

## **Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Taos, New Mexico; Kachina Lodge; June 29, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS at the scoping meeting in Taos, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

*/?Comment.* Will the project look at removing levees or doing non-structural features?

*/?Comment.* What are the environmental justice issues?

*/?Comment.* Environmental justice issue: In some areas, changes in flows could have a negative effect on water quality. If water quality decreases as a result of changing water operations, existing uses of that water, such as irrigation, could be affected.

*/?Comment.* Environmental justice issue: The transfer of water rights could affect minority water users.

*/?Comment.* (In response to information on the Socioeconomics Technical Team display) How is flood damage to houses an issue? Houses should not be built in the floodplain to begin with, so the socioeconomic impacts to these houses due to floods should not be considered.

*/?Comment.* How do socioeconomic impacts relate to those developed for the silvery minnow recovery plan? How much would using the Low Flow Conveyance Channel (LFCC) affect Compact deliveries and how much can landowners use water from the LFCC?

*/?Comment.* Benefits derived from mimicking natural flows include protection of native species, which provides a socioeconomic benefit.

*/?Comment.* Will there be opportunities for public input during the definition of alternatives? Can the public obtain a copy of the alternatives?

*/?Comment.* The sooner people know what alternatives will be considered in the EIS, the better prepared they can be to respond.

*/?Comment.* How does the work product from this review relate to other federal projects?

*/?Comment.* Will the capacity and purpose of the reservoirs be within the scope of this EIS?

*/?Comment.* Reoperating reservoirs has a logical place in a study like this.

*/?Comment.* What will be done with information that might require a change in authority?

*/?Comment.* This process seems to be different in that it will provide more in-depth analysis of operations.

*/?Comment.* Why are you not looking at Platoro and El Vado operations?

*/?Comment.* It appears that three agencies are working together and some others are not. Was there an attempt to include other agencies?

*/?Comment.* A major concern is that this effort will study water operations and how changes would affect resources, but it is losing the opportunity to look at the whole system because it is leaving out some of the reservoirs, which are key components.

*/?Comment.* In response to the answer above, it was recommended that one alternative be used to look at operations outside the existing authorities. How could the system be changed if the agencies had free rein to change the system?

- ?/Comment.* Perhaps just the “plumbing” of the entire system could be studied, just the technical issues, without considering the legal issues. The model, URGWOM, could be run for the entire physical system.
- ?/Comment.* Recommend an alternative that has the Closed Basin Project release more water from May through September and less during the winter. This would help even out the summer low flows to benefit ecological and recreational values and meets one of the purposes of the Closed Basin Project.
- ?/Comment.* Was the MRGCD asked to be a lead agency?
- ?/Comment.* The Bureau of Reclamation does direct water releases at El Vado that are not controlled by the MRCGD.
- ?/Comment.* What about winter releases of San Juan-Chama water?
- ?/Comment.* Will the EIS study sensitive species in addition to endangered species, such as the Rio Grande cutthroat trout **below Costilla Reservoir**? For example, how has stopping the leakage from some of the dams affected cutthroat habitat?
- ?/Comment.* What is meant by the objective of providing a historical baseline?
- ?/Comment.* Will more archaeological survey work be done?
- ?/Comment.* Will the Cultural Resources Technical Team look at potential additions to the National Historic Register?
- ?/Comment.* Will the technical teams study biology and geomorphology from a historical perspective?
- ?/Comment.* Will the project look at tribal and state water quality standards?
- ?/Comment.* Will teams consider how flows and changes in operations would affect water quality? How the operations of dams affect water quality?
- ?/Comment.* Is there a model that can correlate water quantity to water quality?
- ?/Comment.* There is a potential for conflict between the needs of the Rio Grande silvery minnow critical habitat, the requirements for flows, and dam operations.
- ?/Comment.* To what degree will the operations in the San Acacia reach be included?

***Additional comments from technical team flip charts:***

- ?/Comment.* Consider the effects of flows on aquifer recharge. How might changes in operations affect domestic wells and near shallow groundwater systems?
- ?/Comment.* How might changes in water operations affect wetlands?
- ?/Comment.* Don’t forget rafting and kayaking recreational activities.