

**Colorado River Storage Project
Flaming Gorge Working Group
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2008**

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

Peter Crookston called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. with 28 present (see list of attendees below). Peter introduced himself and indicated that this year's hydrograph analysis and forecast and proposed 2008 spring and base flow releases from the Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group (FGTWG) would be presented by Rick Clayton followed by an open discussion and questions. Before starting, all present introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Hydrology Presentation and FGTWG 2008 Flow Proposal - Rick Clayton

Rick Clayton began his presentation with a summary of what occurred in the past and where we are now and then the forecast. He started with a graph of the historic hydrograph and an unregulated inflow graph. We are at a reservoir elevation low point right now at 6021 feet. May is critical as far as inflow in the reservoir. We do not want reservoir elevation to exceed 6027 as we go into the spring runoff. 6027 is the security level we hold in case of unexpected flood events. We try to achieve that elevation by May 1st. May 1st is when Reclamation implements the flow recommendations we are working on today. Currently we are increasing up about 5 plus feet elevation and then we will hold steady until next year.

The snow condition measured at Snotel sites is slightly low for the Green River basin. The unregulated inflow for the Green River is at 97% of normal. The Record of Decision (ROD) keys into the condition of the Green River when establishing flow targets. The Yampa River basin is well above normal right now at 120%. It has been a good snow pack year for the Yampa River. Currently the Green River forecast falls in the Average category slightly on the dry end. However, the Yampa River forecast falls in the Moderately Wet category. Combined forecast flow conditions for both river basins fall in the middle of the Average category.

Rick reviewed the snow pack, and forecast for moderately dry, average, and moderately wet scenarios. He explained that right now according the Green River April final forecast we are in the Average classification and there is a chance we could move down into the Moderately Dry classification and there is also a change we could move up into the Moderately Wet classification depending on what happens in the next few weeks.

Rick described the flow objectives in the ROD for moderately dry years, average years, and moderately wet years. He explained that in the average classification, flows in Reach 2 should be managed to the extent possible to achieve at least 8,300 cfs for 7 days in 50% of all average years and 18,600 cfs for at least 14 days in 25% of average years and 18,600 cfs for at least 1 day in 25% of average years. These flows should be achieved during the peak and post peak flows of the Yampa River. According to past hydrology, statistically the 18,600 cfs for at least 14 days in 25% of average years is the most difficult ROD flow to achieve.

He presented the Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group's (FGTWG) request to achieve the 18,600 cfs for 14 days this year. It appears to be a good year because of the wetter conditions of the Yampa River. If we reach 18,600 cfs for 10 days in Reach 2, with a normal release, we would try to add 4 more days to achieve the 14 day duration (the 14 days do not have to be consecutive). It is not anticipated to be a difficult target to achieve. The Yampa River will do most of the work because of the above average snow pack, but if necessary, bypass flows could be required.

Clayton Palmer stated that the FGTWG (in which he is a member) is not in the position to recommend bypass flows. He said that is a decision to be made by Reclamation and determined by them if it is necessary.

Steven Romney stated that 10 days at 18,600 cfs in Reach 2 would be disastrous for Uintah County (referring to mosquitoes). He added that this flow target shows Reclamation's total disregard for public health.

Rick described the Recovery Program's request (made to the FGTWG) to achieve spring flows, if reasonably possible, at 15,000 cfs for 5 days in Reach 2 in order to maintain connectivity with floodplain depressions. This request is to evaluate escapement of juvenile razorback sucker from the Stirrup wetland.

Rick discussed hydrologic years (1993, 1979, and 1941) that are similar to this years forecast. They are possible scenarios of what could happen this year. He presented and discussed a most probable graph as well.

Rick ended his presentation on a slide with an explanation of the 4 step process now in effect for arriving at the final decision on spring and base flow releases. First, the Recovery Program plans for special flows are conveyed to the FGTWG. The FGTWG convenes and reviews snow pack, hydrology forecasts, and any Recovery Program requests, and comes up with proposed releases for spring peak and base flow. That proposal is then shared with the FG Working Group as we are doing today so that we can receive feedback from the interested public and learn of any other resource issues that should be factored into the decision. Then, Reclamation reviews all of this information and arrives at a final decision. Since the forecasts are subject to further change all the way to the start of peak runoff, Reclamation's decision is subject to further refinement as needed and as the forecast changes.

General Discussion - Peter Crookston

Peter then asked if anyone has questions or comments.

Dennis Breer made a request to allow a 10,000 cfs high flow release in Reach 1 this year. He expressed concern about the buildup of sediments in the tailwater because of the 2002 fire. He said it has been so long since we have had a significant high flow event that sediment has become very hard and cemented on the river bottom. A high flow event would flush out the sediment and go a long way in dislodging mud snails. He suggested that a 72 hour maximum flush would do the job and push the sediment down stream and help the fishery. The buildup of sediment has been harmful to the trout fishery and a decline in fish condition has been noticed for several years. He asked if this could be incorporated into the flow recommendation this year.

Melissa Trammell, with the National Park Service, agreed with Dennis that a 10,000 cfs release in Reach 1 this year would benefit the river below Flaming Gorge.

Steven asked if there is a report that explains the rationale of operating Flaming Gorge Dam with such blatant disregard for public health. To bypass water and provide a 10,000 cfs flow would be devastating.

Clayton said the FGTWG proposal of 15,000 cfs for 5 days in Reach 2 is supported by Western Area Power Administration (Western) even if bypass is required (within reason). He said Western also agrees with the two week 18,600 cfs duration, within reason, which is challenging, but if only 10 days are achieved, Western does not support additional water for 4 days. Western believes the 18,600 cfs target in the ROD could be lowered in the future by the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Recovery Program). For this reason Western said Reclamation should wait this year. Western has no objection to flushing flows in Reach 1 but these flows should be achieved during wetter years when there is a need to move additional water. Western does not believe Reclamation has the legal authority to bypass water for mud snails or sediment. Clayton added that Western believes ecology and endangered fish are compatible with energy production. He requested that once the objectives of the flow recommendations are achieved that a ramp down to base flows should be as soon as possible to save water.

Lowell Marthe stated that Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is supportive of flushing flows this year. He said sediment and invertebrate concerns warrant this year being a flushing flow. Lowell said there is data showing a decline in trout condition the last few years.

Dennis directed a request to Western asking that they support a flushing flow this year. Clayton asked where the 10,000 cfs came from for a flushing flow target. Melissa said that Jack Schmidt studies could help with setting the flushing flow volume. Roger Schneidervin suggested that we look at the high flows of 1997 and 1999 and see what the benefits were and determine what the level should be.

Melissa said it is predecisional to expect that the Recovery Program will lower the ROD flow targets in the future. Clayton said that the 18,600 cfs target is no longer relevant due to the breaching of levees. Dave Speas said the Recovery Program's report is not out yet and they will be synthesizing all available data coming out this year. He said it is still early to know what the results are going to be.

Clayton wanted to clarify Western's position that they support targeting 18,600 cfs in wetter years on the Green River. This year is not one of those years. We do not support doing this unless bypass is likely for hydrologic reasons.

The question was asked if a double peaking release pattern was going to be implemented this year. Roger said that DWR and Western are meeting after this meeting to talk about double peaking. DWR wants to maintain the data collection on invertebrates but it is not funded. We have been cooperating in collecting data but feel Mark Vinson's work is now unfunded. We will not support double peaking in the fall if funding doesn't come through for this work.

Kerry McCalman asked if Mark Vinson's work addresses sediment and does a map of sediment exist? Roger responded that the work does show that high flows are good for invertebrates and biomass in the river. It does not address sediment directly and maps do not exist.

Dennis asked Western if fluctuating request will be similar to last summer. Clayton said the pattern would be the same as last summer.

Dennis said that due to sediment influx from the 2002 fire fish size has declined significantly. This is the consensus of all the river guides on the river.

Boyd Kitchen expressed concerns about warning people in Jensen when the high flows are expected. He asked where people can go for this information. Rick said a press release is issued prior to the flows. Dennis seconded the concern about the information being readily available to everyone and said he appreciates what Reclamation has done in past years as far as informing the public.

Steve said that biomass (mosquitoes) increases exponentially with high flows. This especially occurs where bottomlands are heavily flooded.

Peter thanked everyone for their comments. He agreed to allow everyone an opportunity to review the meeting notes by email before they are put on the internet. Rick added that if they didn't make comments today this is another opportunity for them to comment on the FGTWG proposal.

Next Meeting

Peter announced the tentative date for the next Flaming Gorge Working Group meeting will be Wednesday, August 20, 2008, at 10 a.m. at Western Park in Vernal.

Presentations

[Hydrology Presentation and Flow Proposal - April 2008](#)

http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/fg/pdfs/FlamingGorgeWorkGroup_Apr08.pdf

Previous Meeting Minutes

Flaming Gorge Working Group Meeting Minutes:

August 23, 2007

April 19, 2007

August 22, 2006
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
Steven Romney	Uintah Mosquito	435-789-4105
Sue Cielinski	USFWS	
Dee Holladay	Holiday Exp.	801-266-1393
W. Clay Perschon	UDWR	801-538-4809
Lowell Marthe	UDWR	435-885-3164
Roger Schneidervin	UDWR	435-781-5314
Danelle Highfill	USFWS	435-781-5246
Melissa Trammell	NPS	801-741-1012 ext. 103
Jerry Taylor	Flaming Gorge Corporation	435-784-3483
Dave Speas	Reclamation	801-524-3863
Steve Hulet	Reclamation	435-885-3231
Max Spiker	Reclamation	801-524-3745
Kevin Clark	Reclamation	435-885-3238
Ed Clark	NWS-CBEFC	801-524-5150
Kerry McCalman	Reclamation	801-524-3612
Robert King	UDWR	801-538-7259
Ryan Mosley	UDWR	435-885-3164
John Hayse	Argonne National Lab	630-252-7949
Kirk Lagory	Argonne National Lab	630-252-3169
Boyd Kitchen	USU Extension	435-781-5452
Peter Crookston	Reclamation	801-379-1152
Clayton Palmer	Western	801-524-3522
Dave Irving	USFWS	435-789-4078 ext. 17
Steve Railsback	Lang Railsback & Associate	707-822-0453
Kirk Robbins	Uintah MAD	435-789-4105
Leisa Monroe	UDWR	435-781-5316
Rick Clayton	Reclamation	801-524-3710
Dennis Breer	GROGA	435-885-3355