

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery for the Honorable Lynn Scarlett,
Deputy Secretary of the Interior,
Yavapai Rededication Ceremony
Grand Canyon, Ariz., May 24, 2007**

Nearly 150 years ago, John Wesley Powell careened down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. He was an explorer, scientist, chronicler, even an artist. Powell wrote, as he strived to describe the canyon, “Language and illustration must fail.”

We have all, no doubt, shared Powell’s sentiment. We reach for words: magnificent, awesome, sublime—grand. But the words that sing to me are the words of a child. Peering out across the vast abyss and the painted, textured, layered canyon walls, one child, speaking to his father, simply asked, “Is it real?”

Today, we rededicate the Yavapai Observation Station. Here, a many-faceted reality takes on meaning. We begin to comprehend not simply this place, but a whole planet. Layer by layer, we walk through 1.7 billion years of time – a stretch of time nearly half the age of this Earth.

Geology is, in many ways, our greatest teacher of history, reaching back to what geologists call “deep time.” It is a planetary history that reaches so far back that our human story seems nearly imperceptible. For a moment, we feel small. But then we venture into the canyon or contemplate it from its rim, and we regain our stature. We feel expansive, inspired and alive. We are just a wee point in time. Yet this is our time.

Today, we rededicate the Yavapai Observation Station, which helps us make sense of the striations, the colors and the textures of the canyon. Its architecture reminds us of human achievement and our powers of perception, creation and contemplation. It affirms our power to do great things—to preserve this place, this canyon for generations to come. Its displays remind us of our capacity to understand and to teach. Here, we see the canyon through the insight of scientists and the canvas or lens artists. Seeming randomness is rendered into patterns and deciphered.

I thank our National Park Service for their stewardship, so that we, our children and our grandchildren might continue to marvel at this magnificent canyon. I thank our U.S. Geological Survey, who, following in the footsteps of John Wesley Powell, continue to plumb the secrets of the Earth, and whose scientific inquiry helps us understand this place and a whole planet. And I thank the artists and craftsmen and women who translate ideas into displays, so that when a child asks, “Is this real?” we might lead the child to the observation station and answer, “Yes.” Through these displays, we can see how the processes of climate, water and rock over 1.7 billion years created this canyon.