

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Planning for the Future at the New Melones Lake Area

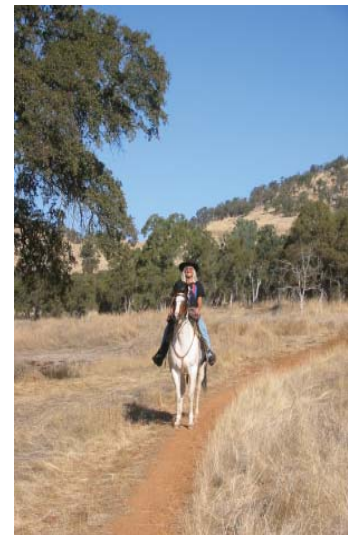
The Bureau of Reclamation is preparing an integrated Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) for the New Melones Lake Area. New Melones Lake is managed by the Central California Area Office, part of Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region.

Public Participation Milestones	
Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register December 18, 2006	
Public Scoping Period December 18, 2006, to February 16, 2007 Comment period extended to March 19, 2007	↻
Public Scoping Meetings January 29, 30, and 31, 2007	↻
Scoping Summary Report available Spring 2007	↻
Draft Alternatives available for public review September to October 2007	↻
Revise alternatives and prepare Draft RMP/EIS November 2007 to August 2008	↻
Draft RMP/EIS with plan alternatives available for public review and comment Fall 2008	↻
Prepare Final RMP/EIS Fall to Winter 2008	↻
30-day public review for Final RMP/EIS Winter to Spring 2009	↻
Record of Decision and approved RMP/EIS Spring/Summer 2009	↻

Shading indicates steps completed. Subsequent project updates will be distributed throughout this planning process.

Framework

The purpose of the RMP/EIS is to develop a framework for long-term management of recreation facilities and adjacent lands at the New Melones Lake Area. This integrated RMP/EIS document will reflect contemporary resources and recreation needs for the New Melones Lake Area while ensuring that the Eastside Division of the Central Valley Project continues to meet its authorized purposes of flood control, water supply, power, recreation, water quality, and fish and wildlife enhancement. The RMP/EIS shall serve as the basis for future resource management decision-making that, when implemented, will provide comprehensive management guidance for future management of the area.



Scoping Meetings

The first project update was mailed in January 2007 to more than 790 individuals from the public, various agencies, and local organizations. The project update provided the dates and venues for the public scoping meetings held in Sonora, Angels Camp, and Manteca with 78 people attending. Reclamation also held an Agency Meeting at New Melones Visitor Center with 15 people attending.

Reclamation extended the comment period from February 16 to March 19, 2007. Written comments on the scope will be considered in developing the alternatives and analyzing environmental issues to be addressed in the RMP/EIS. These alternatives will address planning issues identified during scoping and will meet goals and objectives to be developed by Reclamation.

May 2007

Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 Western States. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits.

Reclamation's Mission Statement: *The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.*

Preliminary Issues

Reclamation compiled a list of common issues from comments and questions at the scoping meetings.

Below are a few issues:

How will Reclamation improve access to the management area while protecting resources and addressing logistical and financial challenges?

How will Reclamation protect sensitive resources while accommodating increasing numbers of visitors with an expanding range of interests?

How will Reclamation enhance fish and wildlife habitats and other natural resources?

What types of recreational activities will Reclamation manage in the New Melones Lake area?

How can Reclamation provide recreational opportunities and services without diminishing the quality of the resources?

How can Reclamation optimize a fee program in order to enhance visitor services and protect the resources?

How can Reclamation provide adequate law enforcement to increase visitor safety and reduce illegal activities?

What Reclamation management strategies will be used to identify and implement necessary changes in facilities or infrastructure?

What Reclamation management strategies will be used to protect public health and safety?

How can Reclamation foster positive relationships with neighboring landowners and communities while meeting Reclamation's management commitments?

Next Steps

Reclamation will continue to meet with collaborating agencies and community groups. The formal scoping period ended March 19, 2007. Reclamation is now reviewing comments received and preparing a Scoping Report that identifies key issues raised during scoping. Next, Reclamation will analyze the comments to identify relevant issues to address in the alternatives formulated for the RMP/EIS.

Although Reclamation welcomes public input at any time during the planning process, the next official public comment period will begin when the draft alternatives are published, which is anticipated for Fall 2007. The draft alternatives will be widely distributed to elected officials, regulatory agencies, and members of the public, and will be available on the project web site. In addition, a workshop on alternatives will be held to facilitate better understanding of the draft alternatives and encourage public comment.

At the conclusion of this public comment period, input received on the draft alternatives will be evaluated and the alternatives that will be included in the Draft RMP/EIS will be selected. The alternatives selected will include a combination of management components that span the responsible range of land and resource uses at the New Melones Lake Area. From the group of alternatives described in the Draft RMP/EIS, a set of management components will be designated as Reclamation's Preferred Alternative and will be described in detail in the Draft RMP/EIS. The availability of the draft document will be announced in the Federal Register, and another public comment period will follow to allow agencies and the public a chance to review the Draft RMP/EIS and provide input to Reclamation.

Contact Information

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Visit the project website at: http://www.usbr.gov/mp/cao/field_offices/new_melones/index.html



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