

**Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**Wednesday, March 7, 2018**

In attendance: Heather Patno, Jerry Wilhite, Randy Staffeldt, Michael Kartlow, Dan Schaad, Dave Speas, Don Anderson, Kevin Bestgen, Tom Chart, Ashley Nielson, Leslie Bennett

Welcome to the 2018 Kick Off

1. FGTWG Overview:

- Authority comes from the 2006 Record of Decision (ROD), Section VII, Environmental Commitments #10 state that in coordination with the Recovery Program, Reclamation, Western and FWS proposals will be made to the Flaming Gorge Work Group.
- This group has grown with a lot of experts pertaining to forecasts, Stewart Lake, Refuges and razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow fish. Biologists and hydrologists will gather information to make proposals to the Flaming Gorge Workgroup. Discussion should be limited to endangered fish and how Flaming Gorge can help.

2. March 5, 2018 Hydrology Summary Review

- Flaming Gorge falls in the average (below median) hydrologic classification
- Yampa River will likely be moderately dry. The North slope of the Uintah is very dry. Fontenelle may see a higher inflow than Flaming Gorge because of this. Comparison years on the Yampa are 2002 and 2013. The Yampa did not see additional water in 2002, however 2013 saw some increased precipitation in April. Yampa is much dryer than the Upper Green. Keep in mind there are two different data types looking at similar statistics. Heather uses the 10 historic most similar years of Yampa, Ashley takes the ensemble prediction using temperature and precipitation with initial conditions. There is a good chance at meeting 4,000-6,000 cfs. There will likely be no days at 18,600 at Jensen this year. Ashley shows 35 years of historical information and feels 8,000-8,500 cfs is the probable peak. Still very early in the season especially regarding peak flows. March meteorological models are showing a dryer pattern with a small storm Friday and Saturday limited in significance. Next week warm/dry conditions. Middle to end of the month there is a decent storm predicted.

3. Draft Recovery Program - Tom Chart

- Current draft request mimics where we were last year. Closed out the Technical Committee on February 28, 2018. Sent to Management Committee for comments by COB Friday this week. Asking for continued experimental flows for Larval Trigger Study Plan. Reference is made to the importance of spike flows to disadvantage smallmouth bass. Not asking specifically for that this year, but keeping it on the radar. The Appendix includes information compiled over the years.
- Heather informed the team that Reclamation is internally discussing the request dealing with experimentation on downramping rates from spring releases to benefit Colorado pikeminnow. In the past year Reclamation has deviated from the 3 percent daily change from the ROD during the baseflow season to increase/decrease from month to month. BOR did not use the 50 cfs per day for the dive team inspection in August 2017, and used 300 cfs daily change. It would have taken a month to reach the necessary level at 50 cfs a day. Information from the GREAT team and a NEPA analysis were done to assess impacts from the deviation from the ROD. BOR is determining what would be needed to accommodate the experimentation request

- during the downramp period from spring peak releases. We are still operating in the ROD and doing NEPA analysis when deviating. There is a different downramp rate for each classification. BOR supports experimentation through adaptive management, and is looking at all possible options.
- The Recovery Program is interested in saving as much water as possible with increasing downramp rates during the dry conditions this year.
4. The FGTWG is in approval of the April 23-24, 2018 spring electrofishing flows request from UDWR.
  5. Flaming Gorge Working Groups
    - The March 8, 2018 meeting in Price has been canceled. Outside groups have requested a placeholder for that meeting in high water years in the future. The spring working group meeting will be April 18, 2018, in Vernal. Not a lot of outside concern due to the lower water levels. Flow Request presentation by Tom or Don. Ashley will present the forecast.
  6. Next FGTWG Meeting will be held at April 10, 2018 at 1:00 pm  
Heather will send the summary link with calendar invite.