

Long Term Experimental and Management Plan for Glen Canyon Dam— The EIS Alternatives Are Out: Say Goodbye to Sand?

H EY GRAND CANYON LOVERS! Have you seen the beaches this Spring? Stone Creek? 118 Mile? Olo? Refreshed. Rebuilt. Amazing! We haven't seen them looking this good for a long time. Last year the Paria River gave us loads of sand, and the November high flow did a great job of putting it up high.

But unless you're ready to do some fighting, don't get used to them.

The future of Grand Canyon flows and floods will soon be chosen from one of six alternatives. They're complex. They're confusingly named. And there's a lot of power rallied behind the ones that take as much as possible

from the Grand Canyon, and do as little as the law will allow to take care of it.

For the latest details, including interesting hydrographs (Hydropower improvement flows?), take a look at http://ltempeis.anl.gov/documents/docs/LTEMP_Alternatives_April_2014.pdf.

I can quickly tell you this: while the public has been waiting quietly for this first glimpse of the possibilities, water and power interests have poured huge resources into setting the stage. They created two of the alternatives—the “Balanced Resource” and the “Resource Targeted Condition-Dependent” (you might be interested in what they mean by “Balanced” and what resources are targeted)—and have been working hard to have one of them selected as the final “preferred alternative.”

A big feature of these two alternatives is restrictions on high flows. Ideas like no more than one high flow every other year, or no Spring HFE's, or even no high flows at all.

A long fight and a huge amount of effort went into creating the high flow protocol, and it's just gotten started. These are the flows that put the sand up where we can use it—sediment that is crucial for the health of multiple resources in Grand Canyon. High flows help keep that rejuvenating sediment in the canyon as long as possible, instead of slowly flushing it all into Lake Mead. They're the best tool we have for moving sand, but they do cut down a little on the water available for generating power revenues.

When the LTEMP draft EIS comes out for public comment, the agencies creating it will have already chosen a “preferred alternative.” It's an important choice that has a lot of influence on the final decision. And that decision will be in effect for twenty years or more. The water and power folks know this—that's why they're so involved behind the scenes.

That's why the LTEMP folks need to hear from you

now, and all summer long. They need to hear from your passengers, and your friends, and everybody who cares about the future of the Grand Canyon. They need to know that we want the preferred alternative to focus on

protecting the canyon and the river, not the revenues extracted from it. We want a healthy environment, built on big beaches, and we want the high flows that create and renew those beaches.

So, sign up on that LTEMP website. Send them your comments. And while you're out there with your toes in the brand new sand, take a moment to talk to your clients about where it came from, what's at stake, and what they can do.

I hope you'll tell them that we want lots of beach building high flows, as many as the Paria and LCR give us the sand for. We want the potential for two floods each year, as intended in the HFE protocols, and we want them to run as high and as long as it takes to make maximum use of the available sand.

The demands of power generation dominated the river for thirty years. High fluctuations and clear water flows stripped sand out of the canyon.

Now it's time to build beaches back up. It's time to take care of the canyon for its own sake. This is our best shot at having beautiful beaches and a healthy riverine ecosystem in years to come, and we need to take that shot. Tell those folks what you care about.

And enjoy the beaches this summer. That Grand Canyon is a glorious place. Thank you for being part of keeping it that way!

Sam Jansen

While the public has been waiting quietly for this first glimpse of the possibilities, water and power interests have poured huge resources into setting the stage.

Suggested Comments, and where to send them:

You can send comments, right now, to: Ltempeiswebmaster@anl.gov

You might say things along these lines:

- The preferred alternative should focus on conserving sediment and building beaches.
- Don't restrict HFEs. Run them Spring and Fall, and make maximum use of the sand that's available.
- Focus on protecting the canyon and the river, not the revenues extracted from it.
- The preferred alternatives should not only protect, but *improve* downstream resources.

They need to hear from you, and every comment matters. Thank you for doing your part!



Lower Hot Na Na Beach—February 2012 photo: Greg Woodall



Lower Hot Na Na Beach—December 2013 photo: Greg Woodall

Hot Na Na

Photos of Hot Na Na Beach show the success of the High Flow Events (HFE), however—they also show the importance of management of the flows between the HFE's. Beaches can be rebuilt by high flows, only to be “buzz-sawed” away by daily and monthly flow regimes!

Your comments on the Long Term Experimental Management Plan (LTEMP) will help make sure that HFEs continue to rebuild the beaches in Grand Canyon—and that the in-between flows don't needlessly destroy those beaches!



Lower Hot Na Na Beach photo: Greg Woodall