

LTEMP Comments

January 29, 2012

Glen Canyon Dam LTEMP EIS Scoping
Argonne National Laboratory
9700 S. Cass Ave. –EVS/240
Argonne, IL 60439

RE: Glen Canyon Dam LTEMP EIS Scoping Comments

From: The Marble Canyon Business Interests

Comprehensive Fishery Management Plan

The Marble Canyon Business Interests is a coalition of businesses and individuals who represent the economic interests of the region adjoining the community of Marble Canyon, Lees Ferry, and the Navajo Reservation.

The economy of this region is 100% driven by tourism and outdoor recreation and a very substantial portion of the local economy is dependent on the recreational opportunities provided by the access point to the Colorado River at Lees Ferry. This is where all Colorado River rafting trips are launched and is the only access for recreational fishing on the Colorado River above Lees Ferry to Glen Canyon Dam. The reason people come here is to raft and fish the Colorado River and the reason we are here is to provide essential services to the tourists. The livelihoods and prosperity of the regional residents are inextricably linked to the resources that support recreation on the Colorado River.

We are confident that there are many hundreds of letters being written as comments to the LTEMP in support of protecting and enhancing all of the natural resources, on and in, the Colorado River/Grand Canyon that we all cherish. So the focus of this letter is to stress the importance of including the recreational trout fishery at Lees Ferry in the LTEMP process and incorporating a detailed plan for creating and maintaining a Blue Ribbon trout fishery above the Paria River to Glen Canyon Dam. In writing this letter we are not only representing and speaking for the regional residents of the Lees Ferry/Marble Canyon and Navajo Reservation but also for the many thousands of our customers who have traveled here in past years to fish the Colorado River at Lees Ferry and hope to return in the future.

The Lees Ferry trout fishery is a section of the River no longer suitable for native fish. In the past this recreational trout fishery had a reputation as a destination Blue Ribbon trout fishery with an abundant trophy trout population. It drew visitors from across the country and around the world who over the years, have spent many millions of dollars in the local area. The economic benefits generated by the trout fishery are essential to the survival of the local population but also the local Native American community that is largely dependent upon fishing related lodges and restaurants for employment. This is especially important considering the fact that more than 28 percent of American Indians are living in poverty, compared with 15 percent of the nation as a whole and there are no other employment opportunities in this area other than tourist services. The status of the River for fishing has been allowed to decline over time and while it remains a unique Arizona trout fishery it no longer brings the large number of fishing visitors of the past. In lieu of being managed to be what it could be it has been the recipient of unrelated management actions rather than planned beneficial actions. We are supporting the implementation of a comprehensive fishery management plan in recognition of both the recreational and economic benefits that will be enhanced through such a plan.

It is essential that a comprehensive fishery management plan be an integral part of the experimental and management plan for the future operation of Glen Canyon Dam. A plan for the Colorado River and its tributaries should be collectively developed by the relevant Federal, State, and Tribal agencies along with the participation of impacted public organizations and private parties. The plan should cover the aquatic life, principally fish, of the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead including the River tributaries. However, as a comprehensive plan it should also include managing and enhancing the associated aquatic food base as an essential component for the success of the plan. There should be a single plan covering the River and its tributaries with the administrative geographic divisions within the area of the plan managed by the entities responsible for those divisions as determined by Federal, State, and Tribal laws, regulations, treaties, etc.

As a comprehensive plan for managing the total fishery in a coordinated manner the plan would include the restoration, recovery, and maintenance of native fish along with the recovery and maintenance of a Blue Ribbon trophy trout fishery in the Lees Ferry reach of the River while addressing the threat to both from invasive non-native warm water fish and organisms. It also should include experimental management actions based on comprehensive, measurable, and defined objectives.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Submitted by:
Marble Canyon Lodge
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