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Sent: Friday, April 27, 2007 10:13 AM
To: strategies@lc.usbr.gov
Cc: tbarnett-ul@ucsd.edu
Subject: Objections: Colorado EIS

Importance: High

4/13/2007

TWIMC....

I was

>reviewing the USBR EIS* on operating rules for the Colorado in times of
>water shortage. The results of that EIS are
practically useless and, if implemented, will put the public interest at risk. My reasons
for this statement are as follows:

>Essentially, they use a river/reservoir model forced by 50 years chunks
>of actual Colorado River flow. These runs under different river flow
>scenarios are used to estimate the likely range of future levels of
>Lake Mead (say); the probability the Lake will be full or empty. In
>fact, their simulations show a disturbingly large range of
>possibilities from full pool to a level near dead pool. Just how the
>Lake is operated depends on these probabilistic estimates of future
>elevation.

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> But the analysis done by USBR to date and the one on which the
>EIS is omits one huge factor. Essentially, their analysis to date
>assumes the past climatic variations in rainfall, snow levels,
>evaporation, etc are good estimates of what the future will be
>like·past river flows are good estimates of future river flows. In
>their case, this is a fatal error that, in my view, negates the basis
>of the EIS.

>Numerous studies over the last 10 years have shown the climate of the
>Colorado drainage will change markedly in the next few decades (it is
>already!). There will be less rain, snow pack will disappear earlier,
>increase temperatures will increase evaporation, etc. In short, the
>EIS is defined for the past, not the future. As such it is largely
>unreliable for decision makers.

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> I believe the model forcing changes could be estimated from
>existing information. They could be added to the existing simulations
>and the whole probability structure of future possibilities be made
>available to decision makers·at least then we would be taking a fairly
>realistic look at the future of the Colorado system under the climate
>change scenario. Given that the system is uncomfortably close to
>failure now, we need the best look at what to expect.

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> One other item along the same lines:

>while USBR talks about inflow, outflow, etc in the EIS, they never
>factor in increasing population. The 20 million more folks expected to
>rely on Colorado water by 2030 will need something like 3 maf MORE than
>is required today. This is order 20-30% the typical inflow to Lake
>Powell today. And as we have seen, numerous studies all show that
>inflow will decrease in a greenhouse world. So where does that extra
>water come from?

Thank you for your consideration. Dr. Tim Barnett, Climate research Div, Scripps Inst
Oceanography, La Jolla, CA

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>* Draft EIS Feb, 2007. Colorado River Interim Guidelines for lower
>Basin shortages and coordinated operations for Lakes Mead and Powell.

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