



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAY - 4 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group

From: Anne Castle, Secretary's Designee, 
Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Re: Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program Workplan and Budget – Technical Work Group and Adaptive Management Work Group Suggested Roles

I am writing to provide you with updated information on the development of this year's Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) workplan and associated budget. Over the past months, we have had many conversations about how the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) can most efficiently utilize its time and further improve the effectiveness of the GCDAMP, consistent with the goals of the Grand Canyon Protection Act. I am acutely aware of the fact that the stakeholder groups represented on the AMWG provide top level leadership as their designated AMWG representatives, and I want to ensure that the collective knowledge, judgment, and experience of AMWG members is put to the most valuable use.

The AMWG has recognized for some time that the GCDAMP is transitioning its adaptive management process from a concentration on large-scale experimental science to more focus on management actions based on learning gained from existing and ongoing science. An important element of this transition is the refinement of the activities and priorities of the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC), as described in my memorandum to Kate Kitchell, Mark Sogge, and Ted Melis dated March 31, 2011 that was distributed to the AMWG.

In 2010, the AMWG established a two-year non-rolling process for review of the GCMRC/Reclamation workplan and budget, partly in order to reduce the amount of time spent by the AMWG stakeholders (as well as GCMRC) on detail-level budget issues. Similarly, the excellent assessment conducted by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR) in connection with the review of the AMWG Charter notes the view expressed by many AMWG members that the AMWG has been excessively focused on the GCDAMP budget. The review concludes that the AMWG would be better utilized if the discussions were directed more toward policy consultation and conducted at a more substantive, less detailed level.

More specifically, we have had multiple discussions at AMWG meetings on the shared desire and need to avoid “getting in the weeds” on budget issues. The USIECR report also recommends, based on input from AMWG members, that the Secretary should delineate more specifically the issues on which the AMWG’s advice is requested and focus the agenda on those science and policy priorities. This recommendation is fully consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act and its implementing regulations.¹ This memo sets forth a vision for effective utilization of the expertise of the AMWG and Technical Work Group (TWG) in connection with the AMP workplan and budget review, consistent with the factors and sentiments set forth above.

The AMWG has received the Streamlined GCMRC Biennial Workplanning Process, which was distributed with the March 31, 2011 memo on priorities. I’ve attached a copy of that document to this memo for your convenience and for your consideration. This proposed process and timeline reflects the priorities and transitions described above, and the implementation of the two-year non-rolling budget and planning process. It also provides target dates for workplan and budget review. As the second year of a two-year budget cycle, a full work plan would not be developed in FY2012 because second year changes would be expected to reflect only minor corrections, consistent with the process AMWG adopted on May 6, 2010 (“During the second year of the budget, a full work plan would not be developed, rather a memo from GCMRC and/or Reclamation, outlining changes to the workplan would be provided in addition to a modified budget spreadsheet.”).

I recognize that it was only a year ago that AMWG approved the biennial budget process, and this proposed GCMRC Workplanning Process timeline represents additional tweaking. I believe, however, that it is consistent with the process and planning document that the AMWG approved on May 6, 2010, which was explicitly intended “to reduce the effort currently expended on the budget process while maintaining a high-quality adaptive management program.” The streamlined process proposed by GCMRC is intended to make more effective use of AMWG, TWG, and Budget Ad Hoc Group (BAHG) members’ time, and is also consistent with the discussions about GCDAMP policy and priorities described above.

¹ See e.g., 41 C.F.R. § 102-3.95(b): “Focus on mission. Advisory committee members and staff should be fully aware of the advisory committee's mission, limitations, if any, on its duties, and the agency's goals and objectives. In general, the more specific an advisory committee's tasks *and the more focused its activities are, the higher the likelihood will be that the advisory committee will fulfill its mission.*”

The revised draft FY2012 workplan and budget has been developed over the last two months by GCMRC and Reclamation based on input from the TWG and the DOI agencies. GCMRC and Reclamation have also developed a summary narrative describing the decision-making process for the FY2012 workplan and budget, the relationship of various budgeted activities to the priorities established, and the funding requirements of (and necessary tradeoffs for) certain additional activities that have not been budgeted but that may be of interest to the TWG and AMWG. The workplan summary is organized around the four DFCs: Colorado River Ecosystem, Cultural Resources, Recreation, and Hydropower. As explained in the memorandum, the budget also considers the 24 recommendations TWG provided following its March 2011 meeting as well as other priorities. These materials were shared with the DOI agencies in April and are being provided to the AMWG, BAHG, and TWG with the AMWG meeting materials. It should be emphasized that the workplan summary and budget overview provided to the AMWG do not reflect detailed review and subsequent feedback by the BAHG or the TWG as those processes will occur subsequent to the provision of the AMWG meeting documents. These materials are intended to allow the AMWG to focus on “big picture” issues at the May 18 meeting and provide any associated input to GCMRC, Reclamation, and TWG representatives to inform the next stages of review.

Following input from the BAHG and Science Advisors, the TWG will consider the revised FY2012 workplan and budget materials at its June meeting. That process will allow for any TWG recommendations to the AMWG on significant unresolved issues to be considered at the August AMWG meeting. I will be seeking your feedback on these proposed process changes at the May 18 AMWG meeting in order to help further refine our efforts, especially as we move toward planning for FY2013 and beyond.

This revised workplan process invests the BAHG and TWG with significant responsibility for working closely with GCMRC and Reclamation to resolve detailed or complex issues. The goal is to elevate to the AMWG only science and policy issues related to the workplan and budget and avoid detailed discussion of specific line items at the AMWG level. Consequently, I am asking the TWG members and TWG Chair to determine how best to ensure that in-depth financial questions and tradeoffs are addressed at the TWG level and not elevated to the AMWG. This will necessarily require the exercise of judgment by the TWG and TWG Chair to distinguish policy issues from budget detail. It will be necessary for TWG members to be fully prepared to discuss and resolve issues at the TWG meetings rather than waiting until the August AMWG meeting to make recommendations for program changes. The TWG Chair has the authority to guide the TWG in these discussions, and must also ensure that the BAHG and TWG review of the workplan and budget occurs in a timely manner.

As AMWG members we must all be cognizant of the need to credit the work performed by the skilled members of the TWG and BAHG, as well as GCMRC and Reclamation, and to focus our discussions on policy issues rather than budget detail. At the May 18 meeting, we will dedicate some time for discussion about the types of budget policy issues the AMWG would think appropriate to be raised by the TWG, so as to provide further guidance.

I greatly appreciate the thoughtful comments of many AMWG and TWG members on this subject and the efforts to more effectively utilize the time and expertise of the AMWG for the benefit of the entire Adaptive Management Program. I believe the proposed changes move us in a positive direction, and look forward to discussing them with you further at our upcoming meeting in Phoenix.