



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

Fall River Ag Service Center
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February 13, 2001

To: Mr. Kenneth Parr
U. S. Bureau of Reclamation
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Mr. Kenneth Parr,

The following are my comments pertaining to the Angostura Unit Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

1. [Summary Section pages ii & iii - Under the "No Action Alternative" you site benefits of \$525,000 from water sales and \$7.08 million from recreation.] Then in the "Reestablishment of Natural Flows" Alternative you state the loss of the \$525,000 but do not mention any losses associated with the \$7.08 million for recreation - with a loss of over 50,000 AF of storage, there will be a tremendous loss in recreational benefits.
2. [On Alternatives page 21 under "Reestablishment of Natural Flows" Recreation, Fisheries, and Downstream Flows - there is no mention to the fact that this alternative will in effect virtually remove all recreation and fisheries on Angostura Reservoir as we know it today - Angostura Recreation Area cannot exist without a permant pool to support activities.]
3. [Page 65-66 on Wetlands - the "Reestablishing of Natural Flows" Alternative and the "Improved Efficiencies" Alternative will both have adverse effects on "man-made" and/or "irrigation-induced" wetlands within the irrigation district. There are hundreds of acres within the irrigation district that irrigation return flows and leaking irrigation ditches are the sole water source of. Most of these acres will be dried up if all irrigation is removed under the "Reestablishing of Natural Flows" Alternative.]
4. [Chapter Four Environmental Impacts - the "Recreational" aspect of Angostura Reservoir has been completely left out of this section - fact remains that the "Reestablishment of Natural Flows" Alternative, as a minimum, will severely restrict recreational activities on the reservoir. Also, the "Fisheries" section of this alternative seems to down play the impact on reservoir fisheries - referring back to beginning of DEIS, reservoir recreation, which includes water sports and fishing activities, accounts for 271,100 visitor/days annually @ \$7.08 million. I would also note that the above visitor/days can only be supported by a reservoir fisheries, riverine fisheries could only support a small percentage of this figure.]

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5. [On page 153 "Recreation" paragraph - if drawdown of the reservoir is so severe that no boat docks are usable and beaches will become revegetated, then the \$2,168,000 loss figure is too low of an estimate in comparison to the benefit figure used of \$7.08 million! I feel the \$2,168,000 figure would be the benefits left over afterwards, with a loss in benefits of around \$4.9 million.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on the DEIS for the Angostura Unit.

Ron Siers
District Conservationist

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1. While not included on p. iii of the draft EIS, the \$2.17 million loss in recreation benefits in the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative was listed in Table S.1 and on p. 153. The summary will be revised in the final EIS.

2. Page 154 of the EIS discusses impacts of the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative on recreation, p. 143 the impacts on fisheries, and p. 119 the impacts on downstream flows. This information is also displayed in Table S.1.

3. Impacts of the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative on wetlands in the district is discussed on p. 141-142 of the EIS and in Table S.1.

4. See p. 154 of the draft EIS for impacts of this alternative on recreation. Reclamation believes the analysis of impacts on reservoir fisheries is accurate.

5. The \$7.08 million in recreation benefits was based on 271,000 recreational visits at the reservoir in the No Action Alternative (see Table 4.19). For the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative, the recreational visitation model estimated 188,000 recreational visits based on reservoir water elevations during the recreation season, or 83,000 fewer visits than in No Action. This translated into a loss of about \$2.17 million. In the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative, there would still be some recreation, even though the reservoir surface area would be smaller, fewer boat ramps would be usable, and the beach would revegetate in places.

The recreation visitation model is primarily based on the relationship between reservoir water elevations and recreation visitation. It was able to directly account for qualitative factors such as the quality of the beach area or the number of usable boat ramps. The model was statistically significant in the relationship between reservoir water elevations and recreation visits. Recreation visitation and benefits could fall more than the model estimated, but what is important is that the model indicated that reservoir water elevations in the Reestablishment of Natural Flows Below the Dam Alternative would result in a significant reduction in visitation and benefits compared to the No Action Alternative.