

Colorado River Storage Project
Fontenelle Working Group
Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2020

Participation

This meeting was held Thursday, August 27, 2020, from 10:00 am to 10:40 am. Due to the current COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, the meeting was held via WebEx virtual meeting. Attendees are listed below.

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of these working group meetings 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 Fontenelle Reservoir and the river corridor below it. 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

Dale Hamilton began the meeting at 10:00 am and introduced the meeting agenda and presenters: Brenda Alcorn and Mark Delorey. To avoid audio feedback, attendees introduced themselves via the chat function in the virtual meeting (attendees who identified themselves or were identifiable by their meeting attendee name were included in the list of attendees below).

Green River - Fontenelle Reservoir: Spring Forecast and Runoff Review – Brenda Alcorn

Brenda Alcorn, Senior Hydrologist, National Weather Service, Colorado Basin River Forecast Center

Brenda presented information on past weather, snow, and runoff conditions, and upcoming weather.

Precipitation: The area above Fontenelle Reservoir was the only part of the Upper Colorado River Basin that improved after March (Oct-Mar was 90% of average, Oct-July was 95% of average), due to good precipitation in April (105% of average) and June (195% of average) especially in the northern part of the basin.

Temperature: April was slightly below normal, but still had a significant warm period during the last week of the month (areas were 10-20 degrees above normal). The end of May and start of June were also unusually warm for seven to ten days.

Snowpack: Mid-elevation (8,000-9,000 ft SNOTEL network) snow peaked at ~115% of the median seasonal peak slightly later in April than typical and melted out with near normal timing. High-elevation (10,000-13,000 ft, CBRFC model) snow peaked a little lower than median due to dry late-April and May conditions and melted out with near normal timing.

Runoff: The observed unregulated April-July runoff volume was ~677,000 acre-feet which is 93% of average and 104% of median. Forecasted runoff volumes ranged from 80-95% of average, increasing from January 1 to May 1, dipping with dry May conditions, and increasing with wet June conditions. The forecast error for the Fontenelle inflow was much less than average error overall. Streamflow was in the normal range throughout the runoff period, but in the lower half during July, with the seasonal peak in early June being rain enhanced. The mean daily peak flow (Green River near LaBarge) of 10,400 cfs on

June 6 was higher than forecasted due to rain (peak flows are difficult to forecast due to sensitivity to daily spring weather).

Looking ahead: In the short term, temperatures should cool down to normal for the start of next week, no large precipitation events are anticipated. In the long term, there is a La Nina watch with a ~60% chance of La Nina development and continuing through the winter; La Nina events have a weak correlation to increased winter precipitation in the Upper Green basin.

Fontenelle Reservoir Hydrology and Operations – Mark Delorey

Mark Delorey, Hydraulic Engineer, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

Mark Delorey presented information on Fontenelle Reservoir 2020 spring/summer operations, forecast information, forecasted 2020/2021 fall/winter operations, and information about USGS gages.

Fontenelle Reservoir spring inflows peaked at 9,100 cfs on June 9, releases up to ~4,000 cfs were made for about seven days (they were kept a little lower to minimize impact to new trees), and the reservoir pool elevation peaked at 6504.2 feet on July 18.

Mid-elevation snowpack above Fontenelle peaked at ~116% of median on April 18. Weather Prediction Center three-month outlooks show that below average precipitation and above average temperatures are likely over the next three months. Fontenelle Reservoir unregulated inflow for April-July was 677,000 acre-feet (93% of average and 104% of median) which was exceeded by inflows in 60% of the years from 1963-2019 and falls in the average (below median) hydrologic classification (conditions above Fontenelle were much better than conditions in neighboring basins).

Currently Fontenelle is 88% full at elevation 6500.51 feet, with inflows averaging 600 cfs, and releases at 1,100 cfs.

Operations until the next working group meeting in April will be based on Colorado Basin River Forecast Center forecasts. The current plan is to keep releases at ~1,100 cfs until mid-September when flows will likely be decreased to 1,000 cfs, then possibly slightly increased to 1,050 cfs in November and held until April to hit a target reservoir elevation of 6468 feet in late-March/early-April.

The USGS gage near Green River Wyoming (USGS 09217000) was equipped with a water temperature gage this past spring and began recording temperatures on May 5. The gage will record water temperatures from May 1 to October 31. The USGS gage below Fontenelle (USGS 09211200) may be reading ~25% higher than actual river flows. The USGS plans to check the gage in the next two weeks.

General Discussion, Comments, Questions

Dale opened the meeting for discussion, comments, or questions. No discussion items, comments, or questions were brought up.

Next Meeting

- Thursday, April 22, 2021 at the Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge (tentative)

Attendees

Pete Rust	City of Green River, Mayor
Reed Clevenger	City of Green River
Mark Westenskow	City of Green River

Doc Wendling	Sweetwater County, Commissioner
Mark Kot	Sweetwater County
Judy Roderick	Sweetwater County, Emergency Management
Emily Covey	Sweetwater County, Emergency Management
Sadie Valdez	Trout Unlimited, Seedskadee
Bryan Seppie	Joint Powers Water Board
Hilary Huckfeldt	Ciner and Joint Powers Water Board
Brenda Alcorn	NWS, Colorado Basin River Forecast Center
Dale Hamilton	Reclamation
Mark Delorey	Reclamation
Tyler Larsen	Reclamation
Paul Davidson	Reclamation
Nathaniel Todea	Reclamation
Preston Feltrop	Reclamation
John Morton	Reclamation
Scott Elliott	Reclamation
Gary Henrie	Reclamation