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Grand Canyon Association Awarded Grant through Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust for Watershed Restoration Project of Two Sites within Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon, Ariz. – Last month, the [Grand Canyon Association](http://www.grandcanyon.org), was awarded a grant from the [Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust](#) for \$104,500 to support a two-year pilot project aimed at restoring natural and cultural resources at Granite Camp and Monument Creek in [Grand Canyon National Park](#).

Granite Camp and Monument Creek, near River Mile 93.5, are very popular areas for both backpackers and river users, but like many sites within the Colorado River corridor, they have been adversely impacted by the operation of Glen Canyon Dam, high recreational use, and the introduction of non-native species. In particular, tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), a non-native plant also known as salt cedar, dominates the plant community in the river corridor within the park, as it does riparian areas throughout much of the southwest. Due to its impacts on water resources, native plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and recreation, considerable effort has been focused on its eradication within side canyons in the park since 2000. However, to date, tamarisk has not been removed along the mainstream Colorado River within the park due to the sheer magnitude of the issue and associated costs and logistical constraints.

In 2001, tamarisk leaf beetles (*Diorhabda* spp.) were introduced into the Upper Colorado River Basin to help control tamarisk. Until recently researchers thought the beetle would restrict its range to above the 38th parallel, which is near the upper end of Lake Powell north of Grand Canyon. However, in 2009, beetles were first detected in Grand Canyon National Park, and ongoing monitoring indicates they have spread along much of the Colorado River within the park. The beetle is actively defoliating tamarisk trees. After repeated seasons of infestation, the trees may ultimately die, which will have dramatic impacts on the canyon's complex riparian ecosystems. While the demise of this non-native invader is welcome, it may pose new threats including the possibility of other non-native plants becoming established in its place. Additional management challenges will include determining how to manage extensive stands of dead tamarisk and the most effective methods to restore native riparian plant communities in a highly altered river environment.

The grant provided by the Pulliam Trust will allow GCA to support the National Park Service's restoration efforts with volunteers and logistical support. This funding will help restore native riparian communities, mitigate user impacts, recover data from and stabilize a threatened archeological site, and enrich the visitor experience through place-based educational programs and materials at two sites as a pilot project. The work will be accomplished by collaboration between the Grand Canyon Association, National Park Service, partner organizations, and volunteer groups.

Grand Canyon National Park Watershed Stewardship Program Manager Todd Chaudhry said, "Due to the ongoing expansion of the tamarisk beetle, it is likely that many sites along the mainstream river will lose the habitat and shade provided by non-native tamarisk that native wildlife and recreationists have come to rely on. This grant will provide the volunteers and support to proactively restore native riparian habitat to a site that is currently dominated by tamarisk, test different restoration methods, and assess the feasibility of restoring similar sites within the river corridor."

According to Susan Schroeder, GCA's CEO, "This project highlights many of the challenges in preserving the plethora of natural and cultural resources within the Colorado River corridor. We believe that the key to successfully meeting these challenges is taking an interdisciplinary approach and developing strong partnerships, such as this one with the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and Grand Canyon National Park."

An interdisciplinary team of natural and cultural resource specialists from the National Park Service will assess the restoration sites this September. There are no planned closures at Granite Camp or Monument Creek due to restoration activities.

Founded in 1932, the Grand Canyon Association (GCA) is the National Park Service's official nonprofit partner raising private funds to benefit Grand Canyon National Park, operating retail shops and visitor centers within the park, and providing premier educational opportunities about the natural and cultural history of the region. GCA works to help preserve and protect Grand Canyon National Park by cultivating support, education and understanding of the park.

For more information, please contact Helen Ranney, GCA or Todd Chaudhry, Watershed Stewardship Program Manager, at 928-638-7448