

## Life after Dead Pool: Lake Powell's Last Days and the Rebirth of the Colorado River

**Zak Podmore**

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Written in time with Lake Powell's water level decline, *Life After Dead Pool* is Zak Podmore's clear-eyed but hopeful assessment of the potential restoration of Glen Canyon.

After years of severe drought, Lake Powell's plummeting elevation is approaching "dead pool" levels, Podmore says. Below this threshold, hydroelectric production would stop at Glen Canyon Dam, Lake Powell's remaining water would be trapped, and the reservoir would fill with a glacier of mud. The downstream impacts on other waterways would be devastating.

But instead of declaring a crisis, Podmore treats falling water levels as an opportunity to undo the "atrocities" of the original dam. The book's proposal is that the dam be demolished and the reservoir drained to expose submerged canyon walls, restore native ecosystems, and begin land reparations.

Podmore, who's rafted the full length of the Colorado and kayaked the perimeter of Lake Powell, acknowledges the "wealthy minority" who use the reservoir for recreation. And in addition to detailing the history of the dam's creation, the book includes piquing descriptions of the canyon's rebirth as waters recede, noting the re-emergence of petroglyphs and other artifacts. A biologist declares the shoreline that resurfaced twenty years ago as "the most intact native ecosystem I've ever seen"; a research ecologist observes that each tributary canyon hosts a distinct microecosystem; and a desert soils specialist celebrates the return of biocrust communities that slow erosion, hold moisture, and support plant growth. The book even shares a vision of a canyon park dedicated to conservation science and the return of thousands of acres to the Navajo Nation.

Outlining inspiring possibilities for Glen Canyon as Lake Powell recedes, *Life after Dead Pool* is a captivating vision of regional transformation.

KRISTEN RABE (July / August 2024)

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