

**Colorado River Storage Project  
Flaming Gorge Working Group  
Meeting Minutes  
August 28, 2025**

## **Participation**

This meeting was held Wednesday, August 28, 2025, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm MT, at Seedskadee, UT and via Microsoft Teams virtual meeting. Attendees are listed on the last page.

## **Purpose of Meeting**

The purpose of these working group meetings is to inform the public and other interested parties on Reclamation's current and future operational plans and to gather input from the public and interested parties regarding resources associated with the dam [Fontenelle].

## **Introductions – Alex Pivarnik (Bureau of Reclamation)**

This is the final Fontenelle Working Group meeting this year. An earlier meeting was held in April.

## **Current and Forecasted Hydrology – Brenda Alcorn (Colorado Basin River Forecast Center)**

Brenda presented on the Water Year (WY) 2025 hydrologic conditions to date and forecasted conditions.

Brenda reviewed the previous fall's soil moisture conditions. The soil conditions can impact runoff efficiency in the following spring but are not as important as the amount of precipitation and the rate of runoff. Fall soil moisture conditions in the Green River basins are below average. In the Green, conditions are worse than last year.

For precipitation, the Upper Green fluctuated a lot; when this meeting was last held in April, precipitation was near average, but runoff was already forecasted lower due to the poor soil moisture conditions. Brenda showed information from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Western Water Assessment to highlight that this year has been unusually dry and hot, with several locations in the Upper Green near record low flows.

Modeled Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) also tracked below normal. Large storms contributed heavily to overall snowpack. Melt had completed 2 weeks earlier than normal on the Upper Green.

Observed April-July runoff above Fontenelle was 63% of average; this was the 10<sup>th</sup> driest in the 35 year record.

Brenda presented the water supply forecast evolution plot. Forecasts at Fontenelle started much below average due to the poor soil moisture conditions and below average snowpack. Forecasts

were highest in April after two months of above average precipitation. The observed April-July volume was below the 90% exceedance forecast for April and May

Streamflows on the Green River have been below normal this summer, with the Green-La Barge being at or below the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile for the last month.

### Questions

There were no questions on current and forecasted hydrology at this time.

### **Reservoir Operations – Amanda Becker (Bureau of Reclamation)**

Amanda Becker reviewed Fontenelle operations, starting with a background of the project.

At the time of the meeting last April, there was 91% of the median snowpack, but jumping into where we went from there, you can see that we had a **significant** loss of snowpack starting in April and continued to have a below-median snowpack throughout the melt and a quick melt-off.

April and May forecasts were near median, but the observed inflow ended up being 464 kaf. Observed inflow showed several decent-sized peaks, but these were much shorter in duration than average. Especially important to operations was how quickly inflows dropped and stayed low after these spring peaks and remained well below median since early June.

Amanda showed a graph of pool elevations. Lower releases during the maintenance period in March really helped us to store water quickly, and then elevations flattened out around July 1 due to a storage target. Fontenelle peaked at 6,500.29' on July 14, which is 97% full. Amanda presented modeled operations from the April working group meeting. Modeled inflow (green line) showed Fontenelle was forecasted to get over 5,000 cfs for a month. The modeled peak inflow, which generally goes from May through July, allowed a release up to 4,500 cfs and to keep storage above 6,500' for most of July and August. Amanda presented actual operations, and in this scenario, observed inflows showed a couple of peaks, but there was not enough inflow to need any bypass, and releases have been stair-stepping down since June. Despite these lower releases, Fontenelle peaked at 6,500.29', and storage has been decreasing since mid-July.

Amanda presented the Wyoming Demonstration Project, which caused a small bump in releases earlier this month. This Demonstration Project was an operation to understand losses between Fontenelle and Flaming Gorge.

Amanda reviewed future operations. Releases are expected to be 800 cfs in the fall and a little above 800 cfs for the winter flows for safety due to icing concerns. Short-term forecasts show some inflow from the local precipitation. Subject to change due to real-time hydrology. The plan is to go back down to 800 cfs for the maintenance period in spring.

### **Questions/Comments**

John Worsen asked about ice jams in winter and why they do not happen anymore. He comment about as a kid they would need to blow up the ice clogging the on bridges with TNT because there were fears that the bridges would collapse from the ice jams pushing up against them.

John Worsen asked why 800 to 850 cfs bump in flows in August. Response: Fontenelle demonstration project partnership with Wyoming and strange quirk with complying to federal regulations for the month of August.

Colin Dovichin - Concerns of the winter flows. Asked about adjustments of the conservation plan, if the summer is hot, can the winter release lower than 800 cfs (like 750 cfs) to shift some additional water into the summer.

Response: Howard Hart commented that going below 800 cfs causes frazil ice that is a problem in the winter and fish survival rate decreases and that making that change to the plan is not advised.

Response: John Walrath – fisheries, dire water forecast, worried about 600 cfs winter flows. Concerned about frazil ice and bottle neck when less than 800 cfs in winter. Commented that issues with access to the reservoir for a couple of weeks is preferable to lower than 800 cfs for winter conditions.

John Worsen- What is the contribution from Big Sandy? Mike Callahan: Usually, 0 cfs unless spring peak.

Mary Thoman commented that she appreciates that the release changes are more gradual than they used to be.

John Worsen asked if there was any preliminary data from the from the demonstration project. Response: Jeff Cowley responded with no results yet, and the consultant is looking at the data now.

## Next Meeting

April 2026 Date and Time TBD

## Attendees

Pivarnik, Alexander J
Becker, Amanda H
Callahan, Michael J
BLAKE GELINAS
JACK MCCULLY
KRISTINA BARDEN
Bryan Seppie (External)
John Walrath (Unverified)
Hines, Brian A
Deppe, Valerie J
Wild, Ron (PacifiCorp) (External)
Craig Rood (External)
Jessica Lockwood WGFD (Unverified)

Mark Westenskow (External)
Jeff Cowley (Unverified)
TYLER SCHILTZ
Suman Chitrakar, WYSEO (Unverified)
Rick Lee
Young, Rob (External)
Chris Brown (Unverified)
Colin Dovichin– FWS Seedskadee
John Worsen
Howard Hart
Mary Thoman
Cory Anderson – USBR

