Unit 06 GeoClips:\_DamIt

Today we're going to go see one of the most extraordinary manifestations of man's desire to tame the wilderness.

We're looking, standing here above what was once a vast and deep and beautiful canyon and has turned into a wonderfully used lake that people like to go boating on and people like go swimming in. And so we've seen a great change in what happened here from a world that was used by very few who love solitude to a world that's used by many who love running around in motor boats.

Well, I think a lot of the early settlers really wanted to place their mark. They said, we are not going to be defeated by this land that has only a few inches of rain per year. We will live here. And the way to do it is to get lots of money from Washington that we collect out East and bring it out West here and build these dams. And these places just do not belong. They are magnificent creations. They are incredible engineering masterpieces. But they should not be here.

And so it obviously does a tremendous amount of good, and it's very clean. Once you have a dam, once the lake gets here, you don't dirty anything up. You're not running out smoke from your smokestack that will dim the air in the Grand Canyon.

They should not be here. And I think we've learned that over and over again. But you go to India, you go to China, and they're doing the exact same thing. The Three Gorges Dam in China, one of the most enormous, incredible engineering projects, displaced millions of people, is an absolute ecologic disaster.

If you've got hungry people, and you can save that water and ship it to them, it's food. If you've got people who need power to do things, and you can ship them the power then they can use it.

Dams are amazing human achievements, but they have incredible costs associated with them. So to me, it's very much of a bittersweet kind of a thing. As a former engineer myself, I can appreciate the artistry and the mastery that goes into building these. But as a practicing geologist, as a practicing resident of this planet, I find them a little depressing to be quite honest.

We're going to argue this one again on a lot of rivers in a lot of places for a lot of time.