

BRIEFING STATEMENT

Date: July 21, 1993

State: Arizona

TITLE: Section 7 Consultation on Preferred Alternative to Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Operation of Glen Canyon Dam (2-21-93-F-167)

The preferred alternative is the Modified Low Fluctuating Flow (MLFF) Alternative, and the consultation is based on information provided in the preliminary draft EIS dated January 8, 1993. Glen Canyon Dam is located in Coconino County, Arizona.

Consulting agency: Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Salt Lake City, Utah

ISSUE:

Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) issued a jeopardy biological opinion on Glen Canyon Dam in 1978. After Glen Canyon Environmental Studies (GCES) phase one studies, Reclamation requested formal consultation on existing operation in 1987 and received a draft jeopardy biological opinion. Seven conservation measures were cooperatively developed to assist in removing jeopardy. Implementation of conservation measures began in 1990 and they continue to be fulfilled by Reclamation. The measures included studies on the ecology and life history of the humpback chub.

Reclamation and Service met January 21, 1993, to discuss request for biological opinion. The need to conduct formal consultation on the preferred alternative in the draft EIS was questioned because the likelihood that, after the public review process and with a more complete agency review, the proposed action would undoubtedly change. Another consultation would be required for the new action. Service recommended that summary reports or one consolidated report from the four GCES endangered fish research studies be made available before formal consultation began or at least within one and one-half months of initiation.

Cooperating agencies for EIS met January 27-28, 1993, to discuss recommendation for preferred alternative. Service asked other agencies to support request for "best scientific and commercial information available." Service and Western Area Power also questioned request for biological opinion at this time.

Service received Reclamation's formal consultation request February 8, 1993. The 90-day consultation period began and was extended 20 days if Service would provide a summary by May 18. Reclamation stated they would include the draft biological opinion or a summary in the draft EIS that was scheduled to be released July 1993.

A draft Biological Opinion with one reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA) with six elements was released to Reclamation May 20, 1993 (summary was provided by COB May 17) on preferred alternative to draft EIS. Species jeopardized: Humpback chub (*Gila cypha*) and razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*). No jeopardy was found for bald eagle, Kanab ambersnail, or peregrine falcon.

Nature of jeopardy or adverse modification: No reproduction in mainstem Colorado River for

humpback chub or razorback sucker due largely to cold water releases from dam. Habitats of larvae and young humpback chub destabilized by fluctuating flows during summer and fall. Little Colorado River (LCR) only tributary in Grand Canyon where humpback chub can successfully spawn and recruit making continued survival precarious.

Service advised Reclamation through EIS comments, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) Planing Aid Memorandum (December 1992), and draft FWCA report (April 1993) of the advantages to endangered species found in the Seasonally Adjusted Steady Flow (SASF) alternative. The RPA incorporates portions of that alternative (a viable alternative in to the draft EIS) to modify the proposed action.

During low water years (8.23 m acre-feet, 50% of releases) the RPA would release more water during spring and early summer, and taper to low steady flows for mid-summer to fall. During winter, flows would be similar to preferred alternative (MLFF which allows for some daily fluctuations).

The Grand Canyon Protection Act of 1992 directs the Secretary of the Interior's actions to protect, mitigate adverse impacts to, and improve the values for which Grand Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon Recreation Area were established.

The RPA was not the optimal alternative for endangered and natives fishes but was at a level to remove jeopardy. As such it would not be as costly to power as SASF, a viable alternative to the draft EIS.

Reclamation stated they would hold a technical review of RPA element on flows. Meeting was conducted by GCES Senior Scientist and Program Manager on June 11, 1993. Overall impression from meeting was that most researchers supported the RPA concept. Although the Service reviewed a preliminary copy of technical meeting's findings in June, Reclamation has not released the report. Reclamation's analysis of the biological opinion's RPA (provided on May 21) also have not been received by the Service.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR POSITION: None.

POSITION OF MAJOR CONSTITUENTS: All but one of the cooperating agencies support the preferred alternative. Environmental groups and endangered fish researchers favor operations that mimic natural hydrograph similar to Service's recommended RPA. National Research Council questioned support for preferred alternative (MLFF) over SASF alternative (letter dated February 26, 1993).

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