

[Pikes Peak River Runners](#)

**Desolation/Gray Canyons: Magical Face Peel, Cribbage & Tunes
April/May 2025**



By Christina King

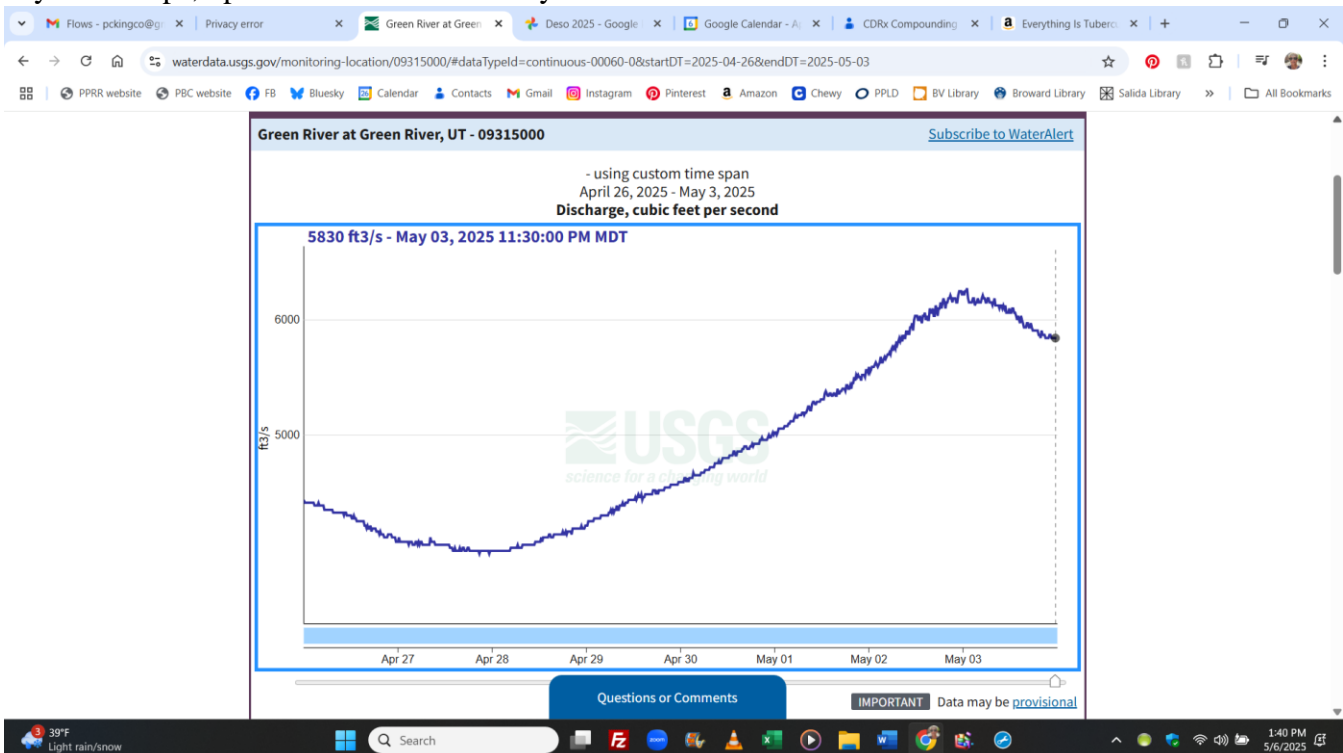
*Photo credits: Christina King, Brian Holling, Debbie/Russ Long, John Grant
Green River (Desolation & Gray Canyons) in Utah, April 26-May 3, 2025
6 Days, 2 layovers, 84 miles, Sand Wash to Swasey's*

[Youtube video of our trip](#)

Participants: 21

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Melissa Broch (permit holder & supreme organizer)2. Leo Gallagher (trip leader & people wrangler)3. Christina King4. Jim Smith5. Eric Gilbertson6. Don Judge7. Pat Wise8. Seth Hemingway9. Brian Holling10. Bruce Baumgart11. Andy Onuscho	<ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Linnea Onushco13. Maya Feters14. Bruce Haroldson15. Scott Anderson16. Mike Sims17. Tom Reilly18. Burt Ward19. John Grant20. Russ Long21. Debbie Long <p>14 rafts/cats, one ducky, 2 motors & plenty of firewood we did not finish burning!</p>
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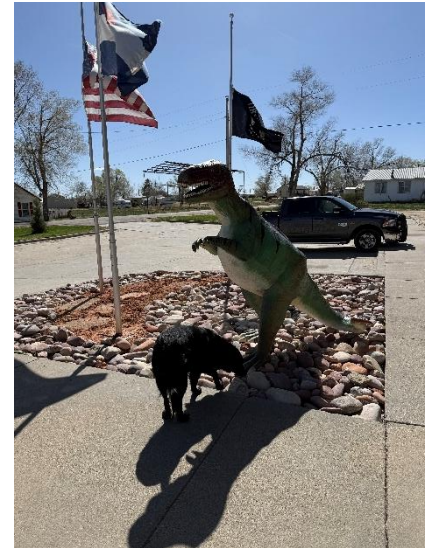
Flows: Flows ranged from 4,500 to 6,300 cfs, see graph below. Quite low, half the flow volume compared to our 2024 Deso trip. Our trip temperatures were quite cold in the evenings/early mornings but relatively warm daytime temps, up to ~91°F on our last day.



April 26/27, 2025 (Pre-trip & Arrive at Sand Wash put-in, River Mile 95.8):

Departed from our various western home states (Montana, Utah, Colorado & Massachusetts) with wet roads in Colorado. Sand Wash road was in good shape. We had one vehicle mishap on the way to Utah, one of our group vehicles had a heater core antifreeze leak. Russ and Deb kept topping it off and it made it on the shuttle to be fixed after the river trip back in Colorado. Noticeably poor snowpack on our way through Colorado. The towns of Rifle and Rangely Colorado are definitely in a bust oil/gas cycle and looked quite deserted. The town of Roosevelt was our last chance for ice/groceries at Davis

grocery store and in addition to topping off our gas tanks. After a dusty ride into Sand Wash we got down to the business of rigging our 14 boats. It was windy which kicked up the sand in the area. We enjoyed the ramp to ourselves and volunteer ranger, Rachel efficiently checked out our permit requirements and we treated her to dinner with us that night. I went to bed just at dark and decided to use a package of “makeup wipes” to clean the sand and grit off my face. Ouch it burned. At first I thought I had gotten too much sun on my face despite slathering on the sunscreen. I turned on my flashlight and realized I had used Chlorox bleach disinfectant cleaning wipes by accident. The package looked the same as Neutrogena moisturizing wipes. My face promptly turned tomato red and burned. I quickly rinsed with drinking water but it was too late. My face began the start of an unintentional magical chemical burn and peeled for the next 10 days. Don't try this at home!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Fortunately, no lasting damage.



Jim's Hopi Hilton is back in action. I nickname it "Deer Playing Flute".

April 28-29, 2025 (Launch Day 1-2) Camp Jack Creek #1- first layover day:

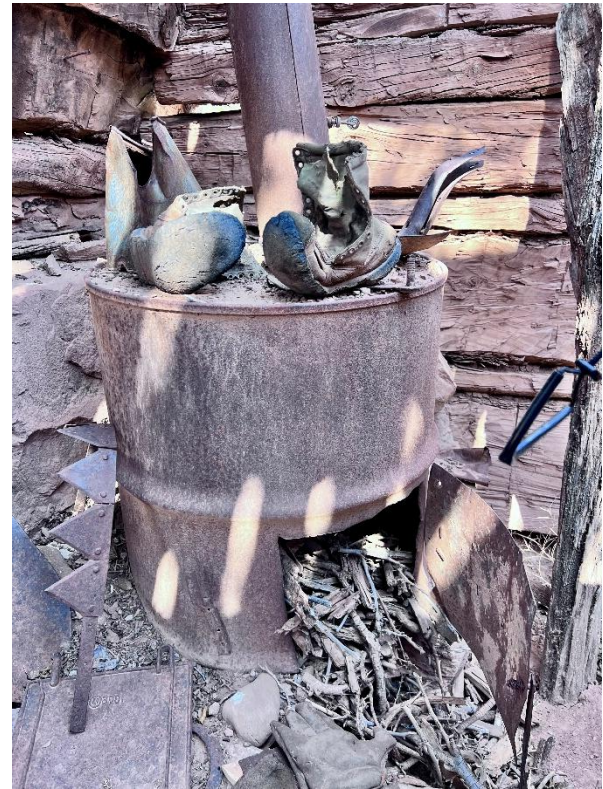
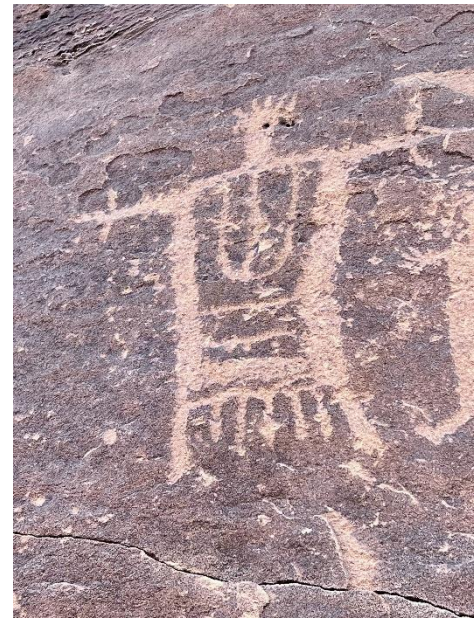
(Mile 95.8 to 69.7) 26 mile motor day. Don and Mike powered up our motors and our long cool day began. It took us 7 ½ hours of motoring to get 26 miles at these low flows (~3 mph avg). Additionally, we had issues with the gas motor flooding at times. Still faster than rowing in the pondlike water (zero rapids) but a lot slower than last year at higher flows. Jack Creek is a great camp and we are pleased to layover here a day and relax. Some hikers went up to an overlook and came back with bloodied shins and arms from their rock scramble. We saw wild mustangs, one elk, many bighorn sheep, Blue Herons, 1 bull, 1 cow and lots of stars at night. Our musicians treated us to music on our

second day in camp. Many cribbage card games & Hungarian horseshoes played.



April 30, 2025 (Day 3) Camp Steer Ridge: (Mile 69.7 to 56.5) 13 mile day. First stop at Flat Canyon petroglyphs. Memorable rapid; Fretwater Falls. Steer Ridge camp is a great camp, deserving of a layover if we had budgeted for this in our trip planning. More wild mustangs today. Water is super cold.

May 1-2, 2025 (Day 4-5) Camp Joe Hutch Canyon, second layover: (Mile 56.5 to 40.5) 16 mile day. Stopped at my favorite- historic Rock Creek Ranch. Memorable rapids: Surprise, Snap Canyon, Belknap Falls & Joe Hutch Creek.



May 3, 2025 (Day 6) Takeout at Swasey's: (Mile 40.5 to 11.9) 28 mile day. Despite getting up early and striking out for our big mileage day, we still took out at Swasey's late in the day. We experienced significant motor problems again with gas engine. Had to row last bit out. Might consider trying to break up this long day into half the miles and add a day to the trip in the future. Many "minor" fun rapids today but it was one LONG hot Day! 91°F at the takeout with one boat almost floating past the takeout when unattended during the massive derigging efforts. Linnea dove after it and with help they were able to drag it back up to the takeout. Pete and I were able to scuttle home in the dark dodging deer and elk and get home before another winter storm. I do not envy the Montana folk their long drive home.



Camps Notes: All camps river right unless noted otherwise, updated from 2024 trip

- Mile 87.8: Small hard to pull out
- Mile 82.1: ok but small, landing cliff disappears at higher water
- Mile 80.1 (Rock House): ok good camp
- Mile 78.1 (Opposite Stampede Flat camp): small
- Mile 76.7: ok
- Mile 76.4: hard to see, small?
- **Mile 69.7 (Jack Creek #1): First great camp, #1 is best but #2 is almost as good. Great for a layover, hike up creek but "trail" hike to Mushroom Rock petroglyphs a short way downriver is a tamarisk/shrub choked mess. Save the petroglyphs for the next day and float down. Quick hike and much easier on your skin.**
- Mile 68.8 (Mushroom): good camp
- Mile 65.6 (Firewater): river left on reservation, but good camp
- **Mile 65.5-65.3 (Cedar Ridge camps #2): great with lots of room, 3 camps here, all good, #2 is the best!**
- Mile 62.8 (Flat Canyon): good, lots of room
- Mile 61.7 (Dripping Springs): good, lots of room
- Mile 59.3: ok
- **Mile 56.4 (Steer Ridge): great camp for a layover**
- Mile 52.6 (Calf Canyon): great camp
- Mile 51.3 (Snap Canyon): ok camp
- **Mile 49.9 (Three Canyon): great camp, two canyons come in on right, third canyon comes in river left.**
- Mile 49.7 (Lower Three Canyon): good camp also
- Mile 48 (Lion Hollow): ok
- Mile 47.2 (Chandler Falls): great camp
- Mile 46 (Trail Canyon): good camp
- Mile 44.7 (Above Bill Canyon): good camp, sandy
- Mile 43.5 and 43.4: small with slope with beach
- Mile 42.8 (Moonwater): good camp
- Mile 42.3 and 42.2 (Below Red Point): small to medium ok

- **Mile 40.4 (Joe Hutch Canyon):** great camp for a layover, very strong eddy at beach
- **Mile 31.2 (Range Creek #1): NO LONGER A GOOD CAMP, BURNED COMPLETELY IN SUMMER 2024.**
- Mile 28.7 (Rabbit Valley): good camp
- Mile 20.3 (Nefertiti boat ramp): If you camp below mile 20.3 you will have entered the day trip run with many campers!
- I did not note the camps below Range Creek – there were so many numerous great camps described in great detail in the River Maps link below.
- [The River Maps](#) are a great resource. My 2022 waterproof edition had a wealth of educational information.

