



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAY 20 2008

Mr. Don Ostler, P.E.
Executive Director and Secretary
Upper Colorado River Commission
355 South 400 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

Dear Mr. Ostler:

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the ongoing period of experimental releases from Glen Canyon Dam (2008-2012). I value the highly collaborative relationship we have enjoyed in recent years addressing a number of complex issues related to the management of the Colorado River. The Department of the Interior is very cognizant of the importance of the Colorado River to each of the seven Colorado River Basin States. As we undertake these efforts we place great importance on forthright and honest communication with each of the seven States. Two areas where we have seen progress are our efforts to develop shortage and coordinated operating criteria for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, as well as our ongoing efforts through the Glen Canyon Adaptive Management Program.

As you will recall, on December 13, 2007, I spoke to the Colorado River Water Users Association in Las Vegas, Nevada, just before signing the Record of Decision on operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. I stressed the importance of working together "in partnership and in cooperation" and praised the success of the seven States in crafting an innovative set of agreements that will guide the management of the Colorado River for decades. I deeply appreciate the continuation of this spirit of cooperation with regard to the recently-completed high flow experimental release from Glen Canyon Dam, as part of the next phase of adaptive management. Just as the seven States set aside their legal differences in order to forge a consensus agreement to coordinated operations, in March, at Glen Canyon Dam, I again praised the States for their pragmatic willingness to work with the Department to undertake and assess the results of the experimental high flow release. While the States carefully reserved their legal positions, they also demonstrated leadership by working with us on this important, but limited, next phase of experimental operations.

With respect to the specific concerns identified in your letter, the March 2008 high flow test was part of a carefully considered five-year proposal, based on extensive research and monitoring, to further assess the effects of operations expected to improve downstream resource conditions. This proposal was then considered by the Department's Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Policy Group, which was established to assess this type of proposal and facilitate intra-departmental coordination and decisionmaking.

It is particularly important to me that, after this internal consideration and analysis, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Reclamation unanimously recommended proceeding with the proposal. Moreover each agency

remains fully supportive of the appropriateness of their recommendation and our final decision. Accordingly, we remain committed to carrying out the post-experiment analysis as described in the science plan prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey and included in Reclamation's approved environmental compliance documents. In the Adaptive Management Program, given the stakeholders' diverse objectives and expectations, the independent and objective research center established within the U.S. Geological Survey is particularly valuable and appropriate.

I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the commitment the Department made to implement the recent proposal by integrating the knowledge gained through previous research and monitoring and fully analyzing the effects of current operations, and the just-completed high flow release before making decisions on any further proposals for high flow experimentation. We are also prioritizing development of a thorough science plan for the upcoming period of fall steady flows. I believe our approach to the adaptive management process fully meets the requirements of all applicable Federal law and policies.

We are well aware of the inconsistent statements referenced in your letter. These views, along with all comments submitted to Reclamation, were fully and carefully considered and documented prior to reaching a final decision on the upcoming period of experimental flows. These statements do not reflect the Department's unanimous final decision regarding this matter.

As we move forward implementing Reclamation's approved plan, I have asked Associate Deputy Secretary Jim Cason to fully assess and report back to me on the Department's coordination and implementation of the experimental plan.

As the Department stated in our recently published Adaptive Management Technical Guide: "Adaptive management focuses on learning and adapting, through partnerships of managers, scientists, and other stakeholders who learn together how to create and maintain sustainable resource systems." I hope that this letter, along with implementation of the Department's recent decisions, will assuage any concerns you may have regarding our continued commitment to work through the Glen Canyon Adaptive Management Working Group to ensure that all stakeholders, as well as the general public, have an opportunity to assess the results of our ongoing efforts and provide input to the Department prior to any further decisions regarding the operation of Glen Canyon Dam. The Department remains committed to involving stakeholders in our decision-making process and we look forward to continued collaboration in this unique and important effort.

Sincerely,



DIRK KEMPTHORNE

Identical Letter Sent to:

Mr. Scott Balcomb
Commissioner, State of Colorado
Upper Colorado River Commission

Mr. John D'Antonio
Commissioner, State of New Mexico
Upper Colorado River Commission

Mr. Patrick T. Tyrrell
Commissioner, State of Wyoming
Upper Colorado River Commission

Mr. Dennis J. Strong
Commissioner, State of Utah
Upper Colorado River Commission