

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
September 2, 2010

Participation: This meeting was held at the Elk Creek Visitor Center on Blue Mesa Reservoir. Attendees are noted on the distribution list located at the end of these notes. **Handouts and presentations are available for review at:**
<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/mtgs/amcurrnt.html>

Purpose of Meeting: The purpose of operation meetings—normally held in January, April, and August-- is to gather input for determining upcoming operations for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal Reservoirs. This input is used in Reclamation's development of specific operations for the Aspinall Unit and for the overall 24-month study (www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/index.html) for operation of Reclamation projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin, which include plans for Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, and Navajo Units, as well as the Aspinall Unit. Operation of the Aspinall Unit considers projected inflows to its reservoirs, hydropower and flood control needs, existing water rights, minimum instream flows, target elevations for reservoirs, flow needs for endangered fish and other resources, recreation, and other factors. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the Gunnison River.

Handouts provided included data on 2010 operations; inflows to the reservoirs for 2010; and operation plans under probable maximum, most probable, and probable minimum runoff forecasts for this spring.

The Fish and Wildlife Service flow recommendations for endangered fish have been completed and published, and a final Aspinall Operations EIS is being prepared to evaluate alternative operations to help meet these recommendations. In addition, the water right for the Black Canyon National Park has been quantified and adjudicated. These operation meetings will be used more in the future to discuss proposals for long-term operation plans to address these and related resource management issues.

Colorado River Forecast Center: Tracy Cox made a presentation on last spring's snowmelt and future projections of weather. Over the last 4 or 5 years there has been a trend of earlier snowmelt. April-July inflow to Blue Mesa was 494,000 af this year, which represents 69% of the 30 year average. Conditions are right for La Nina conditions in first half of 2011. This tends to result in average to slightly below average precipitation and above average temperature conditions. Projections for this fall are for above average temperatures and below average precipitation. Additional information on website:
<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/mtgs/amcurrnt.html>

Operations:

General: Blue Mesa Reservoir capacities are described in meetings as follows: The reservoir holds 940,700 acre-feet (af). Active capacity in acre feet is 748,400, inactive capacity is 81,100, and dead storage is 111,200. Live capacity is the active plus inactive, which totals 829,500 af. Discussions during operation meetings use live capacity.

January-April Operations:

Blue Mesa was lowered to its icing target in December, 2009. Crystal releases were around 800 cfs in January and February and were reduced to 600 cfs in late February. Releases began increasing in late March to accommodate diversions through the Gunnison Tunnel and were at 1,100 cfs on April 22. Blue Mesa content was around 560,000 af in mid-April; roughly 150,000 af above average. Snowpack decreased markedly in April due to rapid runoff conditions.

April-August 2010 Operations:

As of April 15, unregulated inflow to Blue Mesa was forecast at 530,000 af or approximately 73 percent of average. This increased to 560,000 af on May 1. The 30-year average is 720,000 af. Based on the May 1 inflow forecast for April-July, the one day peak flow target under the Black Canyon water right was calculated at 3,883 cfs. A peak of 4,190 cfs was reached on May 18. The operation to allow the peak target to be met required a by-pass at Blue Mesa Reservoir of 6,000 af and about 35,000 af at Crystal. 15 days were required in ramping up and down for the peak. Actual inflow for the April-July period was 494,000 af. This represents a moderately dry year which would be expected to be exceeded in 72 percent of the years.

Peak flows at Whitewater reached 8,020 cfs. Summer flow in the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge has been around 600 cfs. November-December flows are projected to increase above that level to reach the winter ice target and to meet increased hydropower demand.

Blue Mesa did not fill, reaching only 735,000 af at elevation 7508.86 ft.

Special flow requests: CDOW still plans annual monitoring Oct 4-8. They request around 800 cfs. This was originally planned as a longitudinal survey. However, in response to the recent flash flood, they may elect to do their standard monitoring format to better determine effects of the flash flood.

Hartland Diversion...no update on construction. They have not requested special flows.

Invasive Species: Elizabeth Brown with Colorado Division of Wildlife made a presentation on invasive species in Colorado Reservoirs. Has been working with NPS on inspections at Blue Mesa. See <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsrvs/mtgs/amcurrnt.html>

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

EIS update: EIS in Washington with solicitor review. Not at liberty to discuss. Dave Kanzer indicated that the State has urged development of language on marketable yield, any update on this? Reclamation indicated they hadn't seen anything from the State.

Maintenance activities: October starts maintenance season. No dredging at Cimarron-Gunnison confluence this year. Nothing unusual planned.

Colorado Division of Wildlife: Taylor River fish survey in October. Last time this was done was in 2006. 4 stations will be sampled between the dam and Almont. 50 cfs release from September 27 to October 1. Dan Crabtree reported that on 28th of September a dive inspection will be conducted at Taylor Dam-flows reduced down to 25 cfs for 15 minutes, once or twice. This has been done in previous years without significant adverse effects. Dan Kowalski mentioned that ramping of Crystal releases has helped. Continue rates, especially when flows lower than 4,000 cfs.

Fish and Wildlife Service: Working on Study Plan under Aspinall PBO—plan to identify monitoring and research of Aspinall changes. Redlands Fish Ladder used by 3 pikeminnow, a razorback sucker, and a humpback this year. CDOW collected muscle plugs for selenium analysis between Delta and Escalante Creek. Urged Reclamation to complete the Aspinall EIS so new operations can start next spring.

Colorado Water Conservation Board: Next Board Meeting in Grand Junction September 14 and 15.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: Irrigation season starting to wind down. In response to question, they fill Fairview constantly in irrigation season. In winter they fill intermittently. South Canal Power planning is proceeding but a little slow.

Western Area Power: Because of low, steady releases from Glen Canyon, additional use for peaking from Aspinall Unit will be needed. Salmon snagging downstream from Blue Mesa is popular in the fall and sudden river flow changes can be dangerous to anglers and sudden changes may occur more frequently due to the Glen Canyon situation. Will consider warning signs and news release and will work with NPS and Reclamation. Western will contact Reclamation to further discuss.

Bureau of Land Management: Ed Franz, BLM updated the group on recent flash flood. August 19, there was a flash flood in Gorge. Outfitter reported high winds and heavy rain and lost fish. Water came up an estimated 4 vertical feet. BLM reports lost campsites and trail damage. Boulder Garden rapids significantly changed.

Uncompahgre field office working on land management plan and wild and scenic river study. Reaches in Dominquez-Escalante area being considered. Public comment closed August 16. Public stakeholder group has begun..they will provide recommendations. Sept 22 is next meeting, check BLM or River District web page. See www.blm.gov.ufo.planning.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: New office facility, stop by. Working with Uncompahgre Valley Water Users and Gunnison Electric on potential development of hydropower at Taylor Park. Entered agreement with URS to study feasibility. Working on biological monitoring at sites in upper Gunnison area.

Colorado State Engineer: Started to get low flows in July requiring administration. Rains have offset this problem. Roubideau gage washed out in flash flood...stopped recording at 2200 cfs.

Chris Landry: Thanks to Upper Gunnison Board, Tri-County, CWCB, River District, and Reclamation for support of snow monitoring program. Hope to continue this winter. Dust, i.e. May 22-24 event, influenced runoff. Last year was heavy deposition...heaviest seen. As an example, Arapahoe Basin was scraping snow to keep ski runs white. Don't have enough history to know what is normal or average; 2009 and 2010 were high but we do not know if we are in a trend.

Steve Glazer: State working on criteria for stream impairment, involves macro-invertebrates. Upper Gunnison doing macro-invertebrate surveys at 5 sites. Standards may be very stringent. Variances being considered for discharge permits. Has been working on non-consumptive needs with Gunnison Round Table.

Colorado River Water Conservation District: Working on Selenium Management Plan, this plan is of importance to all water users.. Salinity Funding Opportunity Announcement out today. See <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/index.html> for information. On Sept 15th there is a joint meet with CWCB and on the 16th is the annual River District seminar/meeting. Topic is negotiations between Western Slope and Eastern Slope. Convening wild and scenic group; next meeting is Sept 22 in Delta.

Trout Unlimited: Operations over last 3 years have been good for fishery. Conditions have been very good in river. Ramping rates continue to be very important. Concerned about effects of flash flood. Concerned with loss of rainbow. In 1989 there were similar floods. Working on Relief Diversion Dam, located downstream from North Fork...raising money for study to help ditch company replace the diversion with a safer structure for boating. First phase is \$40,000 raised from private funds.

Gunnison Basin Power: Sustainability in drought periods being considered. See <http://www.sdsg.org/gunnison-basin/dust-deposition-on-snow/>

Tri-County: Normal year at Ridgway. Now a little below average content. Reclamation has announced power applications. Tri-County will apply. Will meet with CDOW on winter operations later in September.

National Park Service: Appreciate efforts to meet the reserved right this year. Black Canyon aerial photos were taken this year with Reclamation in Denver.....also working with USGS on long-term monitoring of river area. Continued mussel inspection this year...lots of help from CDOW.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for January 20th, 2011 at the Hampton Inn, 1980 North Townsend, next to the Airport in Montrose.

September 2, 2010 Aspinall Operation Meeting

*An asterisk indicates person attended the meeting in person or acknowledged presence on phone

Daily Sentinel..... Gary Harmon, Dave Buchanan
Delta County Independent Bob Borchardt
Gunnison Country Times Michelle Burkhart, Will Shoemaker, Alan Wartes, Pat Daniel
Montrose Daily Press James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer
Western Resource Advocates Bart Miller
Club 20 Reeves Brown
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
Gunnison Basin POWER Ralph (Butch) Clark*, Ramon Reed
Gunnison River Expeditions Hank Hotze, Al DeGrange
Helton & Williamsen, P.C. Duane Helton
High Country Citizens Alliance/Sierra Club Steve Glazer*, Wendy McDermott, Steve Schechter, Shara Rutberg
Xcel Energy Fred Eggleston, Tom Minerick
Matt Owens Fly Company Matt Owens
Trout Unlimited ... Pat Oglesby*, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternel, John Trammell, Marshall Pendergrass*, Matt Mayer, Mac Cunningham
Western Colorado Congress Fred Wetlaufer
Argonne National Laboratory John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
Ridgway Guide Service Tim Peterson, Matt McCannel
Black Canyon Anglers Richard Dudginski
Self Curt Treichel*, Lynn Johnson*, George Sheldon, Bo Gates, Marlene Zanatell, Jim Cochran, Jim Hokit, Richard Girvan, Coll Stanton, Joe Waggoner
Colorado River Energy Distributors Leslie James, Kent Holsinger*
Colorado River Water Conservation District Dave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt*, Eric Kuhn, Bill Trampe, David Halford, Ray Tenney
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Tri County Water Mike Berry*, Ion Spor, Kathleen Margetts,
Project 7 Richard Margetts
Redlands Water and Power Company Charles Mitisek, Mike Gross
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association Marc Catlin, Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher*
Upper Colorado River Commission Everett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy District John McClow, Frank Kugel*, Greg Peterson, Kathleen Curry, Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, Dennis Steckel*, Jim Slattery, Ken Spann
City of Grand Junction Terry Franklin, Rick Bukus, Greg Trainor
Delta County Commissioners Jan McCracken, Wayne Wolf, Olen Lund
Delta County Duane Freeman
City of Delta Lanny Sloan, Steve Glammeyer, Barry Bullard, Jim Brown, Wilma Ervin
Delta County Emergency Management Rob Fiedler
Mesa County Emergency Management
Gunnison County Commissioners Hap Channell, Paula Swenson, Jim Starr

Colorado Department of Agriculture..... Jim Miller
Colorado Division of Water Resources Pat McDermott, Bob Hurford*, Scott King, Richard Rozman, Luke Reschke, Jason Ullmann*
Colorado Division of Wildlife...John Alves, Dan Brauch*, Sherman Hebein, Dan Kowalski*, David Graf, Ryan Swygman, Jay Skinner, Rick Anderson, Mark Uppendahl
Colorado Water Conservation Board...Ray Alvarado, Michelle Garrison*, Rick Brown, Steve Miller
Congressman John SalazarRichard Baca
Senator Mark Udall.....
Senator Michael Bennet Trudy Kareus
Army Corps of Engineers..... Ken Jacobson
Bureau of Land Management Roy Smith, Rooster Barnhart*, Karen Tucker, Edd Franz*, Forest Zerbe, Jesse Kirthorp, Peter Dennett, Julie Stotler, Ryan Mathis*, Michelle Bailey, Patrick Pratchett
Fish and Wildlife Service..... Al Pfister, Jana Mohrman*, Patty Gelatt
National Park Service Connie Rudd*, Ken Stahlnecker*, Dave Roberts, Matt Malick, Mark Wondzell, Melissa Trammell, Michael Dale, Bill Johnson, Dan Gude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Clayton Frazier*, Norm Henderson
National Weather Service..... Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak, Jim Pringle, Bill Reed, Aldis Strautius*
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration..... Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann, Brad Udall, Kevin Werner, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox*
NRCS..... Paul Van Ryzin, Tom Pagano, Mike Gillespie, John Scott
U.S. Geological Survey..... David Brown, Bob Jenkins, Gordon Mueller, Gerhard Kuhn, Bob Boulgarz, Joe Sullivan, Steve Anders, Kirby Wynn, Trisha Solberg
Western Area Power Administration..... Burt Hawkes*, Brad Warren, Nancy Scheid, Clayton Palmer, Carma Edgell*, Jeff Ackerman*, Kathy Crane, Ken Green, Annette Falvo, Ken Otto, Gary Burton; Margaret Matte, Dave Shelton, Jennifer Henn*, Chris Brown, Shane Messawo, Rachelle Fellin, Laurie Moore,
Bureau of Reclamation... Ed Warner*, Steve McCall, Joe Austin, Grant Watson, Ted Dunn*, Dan Crabtree*, Terry Stroh*, Carol DeAngelis*, Jane Blair, Max Spiker, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock*, Erik Knight*, Nancy Coulam, Laurie Jones, Heather Patno, Dennis Kubly, Dave Harpman, Dawn Munger, Tom Ryan*, Keith Twehous
Interior Solicitors Office..... John Bezdek, Peter Fahmy
Department of Justice.....Dave Gehlert
Colorado U/CADSWES.....Edie Zagona, Satish Regonda
University of Colorado..... Christina Alford
Colorado Basin River Forecast Center.....Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak
National Drought Mitigation Center.....Donna Woudenberg
Painted Sky RCD.....Mike Drake
CSAS-CODOS.....Chris Landry*