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Secretary of the Interior Jewell Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Power Generation at Glen Canyon Dam

PAGE, AZ – Today, at a ceremony on the crest of Glen Canyon Dam, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell joined other officials and dignitaries to kick off a celebration marking the 50th anniversary of power generation at Glen Canyon Dam.

“At the 50th anniversary of Glen Canyon Dam, we are not just standing at crest of this dam – we are standing at a crest of history in the West,” Secretary Jewell said. “Glen Canyon Dam harnessed the power of the Colorado River to open the West to millions of people by providing for their water and power needs. Today we celebrate the triumphs and sacrifices of the people and communities that made this immense undertaking possible.”

Secretary Jewell thanked the people and the community who have supported Glen Canyon from the early days of construction and the continuation of operations today including Facility Manager Jason Tucker, who oversees the operation of the dam for the Bureau of Reclamation and Todd Brindle, Superintendent of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. She also praised Assistant Secretary of Water and Science Anne Castle, who is leaving Interior at the end of the month for new ventures, for her outstanding work with Reclamation, National Park Service and other Interior agencies on adaptive management of the Colorado River Basin.

In addition to Secretary Jewell, other guest speakers included, Assistant Secretary Anne Castle, Mayor of Page Bill Diak, Colorado Energy Distribution Association Executive Director Leslie James, as well as Former President of the Colorado Water Users Association Ron Thompson.

“The Colorado River has always been known for its superlatives – the most volatile supplies, the most iconic landscapes, the most dammed, the most litigated, and recently, the most threatened,” remarked Assistant Secretary Castle. “Collectively, we need to make this river, this basin, this economy, one that will endure into the future and ensure that our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same benefits and gifts that this river has provided to all of us. Operation of Glen Canyon Dam that is based on sound science and that balances a complex set of interests has been and will continue to be key to that sustainable future.”

Glen Canyon Dam is a key unit of one of the most extensive and complex river resource developments in the world, providing vital water storage and power generation for the west. It allows the Upper Colorado River Basin States of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming to utilize their share of the Colorado River while providing the required delivery of water to the lower basin states of Arizona, California and Nevada.

Situated on the Colorado River in northern Arizona, near Page, Glen Canyon Dam is the second highest concrete-arch dam in the United States—710 feet above bedrock, second only to Hoover Dam, which stands at 726 feet. The structure impounds Lake Powell, the second largest man-made reservoir in the United States. The powerplant began generating clean, renewable hydropower on September 4, 1964. The inexpensive electricity generated by this facility contributes to the renewable energy footprint in the western United States and has contributed to the modernization of hydroelectric power that exists today and will continue into tomorrow.

Today Lake Powell can store nearly two years of the Colorado River's average annual flow, helping mitigate the current drought; moreover, the powerplant produces 5 billion kilowatt hours of hydroelectric power each year – enough electricity to help supply the power needs for 5.8 million customers. It would take 2.5 million tons of coal or 11 million barrels of oil to generate the same amount of hydropower that Glen Canyon provides every year using clean, renewable hydropower. The many hundreds of miles of shoreline at Lake Powell provide opportunities for hiking, camping, swimming, boating and fishing. Glen Canyon Dam and the adjacent Carl B. Hayden Visitor Center annually host nearly one million people on guided tours.

“Glen Canyon Dam, its Powerplant and Lake Powell are critical components of Reclamation's Colorado River Storage Project,” said Lowell Pimley, Acting Commissioner for the Bureau of Reclamation. “We are proud that this facility has and will continue to generate clean renewable hydropower, regulate the flow of the Colorado River, store water for multiple beneficial uses, help reclaim arid and semi-arid lands, provide flood protection and offer prime recreation opportunities to millions of Americans.”

The celebration continued after the ceremony with tours of the dam and powerplant, an antique car show, several displays related to power generation and water use from federal, state, and local partners. A special presentation by the Navajo tribe allowed visitors to see traditional Navajo dance. Additionally, at the event a video was premiered that was created by local Page High School students in collaboration with Reclamation titled, “I am Glen Canyon.”

For more information on the event or on Glen Canyon Dam and Powerplant, please contact Reclamations Upper Colorado Regional Public Affairs Officer Matthew Allen at 801-524-3774 or mrallen at usbr.gov.

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