

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group
Agenda Item Form
September 20, 2017

Agenda Item

Proposed Motion from Recreational Fishing Representatives

Purpose of Agenda Item

To consider a motion proposed by Recreational Fishing Representatives.

Action Requested

✓ Motion requested.

The AMWG recommends that the Secretary of the Interior defer a High Flow Experiment (HFE) in the fall of 2017 based on new information from the U.S. Geological Survey that repeated fall High Flow Experiments since 2012 may have contributed to recent increases in the brown trout population and deterioration of the aquatic food base in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam. An increase in brown trout and a deteriorated aquatic food base pose a serious threat to the endangered humpback chub and the Lees Ferry blue ribbon rainbow trout fishery.

Furthermore, the AMWG recommends that the Secretary of the Interior place more emphasis on conducting future High Flow Experiments in the spring (as opposed to the fall) as a means for improving the aquatic food base, building camping beaches in Marble and Grand Canyon immediately before the peak recreation season, minimizing impacts to hydropower, and reestablishing natural ecological processes in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam.

Presenter

John Hamill, Recreational Fishing Representative and AMWG Alternate

Previous Action Taken

N/A

Relevant Science

N/A

Summary of Presentation and Background Information

As of now sediment availability for a fall HFE remains questionable, but that is subject to change on short notice. As identified in the LTEMP, the Glen Canyon Dam HFE Technical Team makes a recommendation to the DOI Leadership Team whether to conduct an HFE based on sediment supplies, resource impacts, and other concerns. The design of that process takes directly affected stakeholders out of the decision. In past years, except for the appearance of green sunfish in the Lees Ferry reach, that decision has been a relatively straightforward process. This year, green sunfish are still present, although in smaller numbers. However, the green sunfish issue has been dwarfed by

the unknowns and uncertainties associated with the increased presence of brown trout and the potential threat they pose to the native fishes and RBT sport fishery. There is debate underway regarding whether there is a correlation or a causation related to recent sequential fall HFEs and the brown trout increase. The AMWG-initiated brown trout workshop that will be held in late September 2017 is part of the process for resolving that question. The completed and reviewed results of the workshop, under the present schedule, will not be available until early next year. In addition, the recently completed Knowledge Assessment concluded that repeated fall HFEs are contributing to the deterioration of the aquatic food base, which impacts humpback chub, other native fishes, and the Lees Ferry rainbow trout fishery.

It is ecologically prudent in the light of the potential risks associated with brown trout, the risk posed by green sunfish, and the evolving acceptance that fall HFEs are detrimental to the aquatic food base, that this year's fall HFE be deferred until the impacts of these flows are better understood. AMWG stakeholders are excluded from this critical decision making process on HFEs, leaving this motion as the only available avenue for presenting our concerns, to the extent we have them, and informing the Secretary of the Interior's ultimate decision.