

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group
Agenda Item Information
February 25-26, 2015

Agenda Item

Lees Ferry Management Plan Update

Action Requested

✓ Information item only; we will answer questions but no action is requested.

Presenter

John Jordan, International Federation of Fly Fishers/Trout Unlimited

Previous Action Taken

N/A

Relevant Science

See below.

Background Information

The Adaptive Management Program (AMP) and the AMWG recognize the importance and the role of the recreational trout fishery within the AMP.

The National Park Service Comprehensive Fishery Management Plan (CFMP) Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead was published May 2014. The intent of the CFMP is to maintain a thriving native fish community within Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) and a highly valued recreational trout fishery in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA).

The CFMP was developed with supportive participation from angling and area guiding and business communities, including national and state fishing organizations and individual anglers. The CFMP acknowledges that within the plan area there are two geographically divided fisheries: the cold water post-dam recreational trout fishery primarily located within GCNRA and the resident pre-dam warm water fishery primarily located within GCNP.

The AMWG recreational fishing representation and the angling community, with the cooperative participation of Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), recognized that the provisions of the CFMP for both the recreational trout fishery and the fishery as a whole would benefit from an expansion of the goals in the CFMP to include more detailed proposed actions. With that in mind, the angling community supported by AZGFD has prepared the Lees Ferry Recreational Trout Fishery Management Plan (LFMP), which is presently being finalized in draft form. The structural goals of the LFMP include that it be consistent with and fit within the CFMP and that any proposed actions be based on the best contemporary science available. The discussions during the developmental stage and leading to the present stage of finalizing a draft have included comments,

suggestions, and critiques from the science personnel of AZGFD, Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Western Area Power Administrative.

The goal of the LFMP is to create a quality blue ribbon trout fishery. The conditions that support that fishery also support a thriving native fish community. Among the factors addressed are enhancing aquatic food base, managing the numbers of young trout to avoid a trout population that exceeds the carrying capacity of the river, and addressing the threat of increasing water temperatures.

Recreational fishing representation's intent is that the final draft be reviewed by the relevant agencies and revised as necessary for inclusion into the CFMP and the appropriate provisions of the eventual Long Term Experimental Management Plan.

This presentation is for informational purposes only and no action is requested.

The Adaptive Management Program (AMP) recognizes the importance and the role of the recreational trout fishery.

As a community, anglers have helped to craft Desired Future Conditions for fishery resources in Glen and Grand Canyons, and contributed to the development of the Comprehensive Fisheries Management Plan (CFMP), which was recently completed by the National Park Service.

The Park Service provided an exceptional opportunity for the angling community to participate in the Comprehensive Management Plan preparation process by early and open discussion and meetings. That plan was developed with participation from the local guiding and business communities, national and state fishing organizations, and individual anglers. The resulting plan was supported by the anglers and included many goals mutually shared with the Park Service.

The intent of the CFMP is to maintain a thriving native fish community within Grand Canyon National Park and a highly valued recreational trout fishery in the Glen Canyon reach.

The CFMP acknowledges that in the plan area there are two geographically divided fisheries - the cold water post dam recreational trout fishery primarily located within Glen Canyon NRA and the resident pre dam warm water native fishery primarily located within Grand Canyon NP. It's not a criticism but rather a reality that greater emphasis of the CFMP is on the river within the Park. That's understandable - the river is 100% in the Park while Lees Ferry is in only a corner of the National Recreation Area.

In general terms the plan presents proactive programs and actions for warm water native fish while the Rainbow Trout fishery receives a statement of conditional support and reactive actions to maintain the status quo.

The AMWG Recreational Fishing representatives and the angling community, with the cooperative participation of Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), recognized that the provisions of the CFMP for both the recreational trout fishery and the fishery as a whole would benefit from an expansion of the Plan goals to include more detailed proposed actions. With that in mind, the angling community, supported by AZGFD, has prepared the Lees Ferry Fishery Management Plan (LFMP), which is presently being finalized in draft form. The structural goals of the LFMP include that it be consistent with and fit within the CFMP and that any proposed actions be based on the best available contemporary science. Discussions during the developmental stage have included comments, suggestions, and critiques from the science personnel of AZGFD, GCMRC, USFWS, and WAPA.

We generally support the CFMP goals for the recreational fishery at Lees Ferry. We propose to refine those goals with a suite of objectives, management strategies and research recommendations to guide the rainbow trout population at Lees Ferry in a direction that meets the CFMP objectives and the expectations of recreational anglers.

To maintain a healthy trout population at Lees Ferry and to support recreational angling: (1) recruitment and abundance of trout should be carefully managed, (2) angler catch rates and quality of fish caught should be managed commensurate with a Blue Ribbon standard for the fishery, and (3) water quality should be closely monitored and maintained to avoid catastrophic effects to the tail water fishery.

We endorse the use of trout management flows under carefully controlled conditions with protective sideboards in place. Approved restocking protocols with triploid rainbow trout or trout translocate from downstream sources must be in place prior to implementation of trout management flows.

Research into repatriation and improvement of the aquatic food base, including flows necessary to support an enhanced EPT food base community, are strongly recommended.

With the LTEMP EIS on the horizon the plan considers recommendations to:

- (1) extend greater flexibility for meeting reservoir equalization requirements to avoid impacts to biological resources,
- (2) limit daily minimum flows to 8,000 cfs,
- (3) maintain existing limitations to ramp rate and maximum daily range of fluctuations,
- (4) evaluate spring High Flow Events as a tool for enhancing the aquatic food base and/or trout recruitment in event of a crash in the population,
- (5) further evaluate fall High Flow Events,
- (6) establish a Lees Ferry based trigger and conditions under which trout management flows would be undertaken,
- (7) do additional scientific evaluation of the relative importance of trout competition/predation to humpback chub recruitment,
- (8) include vegetation control in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area,
- (9) evaluate threats of changing water temperatures due to climate and hydrological conditions and methods to manage those threats, and
- (10) investigate turbidity to restore natural conditions for native fishes in the Grand Canyon

The goal of the LFMP is to create a quality blue ribbon trout fishery. The conditions that support that fishery also support a thriving native fish community.

Recreational Fishing representation's intent is that the final draft be reviewed by the relevant agencies and revised as necessary for inclusion into the CFMP and the appropriate provisions of the eventual Long Term Experimental Management Plan.