



# River And Weighted Lottery Frequently Asked Questions

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# I Want A Permit

## WHO CAN APPLY FOR A PERMIT?

Before applying for a noncommercial river permit through the weighted lottery, it is important to realize these trips are not for everyone. Here are a few important requirements:

- **Necessary Experience:** The Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park is a highly technical river, not something for the inexperienced to try. At least one member of each river trip must have the experience and skills required by the National Park Service.
- **Self-Guided:** Noncommercial river trips must be self-guided and may not hire guides.
- **Full Cost Sharing:** All noncommercial river trip expenses must be shared among all participants on a full cost sharing basis.
- **Launch Date is Final:** Once awarded through the weighted lottery, noncommercial trip launch dates may not be changed, deferred, or traded.
- **PATLs:** Trips may be passed to qualified Potential Alternate Trip Leaders (PATLs). To be qualified, these PATLs must be listed as confirmed on the original lottery application and meet all other National Park Service requirements.
- **18+ Years Old:** The trip leader must be at least 18 years old when applying. While underage people may be listed as PATLs, only those listed as PATLs who will be at least 18 years old by the launch date are eligible to take over the trip should the leader not be able to make it.
- **Lottery Charge:** There is a launch year lottery application cost to apply in a weighted lottery, paid once per launch year. For instance, an applicant who pays the lottery application cost and applies in the 2026 Main Lottery (held in February 2025) can apply for free for all follow-up lotteries for 2026 launch dates. Lottery and river permit payments are nonrefundable.
- **Trip Deposit:** Those who win a launch date through the lottery must immediately pay a nonrefundable trip deposit, usually 1 to 5 days after the lottery closes. This deposit is applied towards final river permit costs.
- **Final Permit Costs:** Final permit costs are due 90 days before launch.
- **One Trip Per Year:** All individuals are prohibited from participating on more than one recreational river trip (commercial or noncommercial) per year through any part of the Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek section of the Colorado River.

## HOW CAN I APPLY?

For people who have never applied before, applying is a two-step process. The first step involves creating a river profile. The second step is to apply through the weighted lottery.

### How do I create a river profile?

Note: the noncommercial river website uses login.gov. Go to <https://login.gov/help/get-started/create-your-account> and create a login.gov account before creating a river profile (account).

You can create, view, and change your river profile (email address, email preferences, mailing address, phone numbers) online at <https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov>. Do not create more than one river profile (user account) – you reuse the same one year after year. Having more than one profile in the lottery system will result in any trip won through the lottery being forfeited (this rule may be waived by the National Park Service in cases

where the individual 1) used only one of their profiles in the lottery and 2) used the profile with the least number of points.

### **What should I do if I have two profiles?**

Having two river profiles can result in the forfeiture of any trip you might win, so this needs to be fixed before you apply in any lottery. Please send an email to [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov) and point out the duplication. We will disable one of your profiles.

### **Why do you need to know the date of my most recent commercial or private trip down the Colorado in order to create my profile?**

In order to give everyone a fair chance to experience a raft trip down the Colorado, individuals are limited to one recreational trip (commercial or private) down the Colorado per year. Moreover, the odds of winning a lottery are weighted, giving more points to those who have not been down the river recently. Note that we do check the accuracy of "last date down the Colorado" for all applicants listed on a permit application against our historical commercial and private records before issuing each permit; false statements of "last river trip" date will result in cancellation of the permit.

### **I plan on going on a river trip in a couple months. Should I list this as my last trip?**

No, the last river trip question is about past trips, not speculative about future trips that may or may not end up happening. Please do not record future trips until after you have participated on them.

### **My answer to the last river trip question is wrong, what should I do?**

If you need to record a more recent trip participation date, you can do this by logging into your river profile at <https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov>, go to the "Most Recent Grand Canyon River Trip" section, and select the "Edit Last Date on River" option. If the date you enter is incorrect or too recent, you will need River Permits Office assistance to fix it. Please send an email to [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov), telling us your name, that you want your last river trip date corrected, and when you last participated on a recreational trip (commercial or noncommercial) through the canyon.

### **Do I have to apply in a lottery every year to keep my points?**

No, you do not have to apply every year to keep your points. Apply only in the lotteries in which you wish to participate. For instance, if you are not interested in going any time before 2026, you don't need to apply before the 2026 Main Lottery (to be held February 2025). Your points will remain valid until you win a trip or participate on another trip (commercial or noncommercial). We do encourage you, however, to log back in from time to time to make sure your information is accurate and current.

### **What would cause me to lose my lottery points?**

There are two ways for you to lose your lottery points. First, your points will be reset to one if you are listed on a lottery application that wins (i.e. if you are listed on the application either as the trip leader or as a confirmed PATL). Second, your lottery points will be reset to one if you participate on a noncommercial trip or are a recreational passenger on a commercial river trip through any portion of the Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek section of the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park.

# LOTTERY QUESTIONS

## When can I apply through the weighted lottery?

You can apply whenever a lottery is open. Each year's main lottery is held in February of the previous year. For instance, for the first few weeks of February 2024 applications were accepted for the 2025 Main Lottery.

Follow-up lotteries occur when launch dates are cancelled and re-released. To hear about follow-up lotteries, sign-up for our lottery notification RSS feed ([https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov/pdf/grca\\_riv.xml](https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov/pdf/grca_riv.xml)), visit the noncommercial river homepage (<https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov>), and/or check the box(es) in your river profile indicating you wish to receive notification emails. Generally, follow-up lotteries open on a Tuesday and close on a Thursday at 12pm (noon) MST.

## What happens to my lottery points if I apply?

Applying does not affect your lottery points, but winning does. Your lottery points will be reset to one (1) if you are listed on a lottery application that wins (i.e. if you are listed on the application either as the trip leader or as a confirmed PATL). Your lottery points also will be reset to one if you participate on a noncommercial trip or are a recreational passenger on a commercial river trip through any portion of the Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek section of the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park.

## I believe my last river trip date and / or points are not listed correctly. What should I do?

If you think you have noticed a problem, contact us at [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov).

## What are lottery and permit costs?

*IMPORTANT: Lottery and river permit payments are nonrefundable.*

Noncommercial river permit costs are:

- \$25 to submit a lottery application during an open lottery (paid once per launch year)
- \$200 small trip deposit or \$400 standard trip deposit (applied towards final costs)
- \$20 entrance fee per participant (16 years and older)
- \$90 river permit cost per participant
- for participants added after a river permit has been issued, an additional \$100 late charge per participant

Note: River trips taking out at Diamond Creek are responsible for additional fees. The Hualapai Tribe charges a fee to traverse the Diamond Creek Road. Permits are required in advance. For further information, contact Hualapai Game and Fish, PO Box 249, 863 Hwy 66, Peach Springs, AZ 86434, 928-769-6043.

## How often do I pay the lottery application cost?

The cost to apply in a lottery is charged once for each LAUNCH year for which a trip leader applies. After you have paid the application cost for a launch year, you can apply in all later lotteries for that launch year for no additional charge. The application cost is paid after a lottery application is submitted and can only be paid when a lottery is open.

For example, you decide to apply in a lottery with calendar year 2025 launch dates, you submit a lottery application and pay, you are now eligible to apply in all later lotteries with 2025 launch dates for no additional charge. If you then decide to apply in a lottery with calendar year 2026 launch dates, you would submit a lottery application and pay; you are now eligible to apply in all later lotteries with 2026 launch dates for no additional charge.

## **How do I pay the lottery application cost?**

When you log in to the river system to view your lottery application, you can modify the application, delete it, or pay for it. On your lottery application select the button that says, "Pay now through pay.gov". Only credit cards are accepted for payment.

## **What additional costs are lottery winners required to pay?**

After a lottery has been run, winners have around 1 to 5 days to pay a nonrefundable trip deposit. Failure to pay this deposit will result in cancellation of the trip. This deposit is applied towards final permit costs. Final permit costs are due 90 days before launch. Participants added to trips after a permit has been issued are charged the participant cost plus an additional late fee. A trip participant is a person who participates on any portion of the trip.

## **I transferred from the waitlist. Do I really have to pay?**

Everyone who applies in a noncommercial river lottery is required to pay the lottery application cost. When you transferred from the waitlist, you were given the option to either get the money you paid in waitlist fees back or to get bonus points in the lottery. If you chose the bonus points, that is what you got for the money you originally paid to join the waitlist. Note, bonus points expire when you participate in a river trip (commercial or noncommercial) or when you win a trip (as the trip leader or as a confirmed PATL) whether or not you actually go on the trip. If you chose the refund, a check was mailed to you.

## **Who must be listed on the lottery application?**

You need to list yourself and anyone you would like to have as a confirmed Potential Alternate Trip Leader (PATL) for your trip.

## **Can I be listed on more than one lottery application?**

You can be listed on two applications in a lottery - each applicant can submit their own application (i.e., as trip leader) **and** at the same time also be a confirmed PATL on someone else's application. (Prior to 2025 applicants had to choose one or the other – this was changed effective January 2025 to encourage more applicants to have confirmed PATLs.)

## **What are Potential Alternate Trip Leaders (PATLs) and why should I list them on my lottery application?**

A PATL is a person who would be capable and willing to take over river trip responsibilities if the trip leader is unable to go. PATLs commit their points (standard and bonus) to the lottery application they are confirmed on. *The National Park Service strongly recommends that all lottery applications have at least one confirmed PATL.* If the original trip leader becomes unable to go on the river trip, and there are no confirmed PATLs, the trip will be cancelled.

## **How do I (as a trip leader) add a PATL to my existing lottery application?**

Go to the *Lottery Applications* section on your river account (profile) page and select the "View/Edit Lottery Application" button for your current lottery application. Select the "EDIT PATLs" button. Enter the PATL token given to you by your proposed PATL and submit. Then select either "Yes" or "No" when asked if you want to add the individual as a confirmed PATL. If you select "YES", the individual is added as a confirmed PATL and their points will apply towards your lottery application.

## **How do I (as a trip leader) remove a PATL from my lottery application?**

Go to the *Lottery Applications* section on your river account (profile) page and select the “View/Edit Lottery Application” button for your current lottery application. Select the “EDIT PATLs” button. Find the PATL and select the “REMOVE as PATL” button. Once a PATL has been removed, their points no longer apply towards your lottery application.

## **How do I (as a PATL) join a lottery application?**

After logging in to your river account, select the “PATL: JOIN AN EXISTING Lottery Application” button. Confirm your last recreational river trip date is correct or update it if needed. Copy the PATL token shown on the web page and give it to the trip leader whose lottery application you want to join. *IMPORTANT: If you provide a PATL token to a trip leader you are consenting to be listed (and your points used) on their lottery application. When a lottery application wins and a launch date is awarded, the trip leader and all confirmed PATLs have their points reset to one standard point.*

## **How do I (as a PATL) leave/reject a lottery application?**

Go to the *Lottery Applications* section on your river account (profile) page and select the “View Lottery Application” button for your current lottery application. Select the “REJECT PATL PARTICIPATION” button. You will be removed from the lottery application.

## **How do PATL tokens work?**

A PATL token is unique to an individual, is for one specific lottery only, can only be used once, and is only good while the lottery is open. The token is created by the PATL and given to the trip leader whose lottery application the PATL wants to join. If the trip leader accepts the PATL, the PATL is automatically confirmed on the trip leader’s lottery application. Once used, a PATL token becomes invalid.

## **Why are PATLs being added using a token?**

The previous method used to add confirmed PATLs to a river lottery application was changed for security and privacy reasons. Using the new method, an interested PATL requests a token and then gives it to the trip leader whose lottery application they wish to join. Each token is unique to an individual, unique to a lottery, can only be used once, and is only good while the lottery (for which the token was issued) is open. Using tokens improves security and privacy for the PATL as they now initiate the sharing of their information with a trip leader.

## **Why is it necessary for my PATL(s) to agree to their listing on my application?**

This requirement ensures the PATL(s) will be given the opportunity to understand the consequences of being listed on a lottery application. If the application wins a trip through the lottery, the confirmed PATL’s points will be reset to one (1) even if they do not participate on the trip. Asking PATLs to agree to their listing on an application allows us to ensure that PATLs are prepared to make this commitment.

## **How many dates may be applied for when applying through the lottery?**

Each lottery application can list up to five dates. By limiting each application to five dates, we are actually limiting the number of applications that will be competing with yours for the dates you choose. In this way you will have a better shot at the preferred dates you apply for. When a lottery application is picked, all five dates will be checked for availability, awarding the first one if possible before checking the second, etc.



## **The launch date I want to pick is not showing up. Help!**

Here are some things to check. If there are two lotteries open, make sure you are creating an application for the correct lottery. On the lottery application itself, confirm you have not selected any options to filter the dates shown on the web page. If these suggestions do not help, please send an email to [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov) requesting further assistance. This email address is watched closely when a lottery is open.

## **What dates were released through past lotteries, and how many people applied?**

Detailed statistics from past lotteries are available through the park's website. Start at <https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/noncommercial-riv-docs.htm> and scroll down to the section called "Archived Noncommercial River Lottery Statistics". These statistics show exactly how many people listed each particular date, what their cumulative points were, and how many points the winner had for that particular date.

## **The 2006 Colorado River Management Plan calls for 503 noncommercial launches. Why aren't more dates listed in the main lottery?**

The noncommercial allocation does include 503 launches per year. However, some of these launches are claimed through the adaptive management process by former waitlist members who had been on the old waitlist, chose bonus points in the transition, still have not won or been on the river since then, and have reached the place where they would have been able to schedule a trip under the old waitlist system. For more information on this, please see "What About People From the Old Waitlist System" on page 19 of this document.

## **Why are there no "small" river trips September through May?**

Since small groups can fit on standard sized trips, these groups are free to apply for small sized trips and for standard sized trips. By definition, small sized trips may not include more than eight people at any time, and they occur only in the summer, the season when large size beach campsites are in high demand. Throughout the rest of the year, trip sizes are not restricted to the eight-person maximum because fewer trips are launching and there is less demand for the large size beach campsites.

## **How often do follow-up lotteries occur?**

We use follow-up lotteries to re-release leftover and cancelled launch dates. These lotteries occur as needed. An email is sent to those who indicated within their profiles that they wish to receive email notifications of upcoming lotteries. We also use an RSS feed to notify those interested of upcoming and currently available noncommercial river launch dates. Follow-up lotteries typically open on a Tuesday and close on a Thursday. Anyone who has already paid the lottery application cost for that launch year will not be charged again for any follow-up lotteries for the same launch year.

## **Exactly how does the weighted lottery work?**

As you apply and submit your noncommercial river lottery application, you will be able to see exactly how many points your application will get in the lottery. Having a chance in the lottery is somewhat like having a tiny copy of your application thrown into a hat. The computer will randomly pick an application from the hat, and that application will be considered in full before going on to the next drawing from the hat.

## **If someone's name appears on more than two submitted lottery applications, what will be the consequence?**

Individuals are not allowed to have more than one river profile. Each profile can only be associated with a maximum of two different applications for any given lottery (once as a trip leader and once as a confirmed PATL). If someone finds a way around this restriction and one of their lottery applications wins, the trip may be forfeit. We say "may" only because if the person's inclusion on the application did not add points to the application, then it might make sense to just disqualify that person from the trip, not cancel the trip for the rest of the participants.

## **If someone's payment doesn't go through, will they lose out through the lottery?**

If a payment is denied, you cannot complete your lottery application and therefore cannot apply. Included in the lottery application process is a payment section through pay.gov (online payment portal of the US Department of the Treasury). If you fail to pay your launch year lottery application cost, your lottery application process will never be completed.

## **Will I be given the chance to accept or refuse a trip before the trip deposit is charged?**

Immediately upon winning a launch date the trip leader will see a trip deposit charge in their river profile. The trip leader can choose to pay the trip deposit (thereby accepting the trip) or to choose to cancel the awarded launch date (thereby refusing the trip). Cancelling an awarded launch date will not restore points lost from a lottery win. You should only apply for those trips you know you would accept. Note: when a winning trip leader pays their trip deposit this automatically removes them as a confirmed PATL from any other application in the same lottery.

## **How are an application's total points in a lottery calculated?**

**"Standard points"** are the basis the system uses for weighting the lottery to give persons who have not been on the Colorado River recently a better chance of success than those who have been more recently. Calculating your standard points is easy: it's simply the number of years since you've been on a river trip (or won in a lottery, whichever is most recent), up to a maximum of five. So, if it's been five or more years since you've been on a trip, or you've never been, then you have five standard points. Essentially this means you have five chances of winning (think of it as "five lottery tickets for your permit in the pot that we draw from"). On the other hand, if you participated on a Colorado River trip last year, you have just one point. If it's been three years since you last went on a recreational river trip through the canyon (noncommercial or commercial), you have three points. Keep in mind that this formula applies for both private and commercial trips. So, if you took a commercial trip last year, you'll have one standard point when you apply for a private trip this year.

Of course, there may be multiple persons (the trip leader and any confirmed PATLs) listed on a lottery application. So how do we calculate the total weighting points for a lottery application as a whole? Simple: if no person listed on the lottery application has "bonus points" (see below), then the total weighting points for a lottery application is the minimum of all standard points held by the leader and all confirmed PATLs. So, if the leader of a trip has five points, and there are two confirmed PATLs with three and four points respectively, the trip application will enter the lottery with three standard points, i.e., with three "tickets in the pot".

**"Bonus points" for persons transitioning from the old waiting list system.** *(Note: the following applies ONLY to persons who were current members of the waitlist in 2006 and elected to transition to the new lottery system with "bonus points". All others effectively have zero bonus points.)*

Persons transitioning from the old "waiting list" system were given one bonus point for every year they had been on the waiting list. In some cases, bonus points are tripled (see "What About People from the Old Waitlist System" on page 19). Bonus points can be used year after year to boost the odds of success in a lottery. Only after the holder of bonus points is successful in a lottery (i.e., is a trip leader or confirmed PATL on a successful lottery application) or participates on a recreational river trip will their bonus points expire and subsequent participation in lotteries is based on standard points only.

The total weighting points for a lottery application with multiple applicants (i.e. trip leader and one or more confirmed PATLs) are calculated by combining the standard points and bonus points of all listed applicants in a simple fashion. Bonus points are particularly powerful because they are cumulative across all applicants on a permit and act in addition to the regular standard points. To illustrate this, consider the following scenario: Mike has submitted a lottery application with Sue, John, and Betty as confirmed PATLs.

- Mike was on a commercial trip down the Colorado three years ago, so he has three standard points.
- Sue was on the waitlist and transitioned from that list with seven bonus points. Thus, she has five standard points and seven bonus points.
- John has never been down the Colorado, so he has five standard points.
- Betty has never been down the river either, and she transitioned from the waitlist with ten bonus points, so she has five standard points and ten bonus points.

The number of points for the application is calculated as follows: First, take the minimum of all applicants' standard points as usual, then add on any bonus points that applicants have due to being on the waiting list. So, in the above case, take the minimum of standard points of all confirmed PATLs:  $\text{minimum}(3,5,5,5) = 3$ . Then add all the bonus points held by all confirmed PATLs: 7 (from Sue) + 10 (from Betty). The total points for this application as a whole would therefore be 20. This means the application will essentially have 20 "tickets in the pot" for the lottery.

### **Why doesn't the lottery system add extra standard points for confirmed PATLs on an application?**

The purpose of having a confirmed PATL is not to increase the chance of winning but instead to increase the chance of an awarded trip actually launching. While most applicants say they are sure they will go if they win, around one in five winners who pay their trip deposits end up cancelling or passing their trips to confirmed PATLs. Having a confirmed PATL helps trip participants know that even if the original trip leader has to drop out, the trip will be able to continue with the PATL.

The standard points for an application are calculated as the minimum standard points of the trip leader and all confirmed PATLs listed on the application. So, even if an applicant lists 20 confirmed PATLs, the maximum standard points they can get on the application is five. This serves to prevent gaming of the system where a person signs up multiple friends (who really have no interest in going) just to inflate their points, thereby making it imperative that others do the same in order to compete on an even footing.

### **Is it better to submit separate lottery applications or list everyone on one application?**

It is worth keeping in mind that assigned launch dates may not be deferred or swapped. They can, however, be passed to confirmed Potential Alternate Trip Leaders (PATLs). So, it is wise to have at least one confirmed PATL on every lottery application. For this reason, groups should not subdivide and submit multiple applications unless they are willing to win two trips, not go together, and not go at the same time. Note: Effective January 2025, individuals have the option to be listed on two different applications per lottery: once as a trip leader on their own application and once as a Potential Alternate Trip Leader (PATL) on someone else's application.

## **How much demand is there for Grand Canyon Noncommercial River Permits?**

In general demand for Grand Canyon noncommercial river permits vastly exceeds supply. To illustrate this, let's look at the 2023 Main Lottery (run in February 2022). In that annual lottery we had 9,252 applicants competing for 359 launch opportunities. Basically, that means 359 applicants could win, and the other 8,893 applicants would not win their own permit. Note that at this rate it would take about 26 years' worth of launches to give everyone who applied in that single lottery their own launch. Each year we have seen additional new applicants apply, and the demand seems to be ever growing. You can review numbers from past lotteries at <https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/noncommercial-riv-docs.htm>.

Your total chance of winning in a lottery will depend both on your application's total points and on the points of all those who apply for the same dates as you. Overall, if 9,252 applications are submitted for a lottery with roughly 359 launch dates, this would represent an average chance of success of 1 in 27. In practice chances of winning are generally much less for popular dates and much higher for winter launch dates.

## **Who should win?**

This is an interesting question because many different individuals passionately disagree on the answer. After carefully deliberating this and many other interesting questions and after considering a tremendous amount of public input, the National Park Service chose a weighted lottery system for fairly distributing noncommercial river permits. It offers everyone an annual opportunity to apply and potentially win a launch, it favors requests from those who have been unsuccessful in previous years, it preserves the group character of noncommercial trips, and it encourages people to apply for launches only in years when they are really interested in going.

## **Does the lottery system guarantee that everyone will eventually win?**

Definitely not. With demand vastly exceeding supply, no honest system could guarantee that everyone would win. Instead, the weighted lottery guarantees that everyone has a shot at winning. In the end one's chance of winning depend greatly on what launch dates are listed on the application, how many launch dates are available for the dates chosen, how many people end up applying for those dates, how many chances all of them have, the number different lotteries you apply within, and how flexible you are to accept a launch last minute should it become available due to a cancellation.

## **How can I maximize my chances of winning?**

To improve your chances of winning, we suggest considering how many launches are available on specific dates (e.g. many March, September, and October dates have double launches, so by applying for one you would be competing for both), studying our statistics from past year's main lotteries to see how popular different launch dates have been (e.g. a January launch is much easier to get than a September launch), and (if the timing would work for you) following up by applying in follow-up lotteries (since fewer folks are willing to accept a launch with just 3 weeks lead time – this could work to your advantage if you are able to plan quickly). Of course, the most common way to “win” is to be invited to be a participant on a friend's trip if they win.

If you are interested in seeing exactly how many people applied for each date in the past, please see our statistics pages at: <https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/noncommercial-riv-docs.htm>. Look for the section titled “Archived Noncommercial River Lottery Statistics”.

### **If I went on a recreational river trip three years ago and apply with someone who hasn't gone as recently, will I reduce their total standard points to three?**

Yes, if you sign up with people who would otherwise get five standard points, together your application will only get three points in the lottery. The weighted lottery system is setup to favor giving control of trips into the hands of people who have not been lucky enough to go on the river as recently as others. You still have the right to include more experienced folks later as participants, but to include them as Potential Alternate Trip Leaders will reduce the group's points in the lottery. Of course, if you get lucky enough, it will only take 1 point for you to win.

### **I transferred from the waitlist with bonus points. What if I never win?**

The waitlist has ended, but our commitment to getting you on a trip has not ended. We have predicted that most waitlist members who transition to the lottery with bonus points will experience shorter wait times than they would have experienced on the waitlist. Yet, because this is a lottery, some might also experience longer wait times, and we don't want to see this happen. For this reason, we are using "adaptive management" to limit any increased waits. Please see "What about people from the old waitlist system" on page 19 for more information.

### **Is a call-in system ever used to release launch dates?**

Typically, all cancellations are released through the lottery website. If a launch date for the immediate future (i.e. next several weeks) remains unclaimed through one or more lotteries, the River Permits Office may decide to use a call-in system to release the date. When this occurs, the dates are only released to live callers – you cannot request a date via a voice mail message. As usual, applicants must comply with the one-trip-per-year rule and all other normal lottery requirements.

The River Permits Office can temporarily revert to using a call-in system for releasing cancelled launch dates, for example, if due to network issues or website maintenance an online lottery could not be held. During such circumstances, notifications would be sent to inform the public and explain the process.

## **CLAIMING CANCELLATIONS**

### **What will happen with launch dates from unclaimed or cancelled trips?**

Follow-up lotteries are used to re-release cancelled and left-over launch dates. The process starts with emails sent to those users who indicated within their river profiles that they wish to receive email notifications. Follow-up lotteries usually open at noon on a Tuesday and close two days later at noon on a Thursday. Lottery results are typically posted later that afternoon, and email notifications follow.

### **Can I camp out at Lees Ferry with my boats and wait for a "no show"?**

No. All dates are awarded through the noncommercial river permit system in advance. Also, due to the cancellation policies, "no shows" are extremely rare.

# I Have A Permit

## PRE-TRIP QUESTIONS

### Is there an age restriction for children on a private/noncommercial river trip?

While trip leaders must be at least 18 years of age, the National Park Service does not have an age restriction for other participants on private/noncommercial river trips. Please note that all trip members must have and wear a USCG approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) for the size and weight of that river runner. Whitewater rafting PFDs for small children are available.

### Can I invite whomever I want on my trip?

Within the maximum group size limits, you can invite anyone onto your trip who will not have been on any prior commercial or noncommercial trip through the Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek section of the Colorado River within the same calendar year. This can include people who applied on other lottery applications and people who are already planning to participate on other trips in other years.

### Can I change my passenger list or gear after sending you my river trip application?

Participant names may be changed before launch. Before going to Lees Ferry, ensure that each participant brings a picture ID and that the total number of participants (including the permittee) does not exceed 16 at any one time (or 8 for a small trip). The trip leader must be present the entire trip. You may change or add boats at Lees Ferry. Just be sure to show up with the required gear associated with the additions. Between 30 and 90 days before launch, the trip leader will be allowed to request that additional trip participants be added to the trip. For these late additions there will be the normal participant cost plus an additional late charge. Trip participants may not be added within two weeks of launch.

### What river flow levels can I expect?

You can find information about river flow levels at <https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov/waterFlow.cfm>

### Where can I find information about closures and other restrictions?

The Noncommercial River Trip Regulations contains a current list of closures and restrictions. ([https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/upload/Noncommercial\\_River\\_Trip\\_Regulations.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/upload/Noncommercial_River_Trip_Regulations.pdf)). The Grand Canyon National Park *Superintendent's Compendium of Designations, Closures, Use and Activity Restrictions, Permit Requirements, and Other Regulations* has additional information (<https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/publications.htm>).

## WHAT IF I CAN'T MAKE THE TRIP?

### Can I change, defer, or swap my launch date?

No, launch dates awarded through the lottery may not be changed, deferred, or swapped.

### Who can I pass my trip to if I can't make it?

Permits may be transferred to any of the confirmed Potential Alternate Trip Leaders (PATLs) listed on the original lottery application provided the PATL has not already participated on another trip that year.

## **POTENTIAL ALTERNATE TRIP LEADERS (PATLS)**

### **What if I did not have a confirmed PATL on my original lottery application?**

If the trip leader can't go, no confirmed Potential Alternate Trip Leaders (PATLs) are named on the original lottery application, and no eligible family members qualify and are willing to be added as PATLs (see the next question), then the trip will have to cancel. Cancelled launches are re-released through a subsequent lottery.

### **Can I add a PATL after the lottery closes and I win my launch date?**

The PATL requirement is that PATLs must be listed on the winning lottery application before the lottery closes and the launch date is won. The only exception to this rule is for direct family members of the original trip leader who have not been on the river in the same calendar year and are at least 18 years old at launch. "Direct family members" is defined here as legal spouses, children, parents, and siblings as well as legal spouses of these children, parents, and siblings. Permittees may request these direct family members be added as PATLs by the River Permits Office after a trip has been won and at least 1 week prior to trip launching provided:

- The family member was not listed as a trip leader or confirmed PATL on any other application within the same lottery.
- The family member's lottery points would have been equal to or greater than the main applicant and all confirmed PATLs listed on the lottery application.

### **Why are family members allowed to be added as PATLs after a lottery closes?**

One key purpose of the rule requiring PATLs to be listed before the lottery closes is to efficiently prevent noncommercial trips from being sold or auctioned to a high bidder. We believe it is unlikely that family members would engage in this kind of activity at the expense of each other.

### **Why can't family members have been listed as a trip leader or confirmed PATL on any other application within the same lottery?**

When a family member applied in the same lottery (as either a trip leader and/or a confirmed PATL), to later allow them to be added as a last-minute family-member PATL to a trip would give an unfair advantage, think of it as "double dipping". Adding this family member is equivalent to allowing them to submit an additional lottery application after the lottery closed and after they already received the same chances as everyone else in the lottery.

### **Why must the family member's lottery points have been equal to or greater than the main applicant and all confirmed PATLs?**

Adding a family member with fewer points as a PATL after the lottery closes, would create an unfair condition, and it is therefore not allowed. An application's standard chances (or points) in a lottery are calculated by taking the minimum standard chances of the main applicant and all confirmed PATLs. Because the family member who would have had fewer points in that lottery was not listed as a confirmed PATL on the application, the application had more points than it otherwise would have had.

## CANCELLED LAUNCH DATES

### **Are all cancelled launch dates made available through follow-up lotteries?**

When cancellations occur at least three weeks before the launch date, the River Permits Office will do its best to make them available through follow-up lotteries. However, to address the Trips At One Time spike occurring in early May, each year the River Permits Office will hold back up to three late April cancellations and then re-release those noncommercial launches either earlier that April or elsewhere within the same season.

### **Is there a mechanism for allowing unused launches from no-shows and late cancellations to be made available at a later time?**

Yes, each year up to 20 unused noncommercial launches from the previous year will be added to the subsequent year's launch schedule (near the month and day of the original, unused launch date) with some adjustments to accommodate Trips At One Time limits.

### **How will this affect launch schedules?**

The extra dates from previous year unused launches will be made available in subsequent lotteries.

### **Will this result in overbookings or extra use beyond CRMP use projections?**

Yes and no. Yes, because there certainly will be dates within each calendar year that have an "extra" noncommercial launch. No, or not really, because the new year will also have no-shows and late cancellations that go unused. The net result is expected to be use levels consistent with Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) use projections.

## The Trip

### LAUNCH RAMP

#### **How early/soon may I arrive at Lees Ferry prior to my launch?**

You may arrive up to one (1) day prior to your launch and utilize the noncommercial river campsite at Lees Ferry. If you arrive earlier, you will have to use the Lees Ferry Campground located one mile from the launch ramp and you must pay the campground user fee.

#### **How early may I rig my boats and equipment on the launch ramp?**

The afternoon of the day before your launch, you may unload your boats and equipment on the launch ramp. Trips usually launch by 1:00pm Mountain Standard Time each day, but it could be later if the trip is delayed. YOU MUST CHECK IN with the Lees Ferry Ranger before unloading anything. If you are unable to locate the Lees Ferry Ranger, look for instructions on the bulletin board located on the downstream side of the launch ramp.

#### **How can I arrange time for a river trip orientation?**

The river checkout and orientation by the Lees Ferry Ranger will occur at 3:00pm MST the day prior to launch, and all trip members launching from Lees Ferry must be present and attend.



## What do I do if I do not have a picture ID?

Participants without photo identification (i.e., driver's license, state issued identification, or passport) will NOT be allowed on the trip.

## Who do I contact for more information?

Grand Canyon River Permits, 1824 S. Thompson St, Suite 201, Flagstaff, AZ, 86001. Fax 928-638-7844. Voice 928-638-7884 or 800-959-9164. Email: [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov) Website: <https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov>

## ON THE RIVER

### What are the maximum allowable trip lengths from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek?

**Non-motorized**, noncommercial trips launching within the following time periods are allowed this number of days between Lees Ferry and Diamond Creek:

16 days (15 nights)	May through August
18 days (17 nights)	Sept 1-15
21 days (20 nights)	Sept 16 - Oct 31
25 days (24 nights)	Nov 1 - Feb 29
21 days (20 nights)	Mar 1 - April 30

**Motorized**, noncommercial trips launching in the motorized season (April 1 through September 15th) are allowed a maximum of 12 days (11 nights) between Lees Ferry and Diamond Creek.

### What are the maximum allowable trip lengths below Diamond Creek?

Noncommercial river trips which launch in May through September and continue below Diamond Creek to take-out at South Cove are allowed four days (three nights) to complete the Diamond Creek to South Cove section of the Colorado River. Noncommercial trips which launch in October through April and continue below Diamond Creek to take-out at South Cove are allowed six days (five nights) to complete the Diamond Creek to South Cove section of the Colorado River.

### Do outboard motors need to be a 4-stroke motor?

Yes, a 4-stroke motor is much cleaner than a 2-stroke motor, which uses a fuel/oil mixture. A 4-stroke motor is required by park regulations.

### Do rafts need navigation lights to travel at night?

A raft with a motor needs a red and green light displayed on the bow and a white 360-degree light from the stern (US Coast Guard Regulations). A raft without a motor needs to have a flashlight or lantern ready for display to avert a collision with another boat (US Coast Guard Regulations). All rafts traveling at night must have someone on watch to warn any oncoming boats to avoid a collision.

### Are the caves open for exploration?

No, all caves are closed to visitation.

## **LOWER GORGE AND TAKEOUT**

### **Are there many camps in the Lower Granite Gorge?**

There are about 10 camps in the gorge. Most camps are between river mile 225 and 245, with one at 248, 253, 259, and 273. The camps have heavy vegetation encroachment and beach erosion. During the summer finding a camp is much more difficult due to the number of trips.

### **Can we hike in Spencer Canyon?**

No, the Hualapai Tribe has closed Spencer Canyon for hiking.

### **Is the Pearce Ferry take out area open?**

Yes. A two-mile road extension and new takeout ramp were opened on Mar-15-2009. This ramp is for take-out only; the launching of boats is prohibited, and the area is closed to swimming, fishing, camping, and shoreline fires. The ramp itself is reserved for boats that are being loaded directly onto trailers – there is a raft de-rigging space upstream and downstream of the ramp, accessible by vehicle.

### **How far is it from Pearce Ferry to South Cove?**

River trips have the option of taking out at South Cove. The distance from Pearce Ferry to South Cove is about 16 miles.

### **Does my trip need a motor to get to South Cove?**

The river current presently ends in Iceberg Canyon about three miles from the South Cove take out. The lake frequently has wind 5-15 miles per hour from the south. This makes rowing a raft a bit more difficult since the direction of travel is to the south. A motor definitely makes travel across the lake much faster. Most trips use a 10-20 hp motor.

### **How big is the takeout area at South Cove?**

The raft takeout area varies due to lake levels. The takeout area is about 150 feet wide and is in use by commercial and noncommercial trips on a daily basis during the summer.

### **What is the best time to take out?**

Early in the morning is best.

### **Is there a lot of lake boat traffic?**

The summer season is busy with multiple jet boat pick-ups of commercial passengers, lake visitors with a variety of boats and Hualapai tour boats that operate between river miles 260 and 263.

## **EMERGENCY**

### **When is a ground to air radio needed?**

Ground to air radios are used by river runners in the event of a needed rescue, accident or medical emergency requiring evacuation. The main emergency frequency is 121.5MHz. Signaling mirrors and 3' x 10' orange signal panels are required for all river trips, a ground to air radio is optional but recommended equipment. More information is listed in both the Commercial Operating Requirements and in the Noncommercial River Trip Regulations.

## **Do you know what type of ground to air radio I should buy or rent for my trip?**

VHF radio/ground to air. Look in the Noncommercial River Trip Regulations, Radio Frequencies for Aircraft section for frequency information.

## **Do cell phones work on the river?**

You might get cell phone service/coverage at Lees Ferry, but you are very unlikely to get cell phone service/coverage while on your river trip.

## **Who does our family contact if there is an emergency (severe illness or death) while we are on our river trip?**

Your family should contact Grand Canyon National Park Dispatch at (928) 638-7805.

# **What About People From The Old Waitlist System?**

## **WAITLIST SYSTEM DETAILS**

### **What happened to the people from the old waitlist system?**

When designing the existing lottery system, we tried to be fair to former waitlist members. Under the old system we released approximately 240 noncommercial trips per year, and around 50 of these were winter dates. People joined the waitlist to be in line to eventually get one of these dates. Before starting the transition process, we projected how long it would take for each of the 7,296 existing waitlist members to reach the top portion of the waitlist and schedule a launch under the old system (how this was done is explained below "How were wait times calculated for former waitlist members?"), and we notified each member of our findings. Next, we released 240 launch dates per year from 2007 through 2011 to waitlist members (notice, this is the same number of launch dates as previously released each year through the old system). Finally, for the remaining waitlist members, we gave each a choice, they could leave the waitlist and take a full refund of the waitlist fees they had paid us, or they could leave the waitlist and accept bonus points in the lottery with some added assurance. These bonus points are non-transferable and are very much designed to ensure most former waitlist members "win" through the lottery as soon or sooner than they would have under the old system. Bonus points expire as soon as the person participates on a recreational river trip (commercial or noncommercial) or wins a trip through the lottery system, whichever comes first.

So, how have people from the old waitlist fared? In 2005 there were 7,296 people on the waitlist. Grand Canyon's lottery transition plan, participation on river trips, and wins through the lottery, have already resulted in that number being significantly reduced. As of December 2024, the total number of individuals who still qualify for this extra assistance is 267 – these are the former waitlist members who did not choose to accept a refund and have not won or participated in any other trip since they were transitioned to the lottery system.

### **Explain this "added assurance." How will the National Park Service step forward to help?**

The "added assurance" is given solely to those individuals who transferred from the waitlist choosing bonus points (instead of a refund) and continue to have these bonus points. (Bonus points expire when the former waitlist member wins a trip through the lottery or participates on any part of a Grand Canyon Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek noncommercial or commercial river trip.) If any of these individuals do not win or participate on a trip (noncommercial or commercial) as soon or sooner than our prediction for them under the old waitlist

system, we will step forward to help, giving the person a one-time option to choose either 1) to have their bonus points tripled, or 2) to pre-schedule a trip ahead of the lottery by choosing from a limited number of launch dates.

The following chart shows the choices made by former waitlist members who have been provided this extra assistance.

<b>Waitlist Number</b>	<b>Chose to Pre-Schedule a Launch Date</b>	<b>Chose to Triple Bonus Points</b>
05#00001 - 05#00705	136	101
05#00706 - 05#00915	38	54
05#00916 - 05#01129	38	53
05#01130 - 05#01358	38	58
05#01359 - 05#01598	50	58
05#01599 - 05#01842	42	81
05#01843 - 05#02096	30	84
05#02097 - 05#02365	40	86
05#02366 - 05#02648	35	105
05#02649 - 05#02945	40	86
05#02946 - 05#03253	37	107
05#03254 - 05#03576	42	105
05#03577 - 05#03909	40	112
05#03910 - 05#04255	43	99
05#04256 - 05#04618	40	102
05#04619 - 05#04990	32	122
05#04991 - 05#05377	32	138
05#05378 - 05#05781	23	133
05#05782 - 05#06206	22	156
05#06207 - 05#06648	34	170

The following chart shows the number of people that currently qualify for this assistance in future years. It should be noted that the total number of people who qualify for this help will decrease year after year as individuals participate on other river trips or win launch dates through the lottery.

<b>If Person's 2005 Waitlist Number Was Between</b>	<b>Year In Which They Will Be Given Assistance</b>	<b>Can Pre-Schedule Trips From</b>	<b>Total Who Still Qualify For This Help</b>
05#00001 - 05#00705	2007	2008 - 2012	0 - Completed
05#00706 - 05#00915	2008	2009 - 2013	0 - Completed
05#00916 - 05#01129	2009	2010 - 2014	0 - Completed
05#01130 - 05#01358	2010	2011 - 2015	0 - Completed
05#01359 - 05#01598	2011	2012 - 2016	0 - Completed
05#01599 - 05#01842	2012	2013 - 2017	0 - Completed
05#01843 - 05#02096	2013	2014 - 2018	0 - Completed
05#02097 - 05#02365	2014	2015 - 2019	0 - Completed
05#02366 - 05#02648	2015	2016 - 2020	0 - Completed

<b>If Person's 2005 Waitlist Number Was Between</b>	<b>Year In Which They Will Be Given Assistance</b>	<b>Can Pre-Schedule Trips From</b>	<b>Total Who Still Qualify For This Help</b>
05#02649 - 05#02945	2016	2017 - 2021	0 - Completed
05#02946 - 05#03253	2017	2018 - 2022	0 - Completed
05#03254 - 05#03576	2018	2019 - 2023	0 - Completed
05#03577 - 05#03909	2019	2020 - 2024	0 - Completed
05#03910 - 05#04255	2020	2021 - 2025	0 - Completed
05#04256 - 05#04618	2021	2022 - 2026	0 - Completed
05#04619 - 05#04990	2022	2023 - 2027	0 - Completed
05#04991 - 05#05377	2023	2024 - 2028	0 - Completed
05#05378 - 05#05781	2024	2025 - 2029	0 - Completed
05#05782 - 05#06206	2025	2026 - 2030	0 - Completed
05#06207 - 05#06648	2026	2027 - 2031	0 - Completed
05#06649 - 05#07104	2027	2028 - 2032	180
05#07105 - 05#07296	2028	2029 - 2033	87
			<b>267</b>

**Exactly how many launch dates will be used for this purpose?**

Of the launches listed on each year’s calendar, the maximum cumulative pre-scheduling of launch dates used for the above pre-scheduling will include:

- four standard sized trips per week in January through March
- two standard and two small sized trip per week in April through August
- four standard sized trips per week in September through December.

**Is it fair to take these trips away from the lottery and give it to these people?**

We believe this is a fair and appropriate action. According to our predictions, the trip leaders who will benefit from these launch dates would have reached the top of the waitlist by the time we offer them this assistance. If the Colorado River Management Plan had not changed things for them, they would have had an exclusive opportunity to pre-schedule. Our “adaptive management” action is specifically intended to take care of these former waitlist members who could have won through the old system and haven’t been lucky enough to succeed in either winning a launch through the lottery system or participating on another trip.

**I was on the waitlist a long time, applied, and did not win! How is this fair to me?**

The lottery system is based on random chance, and everyone cannot win. Out of the 2,304 applicants in the 2008 Main Lottery, 526 were from the former waitlist and had bonus points.

While it doesn't change the fact that you did not win, we would like to point out that the reason why only 213 trips were available in the 2008 Main Lottery (out of the annual allocation of 503 trips) is that we already awarded 290 calendar year 2008 trips through the transition to people from the waitlist. In addition, 55 former waitlist folks also won trips through the lottery. This total of 345 exceeds the old noncommercial allocation of 240 launches per year that were given out through the waitlist, so waitlist folks have greatly benefited.

As we see it, the new system is greatly benefiting former waitlist members without requiring everyone else to have to wait 25 or more years. We think this is quite an accomplishment, and we are sorry you have not yet benefited. We hope you have better luck in the next lottery.

## How were wait times calculated for former waitlist members?

Our estimates for wait times were based on how waitlist numbers progressed from calendar year 2004 to calendar year 2005. For instance, the calendar year 2004 waitlist member who was in the 4760 position progressed to the 4392 position in calendar year 2005, so from this we could predict that the person with waitlist number 05#04760 would progress to 06#04392. Using the same logic, we saw that the calendar year 2004 waitlist member who was in the 4392 position progressed to the 4038 position in calendar year 2005; from this we could predict that a person with waitlist number 06#04392 would progress to 07#04038. Our predictions for all future years were calculated in the same way, resulting in predictions for each waitlist member for all subsequent years. In the case cited above, the waitlist numbers were projected to continue as follows: 08#03702, 09#03378, 10#03064, 11#02762, 12#02474, 13#02198, 14#01942, 15#01692, 16#01451, 17#01215, 18#00995, 19#00785, 20#00577, 21#00373, 22#00199.

## Statistics

### RIVER USE AND LOTTERY STATISTICS

#### Where can I find detailed statistics from past lotteries?

Detailed statistics from past lotteries are available through the park's website. Start at <https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/noncommercial-riv-docs.htm> and scroll down to the section called "Archived Noncommercial River Lottery Statistics". These statistics show exactly how many people listed each particular date, what their cumulative points were, and how many points the winner had for that particular date.

#### Where can I find statistics showing annual use totals and comparing use to other years?

Detailed annual use statistics are available through the park's website. Start at <https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/noncommercial-riv-docs.htm> and scroll down to the section called "Grand Canyon River Statistics". These statistics show both backcountry and river use totals for each calendar year and compare the use levels to previous years.

## Troubleshooting

### PROFILES

#### How do I change my personal information in my river profile?

You can login to the noncommercial river website and change your personal information (address, email, lottery notification preferences, phone numbers) whenever you wish. Login to <https://grcariverpermits.nps.gov> and select "Edit Personal Information". Once you have created and saved your river profile, there are two key bits of information you cannot change. You cannot change your legal name or your date of birth. To request changes to this information, please send an email to the River Permits Office at [grca\\_riv@nps.gov](mailto:grca_riv@nps.gov) explaining exactly what you need changed and why. Note: For your security and privacy, do NOT send us your date of birth by email.

# LOGIN.GOV

## Where can I get help with login.gov?

Login.gov support information is available online at <https://login.gov/help/>. For details on how to contact login.gov visit <https://login.gov/contact/>. *The Grand Canyon River Permits Office does not have access to your login.gov account and cannot provide support for your login.gov account.*