



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAR 03 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Members and Alternates
Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group

From: Secretary 

Subject: Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

I am pleased to take this opportunity to reconfirm my commitment to the Department of the Interior's administration of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (AMP). As you know, this important program is designed to undertake research and monitoring to determine if the revised Glen Canyon Dam operations are actually achieving the resource protection objectives of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and 1996 Record of Decision (ROD) for the Operation of Glen Canyon Dam.

I believe that all those interested in the success of the AMP share the Department's view articulated in the 1996 ROD that "it is imperative that resource management rely on good science to monitor, and respond to possible adverse effects resulting from changes in dam operations." Since adoption of the ROD, we have continued to implement a robust science-based research and monitoring program led by the U.S. Geological Survey's Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center in Flagstaff, Arizona. Over the past decade of work we have gained a tremendous amount of additional knowledge regarding the ecosystem of the Grand Canyon, the natural and human processes that affect this national treasure, and the role of Glen Canyon Dam operations on downstream resources. The USGS has recently compiled a summary of relevant information that reports research conducted between 1991 and 2004 in USGS Circular 1282: *The State of the Colorado River Ecosystem in Grand Canyon*.

As noted in Circular 1282, some of the anticipated benefits of the revised dam operations have not been realized. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that the best approach to managing operations of Glen Canyon Dam is through a rigorous, science-based program that promotes flexible decision-making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood. This is the essence of an "adaptive" management program.

We believe that the active participation of the various stakeholders that participate in the Glen Canyon Dam Federal Advisory Committee is the best available mechanism to ensure that the Department has the benefit of input from a wide cross section of experts and members of the general public, as Congress directed in § 1805(c) of the Grand Canyon Protection Act of 1992.

When Circular 1282 was issued at the Grand Canyon Science Symposium in Tempe, Arizona, last October, the Department reiterated its support for an adaptive management approach to Glen Canyon Dam operations and asked the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) for additional recommendations for refined future dam operations and other management actions.

Previously, pursuant to recommendations from the AMWG, in late 2002 the Department approved a combination of experimental dam releases and non-native fish removal that was developed using knowledge gained over nearly 20 years of research and monitoring of resources in this reach of the Colorado River. As the Department noted at the time of the 2002 experiments:

The proposed actions, detailed in the accompanying report, are the product of years of scientific study and would implement the recommendation of an independent advisory committee that has been studying the natural and cultural resources of the Grand Canyon since 1997. The proposed actions presented in this report are multi-faceted and complex, and have been designed to protect both the endangered species and the important beach habitat found in the Grand Canyon. 2002 U.S. Department of the Interior, Environmental Assessment at p. vi.

Today, those proposed experimental actions have been undertaken and the resulting benefits of those actions are being considered, along with other relevant information, by the AMWG in order to provide further recommendations on modifications to dam operations and other management actions. Recent findings suggest the use of short, strategically timed high-flow releases following sporadic sand inputs from tributaries is a possible strategy for rebuilding beaches and sandbars, as well as creating backwater habitat utilized by the humpback chub. Additionally, recent preliminary monitoring reports are indicating stabilization and possible improvement in the number of endangered humpback chub in the Grand Canyon reach of the Colorado River.

However, as these processes move forward, I have decided to modify the approach that we use at the Department to consider input from the AMWG. Given the number of Interior agencies that participate in the AMP and are represented on the AMWG, and the nature of the issues that are involved in the AMP, timely, intra-departmental coordination is always challenging. In order to standardize and improve the flow of information regarding the AMP within the Department, I am directing that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Policy Group be formed here at the Department's headquarters.

This Policy Group will include the most senior Departmental officials that oversee the Department's agencies that participate with the AMWG. Accordingly, the Policy Group will

include the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Director of the USGS, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Director of the National Park Service, the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Because of the cross-cutting nature of the issues that the AMWG routinely faces, I have also asked Tom Weimer, the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget to co-chair the Policy Group.

As you know, since March 14, 2002, Michael Gabaldon has served as my designee to the AMWG. I have been very pleased by the work Mr. Gabaldon has done on my behalf and he has overseen the workings of the AMWG in a professional and effective manner. Recently, Reclamation has asked Mr. Gabaldon to become the director of its Technical Service Center, located in Denver, Colorado. The Technical Service Center is responsible for all of Reclamation's critical design and construction engineering units. In light of these new responsibilities, Mr. Gabaldon will conclude his tenure as my designee following the March set of AMWG meetings.

I have asked Mark Limbaugh, the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, to serve as my Designee to the AMWG, effective March 31, 2006. I believe that elevating the position of the designee to the official that oversees both Reclamation and the USGS will improve the Department's administration of the AMP. In addition, I have asked Mr. Limbaugh to serve as a co-chair of the Department's AMWG Policy Group. By serving as my designee, Mr. Limbaugh will be able to facilitate timely consideration and review by the AMWG Policy Group, and the Department, of future AMWG recommendations. Mr. Limbaugh's assignment will continue indefinitely in both these capacities.

We recognize that the AMWG is facing a number of complex and challenging issues. For example, in the near future, we anticipate consideration of modified experimental and operational actions to address Glen Canyon Dam releases, as well as possible modification of Glen Canyon Dam to facilitate warm water releases from the dam. Protection of the Grand Canyon and its natural and cultural resources is, and will continue to be, among the highest priorities for this Department. I believe that Mr. Limbaugh will bring important insights and perspectives to the ongoing work of this critical effort. I also appreciate the hard and dedicated work of the members of the AMWG, and I thank you for your continued participation in this program.