

Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting
August 12, 1992

The subject meeting was held in Grand Junction, Colorado. An attendance list is attached.

At the beginning of the meeting summaries of actual and forecasted inflows to the Aspinall Unit were reviewed along with actual and anticipated water deliveries. Actual inflows from January through July 1992 were 68 percent of normal, and forecasted inflows for August through December are projected to be 75 percent of normal. Peak flows at the Whitewater gage during the 1992 runoff were 6,300 cfs and resulted from a combination of snowmelt and rainfall.

The computation of deliveries to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument (Monument) for August through December, based on the preliminary contract guidelines, was reviewed. Handouts covering this material were provided at the meeting and additional copies can be obtained from Reclamation's Grand Junction Projects Office. Live storage as of July 31 was at 685,000 acre-feet, which is below the target storage level of 829,500. This shortfall, combined with low forecasts, cause minimum releases of 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) during the entire period to govern contract releases of 91,000 acre-feet to the Monument between August and December 1992. Actual flows through the Monument will be higher due to releases to the State of Colorado and downstream water rights.

It was agreed to report release data in "cfs" units in addition to acre-feet where appropriate and to provide more information on flows at the "Whitewater gage" (Gunnison River, near Grand Junction) in future meetings and handouts.

Research flows of 600 cfs requested by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) for fish population surveys were discussed and supported. These will occur from September 21-24, October 13-16, and on October 21.

In summary, flows proposed (through the Monument) are 600 cfs in September and 500 cfs in October through December, under the most probable forecast. To assist meeting Fish and Wildlife Service requests for high spring flows in 3 of the next 4 years, Randy Peterson of Reclamation's Salt Lake City office discussed the possibility of managing "controlled" spring spills at Crystal Dam if heavy rainfall occurs next spring.

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) representatives explained why it was important to know at the present time if winter flows will be reduced. The earlier they know, the sooner they can purchase power at a lower cost. They also requested more advance notification of changes in Gunnison Tunnel diversions. Jim Hokit, Uncompahgre Valley Water Users manager, agreed to contact WAPA's Montrose office at the same time he contacted Reclamation personnel in Page, Arizona concerning changes in Tunnel diversions. Notification of 3 or more days in advance of tunnel changes would assist

WAPA in managing their power contracts.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Colorado Water Conservation Board indicated that proposed September through December operations looked good. The CDOW agreed that the operations looked good, but stressed the critical need for relatively stable May-June flows for protection of the Gunnison River's Gold Medal fishery. Ramping rates are very important at the high flow levels to protect the fishery. Spring peaks in 1992 (May 11) may have hurt brown trout reproduction for a critical third year in a row. CDOW is also worried about effects of spills at Crystal. CDOW will provide river cross section data to better explain these concerns.

The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District supported the proposed operations and supported the intent to reach the Blue Mesa Reservoir winter target elevation to reduce icing. The Colorado River Water Conservation District supported the proposed operation but expressed concerns with any plans to spill at Crystal. The Bureau of Land Management supported the operation and indicated that flows during the 1992 recreation season had been very good and had resulted in heavy (perhaps too heavy) recreation use.

The next meeting on operations will be held in Grand Junction at 1 p.m. on January 19, 1993.