ROADLESS AREA STUDY

KANAB CREEK

June 17-20, 1972

/Being the third in a series of field studies conducted by the Saguaro Ecology Club on behalf of the Wilderness Society/
/The purpose being the determination of wilderness qualifications of selected roadless areas in the state of Arizona/

STUDY TEAM:

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prior to their car breaking down on the first day,

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I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Kanab Creek Roadless Area consists of approximately 71,000 acres in Kanab and Grand Canyons. It is about twenty miles long, and from two to ten miles wide. The roadless area extends from Snake Gulch on the north to the Colorado River on the south, and from the western rim of Kanab Canyon east to a point near Tapeats Creek in the Grand Canyon. Elevation ranges between 7200 to 2000 feet.

Kanab Creek is a major tributary of the Grand Canyon. It is an intermittent stream, with permanent water only in the extreme lower end of the roadless area, near the Colorado River. The creek begins in southern Utah and flows more or less due south past the towns of Kanab and Fredonia and into the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. Between Fredonia (on the Arizona-Utah border) and the Colorado River, Kanab Creek has carved a magnificant canyon in the sandstone plateau. Kanab Canyon is very deep and rugged, with vertical cliffs and many steep side canyons. It is geologically and biologically similar to the Grand Canyon, but on a much smaller scale. The entire area is extremely steep and rugged, with very little vegetation.

THE UPPER AREA

The upper part of the roadless unit (north of Jump-Up Canyon) is very rugged and barren, but spectacularly beautiful. At the rim, sheer limestone cliffs drop hundreds of feet to steep talus slopes, which slant down to the inner basin of the canyon. Between the creek and the talus slopes is a broad, rocky area broken by many side canyons. Kanab Creek flows in an inner gorge at the bottom of the U-shaped canyon. The dry streambed is narrow, winding, and sandy, and is enclosed by vertical sandstone cliffs. The

farther downstream, the deeper the canyon, the steeper the talus slopes, and the higher the cliffs. At the junction of Jump-Up Canyon, one of the largest side canyons, there is a desolate wilderness of deep gorges, rocky slopes, and sandstone rock formations. At this point, Kanab Canyon strongly resembles the Grand Canyon.

Vegetation is primarily Upper Sonaran in character. Above the rim is rolling, rocky country with sage and juniper, but these die out for the most part below the rim. The scanty limestone soil supports only stunted desert brush. There is some light riparian growth in the streambed.

Wildlife throughout the area includes desert bighorn sheep, deer, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, badger, fox, Gambel's quail, and many small rodents and reptiles. Chukar partridge and turkey have been introduced into the area. There are no fish, due to the lack of water.

THE LOWER AREA

The part of Kanab Canyon south of Jump-Up Canyon is generally steeper and more rugged than the upper area. The canyon is wider and rockier, and the cliffs are higher. Supai sandstone is predominant over the limestone characteristic of the upper regions. There are many narrow, rugged side canyons, most of them un-named. Near the Colorado River, Kanab Creek flows permanently. However, the water has a high alkalai content and is of dubious drinking quality. The area abounds in good freshwater springs, but their reliability is questionable.

The lower part of the roadless unit includes a broad area adjacent to the Colorado River. Within this area are many large side canyons draining directly into the Colorado, including Deer Creek and the beautiful falls at its mouth. Deer Creek is the only

flowing stream (other than the extreme lower part of Kanab) within the roadless area, although the perrenial Tapeats Creek flows near the eastern boundry. Other attractions in this area include Fishtail Canyon, Fishtail Mesa, Bonita Creek, Surprise Valley, and the increasingly popular Thunder River Trail.

II. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

The Kanab Creek Roadless Area is fortunate in that man's impact is minimal. There are a few fences, primitive trails, and developed springs, but little other noticable activity.

Grazing- there are four grazing permits in the roadless unit, on the Indian Pasture and Kanab Creek allotments. The Kanab Creek allotment has three permitees with term permits for 147 cattle November 16-May 15 and 50 cattle December 1-June 30. The Indian Pasture allotment has a temporary permit for 40 horses, November 16-May 15.

Timber- there is no timber in the roadless unit.

Minerals- most of the Roadless area is within the Grand Canyon National Game Reserve (east of Kanab Creek, south of Snake Gulch), and this would preclude any mineral entry. There are no known claims in the area, although there is a possibility that a small copper-bearing area to the west of Kanab Creek may be mineralized. There is a small existing copper mine in Hacks Canyon just west of the proposed area. There are rumors of an old Spanish gold mine in the area.

Water Rights- belong to the Forest Service. The only permanent water is located in Deer Creek, lower Kanab Creek, and numerous springs of varying sizes.

Private Land- all land within the roadless area is National Forest land. However, it is extremely important that Hacks Canyon, Grama Canyon, and the portion of Kanab Creek north of Snake Gulch be treated in any comprehensive plan for the area. This is BLM land, and boundries for a wilderness study area should be coordinated with that agency. In addition, the area above Supai Rim from Dubrush point south to the Grand Canyon National Monument is BLM land.

A portion of the western rim is located in the Grand Canyon National Monument. It is possible that part of the roadless area may eventually go to the Park Service as shown in their new Grand Canyon Master Plan. However, they would probably not take the entire area deserving wilderness study. There is also a possibility of a Grand Canyon Wilderness Area, into which Kanab Creek would be included. See addendum I.

Archeological Considerations- There are many archeological sites scattered throughout the area, including petroglyphs and cliff and cave dwellings. None of the sites are particularly large or important, but they are largely intact and unexplored.

Access- is extremely limited. The area is difficult to reach except by foot or horseback, and a great deal of effort is necessary to reach the area or to travel through it. Access into the canyon is either from the uppermost part of Kanab Creek or from one of the side canyons. There are few trails, mostly ranching and wildlife paths. The only signifigant trail is the Forest Service maintained Thunder River trail in the lower eastern part of the area. This trail is becoming quite popular, but use is still relatively light as compared to the more well-known trails in the Grand Canyon.

Public Use- Increasing numbers of people have been hiking the length of Kanab Canyon down to the Colorado River. As previously mentioned, the Thunder River trail is often used for access into the Grand Canyon. Recreation opportunities are limited to hiking, hunting, camping, and river-running. However, the visitor to the area must be almost completely self-reliant, with food, water, shelter, and help almost unattainable. Due to these hardships, only the hardiest outdoorsman (or the worst fool) would attempt to make a long trip into the area. The Deer Creek area is a stop for most river-runners, and several

thousand people visit the area yearly. Use of this small area far exceeds all other human use of the Kanab Creek basin. Use is not likely to increase with a wilderness designation, and in any case impact will remain slight.

Other- see addendum II.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kanab Creek Roadless Area would definately make an excellent wilderness area. It is one of the most beautiful and least known canyons in the state, and it provides endless opportunities for the avid hiker or outdoorsman. But, more importantly, it offers much the same as the Grand Canyon on a smaller, more "intimate" scale. Geology, vegetation, and wildlife are essentially the same. Therefore it would be possible to, in effect, study the geology, flora, and fauna of the Grand Canyon without ever setting foot in it. Kanab's reduced scale provides a perfect study area for those not wishing to tackle the much larger Grand Canyon.

We support the Forest Service plan of a 71,000 acre wilderness, with boundries as set down in the plan. However, as mentioned earlier, it is important that BLM and National Monument land on the west and north be considered, as well as Snake Gulch and Little Spring and Slide Canyons on the north.

Fred Arbogast, Big Springs District Ranger, confided to us that he has recommended the area for wilderness study, so there appear to be few obstacles for a Kanab Creek Wilderness Area.

ADDENDUM I

Boundries

The matter of boundries is a complicated one. On the west, the roadless area boundry follows the National Forest boundry, leaving out about half the western rim and all the side canyons on that side; notably Hacks and Grama Canyons. (Hacks has a jeep trail partially down, and may be passable all the way to Kanab.) Most of that land belongs to the BLM, but a portion north of the Colorado River and south of Chamberlain Canyon is in the Grand Canyon National Monument. On the north, the Forest boundry follows the north rim of Snake Gulch. Yet Snake Gulch, Little Spring Canyon, and Slide Canyon, all roadless side canyons in National Forest land, have been left out of the proposal.

ADDENDUM II

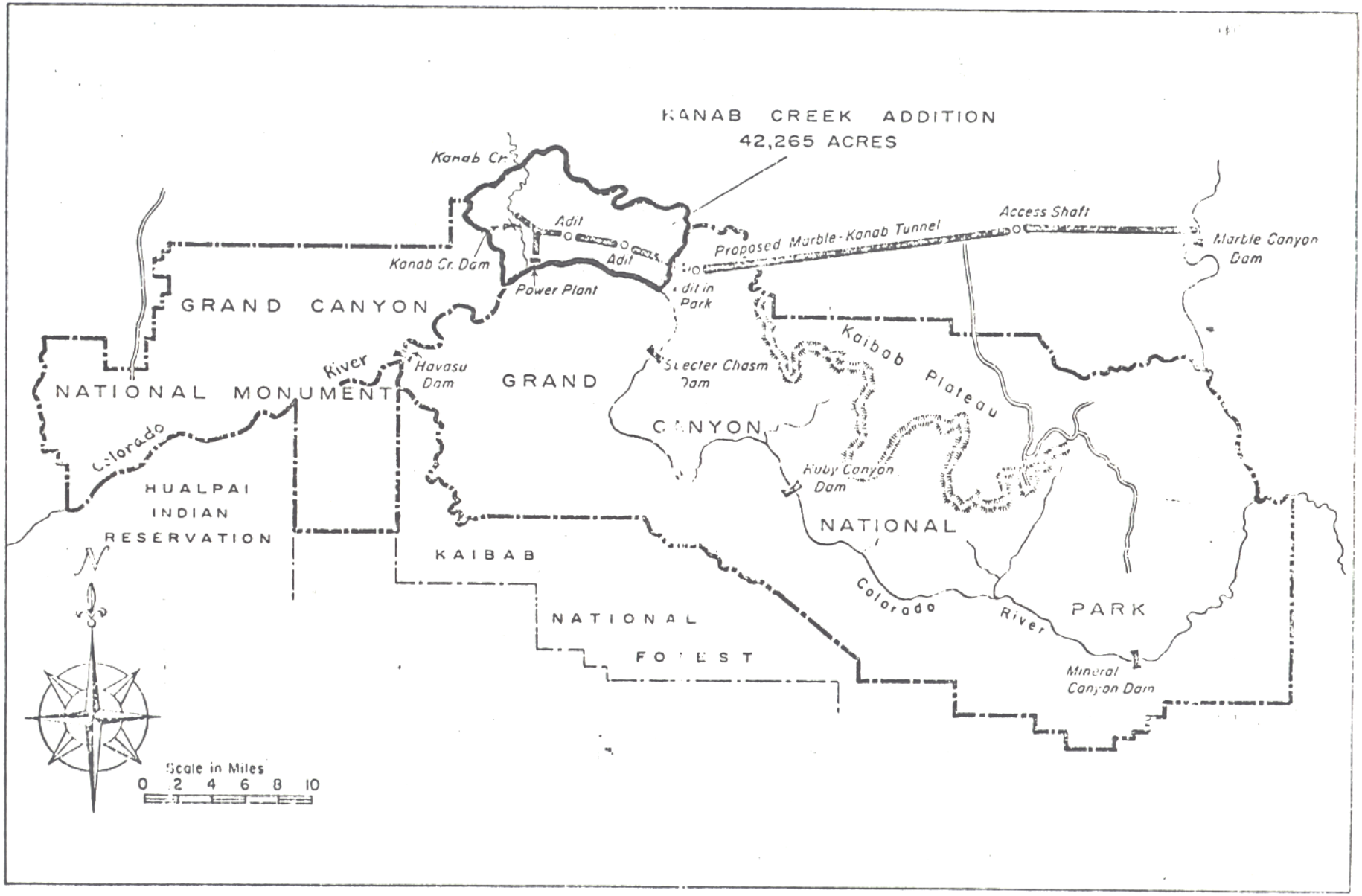
Dams and Power Plants

In 1961, the Arizona Power Authority applied with the Federal Power Commission and the Bureau of Reclamation to build a hydroelectric dam in Marble Canyon, upstream of the northeast corner of the Grand Canyon National Park. 92% of the water passing through the dam would be diverted and tunneled under 42 miles of mountains for the generation of hydropower at the mouth of Kanab Creek. In addition to the power plant, there would be a reservoir on Kanab Creek, wherein water from Marble Canyon would be stored for use at the power plant in times of peak demand.

However, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the conservationists in 1968. The issue is, for the most part, dead, but it still deserves mention here. A power plant at the mouth of Kanab Canyon would be disastrous, as would a huge reservoir drowning out lower Kanab Canyon. The proposed power plant, reservoir, and part of the tunnel from Marble Canyon Dam would be in the present roadless area.

Again, this is largely a dead issue. However, we feel that due to its magnitude and potentially catastophic results, it should be mentioned in this report.

The enclosed map should help make the situation clearer. The area marked "Kanab Creek Addition- 42,265 acres" is now the lower part of the roadless area.



Drawn for National Parks Magazine by Federal Graphics

Shown in map above are locations of various water developments that have been proposed for Colorado River in or adjacent to Grand Canyon Park and Monument. Under one proposal a Marble Canyon dam on the Colorado above park (upper right on map) would supply water by way of long tunnel (solid line) to power plant at mouth of Kanab Creek, or to storage reservoir behind dam on Kanab Creek, according to power demand. Part of tunnel would pass under parklands, and an adit, or access shaft to tunnel, would lie within park. The Kanab Creek dam, power plant, and possibly two other adits would lie within proposed 42,000-acre Kanab Creek addition to park. Shown are damsites in park which are possibilities under so-called Multiple Dam Plan. There are also schemes for dams on river below preservations, some of which would back water into monument, park, or beyond.

ADDENDUM III

Sources

Portions of this report were plagarized from the Forest Service report on the Kanab Creek Roadless Area presented at a public meeting in Williams on April 21, 1972. That report was written and presented by Big Springs District Ranger Fred Arbogast, whom we met and interviewed in Fredonia and so gained further information. We remember him with great kindness. The material about Marble Canyon Dam, etc. was obtained from National Parks Magazine, April 1962 and April 1964, and the Sierra Club Bulletin, May 1966. The remainder of our material was gained through activities and observations of our study group.

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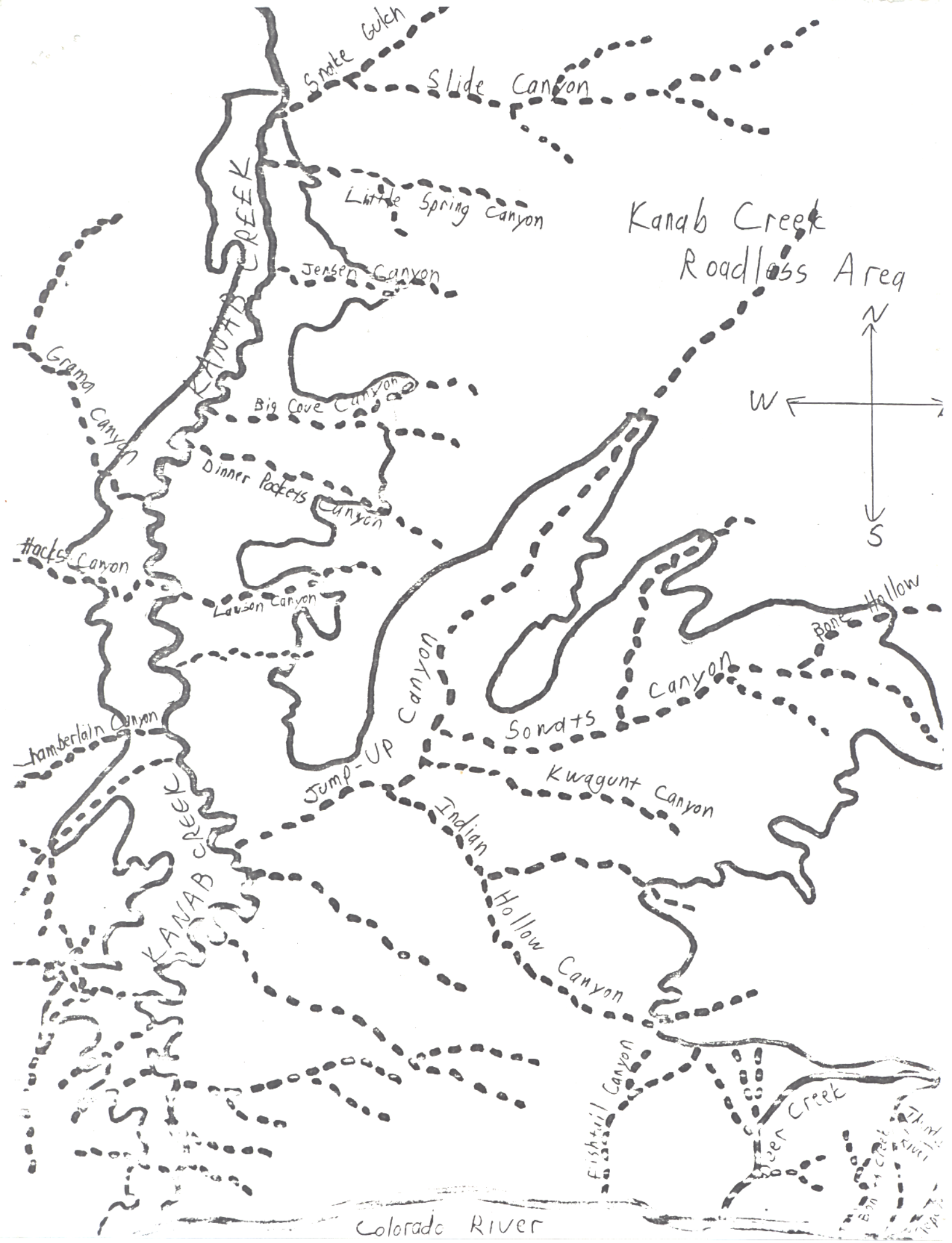
Kanab Creek
Roadless Area
N
W
S
Snake Gulch
Slide Canyon
Little Spring Canyon
Jensen Canyon
KANAB CREEK
Big Cove Canyon
Grama Canyon
Dinner Pockets Canyon
Hacks Canyon
Lauson Canyon
Bone Hollow
Canyon
Sowats
Canyon
Jump-UP
Kwagunt Canyon
Indian
Hollow Canyon
KANAB CREEK
Fishtail Canyon
Colorado River