

# Frequently Asked Questions

## about the Little Colorado River Initiative

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### What strategies is the Little Colorado River Initiative exploring?

The Little Colorado River Initiative is exploring three possible strategies that can work together to support long-term safeguards for the Little Colorado River. These three strategies strengthen one another and can be pursued at the same time.

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#### Tribal Sacred Site Designation:

This is an ongoing, Navajo-led effort to designate the Confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers as a sacred site under Navajo Nation law. This designation from the Navajo Nation Council seeks to prevent undesired development as determined by local communities.

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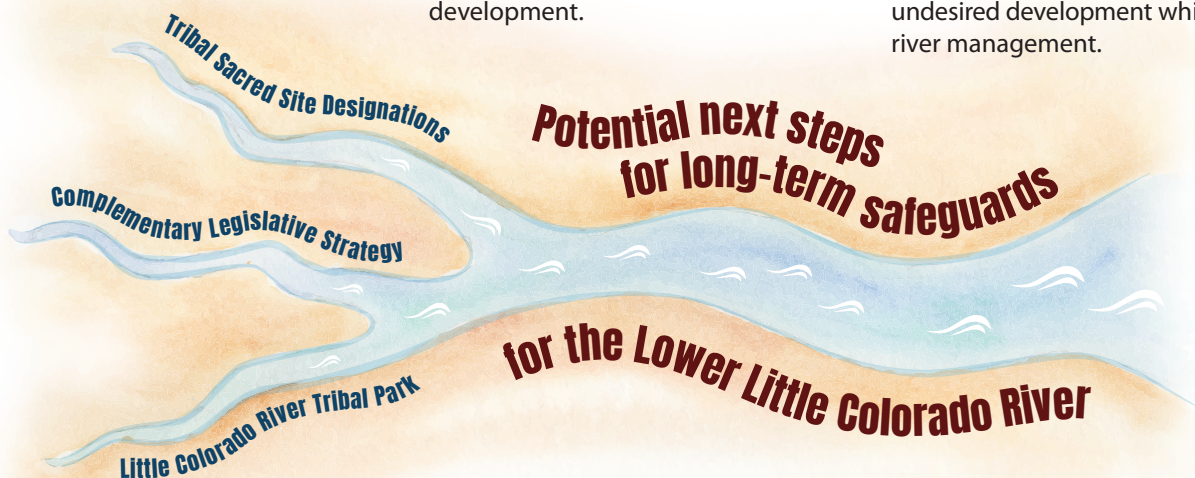
#### Little Colorado River Tribal Park:

Navajo Nation's Department of Natural Resources is creating a Little Colorado River Tribal Park management plan with facilitation support from Arizona State University. Engaging in the process with robust community participation can help promote park management that safeguards cultural sites, wildlife, and waters while discouraging dam development.

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#### Complementary Legislative Strategy:

To complement the first two strategies and to prevent dams and secure funding, we're exploring a federal legislative option. Depending on what Little Colorado River communities want, this may look like a "Tribal Wild & Scenic River" designation of the lower Little Colorado River under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Other types of unique federal legislation could also potentially prevent the dams and other undesired development while funding river management.





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## What organizations are part of the Little Colorado River Initiative?

### SAVE THE CONFLUENCE

As a response to the Grand Canyon Escalade proposal, this group was organized by Navajo families who had been impacted by the Bennett Freeze, and who now are threatened by dam development. [savetheconfluence.com](http://savetheconfluence.com)

### AMERICAN RIVERS

To achieve its vision of a nation of clean, healthy rivers that sustain and connect us, American Rivers protects wild rivers, restores damaged rivers, and conserves clean water for people and nature. [americanrivers.org](http://americanrivers.org)

### GRAND CANYON TRUST

The Trust works to safeguard the wonders of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau, while supporting the rights of its Native peoples. [grandcanyontrust.org](http://grandcanyontrust.org)

The Initiative also includes two advisors.

**Larry Foster** is an advisor who supports the Save the Confluence families and engagement with the Navajo Nation.

**Troy Honahnie, Jr.** is a Hopi Tribal member, consultant, and liaison to the Hopi Tribe.

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## What will these strategies protect?

These strategies work together to safeguard the free-flowing waters of the lower Little Colorado River and its springs, cultural sites, traditional lifeways, plants, and wildlife. Importantly, all three strategies support local communities' authorities and voices in how the Little Colorado River is protected.

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## What is the geographic scope of the Little Colorado River Initiative?

The initiative is focusing on community-directed protections for the Little Colorado River downstream of Cameron, AZ to the Confluence with the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. Ultimately tribes and local communities will determine the geographic scope.

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## What is the status of the dam proposals on the Little Colorado River?

Three hydroelectric dam projects were proposed by Pumped Hydro Storage, LLC on Navajo Nation land on the lower Little Colorado River in 2019 and 2020. The two projects proposed

directly on the river were withdrawn but the developer is still pursuing a preliminary permit for the Big Canyon Dam project on a tributary to the Little Colorado River above the Confluence. If permitted and then licensed, it would require four reservoirs that would be filled by pumping at least 17 billion gallons of groundwater, which is likely to impact springs along the Little Colorado River.

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## Will a tribal sacred site designation prevent the dam proposals?

Unfortunately, no. Even if tribes do not consent to a dam, the only way to prevent a federally licensed dam on any waterway is through federal legislation, like a Wild & Scenic Rivers Act designation.

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## Will federal legislation affect water rights?

The Little Colorado River Initiative is not proposing anything that would impact water rights, settlements, or adjudications. Water rights are determined between the tribes, state and federal governments, and by court proceedings. The Little Colorado River Initiative cannot and will not interfere with adjudications by the Navajo Nation or Hopi Tribe.

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## Does the Little Colorado River Initiative address groundwater management?

Groundwater management is critical to the long-term health of all watersheds. The Little Colorado River Initiative's work protects groundwater by preventing the proposed dams that would pump ancient groundwater to fill reservoirs. Groundwater management in the larger Little Colorado River watershed is not within the initiative's scope. Broadly, groundwater regulation on tribal lands is within the jurisdiction of the tribes and local communities. To address groundwater regulation on state lands in Arizona (which make up much of the Little Colorado River watershed) American Rivers is engaged with the Water for Arizona Coalition which works to improve groundwater regulation throughout Arizona.

