

Say no to the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed Monument

The Grand Canyon is crumbling.

One of the world's natural wonders is falling apart under the weight of a tremendous financial burden. The National Park Service has a maintenance backlog of \$11.5 billion, of which Grand Canyon National Park accounts for a whopping \$329 million.

How bad are things? Park officials say several areas below the North Rim were without drinking water over the Labor Day weekend because of a broken water pipeline, the latest example of an aging pipeline system that a park service spokesman said "...wasn't designed to last this long." Hikers, trying to take advantage of the last "getaway" holiday of the summer, were told to be prepared to carry or treat all drinking water.

"Failing to provide for the (park) system's basic maintenance needs has eroded our most treasured landscapes and historical sites," said Craig Obey, senior vice president of the National Parks Conservation Association.

For whatever reasons, \$329 million must seem like a drop in the bucket – provided there aren't any broken pipelines -- to the special-interest groups that publicly proclaim their love for the Grand Canyon and profess to have its best interests at heart. While the infrastructure, facilities and visitor experience at our national parks continue to deteriorate, groups like the Sierra Club should bear responsibility for adding to this bloated backlog if their proposal to create the 1.7-million-acre Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument becomes reality.

Of course, those same groups that don't seem to care about fiscal responsibility also would have you believe that better "conservation" is right around the corner with the creation of a national monument. That's flat-out wrong.

Conservation is difficult work. Unfortunately, groups like the Center for Biological Diversity would rather pursue their idea of conservation in courtrooms through their filing of endless lawsuits – and have no problem spending your tax dollars to do it – while the Arizona Game and Fish Department puts sound, science-based management and conservation practices to work every day for more than 800 species.

The true core of conservation has been, and will continue to be, the sportsmen and sportswomen who fund the majority of conservation efforts; the ranching families who have pioneered and maintained an important presence in the heart of our state's treasured landscapes; the rural community members who have historically safeguarded Arizona's unique places; and Game and Fish, which has diligently managed our wildlife in a balanced fashion.

These devoted individuals do the tough work through active management, while litigation factories, masked as pseudo-conservationist groups, fill their pockets with taxpayer funds collected from frivolous lawsuits and perpetuate efforts to stymie access and uses on our state's federal lands. These groups are not transparent about how they are funded, so why would we expect them to be transparent about

their intentions for wanting to roll another 1.7 million acres into a national monument in a state that already has more than any other?

A well-built home starts with a solid foundation. Let our state and national leaders know we don't want special-interest groups causing further damage to the foundation of our National Park Service system. Say no to the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument.

Kurt R. Davis is chairman of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, which establishes policy for the management, preservation and harvest of the state's wildlife.