

**Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group**  
**March 8, 2012, 3:30 p.m.**  
**Meeting Record**

Attending:

Service (USFWS) –Kevin McAbee

UCRIP – Tom Chart, Jana Mohrman, Kevin Bestgen

Reclamation (BOR) – Heather Patno, Malcolm Wilson, Dave Speas, Beverley Heffernan

Western (WAPA) – Clayton Palmer, Jerry Wilhite

Argonne National Lab – Kirk LaGory

The next Working Group meeting is April 18 at 1:00 p.m. at the Western Park Convention Center in Vernal, Utah.

Flaming Gorge forecasted unregulated inflows are 96% of the 30-year average and fall in the average (below-median) hydrologic classification. Yampa River Basin forecast flows are 79% of the 30-year average and fall on the drier side of the average (below-median) hydrologic classification. Cool and wet April weather will help the overall conditions in both basins. The current forecast is not promising for Yampa River days above 10,000 cfs for at least one week.

Reclamation then discussed the draft Proposed Flow and Temperature Objectives for 2012. Because Reclamation has not received a formal research request from the Recovery Program, the current draft follows the ROD hydrologic targets similar to past years. The Recovery Program will request the Larval Trigger Study Plan experiment that has been developed and finalized through the Recovery Program process. The goal of this request is an experimental release from FG based on the presence of razorback sucker larvae in the system. The Recovery Program is expecting a final draft letter similar to historic years will be provided to Reclamation after the Management Committee meets on March 21, 2012. The Recovery Program is requesting that FG releases be limited to 8,600 cfs with no use of the spillway. There is currently limited distribution of the non-native burbot species in the Green River below FG, and avoiding spillway releases reduces perceived risk of entraining burbot downriver. In 2012, the Recovery program will initiate a risk assessment of burbot entrainment, which will include the impact of spillway releases. The Recovery Program is respectful and cautious of further introductions of non-native species in the system.

The secondary request is the ongoing research of recruitment in the Stirrup floodplain. New results indicate that the 15,000 cfs request for flows at Jensen is minimally sufficient for entrainment into Stirrup floodplain. The research also suggests that a full floodplain prior to peak flows assists with fish movement. The Recovery Program is working with UDWR to pump water into Stirrup prior to the peak this year. Tom Chart will report on the status of water level at the Stirrup during the next FGTWG call.

Reclamation asked the Service to provide a letter addressing flow thresholds and agreement that ESA compliance is met by altering the timing of releases to larval

presence in the Green River. Western agrees with implementing revised operations to meet the LTSP study parameters where hydrologically appropriate. Western supports the Service sending a letter that reoperation based on larval presence meets ESA compliance requirements this year.

The Service reiterated that the FGTWG process includes ESA compliance and is the appropriate avenue for ESA compliance. However, the Service is willing to provide an official letter if appropriate. The Service is interested in providing a general letter of compliance rather than going through the process annually.

Reclamation discussed the agreement with the Service last year where a compliance letter is appropriate and would request a similar position this year. Reclamation needs a NEPA plan in place for a multi-year study. Reclamation is planning on approving experimentation this year with a categorical exclusion (CX). There will be supplemental NEPA in place for the multi-year experiment.

The post-ROD regression(?) analysis was discussed in detail. Reclamation will revise the LTSP analysis to focus on days at various floodplain connection thresholds after wild-produced larvae were detected in the Green River. Reclamation will send the revised results with documentation before the MC meeting on March 21.

The next FGTWG meeting is April 12 at 3:00 p.m.

#### Action Items:

Reclamation will provide a revised LTSP analysis and documentation before the MC meeting on March 21, 2012.

Tom Chart will report on the status of water level at the Stirrup during the next FGTWG call.

The Recovery Program will submit a final research request to Reclamation as soon as possible after the MC meeting on March 21, 2012.

Reclamation will update the draft Proposed Flow and Temperature Objectives for 2012 with the April final forecast and Recovery Program request.

FGTWG meets next April 12, 2012 at 3:00 p.m. Agenda, conference call and room will be sent out before the meeting.