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## Ririe Reservoir and Dam Proposed Interim Operations

The United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District (Corps) are asking for the public's assistance to help identify issues and concerns associated with Proposed Interim Operations of Ririe Reservoir and Dam, Bonneville County, Idaho.



A 3-5 year period of interim operations is proposed to determine if empty reservoir space that is reserved to contain winter floods, can be replaced with controlled release of water as flood potential increases. Present operations require the release of water each fall that may not be needed downstream and cannot be replaced unless winter precipitation is well above average. It may be possible to hold more water in Ririe Reservoir for irrigation and other purposes while continuing to provide adequate downstream flood protection.

Reclamation has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) is required under the National Environmental Policy Act in order to undertake this action. The EA will evaluate the impacts of the proposed action on both human and natural environments. This analysis, together with input from the public, will assist Reclamation and the Corps in making an informed decision on the proposed interim operations.

Currently, there are three proposed flood storage alternatives being considered.

- No Action Alternative which requires 50,000 acre-feet of space from November through the first of March. The current operation drafts Ririe down to 55,000 acre-feet of space in early November and allows the reservoir to fill slightly into the 50,000 acre-feet of space requirement to avoid winter discharges from the dam.
- Alternative A – Requires 50,000 acre-feet of space in November and linearly decreases the required space to 24,000 acre-feet by the first of March.
- Alternative B – Requires 30,000 acre-feet of space in November and linearly decreases the required space to 15,000 acre-feet of space by the first of March.

Historic operations have frequently encroached upon the required 50,000 acre-feet of space and have occasionally required winter releases to restore space when snow accumulation on the watershed is abundant. Although the 5,000 acre-feet of additional draft in November does not avoid winter releases entirely, it usually delays the need for releases until severely cold winter

conditions have passed. Alternatives A and B have increasing likelihood and quantities of mid-winter adjustment.

If an action alternative for interim operations is selected, downstream flows will be monitored to examine the winter water releases under varying weather conditions. This effort will also evaluate forecasting procedures that will allow time for adjustment in empty space once an increased potential for flooding has been identified. The resulting information may be used to determine the limits to reducing the fixed winter season requirement for empty space. If it is determined that the fixed winter season requirements for empty space can be reduced, Reclamation will explore further steps for considering permanent operational changes.

It is anticipated that the Draft EA will be distributed for public review and comment in the late spring of 2011.

Written comments will be accepted through February 11, 2011, to: Ms. Allyn Meuleman, Activity Manager, Bureau of Reclamation, Snake River Area Office, 230 Collins Road, Boise, ID 83702. Comments can also be accepted via email at [ririeea@usbr.gov](mailto:ririeea@usbr.gov) or by fax at 208-383-2275.

Ririe Dam, completed in 1977, is on the Willow Creek drainage about 15 miles northeast of Idaho Falls. The dam is operated as one of six Reclamation storage facilities on the Snake and Henrys Fork Rivers. The multi-purpose project provides irrigation, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. For more information about the project, please go to: [www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ea/idaho/ririe/index.html](http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ea/idaho/ririe/index.html).

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