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Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 772.

Dated: August 21, 2003.

Loretta Petty Chittum,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Western Area Power Administration

Boulder Canyon Project—Base Charge and Rates

AGENCY: Western Area Power Administration, DOE.

ACTION: Notice of base charge and rates.

SUMMARY: The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE) has approved Rate Schedule BCP-F6, FY 2004 Base Charge and Rates (Rates) for Boulder Canyon Project (BCP) electric service provided by the Western Area Power Administration (Western). The

Rates will provide sufficient revenue to pay all annual costs, including interest expense, and investment repayment within the allowable period.

DATES: The Rates will be effective the first day of the first full billing period beginning on or after October 1, 2003. These Rates will stay in effect through September 30, 2004, or until other Rates replace them.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Jack Murray, Rates Team Lead, Desert Southwest Customer Service Region, Western Area Power Administration, PO Box 6457, Phoenix, AZ 85005-6457, telephone (602) 352-2442, e-mail jmurray@wapa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Deputy Secretary of DOE approved the existing Rate Schedule BCP-F6 for BCP electric service on September 18, 2000 (Rate Order No. WAPA-94, 65 FR 60933, October 13, 2000), on an interim basis. Rate Schedule BCP-F6, effective October 1, 2000, through September 30, 2005, allows for an annual recalculation of the rates. On July 31, 2001, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved Rate Order No. WAPA-94 on a final basis.

Under Rate Schedule BCP-F6, the existing composite rate, effective on October 1, 2002, was 11.16 mills per kilowatthour (mills/kWh), the base charge was \$50,761,729, the energy rate was 5.58 mills/kWh, and the capacity rate was \$1.08 per kilowattmonth (kWmonth). The newly calculated Rates for BCP electric service, to be effective October 1, 2003, will result in an overall composite rate of 12.91 mills/kWh. This is an increase of approximately 16 percent when compared with the existing BCP electric service composite rate. The increase is due to an increase in the annual base charge and a decrease in the projected energy sales. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 base charge is increasing to \$51,719,075. The increase is due mainly to a reduction in visitor service revenues resulting from fewer tours at the Hoover Dam. The FY 2004 energy rate of 6.46 mills/kWh is approximately a 16-percent increase from the existing energy rate of 5.58 mills/kWh. The increase in the energy rate is due to a decrease in the projected energy sales resulting from lake elevations continuing to drop due to poor hydrology in the lower Colorado River basin. The FY 2004 capacity rate of \$1.17/kWmonth is approximately an 8-percent increase from the existing \$1.08/kWmonth capacity rate. The capacity rate is increasing due to decreased generation ratings resulting from lower lake elevations. Another factor that contributes to the increase in

the energy and capacity rates is the increase in the annual base charge.

The following summarizes the steps taken by Western to ensure involvement of all interested parties in determining the Rates:

1. A **Federal Register** (FR) notice was published on February 27, 2003 (68 FR 9078), announcing the proposed rate adjustment process, initiating a public consultation and comment period, announcing public information and public comment forums, and presenting procedures for public participation.

2. On March 7, 2003, a letter was mailed from Western's Desert Southwest Customer Service Region to the BCP Contractors and other interested parties announcing an informal customer meeting, and public information and comment forums. The BCP Contractors consist of Municipalities in Arizona and Nevada, States Agencies from Arizona, Nevada, and Southern California and an Investor Owned Utility from Southern California.

3. Discussion of the proposed Rates was initiated at an informal BCP Contractor meeting held March 19, 2003, in Phoenix, Arizona. At this informal meeting, representatives from Western and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) explained the basis for estimates used to calculate the Rates. A question and answer session was held.

4. At the public information forum held on April 1, 2003, in Phoenix, Arizona, Western and Reclamation representatives explained the proposed Rates for FY 2004 in greater detail. A question and answer session was held.

5. A public comment forum was held on April 23, 2003, in Phoenix, Arizona, to give the public an opportunity to comment for the record. Four persons representing customers made oral comments.

6. One comment letter was received during the 90-day consultation and comment period. The consultation and comment period ended May 28, 2003. All comments were considered in developing the Rates for FY 2004. Written comments were received from: Irrigation & Electrical Districts Association of Arizona, AZ.

Comments and responses, paraphrased for brevity, are presented below.

Agency Accountability

Comment: The Contractors stressed the importance of accountability, for both Western and the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, under the implementation agreement processes, and indicated that there appears to be something wrong in the processes. Similarly, concern was expressed over the significant increases