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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Grand Canyon Youth Launches 2021 Season

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Flagstaff, AZ -- Grand Canyon Youth (GCY) will launch expeditions in this spring after cancelling the 2020 season due to COVID-19. GCY will open the application process for Individual Expeditions on March 12. It has been over a year since the last trip was on the water -- the first time in over twenty years of operation that GCY has been forced to cancel an entire season of youth expeditions.

"We are looking forward to being back in action, connecting young people with the magical landscapes of the Southwest," said Executive Director Emma Wharton. "After the past year, it's so important that we provide opportunities for youth to explore new places, connect with each other, and take time for self-reflection. The river gives us all these gifts, and more."

GCY has developed COVID-19 protocols to reduce the risk of the spread of the disease on an expedition. This includes risk assessment during the planning phase of trips, since "one of our key strategies is to do our best to prevent the virus from being present at the start of a trip," Wharton said.

To learn more about Grand Canyon Youth's 2021 expeditions, including how to apply for an expedition as an individual or set up one for your school or group, visit GCY's website at [www.gcyouth.org](http://www.gcyouth.org). GCY invites youth from all backgrounds to participate; financial aid to cover expeditions fees is available. Expeditions are currently open to youth from Coconino County.

In addition to the research and preparation required for running expeditions during the pandemic, the GCY staff and board of directors has spent the past year crafting a new mission, vision, and values for the organization, as well as a land acknowledgement statement and implementation efforts. "I think we have emerged from our pandemic pause as a stronger organization overall," said Wharton. "The river teaches us to adapt in the face of challenges, and we've done that - both in terms of making the best use of the time we had away from the river, and in terms of adapting our programs and practices so that we can get youth back on the water this year."