

IX. Other Organizations

Introduction

Apart from suggestions for editorial/ narrative revisions and general expressions of approval or disapproval or support or nonsupport, private organizations commenting on the Navajo Reservoir Operations DEIS expressed concern in the general areas summarized below.

Issues Raised

- Nearly one-third of the comments concerned the range of alternatives and the alternative selected. Another substantial block of comments centered on the trout fishery and accompanying economic impacts.
- Reservations were also expressed about the efficacy of the Flow Recommendations and other endangered species conservation measures as well as socioeconomic impacts in general.
- Other concerns range from perceived limitations of the Summer Low Flow Test and a need to withdraw the DEIS, to impacts to a variety of resources, including the reservoir itself.

Organizations in this Section

American Whitewater
New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides
New Mexico Trout (2)
San Juan Fly Fishing Federation
San Juan Guide Association
San Juan Sailing Club
Trout Unlimited, Colorado
Trout Unlimited, Grand Valley Anglers Chapter
Trout Unlimited, Truchas Chapter



November 12, 2002

Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East 2nd Avenue, Suite 400
Durango, CO 81301

RE: Navajo Re-operations Draft EIS comments

Dear Mr. Beck:

American Whitewater is a national non-profit organization that represents roughly 8,000 members and 80,000 affiliate members that works to protect and restore whitewater rivers. Because of this constituency and mission we have a direct interest in the outcome of the debate surrounding the Navajo Re-operations. Many of our members, as well as commercial rafting groups enjoy two different sections of the San Juan below Navajo reservoir. With increased difficulty in obtaining permits, we believe that other sections of the river will begin to have increased boater traffic as well. The DEIS must factor in this geographical shifting of use patterns over time.

In recent years, the lower section known as the Goosenecks (from Mexican Hat to Clay Hills) has been badly impaired because of sedimentation caused by water backing up from Clay Hills. With the lower flow regimens that are proposed, we believe that many more days of boating will be lost due to insufficient flows and quality of water. At lower levels the lower section becomes a continuous mudflow, and sand bars at times completely close off the river for lack of a clear channel to the take out. Our understanding is that there are no arrangements for when the Clay Hills takeout becomes unusable, so alternatives to this takeout should be considered in the flow regimen. These concerns must be addressed in the final EIS and consideration of alternatives.

We believe the higher flow levels (such as the 500/ 5000 flow regime) will better meet the needs of the boating public. Why was this alternative, and other increments not compared completely with the preferred alternative? We believe the comparison should be thorough, and not err on the side of less water in the river. The Draft EIS incorrectly assumes that there is no reduction in boater days at lower flows. We believe that the lower quality of the experience at lower flows has a significant impact on the experience resulting in a reduction of boater days. This impact should be assessed and considered in the preferred alternative.

Furthermore, the EIS must quantify the annual and monthly number of boatable days for each respective alternative. A boatable day is defined as a day in which the instream flows fall between the minimum acceptable and optimum flows for non-motorized watercraft including

- 1 OR1-1 Please see response to General Comment 32.
2 OR1-2 Please see responses to General Comments 3, 7, and 32.
3 OR1-3 Flow frequency tables are included in the EIS. Flow levels for different uses vary considerably from river to river; the BLM was consulted during our studies to determine the value of different flow levels.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS - Comments and Responses

American Whitewater
November 13, 2002 Page 2

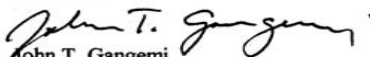
kayaks, canoes, rafts and cataracts. The minimum acceptable and optimum flow are determined through scientific study. To our knowledge, the Bureau has not conducted a scientific study to: A) identify the minimum acceptable and optimum flows for whitewater recreation and B) conduct comparative analysis of the impact on boatable days for the respective alternatives in the DEIS using the appropriate boatable range. For more information on identification of the minimum acceptable and optimum flow for non-motorized watercraft we recommend you consult the text by Whittaker et. al. 1993. Instream flows for recreation: A handbook on concepts and research methods. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Program.

3 cont.

The final decision process should consider an economic assessment of the impacts of the various flow alternatives on boating. This evaluation should include commercial, as well as non-commercial rafting, kayaking and canoeing visits. This study should include calculations on reduced travel due to low flows. Also, the final EIS should account for the possibility of even lower levels due to the lack of monitored water rights in New Mexico. Many New Mexico users simply take as much water as is available, with no regulation or documentation on their withdrawals.

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Sincerely,



John T. Gangemi
Conservation Director

cc: Dunbar Hardy
Kent Ford
Jason Robertson
Landis Arnold

OR1-4 Reclamation concurs that unregulated diversions downstream from Navajo Dam can interfere with meeting Flow Recommendations for endangered fish as well as downstream recreation. For additional information see the responses to General Comments 18a, 20d, and 31.



DEC - 2 2002

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30 November 2002

Mr. Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office, Southern Division
835 East Second Avenue
Durango, Colorado 81301

re: Public comment on "Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Navajo Reservoir Operations," dtd September 2002

Dear Mr. Beck:

This letter is on behalf of the officers, directors and members of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. The Council was formed in 1978 with the expressed purpose of protecting and advancing outdoor recreational opportunities in New Mexico and furthering the development of those professionals who offer quality experiences to the public on our lands and waters. Currently we represent over 500 outfitters, guides, hunters and anglers. Our Associate Members, hunters and anglers both, travel from around the world to participate in the unparalleled outdoor experiences that New Mexico offers. As I am sure you are aware, at the current time, the San Juan River is rated among the finest trout waters in the nation, truly, in the world.

We strongly feel that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement as offered by the Bureau of Reclamation is flawed in both in concept and procedure and will have incredibly disastrous consequences to the very public that government is intended to serve: the people themselves.

Our concerns include:

- Lack of consideration and mediation for the economic impact to the recreational fisheries in the San Juan river Basin. This not only includes those who make their livelihood upon the River, but also all

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OR2-1 Please see the responses to General Comments 29 and 31.

of the ancillary businesses that depend heavily upon tourist dollars for their economic success. The DEIS itself projects over a million dollars a year loss to the hotel/lodging industry alone in the San Juan Basin. While we believe the figures presented by the DEIS are dubious in their conservative nature, this amount of loss by itself when factored into the local economy, will be critical in a state that ranks at the very bottom of income nationally. As an aside: the Council, in cooperation with our affiliated chapter, the San Juan River Guides Association, and New Mexico State University are in the process of completing a much more accurate economic survey of the value of *guided* sport fishing on the San Juan. Had we been granted the realistic extension for comments that we had requested, those figures would be available to all for consideration.

1 cont.

- The public participation process has been hurried and, intentionally or not, presented in such a way as to preclude public understanding and comprehension of the proposed “preferred alternative” and meaningful participation in the process. The DEIS is, as you are aware, a two volume document consisting of over 600 pages. Most copies were provided to interested members of the public *either during or after* the public comment meetings at the first of October. When a request for sufficient time to study the document was made, a 30 day extension (rather than the 180 day extension requested) was granted. Even then, sufficient copies of the document for all those impacted by the proposed actions were not made available. In fact, repeated requests for sufficient copies of the document were denied. We feel that it is also important to note the unconscionable lack of local participation on the Draft EIS Committee. With one possible exception, no one from the locale that will be impacted by the Bureau’s proposed actions was allowed to participate in the drafting process. Rather, the draft was compiled by persons who are not, and probably never will be, stakeholders in the social and economic future of the San Juan Basin.
- We do not find any evidence in the DEIS that provisions of Executive Order 12962 of June 7, 1995, pertaining to Recreational Fisheries were even considered, much less followed. It is our understanding that Executive Orders carry the force of law and, because of this, we are perplexed that we cannot find any reference to the prescribed procedure contained in the Executive Order presented in the DEIS.
- Most disturbingly, and contrary to established procedures, the Bureau’s presentation seem to be an apologetic defense of a chosen course of action. Established procedure maintains that the draft environmental impact statement should be unbiased, allowing for the

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OR2-2 Please see the responses to General Comments 19 and 34.

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OR2-3 The Executive Order cited calls for Federal agencies to improve recreational fisheries to the extent permitted by law and to identify and minimize conflicts between recreational fisheries and their responsibilities under ESA. The Preferred Alternative is designed to follow the authorization or law for the use of the Navajo Unit as well as the ESA. In doing so, recreational fisheries will be impacted as indicated in the EIS. Flexibility, discussed in General Comment No. 11, is designed to reduce impacts.

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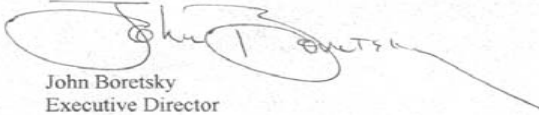
OR2-4 Please see the response to General Comment 10.

discovery and justification of the course of action that would best serve. Even a cursory examination of the Summary and the DEIS itself makes it seemingly apparent that both documents are a justification of a predetermined course of action, rather than the process of discovery and determination that is prescribed by standards. We find this very troubling.

It is the request and recommendation of the officers, directors and members of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides that the current Draft Environmental Impact Statement be withdrawn, and that further actions be withheld until proper and due consideration of process and consequences are presented and examined and an unbiased approach to water usage in the San Juan Basin, usage that will benefit all constituents, can be determined. Until that time, it is the further recommendation of the Council that the mediated agreement now in effect between the San Juan Flyfishers Federation and the Bureau of Reclamation regarding river flow levels be maintained and honored.

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Sincerely,



John Boretsky
Executive Director

cc: Senator Jeff Bingaman
Senator Pete Dominici
Representative Tom Udall
John Tavenner, President, San Juan River Guides Association

OR2-5 Please see the responses to General Comments 1a and 19.

NEW MEXICO TROUT
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION



P. O. Box 3276
Albuquerque, NM 87190-3276

November 5, 2002

Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East Second Avenue, Suite 400
Durango, Colorado 81301

RE: NAVAJO RESERVOIR OPERATIONS DRAFT EIS

Dear Mr. Beck:

Thank you for extending then comment period on the draft EIS. We had not received the draft EIS in time to respond to your agency's initial deadline. New Mexico Trout is an organization of conservation minded anglers and sportsmen with approximately 500 members in New Mexico and surrounding states. We have active membership from individuals residing in counties directly affected by the water proposals in the draft EIS (e.g. San Juan, Rio Arriba and Montezuma Counties).

After careful review of the draft EIS, and consultation with fisheries professionals in New Mexico, our organization has concluded that we cannot support the 250/5000 cfs flow proposal recommended in the draft EIS. Contrary to the assertion in the draft EIS that this is the most beneficial flow regime, we find that this proposal is the least desirable from the perspective of preserving the quality trout fishery that exists below Navajo Reservoir. Nor do we believe that 250/5000 recommendation will be adequate to protect the endangered fish species in the San Juan River below Farmington. For example, we do not understand the assertion in the draft EIS that the 250/5000 release assures a flow of at least 500 cfs below Farmington, while the 500/5000 alternative does not. This is counter intuitive and no data is presented in the draft EIS to support this position.

Our organization supports the 500/5000 alternative. While this might not be ideal for all of the water users affected by releases from Navajo Reservoir, it would in our judgment, be a viable compromise. We believe this alternative would be acceptable to the widest constituency, thereby avoiding potential legal challenges and, most importantly, would best protect wildlife dependent on releases from Navajo Reservoir.

Sincerely,


Norman Segel, President

AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS AND TROUT UNLIMITED

OR3-1 The EIS recognizes that the minimum releases under the Preferred Alternative provide less trout habitat than the existing minimum release of 500 cfs. The Preferred Alternative is designed to assist in recovering endangered fish while protecting existing and future water development. Also see the response to General Comment 22 which discusses flexibility.

OR3-2 In order to maintain target flows (500 to 1,000 cfs) in the critical habitat below Farmington, Navajo Dam releases are used to supplement the natural river flows. For example, when critical habitat target flows are well above the minimum target of 500 cfs, releases from the dam would not be required except to provide water in the river above the Animas River confluence. At other times, almost no flow is available from the Animas River in the critical habitat area, so the dam must supply a large percentage of the target minimum. The Preferred Alternative allows for dam release adjustments to be made so that target flows can be maintained in the critical habitat area. Maintaining a minimum release of 500 cfs would limit the ability to develop water, result in spring peak releases of lesser duration and frequency, and cause occasional exceedences of target flows below Farmington. Adequate spring peak releases and maintaining target flows consistently are necessary components of the Flow Recommendations. Also, see the responses to General Comments 5 and 16.

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OTHER ORGANIZATIONS - Comments and Responses

293

William J. Frangos
2201 Algodones NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112

November 22, 2002

Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
East Second Avenue, Suite 400
Durango, Colorado 81301

RE: EIS on the Operation of Navajo Dam, NM.

Your agency has recommended a flow regime called the "250/5000" Alternative for releases from Navajo Dam into the San Juan River. The Bureau of Reclamation acknowledges that **250 cfs releases will negatively impact** the trout fishery below the dam by reducing the habitat for trout and the macro-invertebrates that support the trout population. **I as a member of New Mexico Trout would like to recommend that the agency adopt the "500/5000" alternative which would keep the minimum releases at 500 cfs.**

Although, I understand the original intended use for the Dam was not recreational, there is no denying that the San Juan Fishery has itself become a national treasure that requires our stewardship. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information that will assist in our organization's effort to protect this fine fishery.

Sincerely



William J. Frangos
Treasurer, New Mexico Trout

OR4-1 Please see the responses to General Comments 5 and 16.

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Farmington, NM 87499-1020

Richard L. Gerding
Michael T. O'Loughlin

December 4, 2002

**Confirmation
of FAX**

Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office, Southern Division
835 E. 2nd Avenue, Suite 300
Durango, CO 81301

Attn: Ken Beck

Re: Draft EIS Statement – Reduced flows on the San Juan

Dear Mr. Beck:

I am writing on behalf of San Juan Fly Fishing Federation to register formal comments with regard to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement addressing environmental issues resulting from proposed changes in flow on the San Juan River below Navajo Dam, New Mexico.

San Juan Fly Fishing Federation has been involved in assessing impacts resulting from attempted changes in flow on the San Juan River since 1995. San Juan Fly Fishing Federation filed suit during that year seeking to enjoin BOR from unilaterally reducing flows without first assessing environmental impacts. A settlement was reached whereby BOR agreed to conduct studies and issue its EIS. BOR also agreed that flows would not be lowered below 500 cfs without permission of San Juan Fly Fishing Federation. To date minimum flows have remained at or above 500 cfs, except when tests were conducted or drought conditions required lower flows.

At no time since 1995 has it been shown that those minimum flows have adversely affected any of the endangered fish in the river below Farmington. No proof has been presented in the Draft study to support the view that reducing flows from Navajo Dam to 250 cfs during summer months will benefit those endangered species native to the lower river. In fact, the study admits, albeit very vaguely, that no native fish have been found. Apparently, the only fish studied and which are under the protection of the Endangered Species Act are fish that have been introduced or planted since 1995.

Obviously, serious questions exist as to the necessity for reduced flows if the fish originally sought to be protected cannot be found or no longer exist. Serious questions

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OR5-1 Please see the response to General Comment 20.

Page 2

also exist concerning known or established benefits to those endangered species from by further reducing flows from Navajo Dam. At best, the Draft EIS appears to accept unproven assumptions from San Juan River Recovery Implementation Project's Biology Committee and does nothing to confirm those assumptions independently.

I will address specific questions raised from a review of the Draft statement and will comment upon each of those questions as a way to emphasize the importance of each of the questions.

QUESTION NO. 1:

Whether the Draft EIS adequately addresses whether changes in flow that have been made to date have harmed to any extent, endangered species and specifically exactly how further reductions in flow will benefit such species in the future.

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OR5-2 Please see the response to General Comment 20.

COMMENT:

As stated in the above summary, there is nothing in the Draft EIS that establishes a definite proven need to reduce flows to the extent recommended in the Draft statement. There is no evidence that an attempt to mimic a natural hydrograph will benefit either of the endangered species. It is also apparent, from the Draft statement, as well as from other sources, that those fish originally classed as endangered can no longer be found. Other fish, reportedly from dissimilar gene pools have been planted in their place. No evidence appears in the Draft study to support the necessity to provide a flow no greater than 500 cfs below Farmington to encourage spawning activity. The very basis for the proposal for reduced flows appears to be flawed, or certainly unsupported in the Draft statement.

QUESTION NO. 2:

Whether the Draft EIS adequately discusses alternative flow recommendations, the way that such flows will be implemented and the differences, if any, between the various alternatives discussed. For example, the differences between the 250/5000 alternative and the 250 variable/5000 alternative are not clearly set forth.

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OR5-3 Please see the response to General Comment 4.

COMMENT:

Although the title of the recommended alternative – 250/5000 – appears to be rigid, the discussion in the Draft statement indicates that "...flexibility would be retained to adjust release rates within this range to respond to new information as it becomes available."

That statement indicates that there may be "variation" or "flexibility" in the releases. How does the recommended alternative differ from the 250 variable/5000 alternative that was rejected. The only difference appears to be a

Page 3

difference in reservoir storage. History from 1995 indicates that reservoir storage is a problem that can be addressed as necessary without artificial minimum flows, but rather in response to actual conditions. In short, the Draft statement does not set forth clearly valid reasons why one variable differed materially from others or why it was necessary to select the preferred alternative at this time.

The only justification for the protection of reservoir storage is the assumption that NIIP will utilize all of its allotted water. That has not happened to date and may never happen. There is no reason given in the Draft statement that the preferred alternative is necessary to protect reservoir levels at this time.

QUESTION NO. 3:

Whether the preferred alternative is one that was selected before investigation was conducted and the report drafted.

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COMMENT:

Bureau of Reclamations NEPA Handbook specifically instructs its employees that the draft "...should not be written in such a way that it appears to justify decisions already made ... The analysis must remain objective ..." (BOR NEPA Handbook, Ch. 8-8.1).

In 1995, BOR attempted to institute those flows that are now reflected in the preferred alternative. San Juan Fly Fishing Federation submits, at no time during the investigation were other alternatives actually considered. It appears that the investigation was conducted in a way that promoted the alternative that had been pre-selected. The Draft statement reflects that BOR ignored its directive that it approach the investigation objectively, that all alternatives be investigated, and that a decision be reached only after considering all factors and not just those that support a particular position.

QUESTION NO. 4:

Whether the Draft adequately addressed, by tests actually conducted, the irreparable and irretrievable losses that would be sustained during summer flows of 250 cfs for periods longer than seven days.

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COMMENT:

Without doubt, the summer low flow study illustrated damages to the river's recreational uses, its ability to deliver adequate irrigation water, domestic water use, power generation, and unacceptable levels of toxic substances. The summer test report itself notes that the test was halted after seven days because "... a lengthier period could have resulted in significant impacts to affected resources..." (Summer Low Flow Test Report, p. 5). BOR employees admitted

OR5-4 Please see the response to General Comment 10.

OR5-5 Please see the response to General Comments 22 and 28.

Page 4

publicly after the test period that the test was stopped to avoid irreparable damages to river resources. No attempt was made, however, in the Draft statement to discuss these impacts. Full discussion of the negative findings and fears of significant damage are avoided through use of models instead summaries of actual observation. A more complete discussion, including actual findings, could have resulted in the consideration of an alternative (such as 500/5000) other than that the alternative actually selected as the "preferred" alternative.

QUESTION NO. 5:

Whether the Draft statement addressed problems that would be experienced by farmers when flows were insufficient to allow diversion to canals or effective delivery of water for irrigation.

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OR5-6 Please see the response to General Comment 31d.

COMMENT:

Actual experience during the summer low flow test period was inconclusive. Summer rains coupled with low demand for irrigation water because of harvesting of alfalfa did not support the concerns voiced before the study that there was a probability that there would be insufficient flows at 250 cfs to allow full diversion and effective irrigation by farmers. The Draft study did not address impacts to farmers if water cannot be delivered during periods of low flow. Testing was not sufficient to establish whether flows at 250 cfs for extended periods would adversely impact ditch companies and farmers.

QUESTION NO. 6:

Whether the Draft EIS statement adequately addressed the adverse impact on wetlands, waterfowl habitat and indigenous species, who inhabit those wetlands affected by periods of low flows suggested as acceptable in the Draft EIS.

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OR5-7 Please see the response to General Comment 33.

COMMENT:

The indigenous species inhabiting the river and wetlands were mentioned only in passing in the Draft statement. A reduction of more than 20% of wetlands resulting from extended periods of flows at 250 cfs would have a permanent, irreparable, impact upon nesting waterfowl, and species such as the Willow Flycatcher and Leopard Frog in areas immediately below Navajo Dam. No attempt was made to assess the impact to wetlands farther down the river at locations beyond irrigation diversion points. It has been suggested that flows at Bloomfield, given full diversion for irrigation and domestic water use, could be as low as 6-8 cfs. Wetlands would virtually disappear. The Draft statement does not adequately address these impacts. The failure to disclose all facts objectively

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makes it impossible to assess the propriety of the alternative selected as the preferred alternative.

QUESTION NO. 7:

Whether the Draft EIS adequately evaluated impact on insect life and the long term impact of those changes on trout and other fish in the first fifteen miles of river below Navajo Dam.

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OR5-8 Please see the response to General Comment 28.

COMMENT:

Insect studies done during test periods involving low flows were conducted in riffles and deeper water where lower flows would have the least impact upon insect life. Given the differences of insect life in tail water fisheries such as the San Juan River below Navajo Dam, studies should have included assessment of insect life in shallow and quieter water. L Such testing would have revealed a far greater negative impact on insect life and, consequently, upon the fish in the quality waters.

Additionally, insufficient data was collected to assess insect life below quality waters. Significant reductions in such insect life in the river below quality waters would have an even greater impact upon the fishery.

QUESTION NO. 8:

Whether the Draft statement adequately discusses the enormous adverse economic impact to citizens of San Juan County if any alternative involving sustained flows of 250 cfs is implemented.

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OR5-9 Please see the response to General Comment 31.

COMMENT:

The devastating adverse impacts include economic damage to guides, outfitters, retailers, and others who lose revenue because of damage to a world class fishery, damage and losses of revenue to water users who may not be able to receive their allotted water from ditches during low flows, damages and costs to municipalities who must reconfigure existing waste treatment facilities, damages to municipalities who will lose hydroelectric power, and who would be forced to purchase electricity elsewhere, and damages to down-stream water users because of concentrations of toxic substances during period of the low flows now recommended as acceptable in the Draft statement.

San Juan Fly Fishing Federation was asked by BOR to help estimate adverse economic impacts to guides, outfitters and retail services that would result from sustained low flows. The estimates were completed by San Juan Fly Fishing

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Federation with help from economists, but were ignored by BOR in its Draft report. The Draft report minimizes the economic impacts to all persons and entities affected by low flows.

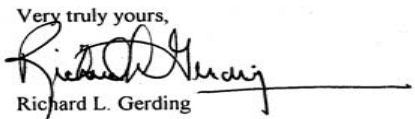
It was estimated that anglers produce economic benefits to San Juan County annually in excess of \$40,000,000. If fish are adversely impacted – as they will be – from sustained periods of low flows, the loss to all retail services in the County could be devastating. The Draft report does not fully and adequately discuss such losses.

Additionally, the City of Farmington estimates that it would lose as much as \$7,000,000 per year because it would be unable to use hydroelectric generators at the dam during low flow periods.

Further, no attempt was made to evaluate costs of reconfiguring water treatment facilities in municipalities such as Bloomfield. Although annual costs associated with repair of diversion points for irrigation was discussed in the Draft statement, no attempt was made to value loss or damage to crops because sufficient water could not be delivered to fields for use by farmers. These costs, if factored in, might force reconsideration of available alternatives.

The questions posed above are not the only questions which should be raised. Additional questions have been raised in correspondence from other interested parties. Because of the serious concerns posed by individuals and governmental entities, San Juan Fly Fishing Federation submits that the Draft statement should be withdrawn and additional investigation conducted before attempting to impose such significant changes. The known damages to citizens and municipalities of San Juan County must be reviewed before attempting to institute flows at 250 cfs. Those flows, if they are allowed to occur, will irreparably and irretrievably damage the river, its fishery and its wetland inhabitants. Needless expenditures of money will be necessary to reconstruct, reconfigure or repair irrigation diversions and municipal water facilities. At least one municipality will lose an estimated \$7,000,000 annually if changes are allowed.

San Juan Fly Fishing Federation submits that an alternative not considered, namely 500/5,000 with rights to adjust flows during drought conditions has been proved, by experience, to be the most viable method to control waters in the lower river while protecting business, personal and governmental interests of citizens of San Juan County. We ask that the Draft be withdrawn and that more viable alternatives, like that suggested above, be substituted.

Very truly yours,

Richard L. Gerding

RLG/mkc

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OR5-10 Please see the response to General Comment 26.

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OR5-11 Please see the responses to General Comments 23 and 31d.

12

OR5-12 Please see the response to General Comment 19.

13

OR5-13 Please see the responses to General Comments 3 and 5.

Colorado Area Office, Southern Division
 835 East Second Avenue, Suite 300
 Durango CO 81301

Dear Mr. Beck

I represent an organization known as the San Juan Guide Association. We are commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the modified operation of Navajo Dam. We believe the DEIS has many flaws that require its immediate withdrawal in accordance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).


For instance, the model used in determining the "Changes in Expenditure Impacts" (IMPLAN) lumps the Guiding and Outfitter businesses with businesses such as putt-putt golf and bowling alley's. We feel that the model used in determining the loss in revenue is not accurate in showing the losses that would occur to our industry. Your model only figures that we would have a 10% loss of anglers due to the low flows. Have you really showed proof that these changes of flow will only effect the guiding business to a certain point? What's to keep all the out of state anglers from not fishing a damaged river? Does this model accurately determine the true economic impact to this area?

The change in flows due to the "Preferred Alternative" would cause a reduction of 34% of the habitat for the trout. And a reduction of 20-30% of the population of trout. You failed to mention the total loss of the trout fishing below the Citizen Diversion. Was a seven day low flow test long enough to really determine the lasting effects of long term low flows? The DEIS also fails to take in to account that the "preferred alternative" will have a longer period of high water, which also limits the fishing along the river. The combination of longer high flows and low flows will drastically effect businesses along the river. Has the DEIS accurately stated what the economic thresholds of running a small business, such as a guide service, is?

The DEIS does not consider all options for flows coming from Navajo Dam. Why wasn't a 350/4500 or a 400/4500 alternative explored? When commenting on the Low Flow test, a Santa Fe based chapter of Trout Unlimited suggested that NHP water be sent downstream and extracted below the confluence with the Animas. Why was this not considered an alternative? Was the BOR thorough in determining an alternative?

And lastly, the purpose for the modified operations of Navajo Dam according to the DEIS is "to provide releases of water to conserve two endangered fish and enable future water development". Is the endangered fish a primary or secondary purpose of the modified operations of Navajo Dam? This is not clearly stated within the DEIS. What will happen to the endangered fish as a result of poorer water quality due to the low flows? This is not stated at all within the DEIS.

We believe that if you must choose between the three alternatives listed in the DEIS, the best choices are the 500/5000 alternative or the no action alternative. Our choice between the two remaining choices would be the 500/5000 alternative, which best fits the economy and well being of this area. Even by your calculations the fly fishing guiding business is a multi-million dollar business to the state. We cannot afford losing something that brings thousands of people a year to this area. The state of New Mexico depends heavily on its tourism industry. This is one of the leading tourist attractions this state has to offer. Try and walk through the Albuquerque Sunport and not see some one heading for the San Juan River. The impacts will be far greater than your predictions.


 John Tavenner
 President, San Juan Guide Association
 83 CR 2929
 Aztec NM 87410

- 1 | OR6-1 | Please see the response to General Comment 1a.
- 2 | OR6-2 | Please see the responses to General Comments 29 and 31.
- 3 | OR6-3 | Please see the responses to General Comments 22, 29c, and 31b.
- 4 | OR6-4 | Please see the responses to General Comments 5 and 8.
- 5 | OR6-5 | Please see the responses to General Comments 10 and 20f.
- 6 | OR6-6 | Please see the response to General Comment 3.

San Juan Sailing Club
PO Box 3982
Durango, CO 81302
December 4, 2002

Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East Second Ave., Suite 400
Durango, CO 81301

Re: Navajo Reservoir Operations Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Beck:

On behalf of the San Juan Sailing Club, may I offer some comments regarding the DEIS:

San Juan Sailing Club has about 30 members, most of whom sail out of Arboles, CO. The club has historically worked with the State Park on a variety of environmental issues, especially marine sanitation.

First, let me say that the Club fully realizes that this is a reservoir, constructed for multiple use, and that recreational users must coexist with the statutory purposes for which the reservoir was constructed. Water levels are going to be subject to fluctuation under the best of circumstances. However, the Recommended Alternative will so severely affect all other uses of Navajo Reservoir that we urge the Bureau to reconsider the No-Action Alternative.

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We do have one technical concern to address at the outset. Footnote 8 in Section II, p. 23, would in our view constitute a modification of the Flow Recommendations. Had it been in effect this year, water depletions during the summer months would have been approximately 30% greater than the actual drawdown. This footnote should be deleted.

2

Our real concern, however, is that the DEIS proposes an annual depletion of approximately 179,000 acre-feet per year for implementation (p. II-6). While certainly preferable to other alternatives (other than the No-Action Alternative), we do not believe that this depletion can or should be justified, for a number of reasons.

Inadequate consideration has been given to the effect of this depletion on businesses and other users of Navajo. The drawdown this summer to maintain the Flow Recommendations has rendered the marina at Arboles unuseable; the owner has said publicly that if water levels do not come up significantly by next year (which at this point appears unlikely), he will be bankrupt. While figures are not available, the impact on both recreation and other businesses dependent on recreational users at Arboles has to be devastating.

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OR7-1 Please see the response to General Comment 3.

OR7-2 The footnote has been revised.

OR7-3 Please see the response to General Comment 31.

We do not have figures available as to how much water was drawn out this year in comparison to the estimated depletion under the DEIS; assuming that the 250/5000 would have required an additional 80,000 cfs, the lake level as of this writing would be approximately 6002 feet rather than 6012 feet. (Source: BuRec Reservoir Elevation-Capacity Tables from Current RiverWare models. 12/15/2000; BuRec Website for Current Reservoir Levels). Were the lake level to remain approximately constant through next year, and the 179,000 A-F depletion to occur, this would put the lake level close to the point at which the NIIP inlet becomes subject to damage (see Navajo Nation comments). As conceded by the DEIS, the 250/5000 Alternative would have severe effects on the rafting industry and the fishery below the dam.

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OR7-4 Please see the responses to General Comments 29 and 32.

More to the point, I feel obligated to observe that this whole proposal falls in the category of the emperor who has no clothes. We believe that the available data do not support the conclusion that these flows are need for protection of the pikeminnow, for the following reasons:

1. The SJRBRIP Program Document (with revisions through August 31, 2002) recognizes that protection activities are not required in the lower reaches of the Colorado River Basin. The ESA does not require restoration of a species to all portions of its former range.

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OR7-5 Please see the response to General Comment 20.

2. As conceded by the SJRBRIP, little is known about spawning habits, nursery habits, or survival data (Program Document, at pp. 23-24). Moreover, while the Program Document at p. 8 mentions eradication efforts (many would argue that the only problem with such efforts was that they were not completely successful!), such efforts are mentioned only in passing— their effect on population is nowhere quantified. Finally, the fish have managed to survive everything from eradication efforts to flash floods and documented periods of no flow. In short, I do not believe that this lack of data supports the conclusions that the regulated flows from Navajo are solely, or even primarily, responsible for reduced populations or that Recommended Alternative would benefit the fish.

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OR7-6 Please see the response to General Comment 20.

3. The proposed depletion would raise the highest mean average flow at Bluff (which occurs in June of each year) from 4,317 cfs to 4,680 cfs (DEIS, Table II-5), an increase of only 363 cfs, or less than 10%. It seems difficult to believe that this modest increase will have any effect whatsoever. For this, we are going to drop the average lake level by some 11 feet (Figure II-3). This estimate is predicated on historical data since the reservoir was built. If, as predicted by some, we are entering a dry cycle, the drop would be much worse.

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OR7-7 The EIS recognizes that the Preferred Alternative would have a moderate impact on reservoir recreation from April through October. However, under this alternative, there is flexibility in summer releases that reduce impacts to recreation over an interim period.

4. Flows have been regulated to study their effect on the pikeminnow between 1992-98 (DEIS, p. I-8). Despite all this effort, the last study of pikeminnow population estimated a population of 19 adults in the San Juan (USFWS 2000 report of research by Ryden et al. for 1991-97). Thus, it appears that dam releases will not materially benefit the population.

8

OR7-8 Please see the response to General Comment 20.

5. The No-Action Alternative was rejected primarily because it did not address the Flow Recommendations and would require reconsultation with the USFWS (DEIS S-11, II-22. Given that the Flow Recommendations appear to us to be, as a professor of mine once put it, a micrometer on the end of a bull rope, such reconsultation may be appropriate!

9

Navajo Reservoir was built in large part for the purpose of impounding spring runoff to allow use of this water, which otherwise was lost downstream, throughout the year. The 250/5000 alternative would release most of this runoff. We will lose the primary purpose for which the dam was constructed, operating Navajo Dam solely for the speculative benefit of a few fish, with devastating impacts on other users. We urge the Bureau to reconsider the No-Action Alternative.

Sincerely,

David L. Dickinson,
Secretary

OR7-9 Please see the response to General Comment 16.



David Nickum
Executive Director
Colorado Trout Unlimited

December 3, 2002

Mr. Ken Beck
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East Second Avenue, Suite 400
Durango, CO 81301
Via email: kbeck@uc.usbr.gov

Re: Draft EIS for Navajo Reservoir Operations

Dear Mr. Beck:

On behalf of Colorado Trout Unlimited and Trout Unlimited (collectively, "TU"), I am pleased to provide these comments on the Bureau of Reclamation's (Bureau) Navajo Reservoir Operations Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Trout Unlimited has more than 125,000 members nationwide, with 8,200 in Colorado, and is dedicated to conserving, protecting, and restoring trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. Our primary interest with Navajo Reservoir operations is with the world-class tailwater trout fishery below Navajo Dam. We would hope to see the Bureau manage Navajo Dam in a way that preserves that unique resource while also providing for recovery of endangered species downstream and meeting federal commitments to Native American tribes. While we recognize that reaching such an outcome would be challenging, we fear that the Bureau has been too quick to dismiss the possibility.

We are gravely concerned about the impacts of a reduction in the minimum release from Navajo from 500 to 250 cubic feet per second (cfs). Such a change would significantly reduce trout habitat and populations below the dam, with an associated harm to local economies that benefit from fishing-related tourism to the area. Water quality will also suffer under the Bureau's preferred alternative. While TU supports efforts to provide a more natural hydrograph in the San Juan, we believe the Bureau should do so while maintaining minimum releases from Navajo Dam of 500 cfs or as close to that level as possible while meeting other legal requirements. Of the options presented in the EIS, the 500/5000 Alternative best meets the full range of uses of the project. However, we are concerned that the Bureau has not explored an adequate range of options to maintain higher minimum flows while promoting species recovery, nor has the Bureau committed to mitigation measures to help maintain a quality trout fishery below Navajo Dam. Both of these shortcomings should be addressed in the Final EIS and reflected in the Record of Decision.

Low flow impacts. TU has deep concern over the reduction in minimum flows proposed under the Bureau's Preferred Alternative. With minimum releases dropped to 250 cfs, the San Juan River downstream of Navajo Dam would suffer a 30-37 percent reduction in trout habitat and a significant decline in trout numbers (EIS at III-52). Macroinvertebrate numbers would also decline - during the winter tests, numbers dropped by 35 percent (EIS at III-53). Moreover, a reduction in river habitat would exacerbate what is already identified by anglers as a major concern with the recreational experience on the San Juan: crowding (EIS at III-64). Downstream from the Citizens Ditch, the effects on trout populations would be even more pronounced (EIS at III-53). Physical habitat loss below the Hammond Diversion would also reduce native fish populations and impair fish movement (EIS at III-55). Water quality in the San Juan would also suffer. During the Summer Low Flow Test, several water quality parameters exceeded State standards and those exceedences would likely increase with long-term low flows (EIS at III-96). For all of these reasons, a 250 cfs minimum flow is undesirable. The Bureau should do all that it can to ensure that minimum flows are kept at higher levels such as those proposed in the 500/5000 Alternative.

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization
Colorado Office: 1966 13th Street, Suite LL60, Boulder, CO 80302
PHONE: (303) 440-2937 FAX: (303) 440-7933 EMAIL: dnickum@tu.org

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OR8-1 Please see the responses to General Comments 3, 23, 27, and 29.

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OR8-2 Please see the responses to General Comments 2 and 5.

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OR8-3 Please see the responses to General Comments 22, 23, and 28.

Economic impacts. The loss of fish habitat below Navajo Dam is not only an environmental issue, but will also have significant economic effects on local communities. The EIS fails to adequately analyze and disclose these effects, focusing only on San Juan County when in fact neighboring counties in Colorado, most notably LaPlata County, also will be effected. The EIS only briefly estimates possible losses as \$1.83 million to \$6.16 million for San Juan County, noting that this would be significant "when considered in small communities such as Navajo Dam or the larger City of Farmington" (EIS at III-124). We agree that these impacts are very significant in the context of local communities that benefit from the tailwater fishery, and the estimates themselves may be too conservative. Much of the San Juan's tourism stems from its status as a world-class tailwater fishery. By losing that elite status, the river could suffer losses in recreation worse than the linear correlation suggested in the EIS (at III-124) as out-of-state tourists shifted their use to other tailwaters that remained world-class fishery resources.

The Bureau also fails to consider the recreational losses (and associated economic impacts) of fishing outfitters using sections of the San Juan beyond the Quality Waters section. This is an oversight in the DEIS that must be addressed. Many outfitters use the river downstream of the quality waters, including the section from Archuleta to Hammond. Some outfitters own or lease lands for wade fishing and many others float this section with rafts or dories. The EIS states "Downstream from Citizens Ditch, negative impacts on angling would be proportionally greater because of further reduced flows. Angler use figures for this reach are not available, so losses have not been projected" (EIS at III-70). Without angling and outfitting data on this significant reach, the evaluation of impacts is insufficient. The Bureau should more thoroughly identify and consider the potential economic impacts of its proposed action

Recovery flows. One of the key factors described in the EIS is the ability of the Bureau to meet Flow Recommendations contained in the San Juan Biology Committee 1999 report. By focusing on the primary criteria identified with the Flow Recommendations, it may be possible to find alternatives that would allow for greater base flows, at least in wetter years. Not only would this benefit the tailwater fishery, it would also benefit the endangered fish as discussed below.

The EIS describes the degree to which different alternatives meet the criteria in Table II-3 (EIS at II-16). This table includes entries for a large number of flow levels and frequencies. In reviewing the flow recommendations themselves, however, it appears that they focus on four specific peak flow conditions and a recommended base flow as "primary" criteria (see Flow Recommendations at 8-3 through 8-6; there are also primary criteria for flood control releases and timing of peak releases that likely do not bear on the selection of alternative in this EIS). The EIS should specifically call out these primary criteria, since they presumably are the grounds on which compliance with the Flow Recommendations must be measured.

It is also our understanding that the Biology Committee informed the Bureau that there is flexibility on the base flow recommendation to have targets higher than 500 cfs. In fact, the Biology Committee report indicates that backwater habitats, identified as key for recovery, are maximized at 900-1000 cfs (Flow Recommendations at 7-6). Accordingly, providing a higher base flow where possible will not only benefit the tailwater trout fishery, but should promote endangered species recovery as well. This should make success for the recovery program more likely and reduce the likelihood of future problems with Endangered Species Act consultations. Moreover, if the overarching goal is to provide a more natural hydrograph, it is particularly true that summer flows should be maintained at higher levels with the lowest flows occurring in the winter months - reflecting the natural flow regime for the San Juan.

The 500/5000 alternative meets two of the primary criteria for peak flow frequency while falling short in others. The preferred alternative, in contrast, meets or exceeds each of the primary criteria. Because the 250/5000 alternative exceeds several of the primary criteria, it seems that there should be some flexibility to operate somewhere between that alternative and the 500/5000 alternative while still meeting the Flow Recommendations. The Bureau should consider options to use that flexibility in order to enhance base flows for the benefit of the San Juan's trout and native species.

It also appears that the 250/5000 alternative has been designed by determining what flow regime will allow the Bureau to pass through drought-period "bottlenecks" while still meeting the flow recommendations.

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OR8-4 Please see the responses to General Comments 29 and 31.

OR8-5 Please see the response to General Comment 29c.

OR8-6 Please see the response to General Comment 11.

OR8-7 The hydrology model used in this EIS was developed and applied by using the basic recommended Navajo Reservoir operating rules from the SJRBRIP Flow Recommendation Report (Holden 1999), as modified for the ALP Project Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Reclamation, 2000). As a result, Reclamation believes that it is not necessary to specifically mention or analyze the Flow Recommendations criteria. In addition, the primary criteria - flow rate and duration - are presented in table II-3 of the EIS. Review of the table shows that the Preferred Alternative is the only alternative that fully meets the Flow Recommendations criteria.

OR8-8 Please see the response to General Comment 11.

OR8-9 Please see the response to General Comment 11.

OR8-10 Please see the response to General Comment 13.

While these bottlenecks are key points for analysis, there will be many years where far more flexibility exists than in severe or extended drought periods. It makes no sense to limit base flows that can benefit trout and native fish during wetter periods based on a worst-case scenario for dry periods. This is especially true in the interim period leading up to full development of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project and the Animas-La Plata Project, when the Bureau will have even more flexibility to provide greater base flows while still meeting the flow recommendations.

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OR8-11 Please see the responses to General Comments 11 and 13.

Lack of alternatives. The EIS offers only one alternative that meets the Flow Recommendations, the Preferred Alternative. The Bureau's failure to provide a range of alternatives that could meet the Flow Recommendations is perhaps this document's greatest failing. The Bureau did not consider any alternative that would assure greater minimum flows when water was available – for example, by setting base flow criteria that are contingent on reservoir contents and annual runoff forecasts, or by committing some undeveloped water to downstream releases pending full development of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project and Animas-La Plata. Nor did the Bureau investigate the possibility of adding pumping capabilities at Navajo Reservoir to allow use of the inactive pool in dry periods when they might otherwise be unable to maintain higher minimum flows, provide water for tribal irrigators, and meet the Flow Recommendations. Given the fishery, water quality, and economic impacts of the proposed low flows, the Bureau should have sought every possible opportunity for maintaining higher base flows while still meeting other statutory obligations. Yet the EIS does not reflect such an effort.

12

OR8-12 Please see the responses to General Comments 5a and 8.

In fact, the Bureau dismissed from consideration an alternative that would have used operational flexibility to provide greater minimum flows when possible (the 250 Variable/5000 Alternative). This was done for the stated reason that "it did not meet the Flow Recommendations" (EIS at II-25). Yet only one sentence before, the document states that the Flow Recommendations do "contain flexibility, at least in the short term, that might allow for operations similar to those proposed in the 250 Variable/5000 Alternative" (EIS at II-25). Taken as a whole, the information contained in the EIS suggests that there is in fact flexibility to provide base flows greater than 250 cfs at least some of the time, and especially in the period prior to full development.

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OR8-13 Please see the responses to General Comments 5b and 11.

The Bureau erred in dismissing the 250 Variable/5000 Alternative and failing to consider other alternatives built on the same concept: using operational flexibility to boost base flows when possible while still providing for recovery flows and water development. The purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act is to disclose environmental impacts and to ensure the analysis of a range of alternatives prior to taking significant actions. Unfortunately, in this EIS the Bureau has failed to offer a legitimate range of alternatives and has instead "stacked the deck" in favor of its Preferred Alternative. This is a fundamental failing in the EIS and must be corrected before the Bureau takes final action on Navajo Dam reoperations.

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OR8-14 Please see the responses to General Comments 5 and 9.

Lack of mitigation. Even within the Preferred Alternative, the EIS refers on numerous occasions to flexibility that would allow low-flow impacts to be reduced during an interim period prior to full development of other projects (e.g., EIS at III-51, III-67, III-83). Yet nowhere does the Bureau commit to using that flexibility to maintain higher releases where it is possible. Similarly, the EIS describes the potential for offsetting some of the reduction in trout habitat below Navajo Dam by increasing pool habitats and placing structure in the river (EIS at III-53), but again makes no commitment to conducting such work. Indeed, the Bureau specifically states that it "will not take a lead responsibility in terms of funding or implementation" of measures to reduce adverse impacts (EIS at IV-3).

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OR8-15 Please see the responses to General Comments 2 and 11.

The mere existence of habitat improvement opportunities and of operating flexibility that may or may not be used to benefit downstream resources offers little comfort to those who value those resources. While TU has no argument that beneficiaries of the proposed action, including participants in the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program, should also assist in these efforts (EIS at IV-3), the Bureau's refusal to take lead responsibility is a recipe for inaction followed by unproductive finger-pointing about who is to blame for the lack of progress. The Bureau must make a greater and more-defined commitment to mitigating the impacts of its actions and should embrace a leadership role in ensuring that such measures are funded and implemented rather than trying to shift responsibility to others.

16

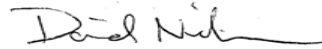
OR8-16 Please see the response to General Comment 2.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS - Comments and Responses

307

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact me at 303-440-2937 ext. 12.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Nickum". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

David Nickum

Enclosure: Other specific comments

Other specific comments

Water uses and water resources. In describing impact indicators, the EIS states that "an underlying assumption ... was that there could be no adverse impact to existing active water uses in the Basin." EIS at III-13. This seems like a worthy goal, but information contained elsewhere in the EIS makes it clear that this assumption is not met under the Bureau's preferred alternative. During summer low-flow periods, some irrigators will have difficulty obtaining their water (EIS at III-83). Existing fishery and recreation uses will also suffer (EIS at III-51-56 and III-68-71). Hydropower generation will also be adversely effected with an average annual cost of \$5.3 million to \$7 million (EIS at III-78). Dilution flows needed by the Bloomfield wastewater treatment plant will be lost (EIS at III-97). All of these are clear examples of "adverse impact to existing active water uses" that will, in fact, occur under the Bureau's preferred alternative.

17

OR8-17 Please see the responses to General Comments 23, 26, 31b, and 31d.

In describing impacts of the 500/5000 alternative, the EIS states that the target flow range would be exceeded more frequently (EIS at III-18). However, there is no explanation of how often the flow range would be exceeded, nor of the flow conditions associated with those periods and the significance for recovery. For example: does this take place in wetter years when native fishes would naturally have experienced higher flows? Are these periods products of short-term spikes cause by thunderstorms – again, a natural phenomenon with which native fishes evolved?

18

OR8-18 Exceedence of the target flows occurs when flows are high in the Animas River. Table II-7 in the EIS shows the distribution frequency of monthly streamflow of the San Juan River at Bluff. Also, see the DEIS Volume II, Appendix A and Monthly Modeled Output for each alternative. A listing of 1929-1993 monthly flow for each San Juan River gaging station is also shown.

The EIS also states that hydrologic modeling suggests that flow criteria for runoff periods could not be met under the 500/5000 alternative (EIS at III-18). The Bureau should provide more information on how these modeled flows were generated, what the underlying assumptions of the model are, what the accuracy of the model is (i.e., plus or minus figures for different confidence levels), and in what specific ways the criteria were not met. Given the importance of a full, fair public review of the proposed reoperations, a more thorough explanation is needed than that provided in this section or in Table II-3. Moreover, more detailed information on these matters may suggest ways in which alternatives could be modified to better meet the full range of existing water uses while also meeting the flow recommendations.

19

OR8-19 Please see the response to General Comment 21a. Volume II of the EIS provides additional information on the hydrology modeling used for this analysis.

Aquatic resources. In describing the expected effects of the Preferred Alternative on the trout fishery below Navajo Dam, the EIS relies extensively upon information gathered from the Winter and Summer Low Flow Tests. For example, the EIS notes that trout condition did not suffer despite a 35% reduction in macroinvertebrate numbers, and that there was no discernable differences in trout health associated with the flow tests (EIS at III-53). While the Flow Tests provide some useful information, most notably on the changes in physical habitat that occurred with lower releases, the conclusions are limited. Short-duration low flow periods like those studied – especially with the Summer Low Flow Test – may not reveal impacts that would emerge after repeated, longer low flow periods. The Bureau must at least acknowledge the possibility if not probability that the effects on aquatic life from chronic low flows (like those proposed in the Preferred Alternative) would be greater than suggested from the short-term low flow tests.

20

OR8-20 Please see the response to General Comment 22.

The EIS offers contradictory statements as to flows that could be experienced below Citizens Ditch, stating in one instance that flows of 60 to 150 cfs would be left instream while stating elsewhere that flows could only go as low as 114 cfs (EIS at III-54). A consistent and accurate description should be provided for the final EIS.

21

OR8-21 The EIS has been revised to accommodate your concern.

Socioeconomics. In considering the economic effects of options other than the Preferred Alternative, the Bureau takes a worst-case-scenario approach by assuming that the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project would be left 56,130 acres short of full development (EIS at III-121). This appears to be based on the assumption that, under any alternative except for the Bureau's Preferred Alternative, the Fish and Wildlife Service would issue jeopardy findings for all proposed water development and that other reasonable and prudent alternatives could not be found that would allow any increment of that development to move forward. Those assumptions do not seem reasonable, and as applied they bias this analysis in favor of the Bureau's preferred alternative and against the other alternatives.

22

OR8-22 Please see the responses to General Comments 10 and 16.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS - Comments and Responses

December 2, 2002

Grand Valley Anglers
Chapter of Trout Unlimited
P O Box 3105
Grand Junction CO 81505

Ken Beck
Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East Second Ave
Suite 400
Durango CO 81301

Sent by email - Kbeck@uc.usbr.gov

RE: Navajo Dam Operations

Mr. Beck,

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this issue.

Grand Valley Anglers, a Chapter of Trout Unlimited, is concerned about the impacts to the San Juan River fishery with the proposed flow changes.

The San Juan River supports one of the nation's outstanding fisheries. Under proposed flow changes trout habitat will be decreased by 34%. Also, with the low flows water quality will be compromised for both fish and people alike. With the proposed flows, the San Juan would no longer be the world class fishery it is now and the area will experience a major negative effect on the local tourist economy.

In addition to trout habitat being reduced, native warmwater fish habitat downstream of Navajo Dam will suffer.

The USBR must do what they can to protect endangered fish and still maintain the tailwater trout fishery. We urge you to support alternatives that will maintain flows of 500 cfs. Flows between 250 cfs and 500 cfs haven't been considered in the EIS and should be looked into. Flows slightly less than 500 cfs may accomplish the goals and still not have a severe negative impact on the trout fishery.

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OR9-1 Please see the responses to General Comments 20f, 23, and 27.

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OR9-2 Please see the responses to General Comments 3, 5, and 16.

Proposed water development projects you mention may not be built for many years, if ever. Don't sacrifice the fishery for something that we may never see.

At the very least, the final EIS and Record of Decision should provide a clear plan and commitment to use the water for "future" projects while maintaining the river environment and trout fishery in the interim.

If the proposed plan is implemented, mitigation measures in the form of stream improvement should be completed prior to flows being reduced below 500 cfs.

Again, thank you for allowing us to comment.

Sincerely,

Pat Oglesby, President

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OR9-3 Please see the responses to General Comments 2 and 11.

Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 31671
Santa Fe, NM 87594

December 3, 2002

Mr. Ken Beck
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Western Colorado Area Office
835 East Second Avenue, Suite 400
Durango, CO 81301
Via email: kbeck@uc.usbr.gov

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement Navajo Reservoir Operations

Dear Mr. Beck:

The Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited requests that the Bureau of Reclamation consider the following comments as it makes a decision on Navajo Dam and Reservoir operations. The Truchas Chapter represents 450 anglers in northern New Mexico, including the areas in and around Navajo Dam. Statewide, Trout Unlimited has over 1,000 members, many of whom are recreational users of the San Juan River and Navajo Reservoir.

Since its inception, Truchas Chapter's main focus has been the survival of the Rio Grande Cutthroat trout. While not listed, it is certainly imperiled, so we understand the issues surrounding fish population recovery and stabilization.

Low Flow Impact

In reviewing the data, the 250/5000 alternative is presented as the preferred alternative because it meets best the Flow Recommendations criteria (DEIS Table II-3), while the 500/5000 alternative does not. A point needs to be made though, that in the *Flow Recommendations for the San Juan River (May 1999)*, there are four "primary criteria" (FRSJR 8-3). The 500/5000 alternative does meet 2 of the 4 primary criteria, reaching flows >10,000cfs for 5 days in 20% of years, and reaching flows >2,500cfs for 10 days in 80% of years. It also effectively meets the criteria of flows >8,000 for 10 days in "one of three years" at 29.2% of years (off by only 1 year in 25).

We also have to wonder if the 29.2% listed in the cell for >8000 for 10 days flows is indeed correct. Comparing the No Action and 500/5000 alternative in performance under the >8000 flow, the 500/5000 performs significantly better for every time duration except the primary 10 days duration. That this is the case defies logic. In fact, the 500/5000 alternative performs better than the No Action alternative at every flow and every

Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited • P.O. Box 31671 • Santa Fe, NM 87594

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OR10-1 Please see the response to General Comment 16.

OR10-2 Please see the responses to General Comments 3, 4, 5b, 6, 7, and 21a.

duration under 30 days, with the exception of this one data point.

Where the 500/5000 alternative misses is in meeting the criteria of providing flows >5000cfs for 20 days (50% vs. 40%, or 1 year in 10). It also misses in terms of maximum duration between events. Though again, it seems illogical that it would perform worse than the No Action alternative when it comes to providing 7,760cfs flows for 10 days. Could this also be an indicator of a problem with the data at >8000cfs flows?

It seems that meeting the primary criteria and maximum duration between events could be accomplished in a way that imposes less economic impact than what is proposed.

The data for other flow regimes, most notably the 250 Variable/5000 are not presented. We would be very interested to see how this alternative rates on these primary criteria. A flow regime with lower winter flows and higher summer flows would mimic the natural flow of the river (pre-dam) better than a plan that is purely based on running at 250cfs year round except for spring flushes.

Historically, summer flows on the streams in the San Juan drainage are typically twice as high as winter flows. The following data is from the USGS website, Surface Water Data for USA: Monthly Streamflow Statistics, and shows historical streamflow by month for 3 of the free-flowing feeder streams to Navajo Reservoir:

River	Gage Location	Years	Monthly Mean Streamflow, in ft ³ /sec.											
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
San Juan	Pagosa Spr, CO	1935-2001	55.7	62.5	150	562	1293	1334	395	185	153	147	95.1	64.8
Piedra	Arboles, CO	1962-2001	75.8	93.9	326	852	1310	1046	345	230	211	176	129	91.6
Navajo	Chromo, CO	1936-1995	28.2	29.4	43.6	139	331	390	139	69.8	53.5	50	37.7	30.8

From this data, it is apparent that streamflows are typically twice as high in the summer months (July - September) as they are in the winter (December - February). We understand that the winter low flow test that was conducted showed little impact to the trout fishery below Navajo Dam, but also that the shortened summer low flow test was inconclusive at best. This data makes it all the more disturbing that the 250 Variable/5000 alternative was dismissed so casually. Because the 500/5000 alternative is so close to meeting the primary criteria as laid out in the Flow Recommendations, we believe that some small adjustments to winter flows would probably make up the difference in water needed to meet the primary criteria and maximum duration criteria.

Also of concern is that the entire focus seems to center around the peak or flushing flows. There is little discussion of the effects of lower flows during the summer months limiting the amount of available habitat for native fish both below and above Farmington.

Economic Impact

The DEIS makes mention of economic impacts to both the fishing and rafting industries, but little monetary data is presented. Using the figures in the DEIS, if outfitters lose 50% of guided float trips due to low flows (DEIS III-70), which total 6000-7000 trips per year

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OR10-3 Please see the responses to General Comments 4, 5, 20c, and 22.

4

OR10-4 Please see the response to General Comment 20f.

5

OR10-5 Please see the responses to General Comments 29 and 31.

(DEIS III-64), the bulk of which are during the affected period, the economic impact would be a loss of \$500,000 to \$750,000 annually at \$250 per angler.

Long term, the impact will certainly force many of the outfitters out of business. This impact would also be felt on the hotels, restaurants, resorts, rental properties, and retail fly fishing shops in the area. Adding these figures in, it is not unreasonable to estimate that the overall loss of income to the community of Navajo Dam would surpass \$1 million per year, and would impact numerous jobs. We have no idea what the impact on the rafting industry would be, but it too would probably be significant.

6

OR10-6 Please see the response to General Comment 31b.

Recommendation

As it stands, we would recommend the 500/5000 alternative, but it is apparent from the DEIS that this option has already been dismissed in the minds of the authors. This document reads more like advertisement than an unbiased EIS.

7

OR10-7 Please see the response to General Comment 3.

Also, we are disturbed at the lack of viable options, which also stacks the deck in favor of the preferred alternative. Because the focus of those studying the survival of naïve fishes downstream is based mostly on flushing flows and not base flows, we are sure that most with expertise in this area will provide comments in favor of the preferred alternative. We too are concerned about the survival of native fishes, but this DEIS however dismisses the economic value of the San Juan River to the local communities.

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OR10-8 Please see the response to General Comment 5.

While it may appear to most not in tune with the fishing/rafting industries that the difference between 250cfs and 500cfs base flow may be small, to those that understand the river, that difference will cost many their livelihoods. It is our sincerest hope that the Bureau of Reclamation will reconsider the narrow scope of alternatives offered and make a better effort to avoid severely damaging the local community in such an important decision. We believe that this can be accomplished with minor changes to the alternatives, which should have no significant impact on the overall plan, native fishes, or water development.

9

OR10-9 Please see the responses to General Comments 11 and 17.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at (505) 422-2286.

Sincerely,

William Schudlich
President
Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited