



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

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Memorandum

To: Members and Alternates

From: Kameran L. Onley, Secretary's Designee and Acting Assistant Secretary – Water and Science *Kameran L. Onley*

Lyle Laverty, Assistant Secretary – Fish, Wildlife and Parks *Lyle Laverty*

Re: Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG)

In recent years, the Department of the Interior has made Colorado River management a top priority. Within the Colorado River Basin, the ongoing efforts of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (AMP) are of particular importance. Over the past few years, we have taken important steps in this program. For example,

- Recent high-flow experiments in 2004 and 2008 will provide valuable information for future decisionmaking.
- Over the past decade, we have seen an important stabilization and improvement in the population of native fish in the Grand Canyon, particularly the endangered humpback chub.

However, we still have many unanswered questions regarding the implementation of adaptive management in this program.

In December 2008, Secretary Kempthorne identified a number of key principles regarding the ongoing efforts of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program and the AMWG. Given your role as members and alternates on the AMWG, we thought it would be both appropriate and important to bring the Secretary's remarks to your attention. In addition, we also wanted to provide each of you with a short summary of our views on this important effort and to memorialize some key principles that we believe should help guide the Department's AMP efforts in coming years.

❖ **Role of Science and Research in the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program**

For well over a decade, the U.S. Geological Survey has developed particular expertise in the ongoing monitoring and research efforts devoted to AMP areas of inquiry. While we both recognize that the National Park Service has a strong science program within their management of Grand Canyon National Park and other Service-wide programs, our considered view is that in order for the AMP to be fully successful, the AMP needs to continue to have access to timely, high-quality, but perhaps most importantly, *independent* science.

In numerous contexts we have both seen firsthand the benefits of ensuring that Departmental management decisions are supported by scientific findings of independent researchers at the USGS. The societal perception of fairness and independence that accompanies USGS findings can be an important positive element during Departmental consideration of complex resource management decisions, such as those that arise in the context of the Glen Canyon AMP.

We recognize that the independent science studies of the USGS may not always be the quickest, or even perhaps always the lowest cost approach to scientific research. Supporting the nationwide network of research within the USGS is an important federal investment in the knowledge base of the nation. "Least-cost" considerations, while important, however, do not in our view outweigh the need for independent USGS-based science efforts in the AMP. On occasion, we have recognized that in particular contexts, there is a benefit that justifies and supports paying a "premium" for the independent and objective scientific work of the USGS. As Secretary Kempthorne noted in his recent remarks,

"Having an independent, research-based group of scientists at the Survey take the lead in this effort was a decision made by then-Secretary Bruce Babbitt many years ago. I continue to believe it was -- and is -- the right decision."

We would strongly encourage the Department to continue to support the role and ensure the continued effectiveness of the USGS Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center in Flagstaff. As the research and monitoring efforts of the AMP go forward we also wanted to re-emphasize our direction that the USGS continue to prioritize documentation of the results of the March 2008 high flow experiment and to integrate these results with those of earlier tests performed in 1996 and 2004. Hopefully, in coming months and years, this ongoing work by the Survey can facilitate the development of better analytical and modeling tools to facilitate future DOI decision-making.

❖ **Interagency Cooperation within DOI**

As we have seen, the various statutory missions of the agencies within Interior can result in differing viewpoints and recommendations from within DOI on matters within the purview of the AMP. This is both to be expected and appropriate. As the Department evaluates and considers the input of various viewpoints, both internal and external, we need to find ways to enhance trust and cooperation among internal officials and external stakeholders. The Department's establishment of the DOI Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Policy Group is but one recent example of our efforts to develop better interagency communication and effective decision-making. As our tenure ends, we have asked our senior regional career staff to

focus on ways to improve information sharing and to enhance the development of consensus recommendations within Interior.

❖ **Future of the AMP**

As our tenure ends, we continue to value the role of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program. Future administrations will have to assess existing and emerging questions regarding the AMP. We wish them success. We believe that they will continue to value the role of adaptive management, the desirability of working with all affected stakeholders, and the need to make decisions based on objective, independent science.

We wish you all much success in your future endeavors in this important program.

Excerpt of Secretary Kempthorne's Remarks - December 17, 2008¹

... Another area where we still have challenges ahead is in the Adaptive Management Program at Glen Canyon Dam. This Glen Canyon [adaptive management] program is clearly one of the most important adaptive management-based efforts in the United States. It involves the operation of one of the most critical water storage and hydropower facilities in the nation and was established to help protect downstream resources in one of the world's most awesome wonders, the Grand Canyon.

I recently visited Grand Canyon National Park with senior Department of the Interior career staff and gained a better appreciation for the complexity of the efforts to balance water delivery, hydropower production, endangered species conservation and national park protection. Knowing that adaptive management will play a critical role in our ongoing management and stewardship efforts, I identified some key principles that I believe should guide the Department's efforts in this program in coming years:

First, we should recognize the extraordinary expertise that the U.S. Geological Survey has developed in the ongoing monitoring and research efforts devoted to the Adaptive Management Program. Having an independent, research-based group of scientists at the Survey take the lead in this effort was a decision made by then-Secretary Bruce Babbitt many years ago. I continue to believe it was -- and is -- the right decision.

Second, as our scientists work to assess the results of the March 2008 high flow experiment, we will need to integrate those results with earlier tests performed in 1996 and 2004. I hope that we can develop better analytical and modeling tools as part of the adaptive management plan to support future decision-making by the Department.

Third, we need to consider these type of high flow releases in the future. However, as the Department of the Interior considers the effectiveness of this type of action, we must carefully and respectfully consider the input of all stakeholder groups - including the views of the seven basin states.

Fourth, we must continue to be guided by the principle of balancing competing interests and meeting the clear statutory responsibilities for endangered species, water delivery, protecting downstream resources and producing hydropower, all while recognizing the unique Native American interests in the Grand Canyon.

We must continue to do our best to strike that proper balance - one that integrates all our statutory responsibilities. Finally, as our efforts go forward, there is no question that the West needs - and will continue to need - affordable, clean, reliable power. Hydropower from Glen Canyon Dam is an important asset that shouldn't be further curtailed without a thorough assessment of the costs and benefits...

¹ The full text of Secretary Kempthorne's remarks can be found at:
http://www.doi.gov/secretary/speeches/121708_speech.html