

**Aspinall Operations EIS
Cooperating Agency Meeting
February 13, 2006**

Final Meeting Summary

The ninth Cooperating Agency Meeting for the Aspinall Operations Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was held on February 13, 2006 at the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Western Colorado Area Office at 2764 Compass Drive, Suite 106, in Grand Junction, Colorado. All Cooperating Agencies were present for the meeting. Cooperating agencies include the State of Colorado (Colorado), Colorado River Water Conservation District (CRWCD), Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD), National Park Service (NPS), Platte River Power Authority (PRPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). A total of 32 people participated in the meeting, including Reclamation staff from Grand Junction, Montrose, Salt Lake City, and Denver. A copy of the meeting attendees is attached.

The meeting began at 9:38 a.m. Seven participants joined the meeting via conference call.

Introduction and Welcome

Ed Warner (Reclamation-WACO Resource Division Manager) facilitated the meeting and reviewed the meeting ground rules. Cooperating agencies and others in attendance introduced themselves and Reclamation reviewed the meeting agenda and no changes were proposed

Review of Draft November 1st Meeting Summary

Reclamation distributed the November 1st Draft Meeting Summary and requested that Cooperating Agencies provide comments and changes within the next two weeks to finalize the meeting summary.

Fish and Wildlife Service Presentation

Patty Gelatt from the Grand Junction Ecological Services Office (Service) presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Endangered Species Act consultation process and the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

Status of Programmatic Biological Opinion

A Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) addresses a variety of programs or actions. For the Colorado River PBO, the Service, Reclamation, and WAPA consulted on recovery program actions. The PBO concluded that all existing and 120,000 af of new depletions would not likely jeopardize the endangered fish; however, a positive response in populations is needed. For the Yampa PBO, a management plan was the action consulted on.

A meeting was held January 13th (Recovery Program Management Committee-ad hoc subcommittee on Gunnison River PBO). A history of Gunnison River PBO discussions was presented. A summary of the meeting has been provided to cooperators. It was generally agreed that a PBO would follow the Aspinall EIS process but there is a need to coordinate both processes. Tom Pitts agreed to lay out a process for developing the PBO that identifies key issues and allows for information to be factored in as it becomes available from the Aspinall EIS process.

No Action Alternative Discussion

The No Action alternative had previously been provided cooperators. There were still some concerns expressed with the way the No Action alternative handles the “Redland’s call” and with language concerning future water development and use. The CWCB reported they could work with the present language. Reclamation advised cooperators to keep their concerns in mind and if their concerns revealed problems in developing action alternatives, they should continue to bring up the concerns.

Hydrology Updates and Discussion

Reclamation advised the Cooperating Agencies that the Riverware model has been posted on the web. Cooperating agencies will need to have a Riverware license and then can study and develop an understanding of how the model works.

Reclamation reported that the Hydrology Subgroup is looking at developing data sets beyond the current set of data. NOAA assisted in the discussion of alternative data sets by first stating they understand there are complications with going outside the 74-2005 period of record which is comprised of daily data. NOAA suggested developing synthetic hydrology to fill out a 100 year probability distribution function (PDF) using historic monthly flows for periods where daily data is not available and then populating with recent data. NOAA also suggested using paleo (tree ring) data correlated to gage data to develop a PDF to look at the state of hydrology and populated with recent data.

Reclamation agreed to look at synthetic data set development before the next meeting. Reclamation advised that the date for next meeting has not been set, but Reclamation would like to piggy back with the next Cooperating Agency Meeting. Reclamation also stated that Dave Harpman would like to make a Hydropower 101 presentation for the Cooperating Agencies.

CRWCD asked how the hydrologic data will be used in alternative development. Reclamation responded that it will be used to run the model. CRWCD asked if Reclamation has an estimate when the leap year problem with the model would be fixed. Reclamation stated that the software manufacturer is working on it and they hope to have something by the end of March.

WAPA agreed with exploring ways to create more robust hydrologic data sets. CRWCD stated that this is an important issue because it deals with assumptions regarding how the Aspinall Unit will be operated.

Steve Glazer asked if the use of the paleo data would help make the model more comfortable in with dealing with climate change. NOAA stated maybe, but that they are not sure what it will do. Reclamation stated that it will look at it to see if we can increase our comfort level. WAPA stated that it believes paleo data is speculative.

Bart Miller asked what the deadline is for a decision on period of record. He asked what the Hydrology groups plans are for the next meeting and how it will make a choice.

Reclamation stated that no choice has been made and that the group is actively working on iterative trace model and will be exploring the period of record data.

Discussion of Alternatives

Reclamation provided a handout for discussion of alternatives and asked for initial ideas on alternatives. Reclamation stated that it hopes to add detail to each of the alternatives provided in the handout.

Reclamation suggested using adaptive management to address extreme drought periods. Bundling was described as “if you expect to bypass, you bundle and generate a peak, but peak is limited to Crystal bypass”. Aggressive bundling was described as “if you have volume, increase capacity up to Morrow Point bypass”. WAPA requested descriptions of bundling.

CRWCD suggested bundling with different baseline flows, as it relates to Redlands. NOAA suggested that Reclamation spell out what extreme drought means.

NPS asked what the timeline is for ideas from Cooperating Agencies. Reclamation requested ideas within the next month.

The Service suggested looking at winter elevation targets. Reclamation stated that it is not excited about visiting that. The winter elevation target seems to reduce icing problems. Colorado suggested providing a narrative of the damage caused before the winter targets were developed.

Reclamation stated a need to tell the Hydrology Subgroup what types of model output data is needed.

WAPA stated that Table 4.5 in the Flow Recommendations is one way of accomplishing the long-term weighted average. Reclamation agreed to keep this in the fore-front as a question. Bart Miller stated that Table 4.5 is the flow recommendations. WAPA provided overview of the development of the flow recommendations.

All Cooperating Agencies agreed to address issues regarding the interpretation of the flow recommendations at the time it comes up.

Bart Miller asked that Reclamation look at icing targets and that Reclamation make opportunities to change discretionary items when developing action alternatives.

Next Cooperating Agency Meeting

Cooperating agencies discussed meeting locations. WAPA had proposed changing the meeting locations to Denver. Colorado stated that it remembers Reclamation promised to hold the meeting in the Gunnison Basin. Reclamation stated that Cooperating agency meetings will continue to be held in Grand Junction or other places within the Gunnison Basin.

Cooperating agencies selected the dates and times for the next three Cooperating Agency and Hydrology Subgroup Meetings. All meetings will be held at Reclamation's Office at 2764 Compass Drive in Grand Junction, Colorado.

April 21, 2006 **8:00 a.m. Hydrology Subgroup**
 10:00-2:30 Cooperating Agency Meeting

June 1, 2006. **8:00 a.m. Hydrology Subgroup**
 10:00-2:30 Cooperating Agency Meeting

July 11, 2006 **8:00 a.m. Hydrology Subgroup**
 10:00-2:30 Cooperating Agency Meeting

Meeting Attendees

Carol DeAngelis, USBR-Grand Junction
Steve McCall, USBR-Grand Junction
Terry Stroh, USBR-Grand Junction
Dan Crabtree, USBR-Grand Junction
Ed Warner, USBR-Grand Junction
Eric Knight, USBR-Grand Junction
Coll Stanton, USBR-Grand Junction
Justyn Hock, USBR-Grand Junction
Paul Davidson, USBR-Salt Lake
Chris Cutler, USBR-Salt Lake
Patty Gelatt, USFWS-Grand Junction*
George Smith, USFWS-Denver*+
Michael Dale, NPS*
Mark Wondzell, NPS*
Melissa Trammell, NPS*
Ken Stahlnecker, NPS*+
Chuck Pettee, NPS*
Bill Wellman, NPS*+
Wayne Schiedt, CDWR*
Randy Seaholm, CWCB*
Michelle Garrison, CWCB*
Kent Holsinger, PRPA*+
Peter Fleming, CRWCD*+
Dave Kanzer, CRWCD*
Dan Burch, CRWCD*
Clayton Palmer, WAPA*+
Heather Pano, WAPA*+
Steve Harris, SWCD*
Leslie James, CREDA+
Bart Miller, Western Resources+
Mike Gross, UVWUA, Tri-County & RWPC
Steve Glazer, HCCA & Sierra Club
Andrea Ray, NOAA

Cooperating Agencies

+Participated via conference call