

GJ-151
ENV-4.00
PRJ-13.00

Subject: Wayne N. Aspinall Unit Operation - Coordination Meeting

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed for your information is a summary of the Aspinall Unit operations meeting held on April 21, 1994. Handouts from the meeting are not enclosed; anyone wanting a set should contact us. Each agency office (designated by * on the distribution list) is being sent a copy of daily content and release data for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, Crystal Reservoirs during high, normal, and low water supply years (1989, 1987, and 1985). This data can be used in identifying "flow matrix" requirements, i.e. how each interested agency would like to see the dams operate under varying water supply conditions.

Please provide the matrix input to Ed Warner at the letterhead address by May 31, 1994. The next meeting will be held in this office at 12:30 p.m. on August 18, 1994, beginning at 12:30 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Warner at (303) 248-0654, or Steve McCall at 248-0638.

Sincerely,

Brent R. Uilenberg
Acting Projects Manager

Enclosure

cc: See Attached Distribution List

bc: Assistant Commissioner - Program, Budget, and Liaison, Washington DC
Attention: W-6640 (w/encl)

Chief, Curecanti Field Branch
Attention: CCI-100 (w/encl)

Regional Director, Salt Lake City UT
Attention: UC-430, UC-440, UC-600, UC-700 (ea w/encl)

bcc: GJ-400, GJ-430*, GJ-150*, GJ-140 (ea w/encl)

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Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting
April 21, 1994

The subject meeting was held in Grand Junction, Colorado. An attendance list is attached. The purpose of the meeting was to review current inflow forecasts and adjust Aspinall Unit operation plans with input from interested participants for the 1994 April-July period. The results of the meeting will be incorporated into the "Operation Plan for Colorado River System Reservoirs" (24-Month Operation Plan) of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Please note that a correction needs to be made to the summary of our previous meeting on January 28, 1994. The eighth sentence of paragraph 2 should read: "End-of-year reservoir elevation at Blue Mesa was within 1 foot of the target of 7490 feet."

January - March Operation: Brad Vickers reviewed actual vs. planned operations for the January through March 1994 period. As shown on graphs, releases were increased from those planned because inflow to Blue Mesa was higher than expected.

Proposed April - August Operation Plan: Planned operation print-outs for each of the Aspinall Unit reservoirs (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal) were supplied for the minimum, most, and maximum probable water supply forecasts. Current snowpack (as of April 15, 1994) is at 85 percent of average, and the most probable April to July inflow into Blue Mesa Reservoir is forecast to be 82 percent of average, or 570,000 acre-feet (AF), with a range of from 61-103 percent. The most probable plan calls for Blue Mesa Reservoir to come within 7 vertical feet of filling (about 7512 feet elevation) by the end of May. Expected Gunnison River flow conditions below the Gunnison Tunnel were graphed based on recent operations for similar supply years (1992 - minimum probable; 1991 - most probable; 1987 - maximum probable). It is desired to match spring peak releases with run-off from the North Fork to achieve the highest possible flow near Whitewater. Assuming current unseasonably warm temperatures continue, early snowmelt is expected. **Planned operation: Current flows of around 500 cfs would continue until around May 5-7. To coincide with anticipated early runoff peaks downstream, flows would then be increased to a 3,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) peak around May 14. To conserve storage, peak flows would be maintained for only 2 days. Flows would then be ramped down until around May 25 when sustained summer levels of about 700 cfs would be reached; summer flows would range between 500-900 cfs depending on weather.**

Test Flows: The 24-Month Operation Plan hand-outs incorporate the request for flows of 600 cfs from September 26-29 from the Division of Wildlife. Many participants contributed to discussion of the request by the National Park Service for 300 cfs flows in the last two weeks of July. The timing and level of flows need to mimic flow and vegetative growth conditions at 134 survey plots established in the Black Canyon between July 18-31, 1990. Concerns with low flows at this time include effects on rainbow trout recruitment (minimize low flow impacts on recruitment, ramp carefully), accommodating power generation needs (shift to beginning of August; maximize use of weekends), recreational use (informing rafters/anglers of reductions as early as possible), and avoiding impacts to downstream endangered fish (late August would be better). **Tentative plans are to provide the low flows (between 300-400 cfs) from July 29 - August 11. Mark Wonzell will coordinate with National Biological Survey researchers and Reclamation to confirm timing of flow needs, and minimize duration of 300 cfs flows.**

Flow Matrix Development: Brad Vickers handed out preliminary information on the Aspinall Unit to be used in developing a "matrix" of flow needs (for fish, power, recreation, etc.) Reclamation will provide daily data on recent Aspinall Unit operations for high (1985), normal (1987), and low (1989) water years to serve as a base from which cooperators could identify operational needs for their resource of interest (***one copy of data sets is attached for each participating agency's office**). To define operational targets for the spring, summer/fall, and winter periods, input is needed under these high, normal, and low water supply conditions. Each agency has been asked to

complete "matrix tables" (included in the handout) to identify 1) desired content (water surface elevation) in Blue Mesa and 2) desired flows (cfs) in the Gunnison River below the tunnel. **Completed tables should be returned to Ed Warner at Reclamation's Grand Junction Office by May 31, 1994.**

Agency Reports/Activities

Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) reported on the implications of "whirling disease" reaching the Blue Mesa and Gunnison Gorge fisheries. The disease has been detected below Crystal, and is expected to progress down the Gunnison River at the rate of 2-3 miles per year. Since rainbow trout recruitment in the Gunnison Gorge has been below the desired level for the past five years, it's even more important to protect their recruitment and "stockpile" large fish against the day when this disease reduces recruitment.

Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) continues to participate in the testing of the Gunnison River Basin Planning Model, and is reviewing the economic studies of the Aspinall Unit (Economic Justification Report) to determine implications on water uses and users.

Colorado Division of Water Resources - Ken Knox is acting Division Engineer following the transfer of Keith Kepler. He predicts a challenge for water rights administration due to increased likelihood for calls.

Reclamation is looking forward to the involvement in future activities by our new office head, Carol DeAngelis (she begins as Area Manager on May 2). Brent Uilenberg reported on Reclamation's Recovery Program activities. Protection of flows for endangered fish below Redlands is targeted to begin in April 1995. Public meetings will begin in June and July to increase understanding of why the flows are needed and impacts on current water rights. The meetings will probably be held in Gunnison, Delta, and Grand Junction. Concerns with flow protection were discussed: administration of flows as contract deliveries of storage and associated impacts to existing water rights; need for FWS to identify flow needs based on preliminary results from studies; interpretations of the 148,000 AF commitment in the Biological Opinions for the Dallas Creek and Dolores Projects; importance of defining how flow protection would be implemented so that effective augmentation plans can be developed; use of the Gunnison River Basin Planning Model to help answer questions. Scoping and NEPA compliance for the Redlands fish passage structure is also being initiated. The new Redlands stream gauge has been in operation since March 1. Reclamation is now developing rating curves; so far have noticed a good relationship with other gauges. USGS studies report that site conditions are poor for installation of a cableway gauge.

National Park Service (NPS) - In addition to the two Black Canyon studies for this year (vegetation resample and USGS study on geomorphology, sediment sources, and sediment movement), Curecanti mentioned that the creel census work with CDOW will continue. They will consider including qualitative information on visitor perceptions of desirable reservoir elevations. Reclamation/NPS studies on limnology and entrainment are also on track.

Fish and Wildlife Service will concentrate on physical measurements of endangered fish habitat (both during the peak spring flow and the low flows requested by NPS), development of a razorback sucker augmentation plan (including monitoring the movement of tagged fish in the Gunnison River), and bottomland restoration studies.

Bureau of Land Management provided final copies of the channel morphology studies in the Gunnison Gorge. The Nature Conservancy will be surveying plant communities in the basin, with an emphasis on locating rare and endangered plants. Inventory and monitoring of campsites in the gorge will continue. Providing trail access from the east side of the canyon is being looked at.

Western Area Power Administration commented that operations at Flaming Gorge and Glen Canyon have increased the need for flexibility in Aspinall Unit operations to meet demands for hydropower. They requested that the NPS look into options for alleviating operational problems from the Morrow Point tour boat concession contract and operations. The Draft EIS on power marketing was released Friday, initiating the 90 day comment period.

Colorado River Water Conservation District requested an update on the status of the Gunnison River Contract development procedures and quantification of the reserved right for the Black Canyon. Chuck Pettee answered that the NPS and Reclamation are still working towards involving all in cooperative development of flow regimes for delivery as Aspinall Unit contract flows, and then petitioning for a consent decree for the Black Canyon water right. Many things are on hold pending information from Endangered Species Act consultation/studies on the operation of the Aspinall Unit.

Upper Gunnison River Conservancy District reiterated the need to know how endangered fish flow protection past Redlands will be implemented to allow adequate lead time for preparation of an augmentation plan. Progress on the proposed Taylor Park Water Management Agreement should continue; it would provide a source of augmentation water to upper basin users.

Computation of Deliveries to the Monument: The computation of deliveries to the Black Canyon was included in the handouts.

Next Meeting - was set for 12:30 on August 18, 1994, in Grand Junction.

Attendance List
Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting - April 21, 1994

Trout Unlimited	Pat Oglesby	303-434-3912
Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District	Tyler Martineau	303-641-6065
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association	Jim Hokit	303-249-3813
Colorado River Water Conservation District	Mike Gross	303-945-8522
Colorado Division of Water Resources	Ken Knox	303-249-6622
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Peter Evans Randy Seaholm	303-866-3441 303-866-3441
Colorado Division of Wildlife	Sherman Hebein Rick Anderson	303-641-0088 303-484-2836 (x339)
Upper Colorado River Commission	Clint Stevens	801-531-1150
Western Area Power Administration	Tony Morton Gary Burton Jeff Ackerman Pat Sanderson Chris Brown	801-524-5636 303-275-1725 303-240-6209 303-240-6212 303-240-6210
Fish and Wildlife Service	George Smith Robert Green Chuck McAda	303-236-5322 303-236-5322 303-243-9319
Bureau of Land Management	John Arkins	303-249-6047
National Park Service	John Welch Chuck Pettee Mark Wondzell Myron Chase Lynn Cudlip	303-249-7036 303-225-3535 303-225-3537 303-249-7036 303-641-2337
Bureau of Reclamation	Brad Vickers Jim Schumacher Lorrie West Steve McCall Coll Stanton Ed Warner Dave Mutz John Ozga Ken Weston Brent Uilenberg	801-524-5576 303-240-6300 303-248-0635 303-248-0638 303-248-0660 303-248-0654 303-248-0655 303-248-0640 303-248-0661 303-248-0641