

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Kurt Dongoske

Winslow, AZ

15 August 2018

Interview conducted by:

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and

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Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program Administrative History Project

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Subject Kurt Dongoske
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Location Winslow, Arizona
Interviewer Paul Hirt
Annotator Jennifer Sweeney
Project Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program Administrative History
Bio Kurt Dongoske is an archaeologist who has been involved with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive management Program (GCDAMP) since 1991, when he was hired by the Hopi Tribe as a tribal archaeologist. He has acted as the Technical Work Group (TWG) representative on GCDAMP for the Hopi Tribe and the Colorado River Energy Distributors Association (CREDA), and has twice been TWG Chair. Dongoske is currently employed as Director and Principal Investigator for the Zuni Cultural Resource Enterprise, and represents the Zuni Tribe on TWG.

Minutes Summaries of interview content during each minute of the interview

- 0 Introduction. Dongoske's involvement with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) began in 1991, when he started work as tribal archaeologist for the Hopi. In that capacity, he represented the Hopi Tribe, which has the status of a cooperating agency, within the group that was developing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Glen Canyon Dam operations. Formation of GCDAMP was one of the recommendations made in the Record of Decision (ROD).
- 1 Dongoske represented the Hopi in the transition phase from the group of cooperating agencies to the GCDAMP in 1996-97. He was the alternate Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) representative, and the primary Technical Work Group (TWG) representative, for the Hopi. **Q:** Did you work with Leigh Kuwanwisiwma? **A:** Yes, it was Kuwanwisiwma who hired Dongoske, and he worked with him closely until 2003, when he left employment with the Hopi Tribe.
- 2 From 2002 to 2005 Dongoske was Chair of TWG. Dongoske cautions that these dates may not be exactly right. After a two-year hiatus, he was TWG Chair again for two years (c. 2007-2009). In 2003 Dongoske became a cultural resource consultant for the Colorado River Energy Distributors Association (CREDA).
- 3 Dongoske acted as CREDA's alternate TWG representative from 2003 to 2007 or 2008. Dongoske became the TWG representative for Pueblo of Zuni in 2008. While Dongoske was a consultant for CREDA, he was hired as a project director for Zuni Cultural Resource Enterprise (ZCRE), doing contract archaeology. From 2006 to 2008, he worked for URS Corporation in Phoenix.

- 4 URS provided archaeological expertise to federal agencies. Dongoske did not find that work as personally rewarding as his work with tribal people. He returned to Zuni in 2008 as Principal Investigator and Director for ZCRE, and at the same time became the Zuni Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, as well as the TWG representative for Zuni. **Q:** And you still hold that position today? **A:** Yes. **Q:** We have, in consultation with Larry Stevens in particular, divided up the kinds of work being done by the people involved in the adaptive management program: primarily scientific research, primarily policy and management, and primarily social and institutional engagement. Where do you place your work?
- 5 **A:** I think my work covers all three. In science and research, Dongoske generates the reports on Zuni monitoring of the Colorado River. He translates Zuni observations and concerns into language that conveys them effectively to the federal agencies and other entities involved with GCDAMP.
- 6 **Q:** Which can affect policy and management. **A:** Yes. Related to policy and management, Dongoske also provides review of documents generated by the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC) and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). In social and institutional engagement, he helps to raise the consciousness of non-tribal stakeholders to not only the Zuni perspective, but also to "the unique responsibility the federal government has to Native people."
- 7 **Q:** Can you elaborate on that, the unique responsibility? **A:** The federal government has a trust responsibility to Native American tribes. There is a long history of interaction between tribes and the federal government. "Initially, the federal government looked at tribes as sovereign nations, that they had to negotiate with like they negotiated with European powers." This was based on interactions between the Spanish and Native peoples in North and South America.
- 8 This became "cumbersome" on the U.S. government during westward expansion. The relationship changed based on early 1800s legal decisions of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, who identified that there was a trust relationship between the federal government and tribes. "Most federal agencies interpret the trust relationship as having to deal with trust assets, or things that you can put a monetary evaluation on, whereas I believe that it goes deeper than that. It goes to preserving traditional cultural identity, traditional cultural practices, and the ability of Native people to relate to their cultural landscape, that has been influenced by unilateral political decisions without consultation with the Tribe, by states and federal entities."
- 9 **Q:** And private developers, too? **A:** Ultimately, if developers get permits, licenses or some form of involvement from a federal agency, it is the federal agency's responsibility. There is no such trust arrangement between tribes and private corporations. **Q:** Do you think that tribes are different from other GCDAMP stakeholders? Recreational interests, fisheries, states are at the table--some people argue that tribal stakeholders are different from the others.

- 10 **A:** They are completely different from other stakeholders. "Oftentimes they're not treated that way, but I think that the tribes have a deep time connection to the Grand Canyon and Colorado River. Before the United States government decided to make the Grand Canyon a national park, the tribes had free access and use of that area, for the most part."
- 11 "For Zuni, the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River has been significant, extremely significant, to their cultural identity, since their emergence into this world. It goes back to such a deep time, it's not calculable." The Zuni have been dispossessed, by the federal government, of a place that is very important to their identity. "There is a history of trauma that the tribes have experienced because of that," and now tribes must follow federal regulations in their use and access of the area.
- 12 "I think that the federal government has a responsibility to recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate the fact that they've done harm" by restricting tribes' access to the canyon and the river. The federal government has a trust responsibility to restore access that should never have been restricted in the first place. The trauma experienced by tribes must also be acknowledged as the backdrop to their participation in GCDAMP. "That stakeholder table, just the way it operates, there is a power dynamic that the tribes are very sensitive to, where the federal government holds all the cards in terms of power."
- 13 Assertiveness is required at the TWG or AMWG table, but that is a trait that is contrary to the way tribal people are inclined to treat others. Confrontation, argument, and aggressiveness connote a lack of respect. "And so oftentimes it takes someone like me, who is willing to do that, is willing to push the point."
- 14 **Q:** Can you talk about the ways in which you've seen the recognition of the tribal role change over the time you've been involved in the adaptive management process, and changes in the ways that the tribes themselves have engaged with the process? **A:** Dongoske can only speak from his own experience. At the beginning of the adaptive management process and the development of GCMRC, "my attitude was one of cooperation."
- 15 He also tried to convey Hopi or Zuni concerns to federal representatives, to remind them that the Grand Canyon was a sacred place and that they must be aware that the values of tribal people may conflict with those of western science. Different cultural views must be considered within the GCDAMP science framework. **Q:** Do you feel you made progress in achieving that recognition? **A:** "Only by being a real contrarian, a real curmudgeon, and coming at them every day and confronting them."

- 16 Other stakeholders express appreciation for tribal participation, but Dongoske does not believe the tribes are actually respected or treated as co-managers of the ecosystem, or that their traditional knowledge is taken into consideration as a management component. "The program privileges a western science perspective, and disadvantages tribal perspectives of that same ecosystem." This is an example of the power dynamic that affects tribal participation.
- 17 In the late 1990s, GCDAMP fish scientists thought that the population of humpback chub, an endangered species whose maintenance is one of the pillars of the program, was collapsing. Before, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had thought the loss of population viability in humpback chub was due to cold water releases from Glen Canyon Dam.
- 18 Scientists also previously thought hydropower-related fluctuations in the river's water level could be to blame. In the late 1990s, the theory changed: scientists, Dongoske thinks from GCMRC, blamed the humpback chub population decline on predation from rainbow trout.
- 19 Reducing the rainbow trout population, they thought, was key to solving the problem. **Q:** Rainbow trout are not native to the system? **A:** Dongoske was told that they were introduced in the early 1960s, when Glen Canyon Dam was completed. Brown trout were introduced into the system in the early twentieth century. **Q:** And they eat humpback chub? **A:** "They eat anything." Even humpback chub prey on smaller members of their own species.
- 20 Scientists proposed an electrofishing program, meaning large numbers of trout would be exterminated by electric shock. The remains of the fish would be used as fertilizer. Dongoske was working with the Hopi at this time, who were offended by the plan. The electrofishing was slated to take place at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers, a sacred site for both the Hopi and the Zuni. "The confluence represents a place of life, the joining of two rivers." Leigh Kuwanwisiwma of the Hopi stated that the plan would bring "an aura of death" to the sacred area.
- 21 The federal agencies proposed that the extermination or "mechanical removal" program be moved to an area a mile upstream or a mile downstream from the confluence. In actuality, the electrofishing was conducted at the confluence. "They ignored--they claimed that it was a miscommunication between the federal agency and their contractor. But I doubt it. I don't believe it." In 2008, when Dongoske was working with the Zuni, a Zuni religious leader asked him if fish were still being killed in Grand Canyon, and was dismayed that they were.

- 22 The Zuni religious leader told Dongoske a story. When the Zuni emerged from the area of Ribbon Falls in the Grand Canyon, they began to journey and crossed a river: some say the Colorado, some the Little Colorado. "The exact location is really not important." They were told to hold their children tightly on their backs as they crossed the river. As they crossed, some of the children began to scratch their carriers, who let them go, and the children fell into the river. The children became the river's aquatic beings: fish, frogs, toads, water snakes.
- 23 The people held the remaining children more tightly, and as they continued the crossing they heard singing. They realized the children who fell had become aquatic beings. The Zuni view all aquatic beings, native or not, as Zuni children. By exterminating trout, "you are killing beings that Zuni has a special relationship to."
- 24 The Zuni River in New Mexico runs through the village of Zuni, and is a tributary of the Little Colorado River, which in turn is a tributary of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon, "thus creating a spiritual umbilical connection to Zuni." Even though the Zuni River is now dry because it was dammed upstream, people in the village of Zuni go to it every morning and every night to make offerings in the riverbed and send prayers to the Grand Canyon. Killing fish at the confluence, with the only motivation being that they are unwanted, is abhorrent to the Zuni.
- 25 The Zuni perceive a cause-and-effect relationship between early deaths in their community and the extermination of fish in the river. They also see a connection between the electrofishing incident and increased use of tasers by Zuni police on Zuni people, which occurred at the same time.
- 26 "Once you start messing with the balance between the material world and the spiritual world, you're looking for trouble. It's gonna come--you don't know where, you don't know when. But it will show up." Based on Zuni concerns, Dongoske started raising his objection to the trout extermination program at TWG meetings. "I was ignored. Completely ignored, for over a year." The Governor of Zuni sent a letter to USBR stating that the extermination caused an adverse effect in the Grand Canyon and in the Zuni community, which must be addressed by USBR, GCMRC, USFWS, and the National Park Service (NPS).
- 27 This got the agencies' attention. **Q:** Did it lead to change? **A:** It did, but not without frustration. The issue went all the way to Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary of the Interior (SOI) for Water and Science. She came to Zuni and met with the Tribal Council and religious leaders. A 2010 Tribal Resolution officially protested mechanical removal of trout.
- 28 "We criticized their science. Their science was circumstantial. **Q:** That rainbow and brown trout were killing too many humpback chub? **A:** Yes, the Zuni wanted answers about typical humpback chub population characteristics and about variables other than predation that may have affected populations, and the agencies could not produce them.

- 29 "We were essentially saying, 'Show us the smoking gun,' and they didn't have one." Around 20,000 trout were mechanically removed while the program was underway, and the Zuni were shown a model based on examination of the stomach contents of the exterminated fish. Less than one percent of the contents were identifiable as humpback chub, but the remainder were assumed to be.
- 30 "The model was not a well-substantiated model, nor was it proven through good ground truthing. So their predictions of the impact of rainbow trout on humpback chub populations, I think, were erroneous at best." **Q:** You pointed out that they originally thought the water was too cold, then they thought it was predation by trout, but they didn't have great data for either of those hypotheses. What do they think it is now, and is this an example of adaptive management in practice?
- 31 **A:** The humpback chub is doing well now. Several years ago, both humpback chub and rainbow trout populations were going up. Dongoske cannot say whether the efforts to address humpback chub populations constitute a good example of adaptive management. "I think, initially, Reclamation went after trout as the culprit because it took the focus off the dam."
- 32 **Q:** Because they're in charge of the water releases, so if cold water is the problem, USBR is responsible. **A:** "So it's not the dam anymore, it's those pesky trout." The Zuni pointed out that they had not been consulted with about the building of Glen Canyon Dam, or the stocking of brown trout or rainbow trout. The intent before had been to privilege sportfishing and eradicate native fish.
- 33 Then the paradigm changed, native biological diversity was the ideal, and managers wanted to eradicate the non-native fish. The non-native fish had resided in the Colorado River for many years, and were not considered non-native by the Zuni. Management actions were having a direct negative effect on the Zuni, but their position was not accepted by the federal government. "They thought I was putting the Zunis up to it." **Q:** Shoot the messenger. **A:** Exactly.
- 34 [Frank Hamilton] Cushing documented the story of Zuni emergence in the 1880s--their concern for the Grand Canyon ecosystem is not a recent phenomenon and not a ploy to annoy federal agencies. It was difficult to convince the federal government to treat the Zuni position with respect. **Q:** You bring up a couple of thorny issues in adaptive management. One is the difference between being listened to and being influential. It took a long time for federal agencies involved in GCDAMP to listen to and accept tribal perspectives. The question remains, did they change management strategies or policies as a result of finally respecting those perspectives?
- 35 **A:** To a degree. Now there are more stringent triggers for implementing mechanical removal of non-native fish. **Q:** Do you remember when that change happened?

- 36 **A:** Dongoske thinks it was in the non-native management plan developed by USBR around 2011 or 2012, and it was implemented in the Long Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) EIS. The LTEMP also implemented trout management flows: a lessening of water releases from the dam at trout spawning time that strands the eggs and causes them to dry out. To the Zuni, this is just killing the fish at a different stage of life.
- 37 At meetings, Dongoske reiterates that Zuni are negatively affected by mechanical removal and trout suppression flows. "I ask the federal government, 'What's the message you're sending Zuni? That humpback chub lives are more important than Zuni lives?' And I get no answer. They don't know how to answer that." **Q:** That's the second thorny issue in adaptive management, and all other kinds of resource management decision-making in complex environments--what do you think is the appropriate way to move forward when a cultural property, and what those who care about it want done with it, conflicts with something like the Endangered Species Act (ESA)?
- 38 When federal agencies are bound by legislation and act on the evidence available, and that action causes the Zuni harm, what is the appropriate way to move forward?
- 39 **A:** "I'm not convinced there was rigorous and compelling science" guiding federal agencies' actions in that circumstance. Dongoske does not think managers and scientists treated Zuni concerns as valid. "I think they saw the Zuni position as being a thorn in their side, and they just wanted to be done with it." A statement from Zuni religious leaders was appended to the resolution issued by the Tribe regarding mechanical trout removal [see Minute 27].
- 40 The statement was signed by over thirty religious leaders. This was a very unusual thing for Zuni people to do. Dongoske says that Assistant SOI Anne Castle handed the document off without looking at it. He claimed this was insulting to the Zuni. In spite of the rhetoric of understanding expressed by federal stakeholders, that "mechanical action" signaled to Dongoske that Castle did not actually care about the Zuni position.
- 41 **Q:** You're suggesting that tribes and tribal representatives were not granted equal weight or full respect as stakeholders, at the beginning at least. Looking from the early 1990s to the present, do you think progress has been made in at least granting greater respect and status for tribes in GCDAMP? **A:** If you go to AMWG or TWG and they do a vote, the tribe has the same sort of voting power as any other stakeholder.
- 42 But with issues raised by the tribes in the adaptive management setting, more deference is given to the Colorado River Basin states' representatives. **Q:** So there's a hierarchy: federal agencies are the power center, the Basin state representatives may be right behind them in influence, and the remaining stakeholders, including tribes, are underneath them?

- 43 **A:** Yes. **Q:** That's been consistent over the three decades? No significant changes or shifts in those positions of power? **A:** There has been a recognition of the need to have tribes at the table, because they fund the tribes at a base amount. **Q:** Do they do that for other stakeholders? **A:** State representatives, and maybe some others, are reimbursed for travel costs and expenses incurred while attending AMWG or TWG meetings. Tribes are given a yearly amount of money to facilitate their participation, but that amount has not changed "since it was identified in 1999."
- 44 "They continue to ask the tribes to do more with less--much more with much less." The same issue impacts Zuni Colorado River monitoring trips. The Zuni appreciate the funding in place for monitoring and participation, but it is inadequate for participating at the level at which they would like to do.
- 45 **Q:** Let's shift gears a bit. What significant changes in the program have you seen over time in the broader adaptive management program itself? Are there stages through which it has evolved since the 1990s? **A:** The GCMRC, "in some respects, has become a monster. It's out of control." **Q:** In what sense? **A:** In developing the science, research and monitoring programs. **Q:** Do you mean that they have too much control over what gets funded for scientific study, or something else? **A:** To a large extent, that is the case. They have become a bureaucratic Frankenstein.
- 46 **Q:** Can you explain what you mean? **A:** The 1995 Final EIS called for GCMRC to have a core of four or five people: the Chief, a physical resource program manager, a biological resource program manager, a cultural resource program manager, and an administrative assistant. All of the monitoring and research was intended to be contracted out, competitively. Now, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) "has created this monster, with all these people in it." **Q:** The USGS took over GCMRC a few years after it was created.
- 47 **A:** It was either going to be housed in USBR or USGS. Somebody in the outgoing Clinton presidential administration assigned it to USGS. At the time, Dongoske thought it was a good idea. His trust that USBR "would do the right thing" was low. In his dealings with federal agencies, though, he has come to see that USGS is "callous to criticism."
- 48 Dongoske believes that the GCMRC "has become arrogant" and focuses on things that are not important to the program. **Q:** Such as? **A:** Since 2003, the center had done [aeolian monitoring] research to quantify the effects of windblown sand on archaeological sites. Dongoske did not think the hypothesis was supportable. **Q:** What was the hypothesis?

- 49 **A:** The reason archaeological sites are eroding is that seasonal floods used to deposit sand on the archaeological sites, replacing what had been lost since the last high-water deposits. Now sediment is trapped behind the dam and there is no new cover to protect sites from erosion. The GCMRC hypothesized that sand deposited on beaches during high flow experiments (HFEs) would subsequently be blown up onto the endangered archaeological sites and help to preserve them. Dongoske pointed out that wind-deposited sand could easily be stripped from the sites during later wind and precipitation events.
- 50 "There's nothing there to armor the sand to stay on the site." GCMRC was spending a lot of money and using advanced techniques to conduct aeolian monitoring. Dongoske continued to criticize that research direction. **Q:** Did you have suggestions for what you thought would be more valuable research? **A:** Dongoske thought that looking at past excavations and examining the stratigraphy of the sites would be a more useful tactic.
- 51 Researchers could determine how much of the sites' preservative sand cover was caused by flood, and how much by wind deposit. **Q:** Have they done that research yet? **A:** The topic last came up about a year ago. **Q:** So you're still advocating. **A:** No, he quit. "It's another one of those issues where I keep pounding my head against a wall, and nothing's happening. I think I'm bringing up legitimate issues regarding this." At a recent TWG meeting where the two-year budget was being planned, the majority of representatives voted to remove the GCMRC research program on windblown sand.
- 52 According to Dongoske, aeolian monitoring of archaeological sites would need to be conducted for 100-200 years in order to effectively evaluate the impact of windblown sand. Other evaluations could be conducted much more quickly. Dongoske also questioned whether the research was directed toward site preservation. "If you think putting sand on a site is going to preserve it, why don't you get your shovels and wheelbarrows?"
- 53 **Q:** Did they defund that [the aeolian monitoring program]? **A:** No. When TWG decided to remove the program from the budget, GCMRC "made a unilateral decision, said 'Thanks for the input, but we're not gonna do that.'" **Q:** One of the changes you've seen in the program over time is an increasing degree of power and insularity on the part of USGS in determining what does and does not get funded? **A:** That's right.
- 54 **Q:** And you'd like to see more of the funding decisions controlled by the stakeholder groups, by AMWG and TWG? **A:** Ultimately, the stakeholder groups just make recommendations. In theory, actual funding decisions come from the SOI. **Q:** It's all centralized decision-making, with consultation. **A:** Yes. Who has more avenues of communication with the SOI? The federal agencies, not the stakeholders. **Q:** How would you change that, if you could? **A:** Over time, GCMRC has used a tautological argument about science and its authority.

- 55 The argument goes, GCDAMP values science in making management decisions; we [GCMRC] are the science providers; we tell you about the science because the science is considered important by the program; so we are the authority, and you are not. "I think that, from what I see, is that it's not just science, it's competition for a limited amount of money." From 1997 to the present, "the Center has for the most part slammed the door on tribes."
- 56 **Q:** Was the door open prior to 1997? **A:** We thought it might have been. "But with each consecutive Chief of the Center, that door has been shut and locked. I think it's because the Center views tribes as a source of competition for a finite pot of money, in terms of doing research and monitoring." In 2001 or 2002, GCMRC invited tribes to participate with them in riparian ecosystem monitoring, but the design of the program and the site selections were done by GCMRC.
- 57 "The tribes were just to come along." This illustrates the power dynamic in place in GCDAMP science. "How can you adequately integrate tribal values or concerns or perspectives when it's completely structured in a western science perspective? It's not gonna happen." The riparian monitoring program did not work out well. "Most of the tribes felt disenfranchised from the process." **Q:** In a previous interview, the Hualapai representative mentioned that tribal elders were brought to the Colorado River, to sites that they were familiar with and interested in. They helped select which sites would be monitored, and for what reasons. The representative hoped for more Hualapai involvement in what is often called "citizen science." It sounds like you think there is a role for tribes to play, start to finish, in scientific studies.
- 58 **A:** There could be this level of participation, and it is something tribes have tried to advocate for.
- 59 In Dongoske's experience, "the Center is interested in training Native people to be western scientists, rather than being open to a collaborative, co-management or co-research initiative that takes western science perspectives and values and indigenous perspectives, and integrates them together to create a more holistic, if you will, approach to research and monitoring. That's not happening. They're still way apart." **Q:** And you're saying the reason that's not happening yet is the oversized influence of the director [Chief] at GCMRC in determining how studies are designed and what gets funded.
- 60 **A:** It is not just the Chief, it's the attitude of scientists, "that there is only one way to understand that ecosystem, and that is western science--western science equals truth. And that infuriates me to no end, because there are multiple ways of relating to the world, there are multiple ways of knowing the world. Science is just one way of trying to understand cause and effect." The Zuni have their own ways of identifying cause and effect in the ecosystem, discussed earlier in the interview [see Minutes 24-26]. Western science is not the only way to understand reality.

- 61 One example is sampling: examining a tiny portion of a fish population and extrapolating what is happening in the entire population is problematic to Dongoske. Native perspectives are not a better way of interpreting the ecosystem, but GCDAMP could improve its democratic operations and its overall effectiveness by treating Native perceptions on an equal basis with western science perspectives.
- 62 GCDAMP scientists are of the opinion that western science equates with truth. This mindset, Dongoske believes, is encouraged in university settings and reinforced in science-based professions. He thinks western science could benefit by being open to the Zuni perspective: "of this sense of stewardship, and this sense that the environment that you're dealing with is composed of multiple sentient beings, and that your actions on that environment have consequences. Long-term consequences."
- 63 Dongoske thinks considering indigenous ecosystem perspectives would make scientists more respectful toward animals, in how they handle them and how they design research projects. **Q:** Let's step back, bigger picture, and I would like to ask whether you think the program has been, overall, a beneficial effort, a good use of time, expertise and funding, over the years. **A:** [pauses] Yes. It has been.
- 64 **Q:** Because? **A:** Despite its flaws, it has been an overall positive program. Because it brings a wide range of stakeholders to a common table to discuss issues. It is always positive when people get together to talk about problems. **Q:** The alternative to this that you think would not be as beneficial is what you were criticizing earlier, too few people making decisions that are too insular? **A:** The alternative to the adaptive management program would be lawsuits. It usually takes going to court to get federal agencies' attention.
- 65 Over twenty-five years of consulting with federal agencies as a tribal representative, Dongoske believes that federal agencies will ignore tribes unless they think they will be sued by the tribes. **Q:** So GCDAMP is valuable as an example of collaborative, democratic decision-making, and even though you think there are lots of ways it can be improved, it should be sustained?
- 66 **A:** Yes, overall. If Dongoske "were king for a day," he would redesign GCMRC, putting it under USBR or NPS because he thinks those agencies would be more responsive and accountable to stakeholders in general, and particularly to the tribes. **Q:** Can you say why USBR or NPS would be more responsive to tribes than USGS is?
- 67 **A:** Because they have a history of consulting and working with tribes that USGS lacks. USGS sees itself not as a land manager or an action agency, but as a science provider. **Q:** They don't have their own land base that they're responsible for managing. **A:** Right. That makes them callous to understanding tribal consultation and tribal values. USGS has tribal programs, but they are meant to turn tribal members into western scientists. "It's another subtle form of assimilation." **Q:** There are a lot of people who think the western science perspective is separate and independent from culture.

- 68 **A:** That's ridiculous. Western scientists claim to be objective, but they are not. "All the data that you look at, you're looking at through your own cultural lens. You can't do anything but that." Scientists must understand that they have bias, and that bias can affect their conclusions. **Q:** There is a decades-long tradition of scholarship in the history of science and technology that examines the ways in which science and technology are cultural constructions. It took a long time for those scholars to make inroads into the scientific community.
- 69 **A:** Dongoske has become sensitive to that in terms of archaeology. Most archaeologists in the U.S. are white, and have a western science approach. They interpret artifacts and features from the standpoint of their cultural bias. When Zuni go to excavations, what they think are important elements of the site are often in the archaeologists' back dirt piles.
- 70 Archaeologists tend to write narratives of prehistory that are "completely divorced from the descendants. It's their heritage, but we don't talk about them." **Q:** Can you tell us about important documents that have been produced and should be highlighted in the administrative history, and people who have been involved and shaped the program in significant ways?
- 71 **A:** [long pause] Dongoske thinks that a lot of the documents produced by GCMRC, TWG and AMWG and intended to guide GCDAMP are ignored. Planning for desired future conditions (DFCs) is one example.
- 72 Dongoske wants to go "off track" for something he thinks it is important to mention. In 1999, GCMRC contracted for a peer evaluation panel for the cultural resources program and the compliance program under the programmatic agreement with USBR. **Q:** An external peer review panel? **A:** Yes. One of the recommendations made by the review panel in 2000 was for the formulation of a Native American consultation plan.
- 73 The panel thought that engagement of tribes had not been effective, that consultation was not mapped out program-wide. USBR, NPS and GCMRC were all consulting separately with tribes, with differing levels of engagement. USBR contracted the drafting of a plan to the Hualapai Tribe, who in turn contracted Dean Suagee.
- 74 Suagee is a highly respected lawyer who has dealt with tribal issues for most of his career. [Dean B. Suagee professional biography from Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker: <https://www.hobbsstraus.com/dean-b-suagee>.] The Hualapai produced a 44-page draft document outlining a comprehensive Native American consultation plan, and submitted it to the other tribes and the federal agencies for comment in 2002 or 2003. "Fourteen iterations later, and the same amount of years, when the document got to the federal agencies, the federal agencies had a problem. They weren't willing to commit to anything."

- 75 The document that was finalized in 2016 was less than six pages long. "It was essentially a policy statement," because the federal government did not want to commit to anything with the tribes. At one meeting, the Solicitor [of the Department of the Interior (DOI)] said that the consultation document should have language stating that nothing in the plan gave the tribes the right to sue the federal government. Dongoske finds it absurd that the federal government would express distrust of the tribes after its history of subjecting them to genocide, displacement, forced assimilation, and structural racism.
- 76 **Q:** Let me ask for clarification. Did they want the document to include language insulating them from lawsuits over consultation itself, or was it broader insulation that was written in? **A:** It was a very general statement. It was unclear what it was intended to prevent. The requested language was ultimately not included in the document. The document itself was more a consultation philosophy than a consultation plan.
- 77 **Q:** Was it ever formally adopted? **A:** Yes. **Q:** It would be interesting to research how the document was revised during the process. **A:** The DOI agencies never shared their internal discussions of the document with the tribes. **Q:** Your judgment is that the consultation plan doesn't have any teeth. What could be improved in the consultation plan?
- 78 **A:** The document tells Dongoske that the federal government is interested on having tribes at the table, but only to a certain extent; that it is unwilling to make commitments to the tribes; and that it intends to keep the tribes, at a certain level, disenfranchised from the process. **Q:** So there is a direction for improvement in GCDAMP in the coming years: less hierarchical power differential and more shared authority and shared decision-making at an equal level? **A:** That's what I would like to see.
- 79 The SOI is the final authority on decision-making. This is because GCDAMP cannot be sued, but the federal agencies involved can be sued. Federal agencies have to have decision-making authority, but it would be helpful if the processes leading to decisions were more transparent about how tribal concerns were considered.
- 80 **Q:** Who have been some of the most important participants in GCDAMP? Who do you think we should be sure to interview? **A:** Larry Stevens. Dennis Kubly, a fish scientist who started out with Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) and was then hired by USBR as manager of the adaptive management program.
- 81 (Continuation of the above)
- 82 Michael (Mike) Berry, regional archaeologist for USBR, Upper Colorado Region, now retired. Involved in GCDAMP from approximately 2003 to 2010.
- 83 Rick Gold, USBR Upper Colorado Region Director during the first EIS process.

- 84 Steve Carothers. He was hired by the Hopi when they became a cooperating agency during the EIS process, and he was Dongoske's mentor in the early stages of the adaptive management program.
- 85 Dave Wegner. Before GCMRC was implemented, Glen Canyon Environmental Studies (GCES), helmed by Wegner, provided science during the EIS process. Wegner visited the Hopi to discuss the Tribe becoming a cooperating agency.
- 86 [Recording paused at interviewer's request] **Q:** Are you hopeful about GCDAMP's future, and do you think the program should be continued? It is a big investment in time and money for the federal government. **A:** It is actually mostly paid for with power revenues. **Q:** No matter what, it is paid for by us, taxpayers and power users.
- 87 **A:** The only appropriated money comes from the DOI to support tribal participation. Dongoske's perception of whether GCDAMP should be continued changes from day to day. Certain situations, like difficult AMWG meetings, can be very frustrating.
- 88 "I think I'm hopelessly optimistic about things, in spite of my cynicism. I do think that when people are talking across a table to each other, that is beneficial. It's when you stop talking that you start to get into trouble."
- 89 The program is worth the investment, but Dongoske thinks it needs to be more self-reflective: analyzing how it operates, how it arrives at decisions, how its power structure can disenfranchise and silence stakeholders. **Q:** In a previous interview, Mary Orton told us about a river trip that GCDAMP stakeholders took together, because there was a great deal of conflict in the group at the time. Were you on that trip?
- 90 **A:** No. **Q:** Do you think stakeholders need to have another trip like that, an opportunity to soul-search and reflect, now? **A:** It depends on how long-lasting the effect is. "While you may be emotionally influenced at that time, once you get back to the hard reality of your office," warm feelings from events like that tend to dissipate.
- 91 **Q:** The river trip resulted in a document that set the path for the program's future [the vision statement]. **A:** Dongoske is aware of that document. "But like all documents with this program, even though they are drafted, revised, finalized, adopted, they're not followed."
- 92 There is no payoff for all of that work. The science program is bureaucratized and more focused on its own preservation than anything else. Dongoske recently read an article by Laura Ogden about the adaptive management program in the Everglades that describes the same overall dynamic he has observed in GCDAMP. [Ogden, Laura. "The Everglades Ecosystem and the Politics of Nature." *American Anthropologist* 110, no. 1 (March 2008): 21-32.] Dongoske pauses to retrieve the Ogden article and an additional pertinent article on which he is co-author. [Dongoske, Kurt E., Loretta Jackson-Kelly and Charley Buletts. "Confluence of Values: The Role of Science and Native Americans in the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program." In Melis, et al., *Proceedings of the Colorado River Basin Science and Resource Management Symposium*, November 18-20, 2008, Scottsdale, Arizona. Flagstaff: Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, 2010, 133-139.]
- 93 (Pause while searching)

- 94 **Q:** What advice would you give your successor regarding working with GCDAMP? **A:** It takes a long time to understand the issues and get up to speed with the workings of the program.
- 95 The resource issues are very complex. It is good to have a mentor in the program to explain not just the science, but the political dynamics and relationships among individuals.
- 96 **Q:** How did you find a mentor? **A:** Dongoske and Steve Carrothers went to meetings together on behalf of the Hopi. Tribal and agency representatives, ideally, should work with their predecessors for a year before doing the job on their own.
- 97 Don't be shy. New participants have to make a commitment to the program and take risks on behalf of their organizations. This is part of the process. "You can't take it personally."

End of Interview

Paul Hirt: 00:00:01 This is Paul Hirt and Jen Sweeney of Arizona State University, uh, speaking with Kurt Dongoske in Winslow, Arizona on August 15th of 2018. Thanks for sitting with us today, Kurt. I appreciate it. Can you start by telling us your name and the positions that you've held in the Adaptive Management Program over the years and the years in which you've been involved.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:00:28 Okay. My name is Kurt Dongoske. My initial involvement with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program [GCDAMP] began in 1991 where I started work at the Hopi tribe as the tribal archaeologist. In that capacity, I was the representative for the Hopi tribe as a cooperating agency to, um, the, the group that was developing the Glen Canyon Dam EIS, environmental impact statement, of which the Adaptive Management Program became part of the final environmental impact statement and the recommendations that came out of the ROD, which then developed the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program.

Paul Hirt: 00:01:13 ROD being record of decision.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:01:15 Right. Sorry, so when I use acronyms for them, I'll try to remember not to. Um, then in '90, also represented the Hopi tribe and the transition from the cooperating agencies into the Adaptive Management Program, '96 to '97. And I was the alternate AMWG representative for the Hopi tribe and the TWG representative for the Hopi tribe, particular work group.

Paul Hirt: 00:01:46 Did you work with Lee Kuwanwisiwma at that time?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:01:48 Yes, at that time. Oh yeah. Lee Kuwanwisiwma was the individual hired me in '91 and I worked with him closely until 2003 when I left. So um, so I held those positions, in the Adaptive Management Program representing the Hopi tribe until 2003. Um, and also around 2001 or [200]2 to, I think, it was like 2002 to about 2005 I was the chair of the technical work group and then from-- I may have these dates wrong, you will need to check them. And then there was a two-year hiatus and then I was the TWG chair again for another two years, I think. So in total, I've been the TWG chair for five years. And then between when I left Hopi in 2003, I became a consultant to the Colorado River Energy Distributors Association [CREDA], cultural resource consultant that was also their alternate TWG representative from 2003 to I think it was 2007 or '08. In 2008, I then became the technical work group representative for the Pueblo of Zuni. While I was the consultant for CREDA, I also worked, was hired as a project director for Zuni Cultural

Resource Enterprise [ZCRE] and worked there doing contract archeology. Um, and then in 2008, I left ZCRE from 2006 to 2008 and worked for URS Corporation in Phoenix.

- Paul Hirt: 00:03:58 What do they do?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:04:00 URS Corporation is a, is a international engineering, environmental compliance sort of corporation.
- Paul Hirt: 00:04:12 So you do archeological clearances for them? Surveys?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:04:15 Well, they were consultants to federal agencies that need, need archeological expertise and stuff. And so I found, actually I found the work with URS nowhere near as rewarding for me personally as working with tribal people. So I went back to Zuni in 2008 and became the principal investigator and director of the Zuni Cultural Resource Enterprise at the same time became the Zuni Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. And the TWG representative for Zuni.
- Paul Hirt: 00:04:49 And you still hold that position?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:04:52 Yes. I still hold that position today. Right.
- Paul Hirt: 00:04:54 So, um, we have in consultation with Larry Stevens in particular, sort of divided up the kinds of work and efforts being done by people involved in the Adaptive Management Program into primarily scientific research or primarily policy and management or primarily social and institutional engagement. And I'm wondering, do you, where do you place your work? Is it sort of a little bit in all three or are you mainly in one of those three categories of participation?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:05:32 I think in my work, uh, covers all three in terms of science and research. I'm the one who generates the reports on Zuni monitoring of the, of the river. Taking their observations and concerns and perspectives, and putting it into a document that then is communicated to federal representatives so that they try to put it in language that they'll, they'll understand and appreciate.
- Paul Hirt: 00:06:09 That can then influence policy and management?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:06:12 Yes. And then I also, in terms of policy and management, provide review of documents generated by the center, Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center or the Bureau of Reclamation. And the other one was public education—

Paul Hirt: 00:06:32 Yes, social and institutional engagement, like for example, Mary Orton was one of our interviewees and her primary responsibility was, was to nurture the collaborative process itself to make the Adaptive Management Program, you know, work in a way that's sometimes difficult when you have so many diverse interests at a table.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:06:53 Right. And so in, in that realm, my efforts go towards raising the consciousness of the other nontribal stakeholders to, um, the perspective of Zuni, but also the responsibility, the federal government, that unique responsibility the federal government has to native people.

Paul Hirt: 00:07:16 Can you elaborate on that a little bit? That unique responsibility?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:07:21 Right. I mean, um, if you talk, well the federal government has trust responsibility to Native American tribes. And it's a long history of the interaction between tribes and the federal government. Um, ultimately, initially the federal government looked at tribes as sovereign nations that they had to negotiate with, like they negotiated with, um, European powers. And that was based on, I believe Spanish, the way the Spanish were originally dealing with the native inhabitants of North America, South America. Um, but that became cumbersome for them in terms of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. Um, so the, the relationship changed based on some of the, in the early 1800s by [US Supreme Court] Chief Justice Marshall, who his Marshall Trilogy is pretty famous, but in that identified that there was a trust relationship between the federal government and tribes. Most federal agencies interpret the trust relationship as having to deal with, um, trust assets or things that you can put a monetary evaluation on, valuation on. Whereas I believe that it goes deeper than that, it goes to preserving, um, traditional cultural identity, traditional cultural practices, and the ability of native people to relate to their cultural landscape that has been influenced by uniliter--unilateral political decisions without the, without consultation with the tribe by states and federal entities.

Paul Hirt: 00:09:22 And private developers too?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:09:24 Well, ultimately if a private developer is getting some sort of permit, license, or involvement from a federal agency, then it's the federal agency's responsibility. There's no real relationship in terms of a trust relationship between a private corporation to [inaudible] something and a tribal group. It's strictly between federal government and the tribe.

Paul Hirt: 00:09:50 So this is probably a good time to ask this question. I'm wondering if you think that, uh, tribes, um, are different than other "stakeholders" in the Adaptive Management Process. And you know, when, when choosing who's going to be represented at the table in this collaborative decision making process, we hear the term "stakeholders" and there's recreational fisheries are at the table and, uh, there's the states are at the table, and there's a sort of a series of interest groups that have stakes in the process and tribes are one of them, they've been recognized as, you know, important stakeholders. But some people argue that they're different than the other kinds of stakeholders. What's your perspective on that?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:10:42 They are. I think they are completely different from other stakeholders. Um, oftentimes they are not treated that way, but I think that the tribes have a deep time connection to the Grand Canyon and Colorado River. And it was, and before the United States government decided that they were going to make the Grand Canyon a national park, um, the tribes had free access and use of that area for the most part and that...and for Zuni, the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River, has been significant, extremely significant to their cultural identity, um, since their emergence into this world. And so it goes back to such a deep time that it's, it's, it's not calculable. Um, and so the federal government comes in and displaces and dispossesses native people of this place that's very important to them, [and] says you can't come in here anymore because we've determined that it's important. So there is a history of trauma that the tribes have experienced because of that and now they're under federal regulations and how they access and use that place. So I think that the federal government has responsibility to recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate the fact that they've done harm to these native groups by restricting them from a very important place. And that they have a trust responsibility to ensure that the tribes have access and use of that place as they should have all along, but were restricted from having. And that, um, at these meetings they also have to recognize that when the tribes come to these meetings, there is a history of trauma that is the backdrop of their interaction with the federal government and how that stakeholder table, um, just the way it operates, uh, there is a power dynamic that the tribes are very sensitive to where the federal government holds all the cards in terms of power and that oftentimes the, just the interaction at a, um, at the AMWG or the TWG table, one has to be very assertive and that oftentimes is contrary to the cultural, uh--

Paul Hirt: 00:13:26 Inclinations?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:13:27 Yeah. The way tribal people treat other people in terms of respect that you don't confront, you don't argue, you know, you don't become real aggressive and assertive. Like it's contrary to their cultural beliefs, their, their cultural norms, of how to behave like a respectful Zuni, for instance. And so oftentimes it takes someone like me who is willing to do that, is willing to push the point.

Paul Hirt: 00:14:02 So do you, um, can you talk about the ways in which you've seen the recognition of the tribal role change over time in the three decades or so that you've been involved and the way that the tribes themselves have engaged with the process? How have you seen those two things change over time, if at all?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:14:34 You know, um, at least I can only speak for me. In the beginning of the adaptive management process and the development of the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, and [inaudible] with the federal agencies. My attitude was one of cooperation...and as a tribal representative. But also trying to point out to the federal representatives, um, the concerns of either Hopi or Zuni and to keep in the forefront of their mind the fact that you're dealing with a sacred place and you're dealing with other values that may be in conflict with western science values and that we should recognize that conflict does exist and let's try to be respectful of different cultural views, um, and consider them within the framework of the science program.

Paul Hirt: 00:15:44 Do you feel you made progress in achieving that recognition?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:15:49 Only by-- only by being a, um, a real contrarian, a real curmudgeon, coming at 'em every day and confronting them. And because there was, there's really strong resistance to that. And you can, you'll hear, um, you'll hear them say the rhetoric of: "Isn't it wonderful we have five tribes at the table. See we have, we have Native American participation, this is wonderful." But yet what is the true participation? Are they real co-managers of the ecosystem? Are you really taking into consideration their traditional views about how to manage the ecosystem? No. The program privileges a western science perspective; disadvantages tribal perspectives of that same ecosystem. Doesn't consider them at the same level or in a commensurate manner. So right there, the power table has shifted. And an example is in, well in the late 1990s, um, the fish scientists saw that it looked like the humpback chub population was tanking. And they were afraid that they were going to blink out of that system.

Paul Hirt: 00:17:20 And that's an endangered species (speaking simultaneously) so they couldn't just let it happen?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:17:23 Right, it was an endangered species. In fact, it's been the endangered fish species that has been the focus of this program for thirty years. Um, so before the [US] Fish and Wildlife Service thought that the reason for the um, the reduction in population viability of the humpback chub in the Grand Canyon was because of the cold water releases from Glen Canyon Dam. That the humpback chub was more of a warm water fish and that the cold water was affecting its ability to reproduce and to survive. And also that the fluctuations of, from the releases of Glen Canyon Dam we're having an effect on it.

Paul Hirt: 00:18:14 Fluctuations in the water level.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:18:16 Yeah, from, from a hydropower generation, you know it would peak and then go down when you didn't need to generate as much electricity. Now I'm an archeologist by training and I don't, I don't like to fish, but I've learned more about fish than I've ever cared to know about fish. Um, but so in a response to what they saw, that they were afraid that the humpback chub was going to seriously decline in the Grand Canyon, they, this, I'm not sure who came up with it, but I think it was the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center decided that the culprit was competition and predation from rainbow trout because there was so many trout, and that the thing to do is to reduce the numbers of rainbow trout.

Paul Hirt: 00:19:12 And rainbow trout are not native fish to that river system?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:19:14 (Speaking simultaneously) They're not, they're not native--

Paul Hirt: 00:19:16 They were introduced for game fishing?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:19:18 Yes. They were introduced as I understand it in the early sixties after the closure of Glen Canyon Dam. But brown trout was introduced into the system back more like in the early part of the last century, 1920s, maybe even earlier.

Paul Hirt: 00:19:36 And they're a European trout? Is that right? Or just--

Kurt Dongoske: 00:19:40 Brown trout, I think it is. Um, but, but--so--

Paul Hirt: 00:19:44 And they eat humpback chub?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:19:46 They eat anything (laughter) from what I understand, I mean brown trout are very voracious.

Paul Hirt: 00:44:51 Like bullfrogs. (laughing)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:44:53 They'll eat anything. I mean, well humpback chub eat humpback chub. You know, I think that if it's small enough and it's alive and swimming in front of you, you go for it. Um, so they—when I was working at Hopi, then they came out and talked to Hopi about what they plan to do is do electrofishing. Stun the fish and when the fish come up, then they collect all the non-natives, particularly the rainbow trout, and then kill them and turn them into fish emulsion. And uh, that was offensive to Hopi. You know, it was offensive because they were going to do it at the confluence of the Little Colorado river and the Colorado River.

Paul Hirt: 00:20:36 That's a sacred site for Hopi, right?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:20:38 Well, for most of the tribes, for the Zunis it is as well. And part of it is because, well, the confluence represents a place of life, of the joining of two rivers, and there's a lot of a life, the spawning and stuff going on there. And that, as [Leigh] Kuwanwisiwma stated, it would bring an aura of death over a sacred place. And so federal agencies said, "Okay, we won't do it in front of the, the confluence, we'll do it a mile upstream or a mile downstream from the confluence." But when they actually did it, they did it right in front of the confluence. They ignored...they claimed that it was, um, a miscommunication between the federal agency and their contractor. But I doubt it. I don't believe it. Anyways, so when I was at Zuni in 2008, um, a Zuni religious leader came in and asked me, "Are they still killing fish and the Grand Canyon?"

Kurt Dongoske: 00:21:55 I said, yeah. He said, "That's not right. They should stop that." And I said, "Well, why?" And he explained to me, well he explained to me this story that when the Zunis emerged at Ribbon Falls in the Grand Canyon and began their journeys, as they, the Zuni people were crossing a river—some say it's the Colorado River, some say it's the Little Colorado River, the exact location is really not important—um, but as they were crossing, they were told to hold their children on their backs tightly as they crossed the river. As they began to cross the rivers, the children started to scratch them. And so they let the children go and the children fell into the river and turned into aquatic beings: turned into fish, turned into water snakes, turned into frogs, turned into, um, tadpoles and things like that. And so everybody was upset by that. And so the remaining people

crossed and they held tighter onto their children. And when they got to another part of the river, they heard the singing and stuff and realized that their children were now aquatic beings. And so this, I mean this is a really brief rendition of the story. But, um, that event: that all aquatic beings are Zuni children, are viewed as Zuni children, whether they're native or not native doesn't matter. And so from a Zuni perspective, you are killing these fish, you are killing Zuni children. You're killing beings that Zuni has a special relationship to. And they find that offensive because as one Zuni religious leader stated that (pause) because, um, Zuni is along Zuni River, the village of Zuni is, the Zuni River runs right through the village of Zuni and the Zuni River, uh--

Paul Hirt: 00:24:24 That's in New Mexico?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:24:25 In New Mexico. It confluences with the Little Colorado River and the Little Colorado River confluences with the Colorado River in Grand Canyon, thus creating a spiritual umbilical connection to Zuni. So every morning and every night Zunis go down to the Zuni River even though it's a dry river now because they dammed it up at Ramah, they put offerings into the riverbed and send their prayers to the Grand Canyon. And so killing fish at the confluence with the only motivation is that those fish are not wanted, is an abhorrent idea to Zuni and they and they now see the cause and effect of that, of killing those fish that people in Zuni are dying early. That there is a direct cause-effect relationship. That people in Zuni are dying of cancer and other reasons and they attribute that to during that time. They also attributed to the fact that during the time they were doing the electrofishing that Zuni policemen were, uh, were, were, they were experiencing the Zuni policeman using an increased use of Tasers on Zuni people. They saw that as a connection, a cause and effect relationship.

Paul Hirt: 00:25:55 Something's out of balance in nature and it has impacts on our culture.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:25:59 Just like the interviews I was doing the last couple of days that once you start messing with, with the balance between the material world [and the] the spiritual world, you're looking for trouble, and it's going to come. You don't know where, you don't know when, but it will show up. And so, based on that information, I started in 2008 raising the objection at TWG meetings saying, "Look the Zunis have this concern. You can't be planning more mechanical removal until you start hearing what the Zunis have to say." I was ignored, completely ignored for over a year. So what finally got their attention—the Bureau of

Reclamation and GCMRC, the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service—is that the Governor of Zuni sent a letter [to the] Bureau of Reclamation saying, “Your mechanical removal is an adverse effect to a traditional cultural property, which is the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River for Zuni. And it's caused, and you have to address the adverse effect. You have to mitigate that adverse effect, and you haven't done it and you haven't consulted.” Then all of a sudden everybody's hair was on fire.

- Paul Hirt: 00:27:22 Did it lead to change?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:27:25 It did, it did. But it took a lot of teeth gnashing and beating your head against a wall because, um, as part of this whole dialogue between Zuni and Bureau of Reclamation, and then it got to the Assistant Secretary's office, so Anne Castle came out to Zuni to talk about that to the Zuni people, the Zuni tribal council and the religious leaders. We had a tribal resolution, um, in 2010 that was geared towards the mechanical removal, it told the Bureau of Reclamation exactly what Zuni wanted because they had, we had criticized their science. Their science was circumstantial.
- Paul Hirt: 00:28:24 That rainbow and brown trout were killing too many humpback chub?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:28:29 That they were affecting the humpback chub population viability. We were saying, well how, you know, what portion of any spawning population would just normally die because they couldn't make it to reproductive age, from either disease or predation or who knows what. Tell us what those percentages are and tell us what effect the predation and competition is having on them. And they couldn't.
- Paul Hirt: 00:28:58 They didn't have enough research yet to determine that? (Talking over one another).
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:29:03 We were essentially saying, “Show us a smoking gun.”
- Paul Hirt: 00:29:05 Right.
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:29:05 And they didn't have one. And we kept hammering this at ‘em. And we kept saying, well--they, they showed this one article where they developed a model based on the stomach contents of the trout that they killed. They killed something like 20,000 trout and you know, they took the stomach contents out and analyzed them. Well, there was a very, it was less than one

percent that they could actually identify as humpback chub. The rest were, uh, assumed to be humpback chub or ones that they just, they couldn't identify. And so based on that, they made a model that said, um, what was it? That, that one humpback chub would be eaten by one rainbow trout everyday or something to that effect. I have to go back and read it. But the model was, was not a well-substantiated model, nor was it proven through, um, good ground-truthing. And so their, their, their predictions of the impact of rainbow trout on humpback chub populations I think were erroneous, a bit at best.

- Paul Hirt: 00:30:25 And that was 2010 you were saying or later?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:30:28 Yeah between you know around 2009, [20]10 because at that time they were proposing to add mechanical removal in out-year scopes of work for the center [GCMRC].
- Paul Hirt: 00:30:44 So you've, you've pointed out earlier that they originally thought the water was too cold and that was why the humpback chubs were suffering and then they decided that it was predation from rainbow and brown trout, but they didn't have great data for either of those hypotheses. What do they think it is now? And is this an example of adaptive management in practice? You'd come up with a hypothesis, you try something, you monitor, you reevaluate, you tweak, and you try again. Is that kind of what adaptive management is all about and where are we now with our understanding of why the humpback chub is not doing well?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:31:24 Well the humpback chub actually is doing well.
- Paul Hirt: 00:31:27 Yes? (Talking simultaneously) Recently?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:31:28 Right now. Yeah. And in fact, several years ago, the humpback chub populations were going up, so we're the rainbow trout populations.
- Paul Hirt: 00:31:37 (Laughs) At the same time.
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:31:38 So you, you go, well, how can that be? Right? Um, I think, is this a good example of adaptive management? I don't know. I'd have to think about that for quite a while before I really would render an opinion on that. I think initially Reclamation went for the, the trout is the culprit because it took the focus off the dam.
- Paul Hirt: 00:32:05 Right.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:32:06 Yes. So--

Paul Hirt: 00:32:07 'Cause they're in charge of the water and the spill. So if it's cold water is the problem, the Bureau of Reclamation--

Kurt Dongoske: 00:32:13 --takes the responsibility.

Paul Hirt: 00:32:13 --is responsible. OK.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:32:15 Yeah. And so, you know, it's like "wow, it's not the dam anymore; it's those pesky trout," right?

Paul Hirt: 00:32:20 Uh huh. OK.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:32:21 Um, but here's the thing too, Zuni said, Look, you didn't consult with us about building the dam. You didn't consult with us about stocking brown trout. You didn't consult with us about stocking rainbow trout. You did these three things without considering our perspective and now...because you've done that, your, um, management paradigm has changed from privileging sport fish—because they tried to kill the native fish in the system before, uh, to get rid of the humpback chub and the speckled dace and that sort of thing so they could promote sport fish--um, but your management paradigm has changed and now you favor biological diversity, particularly native biological diversity and you want to get rid of the, the non-natives. Yet the non-natives have been there for almost 100 years, so we don't view them as native, uh, as non-natives anymore. But yet your management actions are having a direct effect on us in a negative way. And, they never, the federal government didn't accept the Zuni position right away.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:33:49 They thought I was putting the Zunis up to it (laughter). I mean really, it's just like, are you kidding me?

Paul Hirt: 00:33:58 Shoot the messenger.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:33:59 Yeah, exactly. And [Frank Hamilton] Cushing documented that story I told you back in the 1880s. So it's not like something the Zuni just whipped up, um, as a way to irritate the federal government or something I just came up with. I mean, it's documented, it's been documented for a long time. Um, and so it's consistent values that Zuni's have in their relationship to that place. But it was, it was really hard to get the federal government, Bureau of Reclamation and others, to accept that. And to, um, acknowledge and treat in a respectful manner the Zuni position.

Paul Hirt: 00:34:46 So you bring up a couple of thorny issues in adaptive management. One is the difference between being listened to and being influential. And, um, you mentioned that it took a long time to get the federal agencies involved in Adaptive Management Program to respectfully listen to and accept the perspectives of the Hopi and the Zuni, for example, you work for. But then the question remains, did they change management strategies or policies as a result of finally listening to and respecting those perspectives?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:35:29 To a degree. So now they have more severe triggers, you know, before they implement mechanical removal. So, um, the humpback chub numbers really need to start declining and the rainbow trout numbers need to really start coming up before they decide to implement mechanical removal. So that's positive...

Paul Hirt: 00:35:57 Good.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:35:57 But they've also--(interrupted)

Paul Hirt: 00:35:58 Do you remember when that was that they made that change?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:36:02 I think it's, um, it began in the, um, in a non-native management plan that was developed by Reclamation back around 2011-12. But then it was implemented in the LTEMP Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan EIS. So it's part of that now.

Paul Hirt: 00:36:31 Great.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:36:32 But they've also included trout management flows, by which [inaudible] when the trout spawn, they lower the water from the dam so that they strand the eggs.

Paul Hirt: 00:36:44 Ahh, and they dry out.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:36:45 And they desiccate, right. To Zuni, you're just killing them at a different stage of life.

Paul Hirt: 00:36:52 Right.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:36:53 For, for no reason, just because you don't want them there. So they object to that too. So at meetings I said, "You know, you've heard from Zunis that mechanical removal and trout suppression flows, it's still negatively affecting Zunis." In fact, they believe Zuni lives are being taken. You still maintain those

as viable management actions that are in your toolkit to do the mechanical removal. I asked the federal government, "What's the message you're sending Zuni, that humpback chub lives are more important than Zuni lives?" And I get no answer. They don't know how to answer that. But isn't that the message they're sending them? From my perspective it is.

Paul Hirt: 00:37:50 Well, that's the second thorny issue in adaptive management and all other kinds of natural resource management decision making in complex environments with a complex social stakeholders. What do you think is the appropriate way to move forward when, for example, a traditional cultural property and what those who care about that traditional cultural property want done with it, conflicts with, for example, the Endangered Species Act. So you know, early on the federal, you know, the US Fish and Wildlife Services is required to not increase the jeopardy on any endangered species and their best available evidence, as weak as it was at the time, suggested that predation was, was a problem and so they interpreted their legal responsibility as we've got to reduce predation. When the Zuni said we don't like that particular strategy because it's harming us significantly, what would you say is the appropriate way to move forward in a situation like that?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:39:10 In terms of that I, I would (pause) I'm not convinced that there was rigorous and compelling science. And I'm not convinced that the scientists or the managers at first seriously took the Zuni values as being valid, credible and something that they wanted to deal with. I think they saw Zuni and its position as being a thorn in their side and they just wanted to be done with it and get rid of it. I mean, I've mentioned the resolution passed by the tribal council on this issue. With that resolution was appended a statement on the issue by the Zuni religious leaders and it was signed by over thirty some Zuni religious leaders. You know how unique that is from Zuni? To get something like that document?

Paul Hirt: 00:40:13 Very unusual?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:40:14 Very unusual. And the Zuni governor handed it to the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.

Paul Hirt: 00:40:24 Anne Castle at the time?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:40:26 She just took it, she handed it to the director of the Bureau of Reclamation. Didn't even look at it. I found that incredibly insulting in front of the Zunis.

Paul Hirt: 00:40:37 Later she came back and (talking simultaneously) met with them or no?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:40:40 No, I mean, well, like I said the rhetoric's there. All the right rhetoric is there in terms of talking about Zuni values and how the government's real sympathetic to it, but just that mechanical action, at least to me, signaled that she really didn't care. She really, this was really something she wasn't that concerned about and I think it was demonstrated throughout her whole tenure as the, uh, the designee.

Paul Hirt: 00:41:10 So, um, you're, you're suggesting that tribes and tribal representatives were not granted equal weight at the table and in negotiations. They weren't granted full respect as stakeholders, uh, at the beginning at least. I've heard you suggest that things changed over time, that there were some improvements. Looking at from the early 1990s to the present, do you think there has been progress made in at least granting a fuller, you know, respect and status for tribal representatives on the Adaptive Management Program teams? (long pause)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:41:58 I think that, um, well if you go to the AMWG or the TWG and they do a vote, so the tribe has the same sort of voting power as any other stakeholder. But I think if you talk about, um, the issues that are raised by the tribe in a setting like that, um, that there is more deference given to--(interrupted)

Paul Hirt: 00:42:30 Western science?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:42:31 Western science, but also the position of the [Colorado River] Basin state representatives over the tribes.

Paul Hirt: 00:42:39 So there's a kind of a hierarchy. The federal agencies are really the power center.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:42:45 Yes.

Paul Hirt: 00:42:46 The state representatives in the Colorado River Basin maybe right behind them in terms of being influential and then the rest of the stakeholders, including the tribes kind of underneath that. Is that the schema you're suggesting in terms of the power differentials?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:43:05 Yeah, that's what I was, yeah.

Paul Hirt: 00:43:06 And that's been consistent over the three decades. No significant change in, shifts in those power positions, in your mind.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:43:14 Right. I mean there has been, um, a recognition of the need to have the tribes at the table because they do fund the tribes at a base amount.

Paul Hirt: 00:43:27 Do they do that for other participants in the program--other than the federal agencies who certainly have their own funding too? (Both talking)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:43:34 Well they, they, uh, I think they, they reimburse state representatives and some other folks for their travel and expenses to go in to AMWG meetings or TWG meetings. There's a certain amount of budget, um, that Reclamation has for the other stakeholders. They actually give the tribes money annually for participation. Although that amount of money hasn't changed since it was identified in 1999. (laugh) So it hasn't fluctuated. And so they continue to ask the tribes to do more with less, much more with much less. And so the same thing with the funding Zuni monitoring in river trips. Which I'm in the process of trying to arrange one that, that money hasn't changed either, the amount for that hasn't changed either. So while it's, um, it's appreciated, at least from Zuni that this funding is there that helps to support Zuni's participation and presence in those meetings. Um, it's certainly inadequate funding to probably participate at a level that Zuni would like to participate.

Paul Hirt: 00:45:02 Well, let's shift gears just a little bit and I'd like to ask you, um, what significant changes in the program you've seen over time in the broader Adaptive Management Program itself? Um, are there any stages through which it's evolved in your mind since the 1990s?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:45:22 I think that GCMRC, that's the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center in some respects has become a monster that's out of control.

Paul Hirt: 00:45:34 In what sense?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:45:35 In developing the science and the research and monitoring programs.

Paul Hirt: 00:45:41 Do you mean that they have too much control over what gets funded for scientific study, or something else?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:45:51 Yeah, to a large extent there's that. But I think they're, um, they've become a bureaucratic, uh, Frankenstein.

Paul Hirt: 00:46:03 Can you explain what you mean by that a little bit more? I'm not sure everybody will understand that. (Speaking simultaneously)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:46:08 If you read the EIS in 1995, it said that the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center was going to essentially have a core of four or five people. One would be the Chief, then there would be a physical resource program manager, a biological resource program manager, a cultural resource program manager, and then an administrative assistant helper sort of person. And all the science and monitoring research was to be contracted out competitively. But now the USGS has created this monster with all these people in it.

Paul Hirt: 00:46:55 So the U.S. Geological Survey took over the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center a few years after it was created.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:47:01 Yeah, it was, it was, um, it was either supposed to go to, was gonna either be housed in Reclamation or in the USGS. And I can't remember who it was, was walking out the door during the Clinton administration that signed it into USGS [PH: yeah]. And at the time it seemed like a fairly good idea because people's--at least my, I can only speak for me I guess, trust in Reclamation was low that they would do the right thing. Um, and so the USGS is, and maybe it's because I deal with consultation with federal agencies so much on behalf of Zuni that they are, um, callous to criticism.

Paul Hirt 00:48:00 USGS is?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:48:02 Yes. And just...

Paul Hirt: 00:48:04 They don't like to hear it, you mean?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:48:06 They don't like to hear it, no. No, they--and they also don't think they have uh, well, there's a whole lot of things but, um, that I have against the USGS, but in terms of that, but I think that the Center itself has become arrogant, um, and has focused on things that I don't think are important to the program.

Paul Hirt: 00:48:32 Such as?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:48:35 Well since 2003, I've been arguing with the Center about the research on trying to quantify windblown sand in terms of

archaeological site preservation. I thought the hypothesis was not supportable.

- Paul Hirt: 00:48:57 What was the hypothesis?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:48:59 The hypothesis was that, um, the reason archaeological sites are eroding in the Grand Canyon is because there are no longer seasonal floods and there's no longer the sediment in the system, because it's trapped behind the dam, that would come up and deposit more sand on the archaeological sites.
- Paul Hirt: 00:49:23 And protect them from erosion...?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:49:25 Protect them from erosion. Right.
- Paul Hirt: 00:49:26 So the sand is going away and there's nothing replacing it.
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:49:29 Right. And so they, they felt that, okay, so what we can do is we do our, um, our experimental flows—the floods—that should put the sand on the beaches and then the wind comes and blows the sand onto these sites and that preserves sites. Well, you know, windblown sand, um, could leave the site. At the site the sand has been distributed to the site, could be gone by the next wind event as long as the wind's coming from different direction or the next precipitation event could wash the sand. There's nothing there to armor the sand to stay on the site. (Pause)
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:50:18 And they're just spending a lot of money doing this, trying to quantify it by using LIDAR [Light Detection and Ranging] and total station mapping and stuff like that. I said, “Well, that seems to, that seems to be a lot of money spent gazing at your navel. You're really not being effective.” I didn't believe it was. And so I continued to criticize it.
- Paul Hirt: 00:50:47 Did you have some suggestions for what you thought would be more valuable research?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:50:52 I told them, “Why don't you look at past excavations that have been done in the Grand Canyon, archaeological excavations, and look at what the stratigraphy is of archaeological sites and determine how much is caused by floods and how much is caused by wind deposit in terms of preservation?”
- Paul Hirt: 00:51:15 Have they done that research yet? (Talking over each other.)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:51:19 Well the last time we've had, we had this conversation, it was about a year ago, a little more.

Paul Hirt: 00:51:26 So you're still advocating?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:51:29 Well, I quit because it's one of these other issues that I keep pounding my head against a wall and nothing's happening. I keep, I think I'm bringing up legitimate issues regarding this. And at a recent Technical Work Group meeting, when we were voting on the next two-year budget and work plan, the majority of the TWG representatives voted to kick that out, take that, that program out and no longer do it. And then the Center (pause)--

Paul Hirt: 00:52:08 The program that USGS was, that you described that, not the program you were proposing? (Talking simultaneously)

Kurt Dongoske: 00:52:14 Right, so I was criticizing the continued aeolian monitoring, the aeolian sand monitoring, and saying, you know, I don't think it's producing the benefits that we want, or is it, it's gonna, for it to actually be validated in an archaeological site, you're going to have to, you're going to be doing this for 100, 200 years—a long time to make sure that it's a, it's a geomorphological process that's going to preserve the site. This is ridiculous. You know, all you need to do is look at it and see whether or not the site's eroding and do something about it, then to sit and try to figure out this process. I also said, "If you think putting sand on a site is going to preserve it, why don't you get shovels and wheelbarrows and just go down--"

Paul Hirt: 00:53:08 (Laughing) Instead of LIDAR?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:53:10 Yes, and put sand from the beaches in it and go up and dump 'em on the sites.

Paul Hirt: 00:53:16 And then watch what happens.

Kurt Dongoske: 00:53:18 And then watch what happens. Yeah.

Paul Hirt: 00:53:20 So, and they defunded that, recently defended that?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:53:23 No, no they actually, when the Technical Work Group voted on whether or not to keep that in, the majority wanted to take it out. But then the Center made a unilateral decision, said "Thanks for the input, but we're not going to do that because we think we know better than you." Essentially what Chief of the Center said. So, so much for democracy.

Paul Hirt: 00:53:50 So you'd like to, one of the changes that you've seen in the program over time is an increasing, uh, degree of, of power and insularity on the part of USGS in determining what gets funded and what doesn't. [KD: That's right.] And you'd like to see more of the funding decisions controlled by the stakeholder groups, by AMWG and TWG?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:54:13 Yeah. Well ultimately the stakeholder groups are just making recommendations. [PH: Right.] So the actual decisions for funding in theory comes from the Secretary of the Interior.

Paul Hirt: 00:54:27 So it's all centralized decision making anyway, with consultation?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:54:31 Right. Well and, um, who has more avenues to the Secretary of the Interior? Federal agencies [PH: Right.], not the stakeholders.

Paul Hirt: 00:54:42 How would you change that if you could?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:54:47 Well, I mean, I think what I've seen over time is that the Center, um, uses a tautological rhetorical argument about science and its authority. So it says, "The program values science in making management decisions. We're the science provi--so we are the science providers so we'll tell you about the science because the science is considered important by the program and so we are the authority. You're not. So we know better and you're not." And I, and I think that from what I see is that it's not just science, it's competition for a limited amount of money. [PH: uh-huh.] So, and in the years from '99 or '97 to today, the Center, has for the most part slammed the door on tribes.

Paul Hirt: 00:56:01 From 1997 to the present?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:56:05 Yeah, there was...

Paul Hirt: 00:56:06 Was the door open prior to 1997?

Kurt Dongoske: 00:56:09 We thought it might've been, but with each consecutive chief of the center, that door has been shut and locked. And I think it's because the Center views tribes as a source of competition for a finite pot of money in terms of doing research and monitoring. At one, at one point in 2001, 2002, the Center, um, in terms of riparian ecosystem monitoring invited the tribes to participate with them. But the whole design of the monitoring was done by the Center and the place that was selected was done by the Center. The tribes were just to come along. [PH: Uh-huh.] So again, there's this power dynamic where the tribe doesn't have

a say. The Center is controlling the design of the science stuff. And so how can you adequately integrate tribal values or concerns or perspectives when it's completely structured in a western science perspective. It's not gonna happen. And that effort didn't pan out very well. In fact, it didn't work at all. In fact, most of the tribes, I think, felt disenfranchised from the process. Um, there's something I was going to say and it slipped my mind now. Um (long pause). We'll come back.

- Paul Hirt: 00:57:56 Our interview with Kerry Christensen, who works with the Hualapai tribe, uh, he mentioned that, um, they got elders of the tribe down all along the river to sites that they were familiar with and interested in and they helped to select which sites would be monitored and for what reasons. And he was talking about trying to, hoping that there could be greater involvement of tribal members both in the design of the science but also in what's often called citizen science. [KD: Right.] Non-trained professionals doing observations and he thought that it would be nice if there was a lot more of that. It sounds like you would agree that there's a role for tribal members to play in collecting data, in influencing research design and participating, you know, start to finish in the scientific studies. Yes or no?
- Kurt Dongoske: 00:58:57 Yes, I do. I think there could be. Uh, I think it is something that we've tried to advocate for. However, it's in my experience that mostly the Center is interested in training Native people to be western scientists rather than being open to a collaborative co-management or co-research initiative that takes western science perspectives and values indigenous perspectives and integrates them together to create a more holistic, if you will, approach to research and monitoring. That's not happening. There's still, they're still way apart.
- Paul Hirt: 00:59:49 And you're saying the reason that's not happening yet is the oversized influence of the director of GCMRC in determining how studies are designed and what gets funded.
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:00:01 I don't think it's just the director, the Chief of the Center. I think it's the attitude of scientists.
- Paul Hirt: 01:00:06 Uh-huh. [Those] who work there?
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:00:09 Yeah, I think it's, I think it's the attitude that, um, there is only one way to understand that ecosystem and that is western science, because western science equals truth. And that infuriates me to no end because there are multiple ways of relating to the world, there are multiple ways of knowing the world. Science is just one way of trying to understand cause and

effect. The Zunis have a, uh, their own perspective of the ecosystem and identifying cause and effect, which we talked about a little bit earlier. Just because this society privileges western science doesn't mean it has a unique monopoly on understanding reality.

- Kurt Dongoske: 01:01:06 Much of what western science has done, especially when you're talking about ecosystem science, you can't tell me about fish populations when what you're doing is sampling fish from being caught in weirs or electrofishing and you're only grabbing a few and then trying to extrapolate what the entire population's doing underwater that you can't see. I find that to be really kinda squishy science. But the thing is, is that what I'm getting at is that, um, I think you need to assist the program to be very effective and democratic, if you will, needs to treat Native perceptions of the ecosystem on an equal basis. It doesn't. I don't advocate that it's a, it's a better way of knowing the ecosystem, but it needs to be treated as equally with western science. That's not happening. I think much of the scientists in GCMRC are arrogant and are of that mindset that we are after truth. And I think it's encouraged, it's encouraged in university settings where they, where they teach people to be scientists and then when they get into work it's reinforced. As we talked earlier too, there's something, I think there's a lot of, a lot of benefit that western science could take from the Zuni perspective of this sense of stewardship in the sense that the environment that you're dealing with is composed of multiple sentient beings and that your actions on that environment have consequences, long-term consequences. I think it would make scientists much more respectful of the animals they handle, how they treat them, how they deal with them, what sorts of projects they want to design.
- Paul Hirt: 01:03:29 Um, let's, uh, let's step back, bigger picture and ask, I'd like to ask you to reflect on whether you think the program has been overall a beneficial effort, a good use of time, expertise, and funding over the years?
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:03:57 Yes. It has been.
- Paul Hirt: 01:04:01 Because?
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:04:03 Because at least it,
- Paul Hirt: 01:04:04 Despite its flaws—

Kurt Dongoske 01:04:05 Despite its flaws. But yes, it has, I think it has overall been a positive program, positive effect, because it has various stakeholders, a wide range of stakeholders coming to a common table and discussing the issues in spite of the, the problems at that table. I think it's better, it's always positive when people are together and talking about it.

Paul Hirt: 01:04:31 And the alternative to this that you think would not be as beneficial is what you were criticizing earlier: too few people making too insular decisions is that...

Kurt Dongoske: 01:04:48 Or the, or the, the, uh, alternative to the Adaptive Management Program would be lawsuits. [PH: Ahhh.] Most of the time you cannot get a federal agency's attention unless they're in court. And I believe from over twenty-five years of working in consultation with federal agencies on behalf of tribes that, um, if they don't think the tribe has the wherewithal or the potential to sue them, they ignore them.

Paul Hirt: 01:05:30 So this Adaptive Management Program is valuable as an example of collaborative democratic decision making. Uh, even though you see lots of ways that it could be improved, it should be, you think it should be sustained. Uh, primarily for that reason that it's, it brings people of diverse perspectives to the table, forces them to listen to each other, attempts to get to a resource, set of resource management decisions that are based on a broader set of values.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:06:05 Right. Overall. I might, if I were king for a day, redesign the Science Center [GCMRC].

Paul Hirt: 01:06:18 Draw that up if you can, what would that look like?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:06:22 Well, uh, years, well I might put it under Reclamation directly or under the National Park Service.

Paul Hirt: 01:06:30 Because?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:06:33 Because I think that those agencies would be more responsive and accountable if you will.

Paul Hirt: 01:06:43 To the stakeholders?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:06:45 To the stakeholders, but to the tribes, than USGS is.

Paul Hirt: 01:06:51 Can you suggest why BOR [Bureau of Reclamation] or Park Service would be more responsive to tribes than USGS?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:07:00 Because they have a history of consultation with tribes and working with tribes. USGS, I don't see that it does. In fact, the USGS sees themselves as not a land manager, not an action agency, but a science provider.

Paul Hirt: 01:07:16 They don't have their own land base that they're responsible for managing, they're just a science providing agency.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:07:20 (Talking simultaneously) Right. Yeah.

Paul Hirt: 01:07:22 OK. That makes sense.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:07:23 And that and that, I think that makes them callous to understanding tribal consultation and tribal values.

Paul Hirt: 01:07:33 Interesting.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:07:34 Um, I know they have tribal programs, but again, that is to turn tribal members into western scientists. It's not to--it's another form, right? It's another subtle form of assimilation.

Paul Hirt: 01:07:53 Yeah. Um, there's a lot of people that, um, don't think the western scientific perspective is part of a culture. They think it's separate and independent from culture. And it's--

Kurt Dongoske: 01:08:07 That's ridiculous.

Paul Hirt: 01:08:07 Yeah, and it's hard to change their mind.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:08:10 Well, I know, when they say, "Well I'm objective." No, you're not. All the data you look at, you're looking at through your own cultural lens. You can't do anything but that. And so, I mean, you need to be more reflexive on how you do that. You have to take into account that you have bias and how is the bias that you have affecting your conclusions, your end result? It needs to be sort of like a feedback loop.

Paul Hirt: 01:08:48 Yeah, there's a, there's a couple decade-long tradition of scholarship in the history of science and technology that examines the ways in which science and technology are cultural constructions. And it took a long time for those scholars like Sheila Jasanoff at Harvard, took a long time for those scholars to make inroads in the scientific community itself, to help them understand the ways in which they do their work and see the world are not, you know, objective, unfiltered truth, but are, you know, a, a sort of a construction of a particular culture and time and place.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:09:39 Right. And I've become very sensitive to that in terms of archaeology. Most archaeologists are white and they approach it from a western science perspective. And so they're looking and interpreting the artifacts, the features, um, from their cultural bias. So when you take Zunis out to sites that have been excavated and archaeologists pick up the, the most common artifacts, right? Ceramics, ground stone and lithics or flaked stone. And the Zunis looked through the back dirt piles and find mineral concretions and stuff, "Why did they throw these out? These are important." And so there's a—and then we interpret the archaeological record. We write narratives about prehistory that's completely divorced from the descendants, it's their heritage, but we don't talk about them.

Paul Hirt: 01:10:43 You're talking about western archaeologists do that.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:10:45 Yeah, yeah. Right.

Paul Hirt: 01:10:48 So, um, narrowing down again to something more specific. Can you just give us the names of some of the more important documents that have been produced that you think should be highlighted in an administrative history and some of the more important people who have been involved in your opinion that have shaped the program in significant ways. Make sure that they get highlighted in the administrative history. (Long pause)

Kurt Dongoske: 01:11:29 I'm not sure who I would--documents. I mean there's been a lot of documents that are produced by the Center or produced by the TWG or the AMWG or a combination of the TWG and AMWG with the Center and stuff. And they're supposed to be documents that guide the program, but they're then ignored and they don't. Um, Desired Future Conditions is one that have been--

Paul Hirt: 01:12:04 You're the second person to mention--

Kurt Dongoske: 01:12:05 --ignored. And it's now, it's just sort of...There was sort of like developing this plan. Now I'm not sure what's happened to that. This might be a little bit off track, but I want to bring it in, is that in 1999, the GCMRC contracted for a peer evaluation panel to do the cultural resource program of the Center and also the compliance program under the programmatic agreement of Reclamation.

Paul Hirt: 01:12:50 So an external peer review panel.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:12:52 External peer review panel, yeah. And the peer review panel made recommendations. One of the recommendations the peer review panel made was that the program needs a Native American consultation plan, right? So that was 2000--

Paul Hirt: 01:13:11 Like a strategic plan for how to consult with tribes?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:13:14 (Talking simultaneously) How and when and how that would work out. Because they felt that the engagement to the tribes was not very effective and the consultation was not, um, mapped out, if you will, for the entire program because you had Reclamation doing consultation, you had Park Service doing consultation, you had GCMRC doing consultation, or not! Um, and so they asked for that. The Reclamation contracted the drafting of a consultation plan to the Hualapai Tribe. And the Hualapai Tribe contracted Dean Suagee back east who's, uh--

Paul Hirt: 01:13:56 How do you spell his last name?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:13:59 S-U-A-G-E-E I think. And he's a lawyer who has dealt with the Hualapai but dealt with tribal issues for years and years. Highly respected lawyer in terms of tribal issues. The Hualapai has drafted a forty-four page document that outlined it and--

Paul Hirt: 01:14:24 Submitted it?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:14:25 It was a real comprehensive. Yeah, to the other tribes and to the other federal agencies for comment. So that was (pause) that, let's say that was in 2002, 2003.

Paul Hirt: 01:14:42 Quite a while ago.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:14:44 Fourteen iterations later and same amount of years, um, when the document got to the federal government to federal agencies, the federal agencies had a problem. They weren't willing to commit to anything. Right. So it went back and forth, back and forth, and what was actually finalized as the consultation document back in 2016, I believe, was less than six pages. It was essentially a policy statement because the federal government didn't want to commit itself to anything to the tribes. And I remember at one meeting, um, the solicitor said, "Well, we also want to put in this consultation thing that nothing in this consultation plan, um, hereby gives the rights to the, gives the tribes the right to sue the federal government." I said, "Wait a minute, the federal government, the entity that caused genocide, displacement, forced assimilation, structured racism, doesn't trust the tribes?" (Laughs) Are you kidding me?

(Laughs). And, um, I was appalled that the federal government wanted that in there.

Paul Hirt: 01:16:24 Let me ask for clarification. Did they, did this document want to be insulated from lawsuits over the consultation itself or was it much more broader insulation that was written into that?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:16:39 It was a very general statement. So it wasn't sure what it was focused on--

Paul Hirt: 01:16:44 Oh, OK.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:16:44 just that it--

Paul Hirt: 01:16:45 So it was unclear what kind of litigation they'd be insulated from.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:16:46 Right. It hadn't actually been put in the document. Those solicitors were asking to do that.

Paul Hirt: 01:16:53 Oh, OK.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:16:55 But, but the document then became, um, just sort of like, um, uh, it's more of a philosophy on consultation rather than an actual consultation plan.

Paul Hirt: 01:17:09 Was it ever formally adopted?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:17:11 Yeah--

Paul Hirt: 01:17:11 Or was it just in draft form?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:17:13 No, I think it was formally adopted.

Paul Hirt: 01:17:16 Well that, uh, it would be interesting to go back and, uh, ask questions of the different federal agencies that looked at and commented on that draft plan to see how it evolved over time. That would be an interesting story, I'm sure.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:17:31 It would. And that information was not shared with the tribes. What the internal dialogue was among the five Interior agencies.

Paul Hirt: 01:17:41 So your, your judgment is this 2016 consultation plan that was eventually adopted, doesn't have any teeth in it. It was a worthy effort, uh, started out better than it ended up. And you still think, like what could be improved in the consultation plan?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:18:01 Well, so what, so what that [inaudible] tells me is that the federal government is interested in having tribes at the table, but only for so far. They're only willing to, to listen to tribes in terms of co-management, co-decision making only to a point. They're not willing to commit themselves to anything to the tribes. That's what it tells me. It tells me that they're still intending on keeping the tribes to some level disenfranchised from the process. That's what I read.

Paul Hirt: 01:18:39 So there's a direction for improvement in the program in the coming years. Less of that hierarchical power differential that you were talking about earlier and more shared authority and shared decision making at an equal level.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:19:00 That's what I'd like to see, or at least I'd like, I mean knowing full well that the way it's structured, the final decision making is done by the Secretary of Interior or Reclamation at some point. Um, so that, because it's a legal decision and ultimately you can't sue the entire Adaptive Management Program, you sue an agency that, that final authority rests with the, with an individual agency, um, or an individual. But I think it would be helpful if the decision-making process up towards the top was more transparent on how tribal concerns were considered and put into the equation. Most of the time in dealing with federal agencies and even with this program, the tribal concerns go into a black box. What comes out of that black box sometimes doesn't even look like anything the tribe asked for or their concerns were expressed. It doesn't look like anything that you've even looked at.

Paul Hirt: 01:20:14 So, um, who, who would you say have been some of the most important participants in the program in your time and who do you think we should be sure to interview, if they're not already on our interview list?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:20:30 I think Larry Stevens. It sounds like you already talked to him.

Paul Hirt: 01:20:32 Yeah, he was our first interview.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:20:35 Yeah, yeah. He's a wealth of information.

Paul Hirt: 01:20:39 And he's largely responsible for this administrative history being done. He pushed for it for eight years.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:20:46 Right. Um (pause), Dennis Kubly.

Paul Hirt; 01:20:55 Yes, he is on the list, but uh, we have not interviewed him yet. And if he, uh, tell us a little bit about who he is and why you think he's been an important player.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:21:09 Dennis first started out with Arizona Game and Fish Department and did some research, I think, on fish in the Grand Canyon. Um, and then, and he, I think he may have been a technical representative, the Arizona Game and Fish representative to the Technical Work Group, but I'm not, I don't quite remember. But then he was hired by Reclamation.

Paul Hirt: 01:21:43 To do research along the river?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:21:45 No, to actually, I think he became the, for a while the Chief of the Adaptive Management Program. So, um, he was uh, representing Reclamation, when I was TWG chair. The thing I like about Dennis is that he is very knowledgeable and very patient in taking time to explain things to the stakeholders.

Paul Hirt: 01:22:21 Those are good qualities for an adaptive collaborative process.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:22:24 Yeah, and um (pause).

Paul Hirt: 01:22:27 Alright. Anybody else that you think was, had a particular valuable impact on the program? (Long pause)

Kurt Dongoske: 01:22:41 Um--

Paul Hirt: 01:22:42 Or is particularly knowledgeable about something?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:22:47 You have Mike Berry? Michael Berry? He was the regional archaeologist.

Paul Hirt: 01:22:55 B-E-R-R-Y? Or B-A-R-R-Y?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:22:58 B-E-R-R-Y. Michael Berry. Yeah, he's in Durango. I think he's retired now. He is a very smart archaeologist. I think he was there-- (talking simultaneously).

Paul Hirt: 01:23:14 When was he involved?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:23:15 From I'm guessing 2003 until about maybe 2010.

Paul Hirt: 01:23:27 That's probably why he isn't yet on our list because we're trying to get the people who have been involved from the beginning while they still have good memories of (laughs) of the program and sort of, you know, record and preserve those memories and

then move forward in time. Michael Berry, archaeologist, Durango.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:23:48 So, um, Rick Gold. He was the Regional Director for Reclamation during the, the EIS and then the first part of the, I think he was still there during the first part of the adaptive management. Steve Carothers?

Paul Hirt: 01:24:12 Yeah, Steve has been mentioned by a number of people and is (talking simultaneously) on our radar.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:24:15 Steve Carothers was more or less my mentor in this program because Steve Carothers was hired by the Hopi Tribe [PH: Ahhh] when the Hopi tribe became a cooperating agency. And so, Steve and I used to go together to cooperating agency meetings and he was able, he was, because I was completely a neophyte to this whole, to the Grand Canyon and everything like that, and the whole ecosystem management. And so he helped me understand the positions of the federal agencies and what a lot of the biological issues were and stuff.

Paul Hirt: 01:24:59 He had a lot of research contracts in the early years, I suppose before GCMRC took over [KD: Yeah, yeah.] more of the scientific research.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:25:11 Before GCMRC, there was GCES, right? [PH: Right.] Glen Canyon Environmental Studies, and that was Dave Wegner--

Paul Hirt: 01:25:19 We interviewed him in Tucson. That was a great interview (speaking simultaneously).

Kurt Dongoske: 01:25:21 Yeah, who came to Hopi to get Hopi as a cooperating agency. And so he's, Dave Wegner is also one that was very influential and instrumental in my understanding of the program.

Paul Hirt: 01:25:35 Uh-huh. Yeah, he had a lot of experience at the federal level with agencies and he, yeah, he was a very interesting interview. Okay. Yeah, these are good names. Who else?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:25:50 Um, what's his name? Um, now I can't think of his name...the guy who worked for Arizona Game and Fish as well and moved to GCMRC. He was I think the second TWG chair. I can't think of his name off hand.

Paul Hirt: 01:26:16 Let's pause for a second.

[Recording paused]

Jen Sweeney: 01:26:22 Resuming recording.

Paul Hirt: 01:26:26 So Kurt, are you hopeful about the program's future and do you think it should be continued because it is quite an investment of time and money for the federal government?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:26:38 Well, I mean it's, it's paid by a power revenues and so the federal government's not really putting any, that much money into it, directly. It's paid by rate payers.

Paul Hirt: 01:26:53 Yeah ultimately. Of course, all the federal government money is paid by taxpayers (laughs). [KD: True.] It all comes from us, doesn't it?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:27:00 Yes. Um, the only really appropriated money is the money that is provided by the Department of the Interior to help support tribal participation. [PH: Uh-huh.] And that's I think begrudgingly given by each of the five Interior agencies that are part of the program.

Paul Hirt: 01:27:23 Uh-huh. Out of their regular budget?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:27:25 I would, I think, so. I don't know how that, it took many, many years to get that going. I guess to answer your question, it depends on which day you ask me, whether I've just been to a frustrating TWG meeting or not. The answer I give you today may be different from an answer I give you next Friday after I come away from the AMWG meetings or even on Wednesday morning after I had been to the pre-AMWG-tribe-DOI agency meetings. [PH: Uh-huh, yeah.] Um, but I think I'm a hopelessly optimistic about things. In spite of my cynicism, um, I do think that when people are talking across the table to each other, that that is beneficial. So we stop talking, then you start to get into trouble.

Paul Hirt: 01:28:36 Yeah, in a sense, this is a sociopolitical experiment, this Adaptive Management Program. It's an attempt to do natural resource decision making differently than we were doing in decades prior. And just like a scientific study, if it's not producing results, you can have that conversation about whether the money ought to be spent, money and time ought to be spent more wisely somewhere else. So that's why I always ask this question of people who have been involved. You know, it is a struggle. There are disappointments and frustrations. It does cost money. And uh, so I always want to know from people, do you feel that it should be continued? Is it worth the investment?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:29:19 I do. Um, but I also think that the program needs to be more reflexive. It needs to be, it needs to spend time analyzing how it operates, analyzing how it gets to decisions. It needs to take a look at what the power structure is within there and how that power structure works to disenfranchise and silence voices.

Paul Hirt: 01:29:46 You know, a long time ago, Mary Orton, in her interview with us, she told us about a very important river trip that members of the program took together to try to get over a hump in which there was a time in which relations were strained. There were some strong personalities, there was a lot of conflict and they needed to resolve those things and move forward and it took a river trip with everybody together outside of their daily lives and talking through things and apparently everybody who was on that trip thought that it was a really remarkable experience. Were you, by any chance on that trip?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:30:28 No. I wasn't on that trip.

Paul Hirt: 01:30:30 Do you think we need another one of these sort of a long-term soul searching, reflexive look at ourselves and reimagine ourselves kind of experience? Would that be worthwhile?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:30:43 It could. It depends on how long lasting that effect is because I think that while you may be emotionally influenced at that time, once you get back to the hard reality of your office and dealing with decision making in that level where there's politics going on, that sort of kumbaya feeling kinda precipitate, or, goes away. So--

Paul Hirt: 01:31:15 Yeah. Well that, that river trip resulted in a document that set the path for the program's evolving future. I can't remember exactly the name of it, I have to go back and look it up.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:31:31 No, I know, I know what you're talking about and it came up with this sort of preamble.

Paul Hirt: 01:31:39 Yes--

Kurt Dongoske: 01:31:40 For that document. But like all documents with this program, even though they are, are drafted, revised, finalized, and adopted, they're not followed.

Paul Hirt: 01:31:55 Yup. They go on a shelf.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:31:58 They go on a shelf, they're not followed. And so all that work doesn't seem to pay off, especially when you, when you get a

science program that becomes bureaucratized and that's more interested in self-preservation than it is in anything else. And that's what I see has happened. And I didn't-- I read an article in *American Anthropologist* by a woman named Laura Ogden who did an anthropological study of the Adaptive Management program of the Everglades, and she saw the same thing happening. I mean, that's where I went. [PH: Wow.] Yeah. That's what's happening here.

- Paul Hirt: 01:32:44 Can you send me a link to that article or at least the author and title after, after the interview?
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:32:49 Yeah. Um, um, a second (pause). I think I can find it right here. (searching).
- Paul Hirt: 01:33:07 Now that's the value of a personal library (laughing). Mention something and then pull it off the shelf.
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:33:13 Well, this, this is not that, um, let me look it up. This is something (shifting through pages). So this is something that I co-authored, but, um--
- Paul Hirt: 01:33:42 "Confluence of Values: the Role of Science and Native Americans in the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program." Great.
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:33:50 And so this is, actually, describes exactly a lot of what I was talking about. Then there's (long pause—talking softly to himself as he searches publications).
- Paul Hirt: 01:34:12 There's the Ogden article you mentioned right there. OK. Um, I'll, we'll make a copy of this, or-- (talking over each other)
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:34:20 I can send you a PDF of that article.
- Paul Hirt: 01:34:22 That would be perfect. Really appreciate it.
- Kurt Dongoske: 01:34:26 I got your email address, I'll get it to you. (Talking simultaneously)
- Paul Hirt: 01:34:27 Yeah, alright. Great. Last question. Let's say you decide to retire in the coming years and somebody else is going to take over as a representative of either the Hopi or the Zuni Tribe, you've worked for both. What advice would you give the next person coming in to do the kind of job that you're doing now? What advice would you give them?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:34:51 Takes a long time to understand the issues. And I've been doing this now for over twenty years. And it took a long time to try to understand and follow the issues and uh, so it takes a lot of, a lot of work to get up to the right speed to just even participate in the program because there's been so much that has gone on. And the resource issues are very complex.

Paul Hirt: 01:35:23 So read up a lot, be patient, become knowledgeable (talking simultaneously).

Kurt Dongoske: 01:35:28 It's good to have someone who can act as your mentor to help explain things. Not just the science, what's going on there, but to also explain the political dynamics that are going on with individuals because more than agencies, it's the individual that represents the agency that you're dealing with that is really influential. Whether they're open to other opinions, whether they're open to considering different views and different aspects, whether they're really entrenched in for their agency and aren't willing to waver either way.

Paul Hirt: 01:36:12 How did you find a mentor?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:36:14 Well, right, Steve Carothers was hired by Hopi.

Paul Hirt: 01:36:19 So, and you were working for Hopi at the time?

Kurt Dongoske: 01:36:21 Right. So Steve and I went to meetings together.

Paul Hirt: 01:36:26 So find somebody who has similar interests, who has more experience, who you can--

Kurt Dongoske: 01:36:33 Well, if you are taking over for someone who's representing a tribe or an organization in the Adaptive Management Program, then your agency or organization needs to put you with that person for at least a good year to attend these meetings and stuff so that they can explain to you what's going on. You can start to see the situation and hear it and listen to it and start to feel comfortable with it. If you just get thrown in it, you're going to be lost and it's going to be real intimidating. And the other thing is don't be shy. Because, you know, you have to be willing to, to, um, put some skin in the game and be willing to, um, put your neck out, it's going to get chopped and you're going to take some bruises, but it's all part of it. You can't take it personally.

Paul Hirt: 01:37:37 Good advice. Anything else you'd like to add or any closing thoughts? (Pause)

Kurt Dongoske: 01:37:45 No, you'll be gone and I'll think of all sorts of things (laughs).

Paul Hirt: 01:37:48 Sure. Yeah. Send them via email. (Laughter) Yeah, Jen and I are going to work on an administrative, writing an administrative history over the next six months or so and uh, we're happy to have any additional ideas or advice as they come to you.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:38:05 Right. I hope this has been beneficial for you.

Paul Hirt: 01:38:08 Yes. Yeah. I really appreciate you giving us your time today, Kurt.

Kurt Dongoske: 01:38:12 Oh, my pleasure.

Paul Hirt: 01:38:13 Thanks.

Jen Sweeney: 01:38:13 Thank you.

[End of Recording]