

*Public Meetings:* BOEM will also hold public meetings to solicit comment regarding the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

- *New Orleans, Louisiana:* Wednesday, November 9, 2016, Wyndham Garden New Orleans Airport, 6401 Veterans Memorial Boulevard, Metairie, Louisiana 70003; one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST and ending at 7:00 p.m. CST;
- *Gulfport, Mississippi:* Thursday, November 10, 2016, Courtyard by Marriott, Gulfport Beachfront MS Hotel, 1600 East Beach Boulevard, Gulfport, Mississippi 39501; one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST and ending at 7:00 p.m. CST;
- *Fort Walton Beach, Florida:* Monday, November 14, 2016, Four Points By Sheraton Destin-Fort Walton Beach, 1325 Miracle Strip Parkway SE., Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548; one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST and ending at 7:00 p.m. CST;
- *Mobile, Alabama:* Tuesday, November 15, 2016, The Admiral Hotel Mobile, Curio Collection by Hilton, 251 Government Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602; one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST and ending at 7:00 p.m. CST; and
- *Houston, Texas:* Thursday, November 17, 2016, Houston Marriott North, 255 North Sam Houston Pkwy. East, Houston, Texas 77060; one meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m. CST and ending at 7:00 p.m. CST.

*Public Disclosure of Names and Addresses:* Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comments to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Authority:** This Notice of Availability is published pursuant to the regulations (40 CFR part 1503 and 43 CFR part 46) implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* (1988)).

Dated: September 22, 2016.

**Abigail Ross Hopper,**

*Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.*

[FR Doc. 2016-23664 Filed 9-29-16; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-MR-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Reclamation

[RR04310000, 16XR0680A1, RX002361010021000]

#### Notice of Availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Continued Implementation of the 2008 Operating Agreement for the Rio Grande Project, New Mexico and Texas

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to analyze the environmental impacts of continuing to implement the 2008 Rio Grande Project Operating Agreement (Operating Agreement) through 2050, and by this Notice is announcing its availability. The Operating Agreement is a written agreement describing how Reclamation allocates, releases from storage, and delivers Rio Grande Project water to the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) in New Mexico, the El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 (EPCWID) in Texas, and to Mexico. In addition, the FEIS evaluates the environmental effects of a proposal to renew a contract to store San Juan-Chama Project water in Elephant Butte Reservoir.

**DATES:** Reclamation will not issue a final decision on the proposed action for a minimum of 30 days after the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability of Weekly Receipt of Environmental Impact Statements in the **Federal Register**. After the 30-day public review period, Reclamation will complete a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will state the action that will be implemented and discuss all factors leading to that decision.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the FEIS are available for public inspection at the following locations:

- Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque Area Office, 555 Broadway NE., Suite 100, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102.
- Bureau of Reclamation, El Paso Field Division, 10737 Gateway West, Suite 350, El Paso, Texas 79935.
- Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Regional Office, 125 South State Street, Room 8100, Salt Lake City, Utah 84138.

### Libraries

- New Mexico State University—Branson Library, 1305 Frenger Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003.
- University of Texas at El Paso, 500 West University Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79968.

Electronic copies of the FEIS are available at: <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/envdocs/eis.html>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Jennifer Faler, Area Manager, Albuquerque Area Office, telephone: (505) 462-3600; address: 555 Broadway NE., Suite 100, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102; email: [jfaler@usbr.gov](mailto:jfaler@usbr.gov). Any persons wishing to be added to a mailing list of interested parties may write or call Ms. Faler at this address or telephone number.

Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in order to leave a message or question with the above named individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Reclamation prepared the FEIS in cooperation with five agencies:

- United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission,
- Colorado Division of Water Resources,
- EBID,
- EPCWID, and
- Texas Rio Grande Compact Commissioner.

The purpose for the proposed Federal action is to meet contractual obligations of Reclamation to EBID and EPCWID, and to comply with applicable law governing water allocation, delivery, and accounting. These obligations are currently fulfilled under the Operating Agreement. The need for the proposed Federal action is to resolve the long and litigious history of the Rio Grande Project, and to enter into mutually agreeable operational criteria that comply with applicable law, court decrees, settlement agreements, and contracts. The purpose and need for similar action is to respond to a request to store San Juan-Chama Project water in Elephant Butte Reservoir.

### The FEIS Analyzes Five Alternatives

The FEIS describes and analyzes five alternatives: The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1) is continuation of the Operating Agreement and the San Juan-Chama storage contract through 2050.

Alternative 2 would not store San Juan-Chama Project water in Elephant Butte Reservoir. Alternative 3 would not include the carryover accounting provision. Alternative 4 would not include the diversion ratio adjustment. Alternative 5 is the No Action Alternative and it would eliminate both the carryover accounting and diversion ratio adjustment from Rio Grande Project allocation and accounting procedures.

The FEIS analyzes the effect of these five alternatives on (1) water resources (total storage, Elephant Butte Reservoir elevations, allocation, releases, net diversion, farm surface water deliveries, farm groundwater deliveries, groundwater elevations, and water quality); (2) biological resources (vegetation communities including wetlands, wildlife, aquatic species, and special status species and critical habitat); (3) cultural resources (historic properties, Indian sacred sites, and resources of tribal concern); and (4) socioeconomic resources (Indian trust assets, recreation, hydropower, regional economic impacts and economic benefits, and environmental justice).

On January 15, 2014, a Notice of Intent was published in the **Federal Register** (79 FR 2691) inviting public scoping comments on the proposed action of continuing to implement the Operating Agreement through 2050. A Notice of Availability was published in the **Federal Register** on March 18, 2016 (81 FR 14886), and the public was invited to provide comments on the Draft EIS during an 83-day comment period ending on June 8, 2016.

#### Public Disclosure

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: September 7, 2016.

#### Brent Rhees,

Regional Director, Upper Colorado Region.

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

### Bonneville Power Administration

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Reclamation

[RR01041000, 16XR0680G3, RX.16786921.2000100]

### Notice of Intent To Prepare the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement

**AGENCY:** Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD; Bonneville Power Administration, Energy; Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) (Action Agencies) intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the system operation and maintenance of fourteen Federal multiple purpose dams and related facilities located throughout the Columbia River basin. The Action Agencies will use this EIS process to assess and update their approach for long-term system operations and configuration through the analysis of alternatives and evaluation of potential effects to the human and natural environments, including effects to socio-economics and species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Action Agencies will serve as joint lead agencies in developing the EIS.

**DATES:** Written comments for the Action Agencies' consideration are due to the addresses below no later than January 17, 2017. Comments may also be made at public meetings. Information on the public meetings is provided under the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments, requests to be placed on the project mailing list, and requests for information may be mailed by letter to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division Attn: CRSO EIS, P.O. Box 2870, Portland, OR 97208-2870; or online at [comment@crso.info](mailto:comment@crso.info). All comment letters will be available via the project Web site at [www.crso.info](http://www.crso.info). All personally identifiable information (for example,

name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Call the toll-free telephone 1-(800) 290-5033 or email [info@crso.info](mailto:info@crso.info). Additional information can be found at the project Web site: [www.crso.info](http://www.crso.info).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Background

The fourteen Federal multiple purpose dams and related facilities are operated as a coordinated system within the interior Columbia River basin in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. A map identifying the locations of these dams can be found on the project Web site at [www.crso.info](http://www.crso.info). The Corps was authorized by Congress to construct, operate and maintain twelve of these projects for flood control, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, recreation, and municipal and industrial water supply purposes. The Corps' projects that will be addressed in this EIS include Libby, Albeni Falls, Dworshak, Chief Joseph, Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor, McNary, John Day, The Dalles, and Bonneville. Reclamation was authorized to construct, operate, and maintain two projects for purposes of flood control, power generation, navigation, and irrigation. The Reclamation projects that will be addressed in this EIS include Hungry Horse and Grand Coulee. BPA is responsible for marketing and transmitting the power generated by these dams. Together, these Action Agencies are responsible for managing the system for these various purposes.

In the 1990s, the Action Agencies analyzed the socio-economic and environmental effects of operating the system in the Columbia River System Operation Review (SOR) EIS and issued respective Records of Decision in 1997 that adopted a system operation strategy, which included operations supporting ESA-listed fish while fulfilling all other congressionally-authorized purposes. Since the completion of the SOR EIS, the Action Agencies have operated the system consistent with the analyses in the SOR EIS, while some changes to system operations have been adopted under subsequent ESA consultations and project-specific National Environmental Policy Act documents.