

From: David Whipkey [chorse36@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 05, 2007 8:59 AM
To: strategies@lc.usbr.gov
Subject: Comments for Operations at Lake Powell & Lake Mead under Low Reservoir Conditions

Dear Mr. Johnson and Mr. Gold:

Lake Powell and Lake Mead lose 17 percent of the water that flows into them through evaporation. Vacant space in underground aquifers near existing Colorado River water recharge facilities could store more water than these two reservoirs combined. Upwards of 810,000 acre-feet of water annually could be saved by eliminating Lake Powell and operating Lake Mead principally for distribution to groundwater recharge facilities.

After more than 40 years of operation, it was not until the fall of 2004 that Lake Powell's water storage actually augmented downstream water use. And with the impacts of climate change and rising water consumption, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient surplus water to fill Lake Powell again. Even should surplus water accumulate, Lake Mead alone could provide sufficient storage.

Between Lake Powell and Lake Mead lies Grand Canyon National Park. The operation of both these reservoirs has impacted the Canyon, but Glen Canyon Dam at Lake Powell has been far more devastating. Since the dam's completion four of eight native fish have gone extinct and the dam has trapped the sediment necessary to maintain habitat and beaches for wildlife and recreation, as well as the stabilization of archeological sites.

Sediment is a major unresolved problem threatening the long-term operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Ultimately, sediment must be removed to ensure public safety. Removing sediment from Lake Mead downstream, rather than Lake Powell upstream is the most technically feasible, least costly and environmentally advantageous approach.

The Colorado River Compact of 1922, which largely governs the operations of Lake Powell for Lake Mead, cannot meet its intended purpose of equitably sharing Colorado River water between the Upper and Lower Basin states. With River flows expected to decline 18 percent by 2040, this inequity will worsen, furthering the need for Compact amendments while highlighting the benefits of eliminating Lake Powell to fulfill the Compact's primary objective.

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