

**Action Agency Response to Comments from  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
On the 2002 Water Management Plan**

USFWS Comments on draft 2002 Water Management Plan  
01/23/02

(Note: Scott Boyd prepared this electronic version from document faxed to Corps of Engineers)

Libby  
4.3.2 Sturgeon

To preclude jeopardy to sturgeon, the Service recommends using Table 10 from the Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (8.1.c page 71-72, USFWS 2000 Biological Opinion, Effects to Listed Species from Operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System). This water should be in addition to storage needs for listed bull trout, salmon, and the 4,000 cfs minimum releases from Libby Dam.

***RESPONSE: The Action Agencies are reevaluating the sturgeon flow tiers to make accounting for the water more straightforward, and will work with the USFWS, MDFWP, and other interested parties to do so.***

Libby  
7.1.3 Libby VARQ

The Service recommendation for VARQ in the USFWS 2000 Biological Opinion Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (8.1.b page 71) remains unchanged.

***RESPONSE: In regard to VARQ at Libby:***

***The Corps is working toward implementing VARQ at Libby. The Corps has decided it will conduct an EIS before it can implement VARQ for the long term at Libby.***

***At the current time the Corps will;***

- 1. Conduct studies, coordination and NEPA documentation and prepare a "Phase I" (Decision Document) report by December 2002, which will address whether an interim VARQ operation can be implemented in 2003.***
- 2. Look for opportunities to accelerate the EIS schedule.***
- 3. Consider any alternative actions that could potentially be implemented in lieu of VARQ in 2002.***