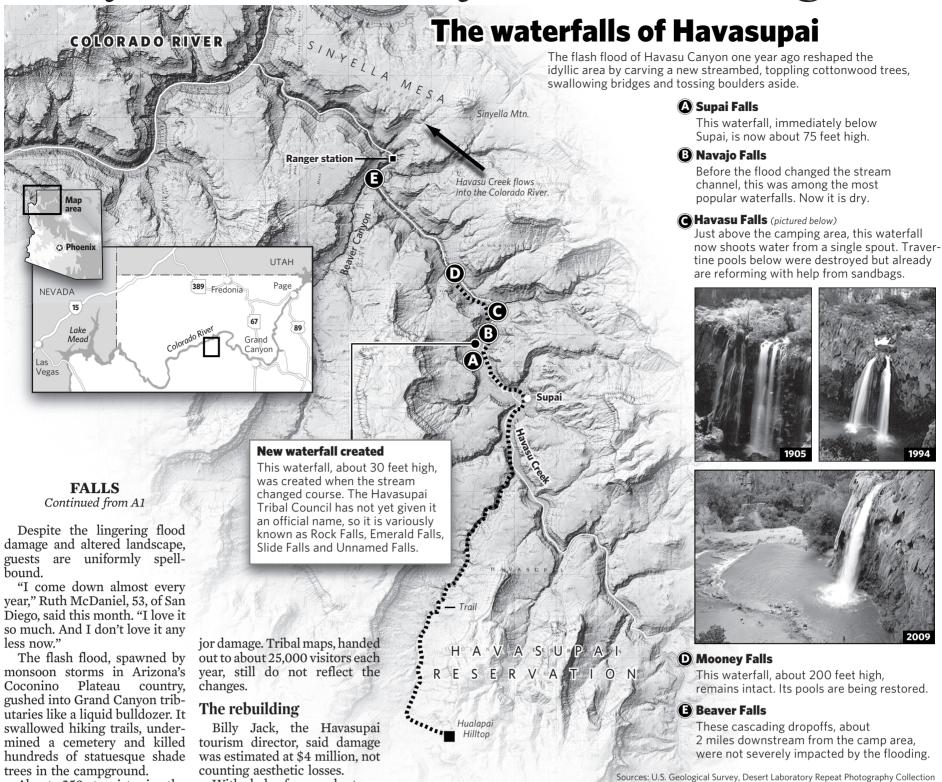
# Canyon's waterfall jewel shines again



trees in the campground. About 250 tourists in the campground were warned in the afternoon of a possible flood, but no one anticipated the brown

Some climbed trees. Others sloshed to high ground.

wave that struck around mid-

Miraculously, there were no deaths or serious injuries. Helicopters plucked campers from safe perches as they marveled at nature's destructive power.

Greg Fisk, supervisory hydrological technician with the U.S. Geological Survey, said more than 6 inches of rainfall upstream sent a roiling mass through normally dry channels. Near Supai, Havasu Creek's flow surged more than ninetyfold, from a normal 65 cubic feet per second, to 6,000.

While there have been much larger inundations, Fisk said, canyon conditions made this one hit with devastating force. Floodwaters carved a new streambed, toppled magnificent ash and cottonwood trees, uprooted bridges, and tossed RVsized boulders aside.

The first icon, known as 50-Foot Falls, became 75 feet high. A detour left the famed Navajo Falls high and dry but created a new landmark with no of-

ficial name. Known variously as Rock Falls, Emerald Falls or Unnamed Falls, this is where Luttman took his refreshing dive. Further downstream, Havasu

Falls now features a single spout of whitewater rather than the veiled spray or double flume captured in thousands of photographs over the past century.

Finally, a network of mini lagoons was blown away at the base of Mooney Falls, which at 200 feet looms higher than Niagara Falls.

Villagers in Supai, arguably the most remote community in the lower 48 states, escaped macounting aesthetic losses.

With help from volunteers and contributors around the world, tribal members spent 10 months rebuilding.

Stream banks have been fortified, pools recreated, trails rerouted. Flood gauges upstream are linked to an early-warning system in the village.

Since the reservation reopened to visitors June 1, life seems back to normal, and tribal members regard the damage with a sense of geological equa-

"Most of the people say it's really sad now, and it is when you see Navajo Falls," said Suzanna Siyuja, the assistant tourism director. "But, traditionally, we're kind of used to this."

Siyuja said she understands that some may mistakenly view a flood as destructive, even unnatural. Then she laughed, noting, "We have people who come here and ask, 'Are the waterfalls on right now? What time do they turn them off?"

Change is inevitable and constant, she added, even in a roadless chasm that was formed over

Meanwhile, Havasu Creek has regained its legendary turquoise hue, the color of a resorthotel swimming pool.

New deposits of calcium carbonate, known as travertine, already are reforming coral-like pools with help from strategically placed sandbags.

Visitors interviewed earlier this month said the canyon scene remains awesome, albeit different.

Kelene Johnson, 22, of Henderson, Nev., waded into a pool beneath Mooney Falls after negotiating the spooky descent on a trail that spirals through rock tunnels. "I mean, this is like the coolest place ever," she gushed.

David Rains, a 44-year-old from Corona, Calif., said he



PAT SHANNAHAN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

At 200 feet high, Mooney Falls looms larger even than Niagara. About 25,000 visitors each year journey to Havasupai to see the network of blue-green waterfalls.

planned to cool off in Navajo Falls after completing the 9-mile trek from atop the Coconino Plateau. "We were looking and looking for it, but it was gone," added Rains, swimming instead at Havasu Falls. "But it's still great here. I still love it."

Gail Brown, 53, a Delta, Ohio, resident on her sixth visit to Havasupai, played poker with familv members while sitting at a picnic table half-submerged in the creek, a picturesque reminder of flood damage.

"It's way different now." Brown conceded. "But it's still just so beautiful.'

## 'Forever cleansing'

A 1996 study by the U.S. Geo-

logical Survey, "When the Blue Green Waters Turn Red," says Havasupai endured at least 14 significant floods during the 20th century and many more going back thousands of years.

The report contains photographic documentation that the creek behaves like a writhing snake that spastically shifts locations over time.

More proof abounds throughout the canyon: Ancient travertine formations hang stalactitelike from cliffs along long-dry stream channels. Mineral formations formed by water eons ago are now home to prickly pear cactuses.

Mike Lowe, who leads tours into Havasupai, described the most recent flood as a catharsis and a "blessing."

"In my opinion, there was no damage," Lowe said. "I think it's beautiful, forever cleansing."

"I was really kind of excited to see nature doing its thing,' agreed Brian Jump, another tour guide. "It's a dynamic place." Alvina Rosales, a 43-year-old

Navajo visitor from Tuba City, cooled in the 70-degree mist from Mooney Falls and spoke of elders who view flooding as a sort of rebirth.

"It's starting over," she said. "We talked with the local people, and they said, 'Well, it's the womb of Mother Earth.' The power it has, you've got to respect it."

## ISOLATED, INCOMPARABLE DESTINATION

## **THE TRIBE**

**Tribal name:** Written in the native language as Havasuw 'Baaja, the name means people of the blue-green water.

Population: 650 enrolled members, about 450 of them living in Supai

Location: Grand Canyon, 64 miles north of Peach

Access: The village of Supai is 2,000 feet below the canyon rim, reachable only via a steep, 8-mile hiking and mule trail, or by helicopter.

Tribal language: Pai.

**Primary employment:** Tourism.

Number of annual visitors: About 25,000.

**History:** Havasupai have resided in the canyon more than 1,000 years. In 1919 the tribe was restricted to an area of just 518 acres. The reservation was expanded to 188,077 acres of indigenous lands in the 1970s.

## **VISITING HAVASUPAI**

Rooms and campground spaces at Havasupai are typically filled months in advance. Reservations must be made by

Entrance fee: \$35 per person, discounted 50 percent for children under 13.

**Environmental fee:** \$5 per person, refunded for those who haul out two bags of

**Campground reservations:** 928-448-2121, 928-448-2141, 928-448-2174 or 928-

448-2180. Campground fee: \$17 nightly per person, discounted by half for children.

Lodge reservations: 928-448-2111 or 928-448-2201.

**Lodge fee:** \$145 nightly for up to four people, plus a \$40 deposit.

Horseback entry, use of pack mules: \$93.50 each for one way, \$187 round trip.

Helicopter service: \$85 per person, one way.

**Helicopter reservations:** Airwest Helicopters, 623-516-2790.

Source: www.havasupaitribe.com; Tourism Director Billy Jack Prospective visitors should refer to the Web site for additional details

## **WEB SITES OF INTEREST**

#### About the tribe and its tourism opportunities: www.havasupaitribe.com

www.grandcanyon treks.org/supai.htm

#### **Pictures and accounts** of the flood:

ourstory.havasupaiflood

youtube.com: Video of flooding and damage viewable by searching Havasupai AND flood

pubs.water.usgs. gov/wri964059: A federal study titled "When the Blue-Green Waters Turn Red"

#### **360-degree photographs** of the waterfalls: www.azcentral.com/

flash/panos/havasupaifalls:

