

Colorado River Storage Project
Fontenelle Working Group
Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2026

Participation

This meeting was held Wednesday, April 22, 2026, starting at 10 am MT, in Green River, WY and virtually via Microsoft Teams. 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)

The Fontenelle Gorge Working Group meeting is an important step in developing operations plans for the spring season. Reclamation takes the input provided as part of this process very seriously and appreciates the comments and questions provided through the Working Group.

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

Water Year (WY) 2026 precipitation in the Upper Green is 105% of average and 100% of average above Fontenelle for year to date. These conditions look better than they actually are, as so much has fallen as rain rather than building snowpack. The NRCS data shows 2026 SWE (Snow-Water-Equivalent) is at a record low in the Green basin. A heatwave in March caused snowmelt at levels that usually isn't seen until May.

The antecedent soil conditions, from fall 2025, can be an indicator of runoff efficiency in the spring. The Green was below normal this fall, with conditions in the 70-90% range for most of the basin. Fall soil moisture conditions were similar to last year. Usually, there would not be much change in the soil moisture conditions over the winter, but due to extremely warm conditions, the basin has seen rain instead of snow accumulation, even at higher elevations. This has increased the soil moisture, which may help the small amount of snowpack runoff more efficiently.

Temperatures have been above normal. The NRCS has recorded periods of record warm daily average temperatures in the Upper Green and the CBRFC's monthly minimum and maximum temperatures have been 7 to 9+ °F warmer in most of the Colorado River Basin.

Forecasts on the Green have also continued to decline. The April 1st official forecast, the April 20th raw model guidance are shown in Table 1 with the record minimum volumes.

Table 1. April-July Forecasted Volume in kaf / percent of 1991-2020 Average (Presented by Brenda Alcorn, CBRFC)

| | Apr 1st Forecast | Apr 20th Guidance | Record Minimum |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Fontenelle | 440 / 60% | 420 / 57% | 1977: 213 |

Forecast verification indicates that the model may tend to over forecast in dry conditions. Model error is largely due to uncertainty in future weather conditions, though some error may be due to model state assumptions.

In the near term, there are above average chances for precipitation over the next two weeks.

Fontenelle Reservoir Operations – Amanda Becker (Bureau of Reclamation)

Amanda reviewed Fontenelle operations for the 2025 until the present. Despite low releases, the reservoir only filled to about 6500'. Releases decreased as the peak inflows came down and stabilized in July. In August, USBR worked with the State of Wyoming to do a flow study. Releases decreased for most of the month to create a block of water that we sent down in that little flow spike. Winter releases were low, trying not to pull the reservoir elevation down too far. Pool elevation hit the low point in storage mid-March at elevation 6478', which is about 45% full. Releases are currently bypassing as the powerplant undergoes annual maintenance. Releases are at 800 cfs and are intended to hold until inflows start picking up.

Amanda reviewed the forecast that was discussed above by Brenda Alcorn.

Amanda then reviewed modeled operations for 5/2026–4/2027. With that dry hydrology in the forecast, it is going to be another low-release year. Releases are planned to hold 800 cfs while waiting for inflows to increase. USBR intends to try to create a type of peak to give some variability to the hydrograph for this year, timed with the natural peak. USBR will follow the normal ramping rates and will give as much notice as possible. There is not a lot of water to provide variability this year, and as forecasts drop, flexibility decreases. Right now, the modeling indicates that we can do around 1,000 cfs for the summer, 950 for the fall, and 975 cfs through the winter. The model currently indicates that this will drop the pool elevation down to about 6468'. If possible, USBR intends to drop down to 800 cfs next April when we will need to bypass for maintenance.

Amanda reviewed the short-term operations with maintenance expected to be completed on 4/30. Releases will stay low, with small increases to safely pass the spring inflow.

Questions/Comments

Reclamation clarified about DROA and 6E based on questions received.

- Fontenelle is operated as normal and is not included in the DROA operations of Flaming Gorge.
- Bryan Seppie asked if summer baseflows are expected early. Amanda answered that, yes, with early runoff, summer baseflow is expected to start early.

- John Walrath asked how to request spring releases for flushing flows. Alex Pivarnik said we will meet offline to discuss.

Next Meeting

TBD – expected in August 2026.

Attendees

Alcorn, Brenda-CBRFC
Becker, Amanda-Reclamation
Callahan, Michael- Reclamation
Chitrakar, suman-Wyoming State Engineer's Office
Cowley, Jeff-Wyoming State Engineer's Office
Dave (Unverified)
Deppe, Val – Reclamation
GELINAS, BLAKE
Gray, Cody
Herrera, Lisa
Hollberg, Kurt – Hollberg Prof. Group
Lee, Rick – Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce
Palmer, Jason
Pivarnik, Alex-Reclamation
Rhett Bain/Reel Deal Anglers (Unverified)
Rockey, Cal – CBRFC
Rood, Craig
SCHILTZ, TYLER
Seppie, Bryan- GR/RS/SW-JPWB
Todea, Nathaniel
Walrath, Hillary
Walrath, John- WY Fish and Game
Weigh, Terry – DNO
Westenskow, Mark- City of Green River Public
Works
WILLIAMS, PATRICK