

**Aspinall Operations EIS
Cooperating Agency Meeting
May 20, 2005**

Final Meeting Summary

The sixth Cooperating Agency Meeting for the Aspinall Operations Environmental Impact Statement was held on May 20, 2005 at the U.S. Bureau of 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 Conservancy 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 44 people participated in the meeting including Reclamation staff from Grand Junction, Montrose, and Salt Lake City. A copy of the meeting attendees is attached.

The meeting began at 9:37 a.m. Four participants joined the meeting via conference call.

Introduction and Welcome

Ed Warner (Reclamation-WCAO 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.

Reclamation reviewed the EIS Purpose which is defined as “to operate the Aspinall Unit to avoid jeopardy to endangered species while maintaining the congressionally authorized Unit purposes”. This does not limit Reclamation’s ability to include alternatives to assist in recovery and allows Reclamation to evaluate an array of alternatives.

Discussion on April 1st Summary

Under Presentation on Flow Recommendations on Page 2, PRPA asked if the flow recommendations would meet all life stages of the endangered fishes. The Service stated that the flow recommendation meet the needs of all life stages of endangered fishes. The Service asked that “Flow Recommendations” be changed to “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Flow Recommendations”.

Introduction to Alternatives

Reclamation discussed the range of alternatives. Each alternative will be compared on an equal basis and then preferred alternative selected. Reclamation stressed attempting to

meet the flow recommendations while maintaining authorized purposes. Alternatives will be compared to the No Action Alternative.

Presentation on Conceptual Alternative by WAPA/Argonne

WAPA discussed a concept for an alternative that attempts to meet flow recommendations while meeting authorized purposes. A PowerPoint presentation was made and copies of presentation were made available to meeting participants. Copies of the PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the Aspinall EIS Website.

WAPA stated that they wanted to have an exploratory discussion of the concept. The concept could be embodied in many of the alternatives and provides an opportunity to take water that would spill and use for environmental purposes.

Wayne Cook (WAPA) made the concept presentation, followed with an additional presentation by Kirk LaGore (Argonne National Laboratory).

After the presentation there was discussion on habitat maintenance versus habitat improvement. WAPA also stated that higher ramping rates would increase the size of the spring peak. NPS stated that it would like to see flow recommendations included in the graphs used during the presentation.

There was additional discussion among the Cooperating Agencies about the long-term average versus the long-term weighted average. The State of Colorado reiterated the need for protection of water storage for additional development to preserve the states ability to use its compact entitlements and stated that the concept has some promise.

Reclamation opened the discussion on WAPA presentation to the public in attendance at the meeting. Additional discussion was as follows:

PRPA stated that it is a mistake to look at the table in the flow recommendations in isolation; the table is one way to meet the flow recommendations. Colorado River Energy Distributors Association stated that there is not a consensus from the Recovery Program's Biology Committee on the interpretation of the table. It was intended to be an example. .

The Service stated that the flow recommendations look at a long-term average. In order to meet flow recommendations, the operation needs to meet targets in other than wet years. Western Resource Advocates stated that it looked at Argonne National Laboratory's 2003 document and that in comparing results of operations, it found that there isn't much difference in wet years in operations. Western Resource Advocates stated that the middle (moderate wet to moderate dry) years are important and that Reclamation needs to focus on these in the EIS. Concept deserves attention.

Western Resource Advocates also asked about a trigger point line, release volume and reservoir content and the policy on what occurs with releases in the months before spring runoff. They asked for changes in conditions or policy and management which determine what occurs in the winter months.

The State of Colorado stated that winter reservoir elevation of 7,490 ft. was established to prevent upstream icing issues. WAPA added that that implies an April 1st target.

SWCD stated that the hydrology committee's responsibility is to develop the model and period of record to be used.

Mike Gross, representing UVWUA, Tri-County, and RWPC expressed concerns about safety of the Gunnison Tunnel diversion. He also expressed concerns with using carryover storage to generate treatment years. He stated that this could increase river calls.

The Meeting broke for lunch at 11:35 a.m. and resumed at 12:45 p.m.

Additional Discussion on WAPA's Presentation

CRWCD stated that WAPA's proposal could be an element of an alternative as it addresses the wet years. WAPA stated that it believes it addresses a range of years.

NPS stated that WAPA's concept was worth exploring, but initial gut reaction is that this trigger only applies in wet years. There was additional discussion among the Cooperating Agencies about what the flow recommendations are and how to evaluate alternatives. There was also additional discussion about what it means to maintain authorized purposes. It was suggested that discussions on maintaining authorized purposes be a topic for future meetings.

The State of Colorado stated that if the reservoir is drawn down too far in the average years, it could affect water rights. The Service stated that the flow recommendations are a Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP) item listed in the "blue book". The Service also stated that the table presented in the flow recommendations represents a concept; the ultimate goal is to meet the long term averages.

CRWCD asked how the programmatic biological opinion fits into the flow recommendations. Reclamation responded that it is a separate process. The Service also added that the programmatic biological opinion would fit after the Aspinall EIS process.

Reclamation reiterated that it desires an alternative that is flexible enough to incorporate changes in flow recommendations.

Action Item: Discussion on what it means to maintain authorized purposes at future cooperating agency meetings.

Comments on No Action, Baseline, and Existing Conditions

Reclamation stated that it distributed a draft version of the No Action Alternative in February and had discussed the draft at the April Cooperating Agency Meeting. Reclamation prepared a revised draft version on May 17, 2005 which is the latest version. Reclamation stated that no one is 100% happy with the No Action Description because it addresses the multi-purposes of the Unit rather than individual special interests. Reclamation asked for Cooperating Agency comments on the latest version and stated that non-discretionary actions will be included in all alternatives.

The May 17th draft was reviewed and the following discussion occurred:

Page 1- WAPA stated the No Action Alternative was the same as existing conditions.

Page 2-No changes recommended.

Page 3, 3rd Paragraph-WAPA expressed concern with including bundling under the No Action alternative. WAPA asked Reclamation to demonstrate that bundling is current management action. WAPA stated that water has not been bundled year after year on a consistent basis. The State of Colorado stated that it thinks including bundling in the No Action Alternative is appropriate. NPS also agreed that bundling should be included in the No Action Alternative. Additional discussion occurred with disagreement among the Cooperating Agencies regarding including bundling in the No Action Alternative.

Page 4, 5th Paragraph-WAPA stated regarding Redlands fish ladder, ladder operation begin in April and not June. The Service stated that it should read mid-April to mid-October.

Page 5, 6th Paragraph-CRWCD asked if Reclamation could be more specific regarding the statement “The State of Colorado has several hundred thousand acre-feet of water remaining for use under the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact...” The State of Colorado stated that it wanted to leave this as broad as possible. It was recommended to change it to read “additional water”.

Page 6, 4th Paragraph-SWCD asked that change “need” to “shall” regarding Dallas Creek and Dolores Biological Opinions.

Page 6, Last Paragraph-SWCD asked to change “One goal of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service is to arrive at a preferred alternative” to “Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service shall develop a preferred alternative...”.

Page 6, 1st Paragraph-CRWCD asked where the 300,000 af number comes from. The State of Colorado responded that the 300,000 af number comes from economic justification report in conjunction with the average annual flow at the Gunnison Tunnel. CRWCD and the State of Colorado will have additional discussions on this issue.

Page 7, 3rd Paragraph-PRPA asked that non-discretionary actions be reviewed with power language from CRSP.

Page 7, 4th Paragraph-CRWCD asked to add language to the bottom of the page about water decrees

WAPA asked if actions needed to be consulted on before being included in the baseline. The Service stated that actions do not have to have been consulted on to be included in baseline. If they are existing, they are included in the baseline.

Page 13, Item F-The Service asked if Blue Mesa Standing Operating Procedures is a document. Reclamation responded that it is.

Reclamation requested written comments on the May 17th version of the No Action Alternative from Cooperating Agencies by June 20, 2005.

Reclamation then opened up the meeting for Public comments on the May 17th version of the No Action Alternative. Discussion was as follows:

UGRWCD focused on page 5 and 6. 5th bullet, Subordination agreement change to “up to 60,000 acre-feet” of water will be used and preferred previous language which contained some amount up to future depletions. UGRWCD stated that it is problematic to set a specific amount of water available to Colorado.

Mike Gross stated that he agreed with WAPA on Page 3 that bundling is an alternative and should not be include in the No Action. Mike stated that alternatives would not have significant change without moving bundling out of the No-Action alternative. Page 6, He stated that Tri-county agrees with SWCD to change to “shall”. Mike asked when referring to Dallas and Dolores, are Reclamation and the Service viewing the process as something that would take care of razorback and critical habitat listings.

Western Resource Advocates asked if Argonne’s charts used in WAPA’s presentation would be available. Western stated that there is a “Yield” question and a lot of uncertainties and that the volumes should be vague. Western Resources stated that Bundling should be included in the No Action Alternative and that determining what the

flow recommendations mean should be determined by the Service. Western Resources pointed out that on Page 5 the language on power contracts is different than the charts.

CREDA stated the on Page 5; Paragraph 2 should include ongoing routine operations, not just emergency obligations.

Discussion of Alternatives

Reclamation wants to stimulate interest in alternatives. WAPA stated that it wouldn't describe the concept presented this morning as aggressive bundling.

There was additional discussion on existing condition and no action. CRWCD asked about the environmental preferred alternative and the Community alternative. Reclamation stated that it would provide documentation on these alternatives for next meeting and provide links on the Aspinall EIS web page.

Action Item: *Distribute and post on the Aspinall Website information regarding the environmentally preferred alternative and the Community Alternative.*

Hydropower and Hydrology Teams

The hydrology subgroup is tentatively scheduled to meet on June 30 at Reclamation's Grand Junction Office at 9:30 a.m. The topic for the meeting will be modeling flow recommendations.

Action Item: *Hydrology Subgroup meeting tentatively set for June 30, 2005 in Grand Junction.*

Next Meeting Date

Date for next meeting will set after the hydrology meeting. September 7th tentatively scheduled. 9:30 a.m. in GJ.

Public Questions and Comments & General Discussion

Dan Lueke, Western Resource Advocates, stated that NEPA is not a comparison, it is a public disclosure. Dan also stated that the Flow recommendations are much clearer than the discussion that occurred and recommendations need to be met in average years.

Bart Miller, Western Resource Advocates stated that he appreciates the need for hydrology work. Bart asked about having a meeting in August before the September meeting. He expressed concerns about the 4 month gap between Cooperating Agency meetings.

Mike Gross, representing UVWUA, Tri-County, and RWCP, asked to what extent is the lack of historical forecast data a constraint. Reclamation responded that that forecasting data is available back to 1965.

The meeting ended at 3:42 p.m.

Meeting Attendees

Carol DeAngelis, USBR-Grand Junction
 Sue Moyer, 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
 Nancy Coulam, USBR-Salt Lake
 Jane Blair, USBR-Salt Lake
 Paul Davidson, USBR-Salt Lake
 Daryl Beckman, USBR-Salt Lake
 Don Phillips, USBR-Montrose
 Patty Gelatt, USFWS-Grand Junction*
 Chuck McAda, USFWS-Grand Junction*
 George Smith, USFWS-Denver*+
 Norm Henderson, NPS*
 Michael Dale, NPS*
 Mark Wondzell, NPS*
 Melissa Trammel, NPS*
 Bill Hansen, NPS*
 John Reburn, NPS*
 Ken Stahlnecker, NPS*+
 Wayne Schiedt, CDWR*
 Randy Seaholm, CWCB*
 Michelle Garrison, CWCB*
 Kent Holsinger, PRPA*+
 Leslie James, CREDA (representing PRPA)*
 Taylor Hawes, CRWCD*
 Dave Kanzer, CRWCD*+
 Chris Tree, CRWCD*

Dan Burch, CRWCD*
Clayton Palmer, WAPA*
Heather Patno, WAPA*
Wayne Cook, WAPA*
Clark Burbon, WAPA*
Lyle Johnson, WAPA*
Steve Harris, SWCD*
Phillip Salleta, DWCD+
Dan Lueke, Western Resources
Bart Miller, Western Resources
Mike Gross, UVWUA, Tri-County & RWPC
Karen Shirley, UGRWCD
Kirk Lagore, Argonne National Laboratory

*Cooperating Agencies

+Participated via conference call