



Foundation Document Overview

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Rainbow Bridge National Monument

Arizona and Utah



Contact Information

For more information about the *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument Foundation Document*, contact: glca_superintendent@nps.gov or 928-608-6205 or write to:
Superintendent, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument
P.O. Box 1507, Page, AZ 86040-1507

Purpose



Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, located at the center of the Colorado Plateau, provides for public enjoyment through diverse land- and water-based recreational opportunities, and protects scenic, scientific, natural, and cultural resources on Lake Powell, the Colorado River, its tributaries, and surrounding lands.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument protects an extraordinary natural bridge that captures public and scientific interest with its rainbow form and appearance.



Significance

Significance statements express why Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The Colorado River and its many tributaries, including the Dirty Devil, Paria, Escalante, and San Juan rivers, carve through the Colorado Plateau to form a landscape of dynamic and complex desert and water environments.
- The vast, rugged landscapes of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area provide an unparalleled spectrum of diverse land- and water-based recreational opportunities for visitors of wide-ranging interests and abilities.
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area preserves a record of more than 10,000 years of human presence, adaptation, and exploration. This place remains significant for many descendant communities, providing opportunities for people to connect with cultural values and associations that are both ancient and contemporary.
- The deep, 15-mile-long, narrow gorge below the dam provides a glimpse of the high canyon walls, ancient rock art, and a vestige of the riparian and beach terrace environments that were seen by John Wesley Powell's Colorado River expedition in 1869, providing a stark contrast to the impounded canyons of Lake Powell.
- Rainbow Bridge is one of the world's largest natural bridges and is a premier example of eccentric stream erosion in a remote area of the Colorado Plateau.
- For many indigenous peoples in the Four Corners region, Rainbow Bridge is a spiritually occupied landscape that is inseparable from their cultural identities and traditional beliefs.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Below are the fundamental resources and values of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument.

- **Heritage Resources:** Glen Canyon National Recreation Area is the steward of heritage resources exemplified by the archeological and historic sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional cultural properties that illustrate the connection of people with the landscape of the Glen Canyon region.



Photo by Gary Ladd

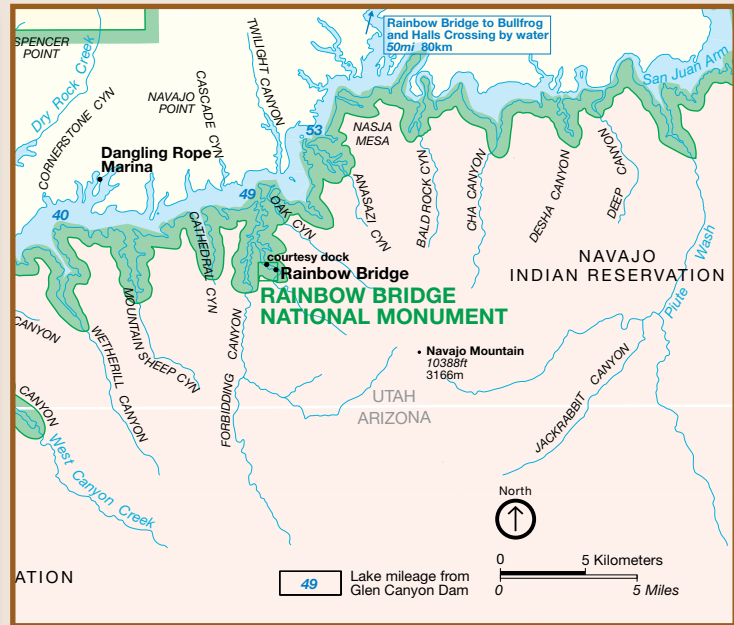
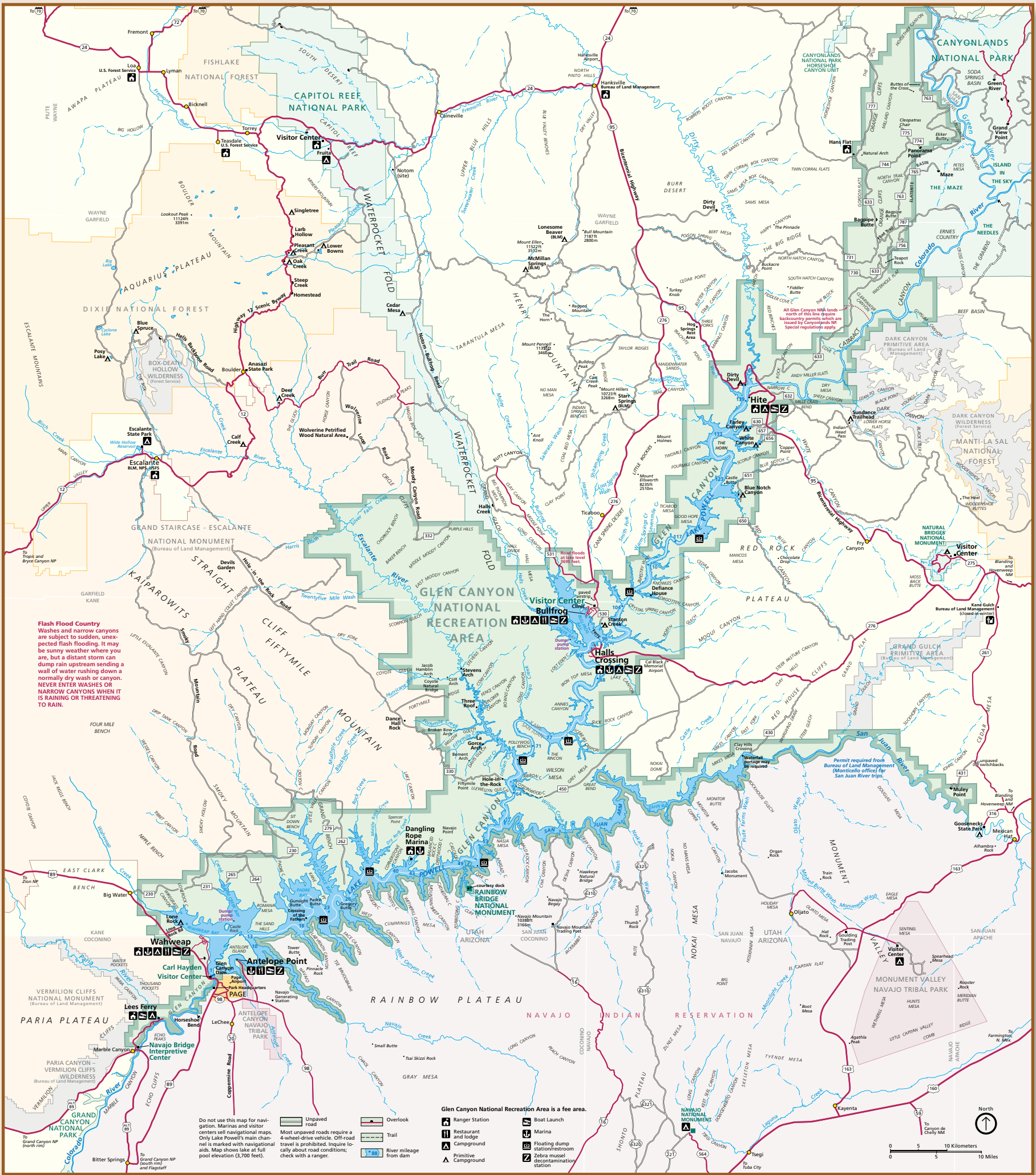
- **Lake Powell:** Lake Powell, set dramatically against a backdrop of eroded red rock canyons and mesas, is the largest man-made lake in North America and is widely recognized by boating enthusiasts as one of the premier water-based recreation destinations in the world.
- **Landscape:** The vast landscape of Glen Canyon contains rugged water- and wind-carved canyons, buttes, mesas, rivers, seeps, springs, and hanging gardens where diverse habitats sustain an array of endemic, rare, and relict plant and animal communities.



- **Paleontology:** Glen Canyon National Recreation Area preserves one of the most complete sections of Mesozoic strata in the world; new discoveries continuously add to our scientific understanding of the past.
- **Water:** Water quality and quantity is essential for public outdoor recreational use and enjoyment and for sustaining terrestrial and aquatic life in the high desert.
- **Rainbow Bridge:** The bridge itself is a fundamental resource.
- **Traditional Cultural Property and Values:** Rainbow Bridge and the immediately surrounding landscape are considered sacred by, and are vitally linked with the histories, cultural practices, ceremonial activities, and oral traditions of associated American Indian tribes.



Location of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument

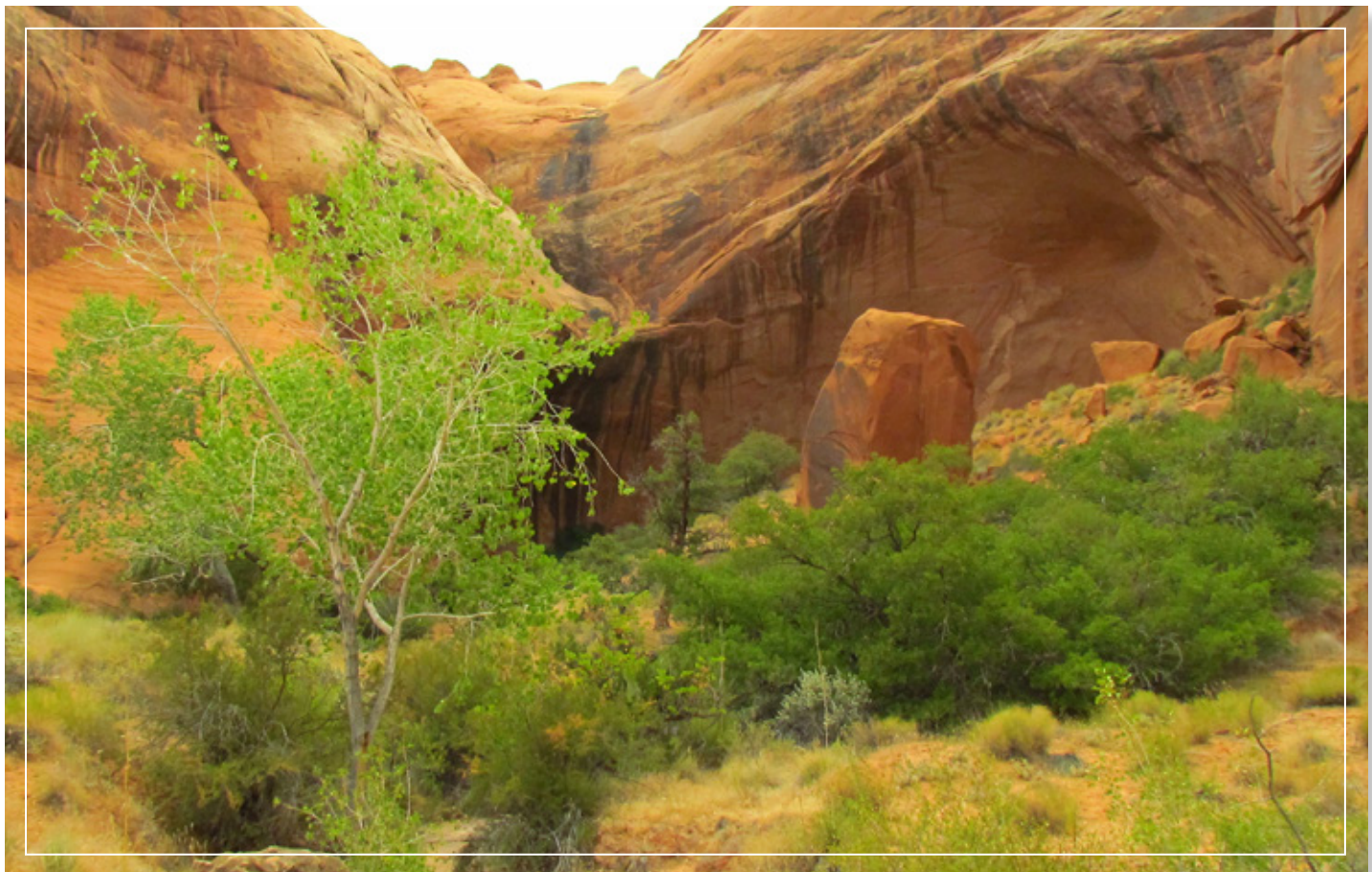


Other Important Resources and Values

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area contains other resources and values that are not fundamental to the purpose of the park and may be unrelated to its significance, but are important to consider in planning processes. These resources and values have been selected because they are important in the operation and management of the park and warrant special consideration in park planning.

The following other important resources and values have been identified for Glen Canyon National Recreation Area:

- **Wilderness:** Glen Canyon National Recreation Area includes 588,855 acres of proposed wilderness and 48,955 acres of potential wilderness. Together this represents 51% of the total land area of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, containing a variety of culturally and ecologically unique landscapes where visitors can experience the character and solitude of wilderness within a recreation area.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The land and water features of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area provide a remarkable variety of opportunities to satisfy our hunger for adventure, discovery, and recreation.



- The dramatic landscape of Glen Canyon lays bare the geological portrait of Earth, which reveals the ancient history of rock, water, and life on the Colorado Plateau with nearly limitless opportunities for research and personal revelation.
- From the first native peoples to contemporary societies, thousands of years of human history along the Colorado River illuminates the intricate web of relationships between peoples, their interaction with the landscape, and the results that shape cultural exchange, create conflict, achieve progress, command choice, and deliver consequences.
- Environments within Glen Canyon remind us that much of life is hidden to casual observation—and entice us to slow our pace and more intimately observe the subtle intricacies and adaptations of both plant and animal communities.



- Rainbow Bridge is one of the largest known natural bridges in the world, a symbol of strength, balance, and change that spans geologic time.
- For many indigenous peoples in the Four Corners region, Rainbow Bridge is a spiritually occupied landscape that is inseparable from their cultural identities and traditional beliefs.
- Even in a landscape of dramatic and distinctive features, the immense presence of Rainbow Bridge often inspires the strong desire to both see and protect it.
- Though remote and in some ways difficult to access, the uniqueness of Rainbow Bridge has inspired many people over time to make the journey and experience its grandeur.



Description

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Glen Canyon) and Rainbow Bridge National Monument are located in a geographic area commonly referred to as the Colorado Plateau. This desert region is characterized by expansive areas of exposed and uplifted rocks that have been carved by the Colorado River and several tributaries. Lake Powell, formed by the impounded waters of the Colorado River above the Glen Canyon Dam, is the best known and most visited feature at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The Bureau of Reclamation manages the Glen Canyon Dam. The surrounding desert landscape and river corridors also provide a wide range of recreational opportunities and provide habitat for a diverse assemblage of terrestrial and aquatic species.

Glen Canyon encompasses more than 1.25 million acres in northern Arizona and southeastern Utah. The recreation area includes portions of Garfield, Kane, San Juan, and Wayne counties in Utah and Coconino County in Arizona. The park's southern boundary runs contiguous to lands of the Navajo Nation for almost 500 miles. Other national park system units, including Grand Canyon National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Canyonlands National Park, and Rainbow Bridge National Monument also share a boundary with the park. Glen Canyon adjoins approximately 9.3 million

acres of other federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, including the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness. The park staff consults regularly with the Hopi Tribe, Kaibab Paiute Tribe, Navajo Nation, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Pueblo of Zuni, San Juan Southern Paiute, and Ute Mountain Ute in areas of mutual interest.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument was established in 1910 to protect a large and exceptionally scenic natural bridge and its surrounding area. At 160 acres, the monument is bounded by Glen Canyon and the Navajo Nation lands. Rainbow Bridge is sacred to several American Indian tribes, including the Hopi Tribe, Kaibab Paiute Tribe, Navajo Nation, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (White Mesa Band). The stone arc of Rainbow Bridge is composed of Navajo sandstone on a base of Kayenta sandstone. Rainbow Bridge spans 275 feet, reaching a height of 290 feet above Bridge Creek and ranging from 33 to 42 feet thick. Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument are managed as one unit; therefore, they are both included in this foundation document.

