

GJ-151
ENV-4.00
PRJ-13.00

Subject: Wayne N. Aspinall Unit Operation - Coordination Meeting

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of the April 19, 1995, Aspinall Unit operations meeting. Highlights include:

Current predictions for runoff are at 130 percent of average. We will need to watch runoff and consider flood control needs at Delta.

Proposed operations were modified to provide for the spring peak runoff to occur in early to mid-May. Spring flows of 3,000 cfs are expected through the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge; a peak of about 16-18,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) is expected at Whitewater.

Summer flows through the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge should be around 900 cfs in July, August and most of September. No special releases should be needed to maintain minimum flows below Redlands Diversion Dam in July through October for endangered fish.

Reclamation is continuing efforts toward development of a matrix of flows needed to meet various resource needs of the Gunnison River.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 17, 1995, from 12:30-3:00 p.m. For a change, it will be held in Montrose, at the Craft Training Center, 1843 South Townsend Avenue. Townsend Avenue is the same as Highway 550; the building is at the South end of town, at the southeast corner of Townsend's intersection with E. Niagara Road.

If you have questions, call Ed Warner or Steve McCall at (970) 248-0654 or 248-0638 respectively.

Sincerely,

Carol DeAngelis
Area Manager

Enclosure

cc: 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)

Solicitors Office, Salt Lake City UT
Attention: Scott Loveless (w/encl)

bcc: GJ-400, GJ-430, GJ-150 (2 sets), GJ-140 (ea w/encl)

Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting
April 19, 1995

The subject meeting was held at the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) office in Grand Junction, Colorado. An attendance list is attached. John Welch of the Black Canyon National Monument was transferred; therefore, John Chapman is helping Reclamation conduct the meeting on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS). Connie Rudd was welcomed as a first time participant; she is the Acting Superintendent of the Black Canyon. Other new participants included Carol DeAngelis and Mike Steves (Reclamation, Grand Junction) and Scott Loveless (Solicitor's Office, Salt Lake City).

The purpose of the meeting was to review operation of the Aspinall Unit over the January through April period, and revise the operation plan for the upcoming period (April through August), based on current predictions for water supply conditions and input from interested participants. Results will be incorporated into Reclamation's "Operation Plan for Colorado River System Reservoirs" (24-Month Operation Plan). General goals for operation include filling Blue Mesa Reservoir in July, and then drawing it down by the end of December to a level that minimizes ice jamming problems at the upper end. Another factor to consider for a year like this is flood control at Delta. A new goal, which will be easy to achieve this year, is to maintain a minimum 300 cfs flow for endangered fish below the Redlands Diversion Dam.

January-April 1995 Operation: Brad Vickers reviewed graphs on actual vs. planned operations. We received more snow than was predicted at the January meeting, and flows were increased accordingly. In January, inflow was predicted at 96 percent of average. The most probable prediction now is for inflow to be 130 percent of average.

Forecast and Proposed 1995 Operation: Planned operation print-outs for each of the Aspinall Unit reservoirs (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal) were discussed for the minimum, most, and maximum probable water supply forecasts. The most probable prediction for Blue Mesa inflow is 130 percent of average, and probable minimum is 96 percent. NPS asked how low Blue Mesa will probably get; the proposed operation plan predicts it would hit its lowest elevation of 7,489.78 feet in April. A map for the Colorado River basin showed that snowpack is concentrated in the south. At Whitewater, a peak of around 16-18,000 can be expected, and should be watched in relation to North Fork and Uncompahgre flows to stay within the flooding thresholds at Delta.

Chuck Pettee of the National Park Service suggested that a "controlled spill" be forced early at Crystal. Brad Vickers noted steps are being taken now to prevent spills, and that spills at Crystal occur due to side inflow. Releases of 2,000 are on their way up to 4,000 cfs. About 600 cfs will be diverted through the Gunnison Tunnel for the next 2-3 weeks; this timing is normal and needed because the Uncompahgre River is not running yet.

Proposed operations were summarized to highlight flows that would be expected through the Black Canyon/lower Gorge (after tunnel diversions):

<u>Flow Range</u>	<u>Month</u>
3,300	May
3,000	June
3,000 (+spill)	late May/early June
800-900	July, Aug, Sep
1,500	Oct, Sep, Nov, Dec

Participants requested the peak occur in **early to mid-May** because:

- " Having Aspinall releases peak prior to those of the North Fork and Uncompahgre River would complement efforts to stay within flooding thresholds at Delta.
- " Completion of the peak prior to June 10 will protect hatch of rainbow trout. Low census of fry from last year increases need to protect this season's spawn. Whirling disease and trapping of fish in pools may have taken a toll on young trout populations in 1994. It will take time to determine the extent of young fish loss to whirling disease. It may be even more important to take all measures possible to enhance fry survival.

- " Early peak would better protect resource values of Black Canyon
- " Completion prior to Memorial Day coincides better with seasonal and increased public use of the Gorge
- " Earlier peak meets flow needs of endangered fish and study needs of FWS

Conclusions for summer operation plan:

It should be possible to force a spill at Crystal to provide a peak flow earlier in May.

Though difficult, Reclamation and Western will continue to strive to maintain a decreasing ramping rate of around 10 percent. Power plant operators would prefer that desired ramping rates be specified using a range in percent of change, rather than a specific amount of flow in cfs.

Following runoff, summer operations for July-September will attempt to keep canyon flows below 900 cfs.

Handouts also included the Computation of the Delivery to the NPS.

Special Flow Requests:

Previously, the Division of Wildlife requested 600 cfs from September 25 to 27 or 28 for their annual fish census. No other special or test flows were requested.

Endangered Fish Flow Requests:

- A peak flow near Whitewater of 16-18,000 will meet the needs of the FWS for a high flow. In future years, another moderately low peak (6-8,000) will be needed.

- The proposed operation plan shows there will be more than 300 cfs available all summer below the Redlands Diversion. Therefore, no special flows will be needed in July-October to maintain minimum flows under the Interim Agreement.

Agency/Organization Activities and Comments

Western Area Power Administration - Jeff Ackerman of Western wants to reevaluate the operation criteria for Morrow Point imposed by the old tour boat with the NPS. He requested the NPS to delay performance tests and public use of the new boat until after the peak run-off season. Normally, tours begin Memorial Day weekend and end Labor Day weekend. Constraints to accommodate public safety and use may conflict with flexibility needed to operate the power plant. John Chapman of Curecanti will consult with their concessionaire and get back to Western.

Gunnison River Expeditions - Bo Gates commented that reduced flows in June would be better for rafters, and that flows of around 900 cfs in July-September would be safer for boaters and help minimize damage from sediment inflows during flash floods.

Colorado Water Conservation Board - Randy Seaholm reported consensus has been reached with Arapahoe County on CWCB's instream flow filing for the Nature Conservancy's 300 cfs flow donation through the Black Canyon. The decree should be completed in the next couple of months.

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) - Will be in the field during high water to evaluate habitat, and will continue monitoring activities this summer.

Bureau of Land Management - Commented they would like to see high flows last awhile for channel maintenance purposes in the Gorge. Please notify them of any sudden changes or spill so they can warn boaters.

National Park Service

- The NPS also needs to be notified of sudden changes.
- The Entrainment Study is gearing up.
- They have acquired photographs of Coal (1918) and Walkers (1934) and will be reshooting the areas whenever flows are more similar for comparison purposes.

They will not ask for special flows to mimic conditions. They are looking for any other photos that may have been taken of the same areas to compare changes. Jim Hokit (UVWUA) has historical photos that NPS may look through.

- Reclamation and NPS have met to discuss the Gunnison River Contract; it is still on a slow track. Development of the matrix will be an integral part of negotiations, and the forum of these coordination meetings should be a permanent practice. Recommend that ranges of flows be used in the matrix.
- Inconsistencies between water management objectives for Curecanti and the Black Canyon have been noted. Late last year, the Black Canyon initiated work to develop a vision statement for the Black Canyon. Curecanti's 1980 General Management Plan is also being updated to emphasize management rather than development. Work on both efforts has been suspended pending an organizational restructuring underway for the NPS. Movement is from Washington to the field to increase on-the-ground efficiency. Restructuring for Curecanti and Black Canyon may result in the parks being combined.

Bureau of Reclamation

- We are continuing work on Emergency Communications, the Limnology Study with NPS, and an Irrigation Water Quality Program study with USGS and FWS.
- For the Redlands passage interim agreement, congratulations to success of negotiators. While agreement reached in principle, latitude has been given to State and Federal legal counsels to hammer out some legal details. We think we are still on track for execution this month. Randy Seaholm will be discussing recent changes with stakeholders to see if they are acceptable.
- For the Redlands ladder, Reclamation is very concerned about recent comments from the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County. Will be meeting with Federal, State and local officials, boaters, and Elam Construction (owner of land proposed for use as boat take-out). Will also be meeting with County officials to increase understanding and deal with their resolution opposing the ladder.
- Have heard information from the new streamflow gauge below Redlands is now reported on Water Talk as #32 for Division 4. Reclamation still needs to get the data into Hydronet.

Emergency Power Needs: Ed Warner and Brad Vickers discussed a flow diagram to show how one point of contact is being identified between Western and Reclamation for use in any type of emergency at our dams and powerplants. Discussed opportunities to coordinate with emergency planning efforts of others such as the National Weather Service and response plans of communities/counties for hazardous material spills.

Flow Matrix Development: The matrix will be an important long-range tool. Reclamation has incorporated responses from NPS and BLM to the latest request for matrix information. Comments included with their input shows a need to orient the criteria around various resource needs rather than by agency, and to identify ranges rather than specific flows. Reclamation will work more on modifying the matrix accordingly. Agencies should not worry about being tied to any input provided.

Next Meeting August 17, 1995; 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.
For a change, it will be held in Montrose, at the Craft Training Center:
1843 So. Townsend Avenue (same as U.S. Highway 550)

Attendance List
Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting - April 19, 1995

Individuals	Ruth Hutchins
Gunnison River Expeditions	Bo Gates
Trout Unlimited	Pat Oglesby
North Fork Water Conservancy District	Tom Alvey
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association	Jim Hokit
Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District	Tyler Martineau
Colorado River Water Conservation District	Mike Gross David Kanzer
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Randy Seaholm
Western Area Power Administration	Gary Burton Jeff Ackerman Chris Brown
U.S. Geological Survey	Paul von Guerard
Fish and Wildlife Service	George Smith Terry Ireland Chuck McAda
Bureau of Land Management	John Arkins
National Park Service	Connie Rudd Chuck Pettee Mark Wondzell John Chapman Rick Harris Lynn Cudlip
USDI Solicitor's Office	Scott Loveless
Bureau of Reclamation	Carol DeAngelis Brad Vickers Jim Schumacher Steve McCall Ed Warner Mike Steves Lorrie West