

**Colorado River Storage Project
Flaming Gorge Working Group
Meeting Minutes
August 22, 2006**

Participation

This meeting was held at Western Park, Vernal, Utah. Attendees are listed below.

Purpose of Meeting

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

Ed Vidmar called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with 18 present (See signup sheet for attendance). Ed indicated that a presentation would be from Rick Clayton, followed by Clayton Palmer and then an open discussion. Before starting with Rick Clayton's presentation, all present introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Hydrology - Rick Clayton

Rick Clayton then gave his presentation on events that lead up to the spring release (see presentation posted on web site). Rick reviewed snowpack, forecast, and dry, average and wet scenarios, taking both the Yampa and Upper Green into account. This year is the first year implementing the Record of Decision (ROD). Flaming Gorge reservoir is 83.6% full as of August 10 th and is very stable and gradually filling. Inflows are slightly suppressed due to irrigation. 6033 feet elevation is full reservoir and we are 9 feet below that. Comparing this year to last year the snowpack was better but the inflow was not as good due to many factors along with an early melt. The early forecast of the Green River basin indicated we would try to achieve a target of 18,600 cfs for 14 days in Reach 2. But as the season progressed and the forecast dropped we adjusted the target. By June we were low in the average range and by July we were in the moderate dry range and a new target of 18,600 cfs for one day seemed more reasonable. The Yampa River basin did the same thing as the Green River basin and fell from the wet side of average to a dry scenario. So using the model we started looking for an opportunity to achieve the one day target.

On May 24 th Reclamation initiated a bypass for 24 hours to achieve the one day target of 18,600 cfs. We actually balanced the bypass release by partially opening both bypass tubes. We hit 18,900 cfs at Jensen on May 24 th and hit it again on May 25 th. The second peak was the result of an unexpected heavy rain event in the upper Yampa River basin. Overall the inflow to Flaming Gorge reservoir ended up being below the minimum probable statistic and we are now in a moderately dry scenario.

When the Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group (TWG) met in July we recommended a base flow target of 1230 cfs in Reach 2 at Jensen. Due to the now dry condition and low flow of the

Yampa River we are now at 1000 cfs base flow in Reach 2. As the summer cools and irrigation decreases next month we should see an increase of 100 cfs in the Yampa River.

Rick ended his presentation by laying out the schedule for the TWG and the Flaming Gorge Working Group (FGTWG) to recommend the 2007 spring and base flow releases. The goal now is to have the reservoir at 6027 feet elevation by March 1 st and from there we look at the weather forecast to formulate a recommendation.

Double Peaking Study for Winter of 2006-2007

Clayton Palmer described a study design to look at load following patterns (double peaking during a 24 hour period) and determine the impacts on trout. The study design should be out next week for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and Reclamation to review. Clayton referred to a slide describing the double peak that was not included in the handout (the slide will be included in the version available on the internet). If water is available this year Western would like to extend the duration of both peaks. Western would also like to modify the current ramp rate proposal of 800 cfs up and 500 cfs down to a descending rate of 1200 cfs.

Denny Breer asked for more notice of the change in operations. Last year it seemed decisions were made mid day and a 2 hour notice is not enough time. Ed Vidmar responded that Reclamation will try to provide as much notice as possible. Rick Clayton noted that at that time of year sometimes we only have a 2 hour notice and that situation was described in the proposal. Rick said we will do what we can to help.

Sam Haslem would like to see handouts with bigger print and a hard copy of meeting notice sent to his homes in Utah and Colorado. Ed Vidmar agreed to provide him written notice.

Lowell Marthe said it would be best if we did not double peak this year. We have limited water anyway and it would allow us to collect two more data sets on the trout study. Also the Division is concerned with Western's proposal to modify the ramp rate. A 1200 cfs ramp down is generally hard on fish and can strand them in shallow water. Roger Schneidervin agreed. He said we pit tagged 1400 fish last year and a bigger sample size would greatly benefit the study. With the low forecast and being in such a dry year we would like to forgo the double peaks this year. Clayton Palmer said Heather Patno ran the SAR model and the double peak is clearly within the ROD. In fact a double peak is a better fit for the ROD than a single peak because it attenuates down river and in Reach 2 it actually creates a smaller stage change than a single peak.

Clayton Palmer expressed concern with the data gathering (pit tagging trout) proposed for September 18 th and 19 th with the 1600 cfs release. He said the double peak this year is necessary for development of the Individual Base Model (IBM). Additional data points are necessary to calibrate the model. Clayton said Western and Reclamation are working on research to see if the spring peak target can be lowered below the 18,600 cfs target in Reach 2. Levees have been breached in order to accommodate a lower peak spring flow that will inundated sufficient flood plains for endangered fish habitat.

Roger Schneidervin responded that the 1600 cfs release during data collection is the standard flow for collecting the data. A 1600 cfs release allows us to compare data gathered for many years by maintaining the same conditions.

Melissa Trammel asked that the research plan be in a little earlier this year. Ed responded that this was the first year implementing the ROD and it is a learning process but we met the target and overall it went well. Melissa Trammel added that the entrainment research results are not compiled yet but the data collection for the research went well and she thanked Reclamation for helping to provide the necessary flows.

Denny Breer asked when Reclamation will make a final decision if a double peak will be implemented this year. Ed Vidmar responded that a final decision will be made by the first or second week of November. Ed added that unless you hear from us you can plan on double peaking this year. The double peak operation is the current plan. Roger Schneidervin asked if the 6027 is a hard and fast goal. Rick Clayton responded that it is the target for reservoir elevation for safe dam operations. Roger said that target is desirable because it will help kokanee salmon reproduction in that the eggs will not dry up from low water levels.

Sam Haslem said that Dr. Romney is not here but he continues to have concerns with the threat of West Nile Virus. Two Jensen residences are hospitalized from this disease. He added that controlling mosquitoes is more difficult these days because they cannot use the chemicals used in the past. Ed responded that in Utah County we have had two deaths due to West Nile Virus and that many of the mosquitoes on the Wasatch front carry the disease. The threat may be even greater on the Wasatch front which is unrelated to Flaming Gorge Dam and the Green River flows. Brian responded that the 14 day peak of 16,800 cfs was reduced to a 24 hour period. The initial proposal with a much greater duration could have created a much more serious disease threat than what we experienced.

Melissa Trammel asked if more SNOTEL sites will be installed in the upper Green River basin. Ed Vidmar responded that most of the snow is in the wilderness area above 10,000 feet elevation which is off limits to installing the sites. Installing SNOTEL sites at the lower elevations outside of the wilderness area will not help much in predicting runoff. Eight million dollars has been earmarked to develop ways to use satellites to predict the amount of runoff and cloud seeding to increase runoff.

Next Meeting

Ed Vidmar announced the tentative date for the next Flaming Gorge Working Group meeting will be Thursday, April 19 th, 2007, at 10 a.m. at Western Park in Vernal.

Presentations

[Hydrology Presentation August 2006](#)

http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FlamingGorgeWorkGroup_Aug06.pdf

Previous Meeting Minutes

Flaming Gorge Working Group Meeting Minutes:

April 13, 2006

November 2, 2005

October 28, 2005

August 25, 2005

April 20, 2005

August 19, 2004
April 15, 2004

Attendees:

Name	Organization	Telephone Number
Ted Rampton	UAMPS	801.566.3938
Kevin Clegg	Flaming Gorge Resort	435.790.4822
Dennis Breer	GROGA	435.885.3355
Peter Crookston	Reclamation	801.379.1152
Brian Raymond	Daggett County	435.784.3218
Melissa Trammell	NPS	801.741.1012
Rick Clayton	Reclamation	801.524.3710
Dave Klein	Reclamation	435.885.3106
Billy Elbrock	Reclamation	435.885.3106
Dave Irving	USFWS	435.789.4028x17
Sam Haslam	Rancher near Jensen, UT	435.789.1947
Ed Clark	CBRFC	801.524.5130
Clayton Palmer	WAPA	801.524.3522
William Conroy	Ashley National Forest	435.781.5278
Alex Gouley	Ashley National Forest	
Lowell Marthe	Utah DWR	435.885.3164
Roger Schneidervin	DWR	435.781.5314