

AWMG Discussion on Issues, Concerns, and Challenges

Future Focus
August 28, 2014
Themes Document

AWMG August 27 – 28, 2014 Meeting

This document is a summary of the discussion that occurred under the added agenda topic “AMWG Discussion on Issues, Concerns, and Challenges” at 8:15 a.m. on August 28, 2014.

After consensus approval of the FY 2015-17 Budget and Work Plan, Anne Castle led AMWG members through a brainstorming session of issues and ideas for focus to be considered during future discussions on AMWG’s work plan.

The following document categorizes the issues and opportunities discussed by AMWG members in response to the question “*what issues/concerns/challenges do you feel AMWG should focus on over the next 3 years and/or the long term? Why?*”

Issues, Concerns, and Challenges by Category

Issue Area #1: Greater Concentration on Restoration

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to address the following **restoration issues**:

- Examine how much money is dedicated to on-the-ground-actions versus studying and researching.
- Include more emphasis on improving the Glen Canyon ecosystem.
- Consider invasive species, especially with the onset of low lake levels and higher temperatures.
- Consider issues related to water quality, specifically temperature and turbidity.
- Improve habitat in riparian areas.
- Monitor riparian habitats.
- Consider efforts that could keep other species from being listed (MSCP has had a focus on this).
- There is concern that the Grand Canyon National Park is “dying of 1,000 cuts.”

Issue Area #2: Holistic View of the River

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see a more **holistic management plan**, and commented that:

- In the future, there will be less water, more fluctuations, reservoirs will trap sediment, and the river will be smaller with the dams. What is it AMWG wants to see for the whole river?
- AMWG should think in terms of the broader basin – where is the biggest bang for the buck?
- By concentrating on the Grand Canyon National Park, what opportunities do we miss elsewhere in the watershed?
- AMWG should take a broader look at sediment.
- Physical and social systems are important to consider in addition to the science research.
- The human element can get lost in the science program. Humans are an essential element in the science and humans are stewards of the environment.
- There is a limited amount of information available for all nine national parks – a basin wide approach may address this.
- Managing the Colorado River in its entirety may lead to better choices.*

**Concerns were expressed about expanding the geographic scope and adding potential new AMWG members to cover a larger geographic area, which are captured in Issue Area #8.*

Issue Area #3: Desired Future Conditions (DFC)

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see the ***Desired Future Conditions*** revisited and expanded, and commented that:

- AMWG should revisit the DFCs.
- Over the next few years, AMWG stakeholders should work to take the DFC document to the next level. The existing document has some incompatibilities. It will be important for AMWG to look at the inconsistencies in the current DFC document.
- Should DFCs be defined for the whole watershed?
- AMWG should take DFCs to the next level by writing goals with more specificity, especially related to humpback chub and sediment.
- The group should determine what questions it has answered over the years and consider how to tie these answers in with DFCs.
- Change DFCs to “Desired Conditions.”

Issue Area #4: Updating AMWG’s Foundational Documents

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see ***AMWG’s Foundation Documents*** revisited, and commented:

- How does this question on AMWG’s focus for the next three years relate to the need to revise the Strategic Plan?
- Review the core monitoring plan – what questions are important to consider in this plan?
- GCMRC’s Big Questions have helped. What should our AMWG vision be now?
- AMWG should clearly articulate the importance of Glen Canyon and how AMWG makes decisions, as well as clearly explain how AMWG’s work impacts the Grand Canyon National Park.
- The Grand Canyon Act puts a priority on the Grand Canyon National Park.
- AMWG’s foundational documents should have the Grand Canyon National Park as the foundation for the work AMWG does.
- AMWG needs to determine what questions it is trying to answer.
- AMWG should develop a science plan out of the Long Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) and determine what will be important for science and how to prioritize the science.
- The Public Outreach Ad Hoc Group (POAHG) should be used to communicate with the public positive aspects of the AMWG program.
- AMWG’s philosophy on what it is really after needs to be defined – we often lose sight of this.
- There is a need to revisit the LTEMP and think about what was left out.
- AMWG needs to consider the unique components of what we have and better understand the various interests at the table. What do people care about?

Issue Area #5: Incorporating Tribal Values

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see ***tribal values*** more readily incorporated into AMWG’s work, and commented that:

- One of the main challenges for AMWG is how to incorporate Native American values into the program.
- Tribes have a much more holistic view of how to manage the ecosystem. There has been a lot of progress on how to mesh the two differing viewpoints, but more needs to be done. This would include broadening the focus to the whole system and looking at a broader range of resources (types of fish, tribal restoration, expand within the socio-economic Tribal aspects).

Issue Area #6: Concentrate on Big “Payoffs”

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see more of a ***focus on “big payoff” efforts***, and commented that AMWG should:

- Look at areas where agreements can be reached instead of dedicating resources to issues that will be near impossible to reach agreement.

- Spend our resources where there will be the biggest gains – will this be watershed wide or a specific segment of the river?
- Determine where existing resources are best spent.

Issue Area #7: Humpback Chub

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see the following changes related to

Humpback Chub:

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s recovery plans for humpback chub should have more specificity for the recovery goals and a plan on how to reach those goals.
- Delist humpback chub and possibly help other basins with humpback chub.
- Consider raising humpback chub for future introductions. Why can’t humpback chub benefit from rearing?

Issue Area #8: Leadership & Future Membership

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see ***membership changes***, and commented that:

- AMWG works best when the Secretary pays attention to the program. This is especially important if AWMG starts looking at the whole river.
- Potential AMWG membership invites to upstream and downstream groups, including the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and Mexico, may help with understanding the different programs on the river and creating an integrated river system.
- If membership is expanded, it will be important to consider the issues associated with expanding up into tributaries. Looking at how the CRSP program deals with multiple state issues may be a good starting place.
- If membership expands, what would others bring to the program? Federal agencies would likely not provide all the resources.
- It is important to tap into the experience of a wide variety of folks.
- The process should continue and expand.

Issue Area #9: Hydropower

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to see the ***value of hydropower considered***, and commented that:

- The value of developed water in the West and hydropower often does not get recognized enough. To get the fixes this area needs, AWMG needs a better understanding of what has been achieved and the complete value of developed water (e.g. decreased CO2, agricultural and human uses). What do we trade for when we make these choices?
- With the focus on greenhouse gas emission reductions, electric utilities find themselves in a place of wondering what to do.
- Hydropower is an important component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Issue Area #10: Climate Change Responsiveness

In the next 3+ years, some AMWG members would potentially like to answer this question related to ***climate change***:

- What needs to be incorporated into AMWG’s discussions to ensure that climate change is accounted for and the Glen Canyon ecosystem remains resilient?