

**Colorado River Storage Project  
Flaming Gorge Working Group  
Meeting Minutes  
August 25, 2005**

**Participation:**

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This meeting was held at the Western Park Convention Center in Vernal, Utah. Attendees are listed below.

**Purpose of Meeting:**

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The purpose of operation meetings (held in April, and August) 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. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the Green River.

**General**

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Meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. by Ed Vidmar. Approximately 30 people were present, see attendance list. Ed indicated that four items were on the agenda. First, a review by Rick Clayton of the spring hydrology and dam releases and the fall and winter forecasts; second, Dave Speas (Reclamation, UC Region, member of Recovery Program Biology Committee) would present a review of the Recovery Program research conducted in May to June 2005 during the spring peak runoff season; third, Gary Burton of Western Area Power Administration would present a study of the effects of fluctuating flows on trout below Flaming Gorge Dam; fourth, Ed Vidmar would present a review of historical hydrology on the Green and Yampa Rivers from 1922 to present.

**Flaming Gorge Hydrology**

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Rick Clayton gave a review of the spring forecast as shared at the April 2005 FG Working Group meeting, the Recovery Program's request for releases from the dam for research purposes, and actual releases (See meeting handout). Reclamation had agreed following discussion at the April FG Working Group meeting to schedule releases from FG Dam such that flows of 14,000 cfs, 16,000 cfs, 18,000 cfs and 16,000 cfs post-peak, could be held for a couple of days at each increment at the Jensen gauge to the extent possible. Because Yampa River flows were significantly higher than forecast, flows in excess of powerplant capacity at FG Dam were made only before and after the peaks at Jensen. With Flaming Gorge Dam operating at 4600 cfs (powerplant capacity, normal spring peak operations), there was a brief spike at Jensen of just over 20,000 cfs, and there were high flows at Ouray due to extremely high runoff in Ashley Creek and the White and Duchesne Rivers. Flows on the Green and Yampa Rivers were those of an average hydrologic year.

Uintah County Commissioner Mike McKee stated that he thought there were problems with flooding, and Reclamation should have reduced the dam to below powerplant capacity. Ed Vidmar noted that we had stated very clearly at the April Working Group meeting that we would hold steady at powerplant capacity because of the criticism we received from Uintah County in 1995, when we went below powerplant capacity to compensate for Yampa River flows. At that

time, county personnel indicated that such action was detrimental to mosquito control. Others in attendance indicated that they were subject to property damage (pumps and other equipment) from high flows. Ed noted that the Federal government is not liable for improvements in the floodplain, which are made at each landowner's risk. Dee Holladay noted that the overall health of the river, particularly in Dinosaur National Monument, has improved over the years, including this year. Ed Vidmar noted that at the April 2005 meeting, the trout fishermen supported the proposed bypass even though it meant a loss of revenues for them. Roger Schneidervin of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources indicated that this year's flows below the dam were beneficial for silt removal following the Mustang fire as well as for New Zealand mud snail research.

Commissioner McKee asked about the timing of the FG Dam releases, is it not possible to have Green River peak releases before or after the Yampa River peaks? Larry Crist of the US Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that no, this would generally not be desirable. The flow and temperature recommendations proposed in the Flaming Gorge EIS for implementation are based on supplementing the Yampa River flows with releases from the FG Dam. The target flows are based on historic hydrology and each year's targets would depend on the hydrologic year. In dry years, as we've seen recently, the spring peak would be low, in wet years, the spring peaks would be higher, but they would generally be expected to be higher anyway in wet years, due to the need to operate FG Dam so that the reservoir has sufficient capacity to capture inflows.

There followed considerable discussion about the timing of peaks and meeting attendees expressed frustration over the use of the dam for the benefit of endangered fish, as opposed to power generation and flood control. Commissioner McKee restated that the counties should have been cooperating agencies on the Flaming Gorge EIS. Beverley Heffernan explained again that in 2000, the states were invited to be cooperating agencies and Reclamation's assumption at that time was that the states would coordinate with counties as needed to represent any concerns they might have. Beverley noted that in many meetings since 2000, including the monthly Uinta Basin partners meetings, Reclamation staff have provided briefings and updates on the FGEIS and the county never expressed a concern or a desire to be a cooperating agency, had they done so Reclamation would have been happy to accommodate them. Beverley also noted that there is some misunderstanding over the proposed action as analyzed in that EIS. It is important to focus on the differences in that document between action and no action, and because spring peak flows are subject to the amount of runoff each year anyway, the differences are generally small. Steve Romney stated his ongoing concerns about public health and mosquito production, he does not think that Reclamation takes those concerns seriously. Beverley and Ed indicated that we do take those concerns, and all concerns, seriously. Ed noted that we know we can't make everybody happy all the time, but we do our best. Ed reviewed for the benefit of newcomers the purpose of the FG Working Group.

After this series of discussions, Rick Clayton finished his presentation with an explanation of base flows relative to the 1992 Biological Opinion. He noted that current daily fluctuations under the 1992 BO would violate stage restrictions under the FGEIS action alternative. Current forecast for spring 2006 is for 78% of normal inflows to the reservoir, suggesting that the drought isn't over yet. 2nd year projection (2007) is for 90% of normal inflows to Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

At 11:35 a.m., Dave Speas gave his presentation regarding Recovery Program research activities during the 2005 spring peak flow season on the Green River. He noted that the test flows for research were requested by the Recovery Program and discussed at the April 2005 FG Working Group meeting. The Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program is of benefit to all water users in the Colorado River system because it allows for the continued development of water despite the presence of the four endangered fish species. Dave noted that it's important to remember the big picture in terms of continued water development and the health of the river system, these will continue to be important for decades to come. He showed pictures of the research activities and gave an explanation of the sampling that occurred. The focus of the research was on razorback suckers, one of the four endangered fish species in the river. This was a very good cooperative effort and once the data has been analyzed, the results of this research will be published and posted on the Recovery Program web site. Other documents related to the Recovery Program are also available on that web site. Dave noted that this type of research is important because if we aren't doing the right things for the recovery of the fish, we can make changes for the better. Kevin asked whether there was success in overwintering of young razorbacks at Stewart Lake; Dave said yes, Stewart Lake is an important site.

At 11:55 a.m., Gary Burton of the Western Area Power Administration gave a presentation of research conducted by Argonne National Laboratory on the effects of fluctuating flows on trout below Flaming Gorge Dam. His presentation included a review of the modeling and assumptions. Conclusion of research and modeling to date is that the effects of fluctuation on the trout are small, but are more pronounced in dry conditions. Next steps include looking at ramp rates and other flow scenarios, studying how different flows affect food production. Roger Schneidervin of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources asked how trout movement was measured and modeled, and Walt Donaldson, also of UDWR, asked what 'simulated trout production' means- is that number the same as biomass? Roger asked that UDWR staff be able to meet with the researchers to review the model and assumptions in more detail, and perhaps undertake other modeling runs and analyze the results.

At 12:17 a.m., Clayton Palmer of Western Area Power Administration gave a presentation on daily fluctuation patterns for power generation, as a followup to recent commitments at a meeting with fishermen, river guides and Daggett County representatives. Clayton reviewed the current daily pattern and the patterns expected to be used for the rest of the year. Western is trying to accommodate the needs of the trout fishermen through the end of October, which is presumed to be the end of the peak fishing season. Clayton noted that his handout included alternate patterns for September and October 2005, and he asked that those interested give him feedback as soon as possible as to which alternative is preferable. Clayton also indicated that flow requests for November and December will include double humps and a ramp rate of 1250 cfs, which exceeds the 800 cfs restriction mutually agreed upon by FG Working Group participants. Roger Schneidervin noted that Denny Breer was not present to speak for the trout fishermen, but he expected they would be opposed. In addition to the higher ramp rate, the double hump deviates from established trend of one peak per day. Clayton noted he had asked Steve Brayton for input in the past and that the restrictions were based on observations. Roger asked for a separate meeting with Western, trout fishermen and river guides on the issue, Roger also wants to meet with Argonne on the trout modeling. Clayton indicated that a meeting on the proposed November-December patterns will be scheduled; Ed Vidmar asked that Reclamation be

included in these meetings. Ed noted that copies of presentations at today's meeting will be posted to the FG Working Group web page; Dave Speas also distributed a handout on the 2005 Recovery Program research.

At 11:36 a.m., Ed Vidmar gave a presentation on hydrology on the Green and Yampa Rivers dating back to 1922. The graphs progressed from 1922 to present adding additional spring flow data as new gauges came on line. Graphs of post-dam flows also showed what flows at Jensen would be without the dam in place, significantly higher in many years. Wade (last name?) stated that landowners need to know what's happening, how often will floods occur and is there early warning for farmers? Ed noted that floods will occur whenever there is a wet year and that Reclamation does go to great effort to notify those who have asked for at least 3 days' notice when the peak flows are starting. Reclamation has an email notification system but will also phone, or fax, or put announcements on the radio, or a notice in the coffee shop in Jensen—we'll do whatever it takes, just let us know. Ed was asked to give this presentation at the beginning of the next Flaming Gorge Working Group meeting, it was very informative and many of those who were complaining about this year's flows left before this presentation. They should see it because it answered many of their questions.

Wade asked what the difference in stage is between 18,000 cfs and 25,000 cfs; the answer is that it depends on the location along the river and the topography, Reclamation does have maps that show how high the water goes at different flows, and will share those with anyone who asks, just send property location and Reclamation will send that map. Walt Donaldson of UDWR stated that he wanted to compliment the Bureau of Reclamation; he thinks Reclamation has a tough job with all of the conflicting interests and is handling it well. One gentleman asked which landowners were questioned about flooding when preparing the EIS, Reclamation will provide that information if desired. It was also noted that those with pumps in the river need to know when the river is declining so they can lower their pumps; this information is provided through the email notifications that Reclamation sends out and anyone who wishes can be on that list.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m. Next meeting date was not scheduled but would be expected to be in April 2006.

### **Presentation:**

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[Western Presentation of Modeling the Effects of Flow Fluctuations on Trout Below Flaming Gorge Dam](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FGWG08-2005Presentation2kel.pdf)

<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FGWG08-2005Presentation2kel.pdf>

[Hydrology Review and Update](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FlamingGorgeWorkGroup_VID.pdf)

[http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FlamingGorgeWorkGroup\\_VID.pdf](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FlamingGorgeWorkGroup_VID.pdf)

[Proposed Western Generation Schedules](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/WesternProposal.pdf)

<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/WesternProposal.pdf>

[Yampa and Green Historic Flow Presentation](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/YampaHydro.pdf)

<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/YampaHydro.pdf>

### **Previous Meeting Minutes:**

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Flaming Gorge Working Group Meeting Minutes:  
April 20, 2005

August 19, 2004  
April 15, 2004

**Next Meeting:**

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Next meeting date was not scheduled but would be expected to be in April 2006.

**Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>
Scott Chew	Irrigator	435.798.6710
William Pleaugh	Irrigator	
Steven Romney	Uintah Mosquito	435.389.4105
Steve Huler	reclamation FGFD	435.885.3258
Peter Crookston	Reclamation	801.379.1152
Brian Raymond	Daggett County	435.784.3218
Jim Abegglen	Uintah County	435.781.5383
Mike McKee	Uintah County	435.781.5382
Roger Schneidervin	DWR	435.885.3164
Scott Mc???	Landowner	
Boyd Kitchen	USU Extension	
Rick Clayton	Reclamation	801.524.3710
James S. Goff	Landowner	435.789.8739
Dee Holladay	Holliday Expeditions	801.266.1393
Walt Donaldson	UDWR	435.789.9453
Larry Crist	USFWS	801.975.3330x126
Clayton Palmer	WAPA	801.524.3522
Dave Irving	USFWS	435.789.4078
Scott Ruppe	Uintah Water Cons	435.825.1402
Lane & Cindy Scott	Irrigator	435.789.7661
Gary Burton	WAPA	720.962.7259
Jeffery Ackerman	WAPA	970.240.6209
Kevin Christopherson	UDWR	
Dave Speas	Reclamation	801.524.3863
Beverly Heffernan	Reclamation	801.379.1161
Ed Vidmar	Reclamation	801.379.1182