

From: Dan Crabtree  
To: Aspinall Operations  
Subject: Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting Summary

Enclosed is a summary of our April 23, 2009 meeting to coordinate Reclamation's operation of the Aspinall Unit. The meeting was held in Reclamation's Grand Junction office. Highlights of the operation meeting include:

- April 15 forecasted inflow to Blue Mesa is estimated at 700,000 af. 2008 inflow was 1,006,000 af and "average" inflow is 720,000 af.
- The Black Canyon water right has been quantified
- 2009 operations will most likely include a May Black Canyon/Gunnison Gorge peak of around 6,000 cfs and summer flows in the 1,000 cfs range.
- Blue Mesa is expected to fill this year.

If you have any suggestions on improving the operation meetings or summaries, please let us know. The next operation meeting will be on Thursday, August 27, 2009 at the NPS Elk Creek Visitors Center on Blue Mesa. If you have any questions, please call me at 970 248-0652 or respond to this email.

Sincerely,

Dan Crabtree  
Water Resources Group Chief

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting  
April 23, 2009

**Participation:** This meeting was held in Reclamation's Grand Junction Office. Attendees are noted on the distribution list located at the end of these notes. Handouts are available for review at <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/mtgs/amcurrnt.html>

**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 and 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 2008-2009 operations; projected inflows to the reservoirs for 2009; and potential operation plans under probable maximum, most probable, and probable minimum runoff forecasts for 2009.

The Fish and Wildlife Service flow recommendations for endangered fish have been completed and published, and a draft Aspinall Operations EIS has been released to evaluate alternative operations to help meet these recommendations. In addition, the water right for the Black Canyon National Park has been quantified and adjudicated. 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.

**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center:** Brenda Alcorn made a presentation on the Gunnison Basin forecast. October and November 2008 were dry as was the first portion of December. December, however, ended up with 225% of average precipitation in the basin. On January 1, snow water content was at 130% of normal. By April 1, this had declined to 100% for the Gunnison Basin overall. Snowpack in the northern part of the basin is above 100% and the southern portion below. April has been wet so far and snow water equivalent on April 21 was 109%.

As of April 15, the April through July inflow forecasts for Blue Mesa Reservoir is estimated at 700,000 af and at Whitewater 1,500,000 af. Inflow to Taylor Park is estimated at 105%, Ridgway 95%, and Paonia 105%. A North Fork peak at Somerset is estimated around 3,400 cfs and is estimated to occur around May 21. A peak at Delta (minus Crystal release) is estimated at around 4680 cfs. More forecast information is available at [www.cbrfc.noaa.gov](http://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov).

**24-Month Study:** Paul Davidson reviewed the "24-Month Study." This study is based on forecasts used to estimate operations of Colorado River reservoirs over the next 24 month

period. It is updated monthly and coordinated with the Lower Basin. The study is available at: [www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/index.html](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/index.html).

### **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.

### 2008-2009 Operations:

The icing target at Blue Mesa (7490 feet) was reached at the end of December. Winter releases from Crystal were around 700-800 cfs. Releases are now 1,500 cfs with 1,000 cfs in the Black Canyon/Gunnison Gorge. Blue Mesa is 66% full with 545,000 af of content.

The forecasted inflow to Blue Mesa on April 15 was 700,000 af, down from 750,000 on January 1. Median inflow based on 1937-2008 records is 645,000 af. This year is considered an “average wet” year and would be expected to be exceeded in 42 percent of years.

Under most probable conditions, Blue Mesa is expected to fill. Crystal releases would average 2,700 cfs in May and 2,000 cfs in the summer. Black Canyon/Gunnison Gorge flows would average 1,850 cfs in May, 1,200 cfs in the summer and 900 cfs in the fall.

The Unit will be operated to allow meeting a Black Canyon peak in May. Based on the Black Canyon reserved water right and April 15 inflow forecast, a 1-day peak of approximately 6,000 cfs is planned in mid- to late-May. Dependent on North Fork flows, this could result in 12,000-13,000 cfs or less at Delta.

Western Area Power questioned why Reclamation was attempting to match a North Fork peak prior to completing the operations EIS. Reclamation answered that this year we are not operating to meet endangered fish targets, but we are operating to allow the Black Canyon right to be met. We will try to do this by matching a Cimarron Creek peak and using full Morrow Point powerplant and bypasses. If this isn't sufficient, Morrow Point may be spilled.

Input was requested from those in attendance concerning 2009 operations:

CREDA reported that there will be steady releases from Glen Canyon in May and September-October and asked whether Aspinall can be used to mitigate resultant hydropower impacts. Paul Davidson reported that he is coordinating this with Western, but it did not appear economical to do so as maintaining a spinning reserve would be more costly.

The Bureau of Land Management stated that for recreational use, the earlier the peak in May the better.

The CDOW requested flows in the 700-900 cfs range September 29 thru October 2 for the

annual inventory of the Gunnison Gorge trout fishery. There were no objections to this.

Trout Unlimited recommended that having the peak earlier (in May) would assist in rainbow restoration as compared to a later peak in June.

### **Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:**

**Colorado Division of Wildlife** – 3.3 million kokanee were released from Roaring Judy Hatchery to Blue Mesa last week. There are still concerns with the kokanee fishery due to lake trout and possibly yellow perch predations. Will be actively working on Quagga mussel control activities this year along with NPS and State Parks.

**Colorado Water Conservation Board** – John McClow has been appointed to the Board. The Board supports operation meetings as conducted as they allow for equal input to operations and are important for all parties to understand operation issues and ramifications of operations. Budget has been cut by around \$100 million; salinity control has received Stimulus Funding. The July Board meeting will be in Crested Butte just before the Gunnison Water Workshop.

**Bureau of Land Management:** If peak is late (late May-June), it will impact outfitters and other recreationists. The BLM also reported that the Grand Junction Field Office is working on a new Resource Management Plan that will include Wild and Scenic river studies. Eligibility determinations have been completed on two sections of the Gunnison downstream from Delta (See BLM website: <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html> ) and suitability is now being studied. Input on suitability should be provided BLM by the end of May.

**Black Canyon Anglers:** Also would prefer earlier peak; the later the peak is, the greater the impact on recreationists and outfitters.

**Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District:** Funding new SNOTEL site upstream from Taylor Park Reservoir.

**Colorado State Engineer:** Working on a position report on how the Black Canyon right will be administered. Will be made public.

**Tri-County:** Ridgway will fill this year; now releasing 300 cfs. Dust storms may result in faster runoff and consideration is being given to using spillway this year.

**Colorado River Water Conservation District:** Will have presentation at June 1 Gunnison Basin roundtable meeting on “State of Gunnison River.”

**Western Area Power:** During Black Canyon water right negotiations, flexibility was discussed and it should be used. Western supports spring flows if inflow forecasts show bypasses will be necessary. Western also encouraged investigating steeper ramping rates as a means of reducing water used for spring peaks. Can support this year’s spring peak if Morrow Point spill is not used. For next year, Western suggests making higher releases in December thru February when power demands are high instead of March thru April.

**Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for 1:00 p.m., Thursday, August 27 at the Elk Creek Visitors Center on Blue Mesa.**

April 23, 2009 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, Will Shoemaker, 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\*, Marshall Pendergrass\*, Matt Mayer, Mac Cunningham  
**Western Colorado Congress** ..... Randy See, Fred Wetlaufer  
**Argonne National Laboratory** ..... John Hayse, Kirk Lagory  
**University of Montana** ..... Jack Stanford  
**Ridgway Guide Service**..... Tim Peterson  
**Black Canyon Anglers**.....Richard Dudginski\*  
**Self** .....Curt Treichel, Lynn Johnson, George Sheldon, Bo Gates, Marlene Zanatell, Jim Cochran, Jim Hokit, Richard Girvan, Coll Stanton\*  
**Colorado River Energy Distributors**.....Leslie James\*, Kent Holsinger  
**Colorado River Water Conservation District** .....Dave Kanzer\*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt\*, 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** ..... Charles Mitisek, 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, Kathleen Curry, Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, Dennis Steckel, Jim Slattery, Ken Spann  
**City of Grand Junction**..... Terry Franklin, Rick Bukus, Greg Trainor  
**Delta County Commissioners**..... Jan McCracken, Wayne Wolf, Olen Lund  
**Delta County**..... Duane Freeman  
**City of Delta**..... Jim Hatheway, Bill Seuell, Dales Hukle, Barry Bullard, Jim Brown, Wilma Ervin

**Delta County Emergency Management**.....Rob Fiedler\*  
**Mesa County Emergency Management**.....Chadd Searcy\*  
**Gunnison County Commissioners** ..... Hap Channell, Paula Swenson, Jim Starr  
**Colorado Department of Agriculture**..... Jim Miller  
**Colorado Division of Water Resources** .... Pat McDermott, Bob Hurford\*, Scott King\*, Richard Rozman  
**Colorado Division of Wildlife** .....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 Salazar** .....Richard Baca  
**Senator Wayne Allard** .....Derek Wagner  
**Senator Ken Salazar** ..... Trudy Kareus, Mary Beth Buescher  
**Army Corps of Engineers**..... Ken Jacobson  
**Bureau of Land Management** .....Dennis Murphy, Roy Smith,  
 Rooster Barnhart\*, Karen Tucker, Edd Franz\*, Forest Zerbe, Jesse Kirthorp, Peter Dennett, Julie Stotler,  
 Ryan Mathis\*, Michelle Bailey\*  
**Fish and Wildlife Service**..... Al Pfister, Jana Mohrman\*, Patty Gelatt\*  
**National Park Service** .....Connie Rudd, Ken Stahlnecker, Dave Roberts, Matt Malick, Mark Wondzell\*,  
 Melissa Trammell, Michael Dale\*, Bill Johnson, DanGude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Chuck Pettee, Norm Henderson  
**National Weather Service**.....Brenda Alcorn\*, John Lhotak\* Jim Pringle\*, Bryon Lawrence\*, Bill Reed,  
 Aldis Strautins  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**..... Andrea Ray\* Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann,  
 Brad Udall, Kevin Werner\*, Chad McNutt\*, Bryon Lawrence\*  
**NRCS**..... Tom Pagano, Mike Gillespie\*, John Scott  
**U.S. Geological Survey**..... Bob Jenkins, Gordon Mueller, Gerhard Kuhn, Bob Boulgarz,  
 Joe Sullivan, Steve Anders, Kirby Wynn, Trisha Solberg  
**Western Area Power Administration**..... Burt Hawkes\*, Brad Warren, Nancy Scheid, Clayton Palmer\*  
 Jeff Ackerman, Kathy Crane, Ken Green, Annette Falvo, Ken Otto, Gary Burton; Margaret Matte, Dave  
 Shelton, Jennifer Turnbull\*, Chris Brown, Shane Messawo\*  
**Bureau of Reclamation**...Carol DeAngelis\*, Ed Warner\*, Steve McCall\*, Don Phillips\*, Joe Austin,  
 Grant Watson, Ted Dunn, Dan Crabtree\*, Chris Cutler, Terry Stroh\*, Jane Blair\*, Max Spiker, Paul  
 Davidson\*, Justyn Hock\*, Erik Knight\*, Nancy Coulam, Heather Patno, 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  
**University of Colorado**..... Christina Alford  
**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center**.....Brenda Alcorn\* John Lhotak  
**National Drought Mitigation Center**.....Donna Woudenberg\*