

Below is a summary of our January 19, 2012 meeting to coordinate Reclamation's operation of the Aspinall Unit. The meeting was held in Montrose. Significant items discussed included:

- Blue Mesa April through July inflow is predicted at 450,000 af based on January snowpack, representing a moderately dry year. Last year the inflow was 893,000 af, representing a moderately wet year.
- Based on this early 2012 forecast, the Black Canyon water right would call for a 1 day peak of 2,206 cfs and Flow Recommendations for endangered fish would call for a 5,396 cfs peak at Whitewater. As usual, there can be significant changes in snowpack between January and the actual runoff.

If you have any suggestions on improving the operation meetings or summaries, please let us know. The next operation meeting will be on Thursday, April 26th in Reclamation's Western Colorado Area Office in Grand Junction. If you have any questions, please call me at 970 248-0629 or contact me at eknight@usbr.gov.

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
January 19, 2012

Participation: This meeting was held at the Holiday Inn Express in Montrose. 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-- 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 2011 operations; projected inflows to the reservoirs for 2012; and proposed operation plans for 2012 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 are used to discuss proposals for long-term operation plans to address these and related resource management issues.

Slide Show: Vern Jetley, retired Reclamation photographer, gave an interesting slide show on the construction of the Aspinall Unit Reservoirs. Thanks Vern!

Operations:

General: Blue Mesa Reservoir capacities are described in meetings as follows: The reservoir holds 940,700 acre-feet (af). Active capacity 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. Discussions during operation meetings use live capacity.

August 2011-January 2012 Operations:

The fall of 2011 began with good precipitation in the Gunnison Basin; however, November and December were much drier than normal. Crystal releases were around 2,000 cfs in September;

reduced to 600 cfs during October, and then increased to 1,500 cfs until the Blue Mesa winter elevation target of 7490 feet was reached in late December. Releases are now at 800 cfs.

As of January 16, snowpack in the Gunnison Basin is 56 percent of average and there is less snow accumulation than in 2002. San Juan Basin is at 74 percent and the upper Green Basin is at 59 percent.

The forecasted April through July inflow to Blue Mesa is 450,000 af which would be expected to be exceeded in 85 percent of years. This is a moderately dry year category. In 2011 the inflow for the same time period was 893,000 af.

Early predictions, under most probable conditions, call for Black Canyon/Gunnison Gorge flows in the 600 cfs range into April and around 750 cfs for the summer and early fall. At this time, Blue Mesa is expected to fill to 720,000 af. This is 90,000 af or 12 vertical feet short of filling.

Based on the present forecast, the Black Canyon National Park water right would call for a 1-day peak of 2206 cfs. Flow Recommendations for endangered fish would call for a peak at Whitewater of 5396 cfs.

It should be noted that we are a little over half way through the snow season and inflow forecasts may change significantly.

Special flow requests: The National Park Service would appreciate flows of 600 cfs during the last weekend of July to conduct vegetation surveys, if possible. The Uncompahgre Valley Water Users would like to see flows around 300 cfs for 1 day in March to do repair work on the Gunnison Tunnel diversion dam. The Colorado Division of Wildlife is scheduling trout monitoring for October 2-5 and flows of 600-900 cfs are ideal for this work.

EIS update: The final EIS is being printed. A draft Record of Decision will be provided to cooperating agencies. Reclamation hopes to file the EIS and complete the Record of Decision prior to this spring's runoff. The preferred alternative has not changed in the final EIS.

As part of the Programmatic Biological Opinion, a selenium management plan has been completed. Salinity and selenium reduction programs have resulted in a downward trend in selenium concentrations in the Gunnison River and downstream in the Colorado River. Public meetings were held on October 17 and 20 and the final plan was distributed this month.

Power Office: Normal maintenance work on dams and powerplants ongoing. No projects planned that will affect river flows/reservoir operations.

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

Colorado Division of Wildlife: Kokanee harvest showed a second year of improvement but still below peak years. Egg take last fall totaled 11 million eggs which is a record...more efficient use of fish moving upstream to the hatchery is a major factor. Lake trout control is ongoing with 1,400 fish removed last year.

Last October, the Taylor River was sampled and trout numbers were in good shape, similar to the last survey in 2006. Numbers exceed the Gold Medal standard. Ridgway Reservoir operations during the last two winters have helped fish populations.

Working with USGS on a salmon fly study on the Gunnison.

Colorado Water Conservation Board: Board will meet in Gunnison in July in conjunction with the Gunnison Water Workshop. Taking input on the Basin Study....see Reclamation's website.

Dust on Snow: Chris Landry reported on the dust on snow monitoring. Three minor dust events so far this winter. Conditions are very dry here and in the lower basin. Dry conditions in lower basin may be related to increased dust later in the year.

Fish and Wildlife Service: Redlands fish ladder used by 2 pikeminnow, 1 razorback and 5 bonytail last year. Bonytail had been stocked previously upstream of ladder at Butch Craig pond. Selenium Management Program plan has been completed.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: South Canal hydropower EA out for review. Will conserve water as much as possible due to predicted runoff conditions.

Western Area Power: New representative Nancy Scheid was welcomed.

Bureau of Land Management: May be a year for small boats due to low runoff predictions.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: Working on 50th anniversary celebration of Blue Mesa construction with Gunnison Basin Round Table. Will be event in June including ceremony at the dam.

Colorado River Water Conservation District: Hartland Diversion improvement work complete; will open in early February. Grant program open until January 31. Colorado River Basin study is ongoing. Identified water supply gaps. See Reclamation website for information. Lots of water-related celebrations this year including 50th anniversary of Blue Mesa construction. See www.crwcd.org.

Tri-County: EA and Finding of No Significant Impact completed on hydropower project at Ridgway Dam. Board has signed Lease of Power Privilege with Reclamation. Due to forecast, may need to reduce releases from the dam. Noted that Gunnison Basin Round Table looking at excess storage capacity at Blue Mesa in conjunction with the Arkansas River Round Table.

National Park Service: Boat inspections for quagga mussel will continue and will now include hand-launched boats. Water sampled twice monthly. Blue Mesa on "suspect list" due to DNA findings...no adult mussels have been found.

USGS: There is a new seasonal gage on the Smith Fork about two miles above its mouth.

State Engineer: There are 2 new gages on the Uncompahgre for administration—one near Uncompahgre Road and one above South Canal.

Trout Unlimited: Noted that ramping rates are important when making changes in releases from Crystal Dam. Working with the Relief Ditch for boater and fish passage. Design is complete and BLM working on the EA. Hope for construction in fall of 2012.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for April 26th, 2012 at 1 pm in Reclamation’s Grand Junction office.

January 19, 2012 Aspinall Operation Meeting

*An asterisk indicates person attended the meeting in person or by phone

Argonne National Laboratory John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
Black Canyon Anglers.....Richard Dudgeonski
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, Jeremy Matlock
Bureau of Reclamation... Denny Johnson, Ed Warner, Steve McCall*, Ted Dunn*, Dan Crabtree*, Terry
Stroh, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock, Erik Knight*, Nancy Coulam, Laurie Jones, Tom Ryan,
Phil Martin*, Grant Watson*, Vern Harrell*
CSAS-CODOS.....Chris Landry*
City of Grand Junction..... Terry Franklin, Rick Bukus, Greg Trainor
Club 20Reeves Brown
Colorado Department of Agriculture..... Jim Miller
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James, Kent Holsinger
Colorado River Water Conservation DistrictDave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt, Eric Kuhn,
, David Halford, Ray Tenney
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
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*, Dan Kowalski*, David Graf,
Ryan Swygman, Jay Skinner, Rick Anderson, Mark Uppendahl
Colorado U/CADSWES.....Edie Zagona, Satish Regonda
Colorado Water Conservation Board...Ray Alvarado, Michelle Garrison*, Rick Brown, Steve Miller
Congressman Scott Tipton
Daily Sentinel..... Gary Harmon, Dave Buchanan
Delta County IndependentBob Borchardt
Delta County Commissioners.....Jan McCracken, Wayne Wolf, Olen Lund
Delta County..... Duane Freeman
City of Delta..... Lanny Sloan, Steve Glammeyer, Glen Black, Barry
Bullard, Jim Brown, Wilma Ervin
Delta County Emergency Management.....Rob Fiedler
Delta Montrose Electric Association..... Jim Heneghan
Department of Justice.....Dave Gehlert
Fish and Wildlife Service..... Jana Mohrman*, Patty Gelatt*
Gunnison Country Times Michelle Burkhart, Will Shoemaker, Alan Wartes, Pat Daniel
Gunnison Basin POWERRalph (Butch) Clark, Ramon Reed
Gunnison County Commissioners Hap Channell, Paula Swenson, Jim Starr
Gunnison River ExpeditionsHank Hotze, Al DeGrange

Helton & Williamsen, P.C. Duane Helton
High Country Citizens Alliance/Sierra Club Steve Glazer, Jennifer Boch*, Wendy McDermott,
Interior Solicitors Office John Bezdek, Peter Fahmy
Matt Owens Fly Company Matt Owens
Mesa County Emergency Management
Montrose Daily Press James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer
National Drought Mitigation Center Donna Woudenberg
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann,
Brad Udall, Kevin Werner, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox, Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak
National Park Service Connie Rudd*, Ken Stahlnecker, Matt Malick, Mark Wondzell,
Melissa Trammell, Michael Dale*, Bill Johnson, Dan Gude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Clayton Frazier, Mike Drake*
National Weather Service Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak, Jim Pringle, , Bill Reed,
Aldis Strautius
NRCS Paul Van Ryzin, Tom Pagano, Mike Gillespie, John Scott
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Painted Sky RCD Mike Drake
Project 7 Adam Turner*
Recovery Program Tom Pitts, Tom Chart
Redlands Water and Power Company Charles Mitisek, Mike Gross
Ridgway Guide Service Tim Paterson, Matt McCannel
Self Ralph Files*, Dick Margetts*
Senator Mark Udall
Senator Michael Bennet Trudy Kareus
Tri County Water Mike Berry*, Ion Spor*, Kathleen Margetts,
Norm Brooks*
Trout Unlimited Pat Oglesby*, Cary Denison*, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternel, John Trammell,
Marshall Pendergrass*
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher, Steve Shea, Aaron English*,
Dennis Veo*
Upper Colorado River Commission Everett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy District John McClow, Frank Kugel* Greg Peterson,
Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, Jim Slattery, Ken Spann
U.S. Geological Survey David Brown, Bob Jenkins, Gordon Mueller, Gerhard Kuhn, Bob Boulgarz,
, Steve Anders* , Trisha Solberg
Western Area Power Administration Clayton Palmer, Jeff Ackerman,
Jerry Wilhite*, Nancy Scheid*, Tim Vigil*, Tanya Newman*
University of Colorado Christina Alford
Western Colorado Congress Fred Wetlaufer
Western Resource Advocates Bart Miller
Xcel Energy Fred Eggleston, Tom Minerick