

**Flaming Gorge Working Group**  
**Vernal, UT**  
**April 19, 2018**

The purpose of the working group meetings is to inform the public and other interested parties of Reclamation's current and future operational plans and to gather information from the public regarding specific resources associated with Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the river corridor below it. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the Green River.

**Agenda:**

- Introductions
  
- Current and forecasted hydrology on the Green and Yampa River (Ashley Nielson, CBRFC/NWS)
  
- Flaming Gorge Historic and Projected Operations (Heather Patno, Reclamation)
  
- Green River Research and Endangered Fish (Tom Chart (Program hydrologist), Recovery Program)
  
- General Discussion/Q&A

Notes:

Ashley

- Last year's weather pattern was dominated by atmospheric rivers that brought large amounts of precipitation
- The 2018 pattern has been dominated by a high ridge sitting over the southwest and Mexico, sending moisture north of Utah
- Temperatures were above normal in January and then less than normal for March
- Snowtell Groupings for above FG – 118%
- Yampa basin snowtell – 90% of median
- San Juan conditions are worsening drastically
- Water supply – FG 102%; Yampa – 60%; Green River – 65%
- April precipitation has had a large impact on the Yampa

- Mid-level snowpack however is already down, so the forecast from Yampa at Deerlodge is only 68%
- Model error – January – 31% vs June – 24%
- Upcoming weather – active weather pattern with storm coming in tomorrow
- Not likely a chance of a quick warmup
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- Questions
  - What percentage of Green River flows come from above Fontenelle? Estimated at about 70%
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#### Heather

- Changes in Reclamation
  - Steve Hulet Retiring
  - Jed Parking going to replace Heather over FG operations
- 1956 CRSP Act
  - Authorized FG dam and other projects for
    - Storage – 1922 Compact apportionments
    - Others
- 2000 flow and temperature recommendations
- ROD requires Reclamation to meet flow and temperature recommendations
- Recovery Program request for Research Flows
- FG TWG addresses informal section 7 consultation
- The Technical working group brings the information to the Flaming Gorge Working Group
- Reclamation makes a final decision on operations
- Flaming Gorge 2017 – largest March on record
- 2017 February – base flows increased to 3000 cfs with the snowpack increasing from 60% to 120% in January to the start of February
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- Keeping reservoir full for consumptive use – based on legislation
- We have multiple authorized objectives
- Last year we told the recovery program we were not going to meet the program requests since we were operating for hydrology
- 122 days at power plant capacity and 103 days at bypass
- Endangered Species Act
  - We were in the moderately wet classification last year which says we need to get to 18,600 cfs at the confluence
  - If Yampa not able to supply the peak, the Flaming Gorge flows

- Forecast (Jed)
  - 1070 ac ft forecasted to runoff which is in the lower end of the average category, similar to 2016
  - Average classification means we should meet 18,500 for 2 weeks
  - Yampa forecasted to have 830,000 ac ft, and is in the moderately dry range
  - Combined, we are in the Moderately dry for the flow and temperature recommendations
  - Peak flow at Jensen when larvae are present: 8,300 to 14,000 cfs
  - Base flow period – 1800 – 2000 cfs
- Planned releases include a 14-day 4,600 cfs peak starting at the larval presence
- Analogous years: 2016 for the upper green, 2001 for the Yampa
  
- Questions
  - T. Wright Dickinson made a request that stakeholders have a seat on the FGTWG. They feel that Looking for a similar meeting to the FGWG, but in for of a FGTWG format.
  - Perhaps have County officials involved as well

#### Tom Chart

- Endangered fish – 4
- Populations respond slowly – Colorado Pike Minnow has 15-year life span with females maturing in 9 years
- Endangered Fish Recovery Program – established in 1988 with a lot of partners
- 2,149 water projects rely on the recovery program at 2.86 million ac ft depletions
- Program is expensive – fish ladders, fish hatcheries, administration, studies, etc
- Federal and State hatcheries and stocking program
- Flood control flows in 2017 did not bode well for the endangered fish
- 2018 flow request – hold spring release till larval Razorback Suckers are identified
- Continue to study spike flows to disadvantage smallmouth bass

#### General Questions:

- Suggestion – Add recovery program message from Tom Pitts and Tom Chart they showed to the Yampa Roundtable in the August Meeting
- Suggestion – There should be more focus on looking at the operational flexibilities involving creating a larger hole in the reservoir before runoff and alleviating the peaks more.
- Suggestion to consider Reach 3 more in presentations and operations

Next meeting scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 am at the DWR office in Vernal (318 N Vernal Ave)