

WCG-SMcCall
ENV-4.00/PRJ-13.00

Subject: Wayne N. Aspinall Unit Operations

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of our January 18, 2007 meeting to coordinate Reclamation's operation of the Aspinall Unit. The meeting was held in Montrose. Highlights of the operation meeting include:

■ Early runoff forecasts for 2007 are around 97 percent of average for both Blue Mesa inflow and the Gunnison River near Grand Junction. Blue Mesa is expected to fill early in the summer.

- Black Canyon flows are around 1,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the present time, and preliminary estimations are for flows in the 1,000 – 1,500 cfs range for the spring and summer. Based on the early forecasts, a spring peak may not occur in the Black Canyon downstream from the Unit; however, significant gains or losses in the forecast can occur between January and May.

If you have any suggestions on improving the operation meetings or summaries, please let us know. The next operation meeting will be on Thursday, April 26 at 1 p.m. in Grand Junction. If you have any questions, please call me at 970 248-0652.

Sincerely,

Dan Crabtree
Water Resources Group Chief

Enclosure
Distribution (see attached list)

bc: CC-100

John Bezdek, Office of Interior Solicitor, 1849 C St. NW, Mail Stop 6412, Washington, D.C. 20240
UC-110, UC-400, UC-434, UC-436, UC-438, UC-600, UC-700, UC-720
D-885100

WCG-CDeAngelis, EWarner, BUilenberg, SMcCall, CStanton, EKnight, MSteves,
DCrabtree, TStroh, JHock
WCD-RSwickard, JSimons, PPage
(each w/encl)

WBR:SMcCall:Aspinall summary January 18
Identical letter sent – see attached list

Distribution List –
January 18, 2007 Aspinall Operation Meeting

*An asterisk indicates person attended the meeting

Daily Sentinel..... Gary Harmon, Dave Buchanan
Delta County Independent Bob Borchardt*
Gunnison Country Times Michelle Burkhart, Alan Wartes, Pat Daniel
Montrose Daily Press James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer, Matt Hildner*
Western Resource Advocates Bart Miller
Club 20 Reeves Brown
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
Environmental Defense Fund Jim Martin
Gunnison Basin POWER Ralph (Butch) Clark, Ramon Reed
Gunnison River Expeditions Hank Hotze, Al DeGrange*
Helton & Williamsen, P.C. Duane Helton
High Country Citizens Alliance/Sierra Club Steve Glazer, Wendy McDermott,
Steve Schechter, Shara Rutberg
Xcel Energy..... Fred Eggleston*
Matt Owens Fly Company Matt Owens
Trout Unlimited Pat Oglesby, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternell John Trammell
Western Colorado Congress Randy See, Fred Wetlauffer
Argonne National Laboratory John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
University of Montana Jack Stanford
Ridgway Guide Service..... Tim Peterson
Self Curt Treichel, Lynn Johnson, George Sheldon, Bo Gates, Marlene
Zanatell, Jim Cochran, Jim Hokit
Colorado River Energy Distributors..... Leslie James, Kent Holsinger
Colorado River Water Conservation District Dave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Eric Kuhn, Bill Trampe,
David Halford, Ray Tenney
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Tri County Water Mike Berry*, Ion Spor, Kathleen Margetts, Richard Margetts* (Project
7)
Redlands Water and Power Company Gregg Strong, Mike Gross
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association..... Marc Catlin*
Upper Colorado River Commission Everett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy District John McClow*, Frank Kugel*, Greg Peterson,
Karen Shirley, Kathleen Curry, Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, Dennis Steckel, Jim Slattery, Ken
Spann
City of Grand Junction..... Terry Franklin, Greg Trainor
Delta County Commissioners..... Jan McCracken, Wayne Wolf, Olen Lund
Delta County..... Duane Freeman
City of Delta..... Dales Hukle, Barry Bullard, Richard Sales, Wilma Ervin
Delta County Emergency Management..... Rob Fiedler
Gunnison County Commissioners Hap Channell, Paula Swenson, Jim Starr
Colorado Department of Agriculture..... Jim Miller
Colorado Division of Water Resources Wayne Schieldt*, Pat McDermott*, Richard Rozman
Colorado Division of Wildlife Mike Japhet*, Daniel Brauch, Sherman Hebein, Dan Kowalski, David Graf,
Ryan Swygman, Jay Skinner, Pat Martinez, Rick Anderson, Mark Uppendahl
Colorado Water Conservation Board..... Randy Seaholm, Ray Alvarado, Michelle Garrison*, Rick Brown,

Steve Miller

Wyoming State Engineers Office..... John Shields
Congressman John SalazarRichard Baca
Senator Wayne AllardDerek Wagner
Senator Ken Salazar Trudy Kareus, Mary Beth Buescher
Army Corps of Engineers..... Ken Jacobson
Bureau of Land Management Dennis Murphy, Jim Ferguson, Roy Smith, Rooster Barnhart, Karen Tucker*, John Arkins, Forest Zerbe, Jesse Kirthorp, Peter Dennett, Julie Stotler
Fish and Wildlife Service..... Al Pfister, Chuck McAda, Patty Gelatt, George Smith
National Park Service Bill Wellman, Ken Stahlnecker, Matt Malick, Mark Wondzell, Melissa Trammell, Michael Dale*, Bill Johnson, DanGude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Chuck Pettee, Norm Henderson
National Weather Service..... Bill Reed, Brian Avery
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration..... Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann, Brad Udall
U.S. Geological Survey.....Paul von Guerard, Bob Jenkins, Gordon Mueller, Gerhard Kuhn, Bob Boulgarz, Joe Sullivan, Steve Anders*
Western Area Power Administration..... Brad Warren, Nancy Scheid, Clayton Palmer, Jeff Ackerman*, Kathy Crane, Ken Green, Annette Falvo, Ken Otto, Gary Burton; Margaret Matte, Dave Shelton, Heather Patno, Jennifer Turnbull, Chris Brown*
Bureau of Reclamation...Carol DeAngelis, Ed Warner, Steve McCall, Coll Stanton*, Don Phillips*, Dick Girvan*, David Steinmark, Grant Watson*, Ted Dunn, Dan Crabtree*, Chris Cutler, Terry Stroh*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock, Erik Knight*, Nancy Coulam, Dennis Kubly, Dave Harpman, Dawn Munger, and Rick Vinton
Interior Solicitors Office..... John Bezdek, Peter Fahmy
Department of Justice.....Dave Gehlert
Colorado U/CADSWES.....Edie Zagona, Satish Regonda,

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
January 18, 2007

Participation: This meeting was held in Montrose. Attendees are noted on the distribution list.

Purpose of Meeting: The purpose of operation meetings-- held in January, April, and August-- is to gather input for determining upcoming operations for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal Reservoirs. This input is used in Reclamation's development of specific operations for the Aspinall Unit and for the overall 24-month study for operation of Reclamation projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin, which include plans for Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, and Navajo Units, as well as the Aspinall Unit. Operation of the Aspinall Unit considers projected inflows to its reservoirs, hydropower needs, flood control needs, existing water rights, minimum instream flows, target elevations for reservoirs, flow needs for endangered fish and other resources, recreation, and other factors. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the Gunnison River.

Handouts provided included data on 2006 operations; projected inflows to the reservoirs for 2007; and potential operation plans under probable maximum, most probable, and probable minimum runoff forecasts for 2007.

Activities related to long-term operation planning were also discussed at the meeting. Field studies leading to flow recommendations (Fish and Wildlife Service Flow Recommendations) to help recover downstream endangered fish and studies to quantify a Federal reserved water right have been completed for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The 2003 Agreement to resolve the reserved right has been overturned.

The Fish and Wildlife Service flow recommendations for endangered fish have been completed and published, and an Aspinall Operations EIS has been initiated to evaluate alternative operations to help meet these recommendations. These operation meetings will be used more in the future to discuss proposals for long-term operation plans to address these and related resource management issues.

Operations:

General: Blue Mesa Reservoir capacities are described in meetings as follows: The reservoir holds 940,700 acre-feet. Active capacity is 748,400, inactive capacity is 81,100, and dead storage is 111,200. Live capacity is the active plus inactive, which totals 829,500. Discussions during operation meetings use live capacity.

August-December 2006 Operations:

Unit releases were around 2,100 cfs in August and declined to 600-700 cfs in October. Releases later increased to around 1,500 cfs through December and into January. October and November inflows were higher than normal as a result of above average precipitation in August through

October. Blue Mesa was lowered to 7490 feet in December to help reduce the potential for upstream ice flooding.

2007 Operations:

Based on January 1 data, Blue Mesa April-July inflow is projected at 700,000 acre-feet or around 97 percent of average. This inflow is considered representative of an “average wet” year. Blue Mesa is expected to fill this summer based on the preliminary data.

Crystal releases should remain above 1,000 cfs this winter and should increase to around 2,100 cfs in the May thru September timeframe. Black Canyon flows are projected to be in the 1,000 to 1,250 cfs range for the spring and summer. A spring peak is not predicted at this time.

It should be noted that we are very early in the snowfall season and inflow projections and operations often change significantly between January and May.

Input was requested from those in attendance concerning operations:

The Colorado Division of Wildlife will be spawning rainbow trout at the East Portal in April and early May and requested that they be notified of any significant increases/decreases in releases during this time frame. The Division requested flows in the 700-800 cfs range between October 2 and 5 to facilitate fishery inventories in the Gunnison Gorge. The inventory has been moved from September to October based on requests from Western.

The Uncompahgre Valley Water Users may request a short period of flows in the 600-650 cfs range to allow inspection of the Gunnison Diversion Dam in the spring.

The Fish and Wildlife Service was not in attendance at the meeting but their flow recommendations would call for a spring peak for downstream endangered fish and their habitat.

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

National Park Service – Will wait until April runoff forecasts are available to consider requesting a spring peak. Connie Rudd is the new superintendent of Curecanti/Black Canyon.

Reclamation – Annual maintenance at Crystal in early February—will release water through bypass tubes. Concrete repairs of the Morrow Point stilling basin will be scheduled this year. Grant Watson is the new superintendent at Blue Mesa.

Colorado Division of Wildlife –Inventories in September 2006 showed very high biomass/acre in the tailwater fishery, with brown trout dominating the fishery and rainbows accounting for only 5 percent of the population. Work continues on developing whirling disease resistant rainbow trout and new regulations are being considered to allow additional harvest of brown trout and to extend catch and release for rainbow trout further downstream.

Fish and Wildlife Service – 2007 activities for the Gunnison River include sampling for adult endangered fish, sampling for larval fish, and operating the Redlands fish ladder. Flow recommendations call for a spring peak.

Bureau of Land Management: Working on boater access downstream from the Relief Ditch.

Western Area Power Administration: Water supply at the Aspinall Unit was very good in the fall and early winter. Blue Mesa and Morrow Point continue to be very important because they are very flexible peaking units.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: System maintenance should be completed in March and expect a typical irrigation season.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: Status conference on Black Canyon water right scheduled for March 1. Frank Kugel has been selected as District manager and John McClow as council.

Tri County Water: Gage on Cow Creek should be completed this winter.

Aspinall Unit EIS:

The EIS is being prepared to evaluate a range of alternatives to help meet endangered fish flow recommendations while continuing to meet Aspinall Unit purposes. Flow Recommendations have been developed by the Recovery Program for endangered fish habitat downstream from Delta. Progress is being made on developing hydrology models to analyze the alternatives and existing resource information is being compiled. The court decision to overturn the 2003 Black Canyon agreement causes problems with modeling operations and alternatives. See: www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/ ; for information---select “Aspinall Unit Operations EIS” under the “General” heading. Contact aspinalleis@uc.usbr.gov for information.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for 1:00 p.m., Thursday, April 26th in Reclamation’s Grand Junction Office.