

Lees Ferry Rainbow Trout Fishery & LTEMP EIS Scoping Public Comments

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the National Park Service (NPS) are preparing a Long Term Experimental & Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (LTEMP) that will guide the operation of the Glen Canyon Dam and affect the Lees Ferry Rainbow Trout recreational fishery for the next ten to fifteen years. There are a number of competing interests of which the recreational trout fishery is one among hydropower generation, water delivery, recreational rafting, tribal cultural concerns and environmental issues.

The BOR and NPS are soliciting public comment and inviting you to participate in the initial scoping process for the development of the LTEMP. More information is available at the project website: <http://ltempeis.anl.gov>. The public scoping period is open through January 31, 2012.

The Lees Ferry Rainbow Trout fishery has a storied past as a destination Blue Ribbon fishery with abundant trophy trout. That condition was allowed to decline over time and although it remains the exceptional Arizona river trout fishery it has not been managed to be what it could be. Under the existing operating regime the Lees Ferry fishery has not had equal status with the other competing interests. In recent years there has been an increase in both trout numbers and size, but this has been incidental to other management actions rather than the result of planned beneficial actions.

As part of the LTEMP scoping your voice in sharing your goals and aspirations for this fishery as a member of the fishing community is essential in establishing the position of recreational fishing among the other interests. The Federal Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recognizes the vital contribution of fish and wildlife resources to the Nation and provides that such resources shall receive equal consideration and be coordinated with other features of water resource development programs such as the operation of Glen Canyon Dam when waters of the Colorado River are controlled or modified for various project purposes with a goal to provide for water delivery, hydropower production, other recreational uses including rafting and fishing, cultural and other tribal values and conservation of native fish.

Up to the present there has not been a comprehensive fishery management plan for the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead for the integrated benefit of both native and non native fish. The other competing interests have their proponents some of whom may advocate management actions that overlook the impact on the trout fishery or in some cases could be detrimental. Their voices are being heard through their participation in the scoping process. The voices of the fishing community need to be heard. Individual written or transmitted comments are more important than hundreds of copies of the exact same paragraph and words merely signed by a large number of people. Following are some points to consider for putting into your own words.

1 Your personal perspective is important. Share your goals for your future fishing experiences on the fishery (i.e. fish size, catch rate, etc.). Describe what the Lees Ferry fishery means to you and to recreational fishing in AZ and the need for balance between the recreational experience and water delivery, hydropower, cultural values and conservation as provided for under the Federal Fish and Wildlife Coordination act. Include any other thoughts you feel are important to protect, enhance, or improve your recreational experience.

2 There presently isn't a comprehensive fishery management plan for the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead. As part of the LTEMP a plan needs to be developed and implemented for managing the total fishery in a coordinated manner. That fishery management plan would include the recovery and maintenance of a Blue Ribbon trout fishery in the Lees Ferry reach along with the restoration, recovery and maintenance of native fish throughout the River while addressing the threat to both from invasive non native warm water fish. It also should include experimental management actions based on comprehensive, measurable, and defined objectives rather than continuing the well intentioned but disjointed efforts of the past.

3 The Lees Ferry/Marble Canyon area is economically dependent upon recreational activities of which fishing is a large component. The LTEMP should recognize that the recovery and maintenance of the Blue Ribbon fishery has a direct effect and a major impact on the economic livelihood for that community particularly the surrounding Native American residents who are dependent on employment for the related services.

4 Glen Canyon Dam operations include fluctuating water releases impacting fishing experiences. Currently typical daily flows vary from around 9,000 to 15, 000 cfs. These flows are determined by both hydropower and water distribution requirements. This year the river has experienced equalization flow to boost the water content of Lake Mead. These flows have been around 23,000 cfs. A major component of the LTEMP will be a determination to continue the present flow regime or adopt some alternate. The LTEMP should recognize and consider that flows over 16,000 cfs restrict or eliminate the opportunities for wade fishing.

Your comments must be received by January 31, 2012

Comments on the scope of the LTEMP EIS are important contributions from citizens. The public is encouraged to communicate information and comments on issues it believes the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service should address in the EIS. Accordingly, comments should be clear, concise, and relevant to the scope of the EIS analysis. Take the time to organize your thoughts and edit the document before it is submitted.

The following web site provides additional information:

<http://ltempis.anl.gov/involve/index.cfm>

Type your recommendations, comments or suggestions, edit them and use one of the following methods to make the submittal.

Electronically, using the online comment form (the preferred method):
<http://ltempeis.anl.gov/involve/commentintro/index.cfm>

Written comments or suggestions on the scope of the EIS can be mailed to:

Glen Canyon Dam LTEMP EIS Scoping
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