

Glen Canyon Dam Technical Work Group
Agenda Item Information
March 16-17, 2009

Agenda Item

Management Actions

Action Requested

- ✓ Motion requested. (The following motion is provided for TWG consideration. However, no motion is presumed to be made unless and until a TWG member makes the motion in accordance with the TWG Operating Procedures.)

Action 1: The TWG requests that the Science Advisors develop a report on Management Actions. This should be developed in coordination with the TWG Chair, TWG Co-Chair, and Chief of GCMRC. The report should be provided to the TWG at its next meeting and a presentation should be provided. The SAs should also be available to present this to AMWG at their late summer meeting (likely in August).

Action 2: The TWG requests that AMWG consider the policy implications of management actions. This could look similar to an in-and-out committee, involving interested parties that are familiar with the legal and policy framework of the program. This could either be a TWG or AMWG committee and could involve a mix of individuals from all parts of the AMP. We are looking to AMWG for guidance on how to, and if we should, further pursue the question of management actions.

Presenter

Shane Capron, TWG Chair; Dennis Kubly, TWG Co-Chair; John Hamill, Chief GCMRC; Dave Garrett, Executive Coordinator Science Advisors

Background Information

The GCDAMP web site includes the following two statements related to management actions:

The scientific information obtained under the Adaptive Management Program is used as the basis for recommendations for dam operations and management actions.

Through the Adaptive Management approach, scientific experimentation is integrated into resource management actions. Over time, as more is learned about the complexities of the downstream ecosystem, the goal of enhancing and improving downstream resources and dam operations can be realized.

However, neither the Strategic Plan nor any of the other guiding documents in the AMP clearly describe what management actions are, how they should be developed, or what funding should be used to implement them. This is further confused by the need to implement compliance activities within the program, which might be considered by some to be management actions. Thus, there is no clear vision of what a management action is.

In developing the FY 2010-11 budget, it has become clear that the program should consider the implications of management actions. A current example is the Non-native fish removal project which GCMRC believes is ripe to be implemented as a management action rather than scientific research. This has sparked substantial discussion on whether management actions should impact the science budget, whether GCMRC should implement management actions, and a whole variety of other issues. Additionally, the complexity of the cultural program and the need to provide compliance for Section 106 has added the issue of compliance costs to this discussion. For example, as compliance costs rise and more management actions are implemented, this could have a substantial impact on the science budget.

What are management actions?

Management actions, within an adaptive management program, are intended to induce change in the ecological system. Development of management actions proceed from asking “how” as opposed to asking “why.” One asks how program objectives are going to be achieved? The non-native fish removal project is a good example of this. The removal program was included in the 2008 Biological Opinion as a necessary conservation measure, and thus was established as a program objective (low numbers of non-natives in the vicinity of the confluence with the Little Colorado River(LCR)). GCMRC believes that they have developed adequate methods to conduct non-native removal (specifically for rainbow trout in the vicinity of the LCR), and that this should be handled by a management agency and that these funds should be freed up to work on other science questions. The question becomes, is this a management action, and if so, who pays?

If this adaptive management program is going to develop and solve critical issues, we need to have a common understanding of the process of moving from science to management actions. It is needed to help us develop the current budget, and would also assist in the development of a revised Strategic Plan for the AMP. The development of management actions includes two major areas of discussion; science and policy.

Science and adaptive management (Action 1 above)

As GCMRC points out, they believe the scientific portion of the non-native removal work is completed, but what does it mean in the adaptive management world to move from science to management actions? Are there examples we can learn from in other adaptive management programs, and how should we structure our process? Where does monitoring fit? It is likely that management actions will fall on a continuum of how much “science” is involved in their implementation and monitoring. What are the important considerations in defining management actions and how do we determine who is responsible for funding and implementation? These questions should be investigated by TWG in order to make technical recommendations to AMWG.

Policy and funding (Action 2 above)

It is critical that policy issues be considered separately from the scientific/technical issues of management actions. The policy discussion will likely provide the background and range of management actions that could be considered. It would be helpful to have a common understanding of the regulatory/political background while considering how/if the program will implement management actions. What are the guiding documents and can we agree on their interpretation? Who should pay for management actions and who should implement them? How should these choices affect budget priorities (e.g., science)?