

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
January 20, 2011

Participation: This meeting was held at the Holiday Inn Express in Montrose. Attendees are noted on the distribution list located at the end of these notes. **Handouts and presentations 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 (www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/index.html) 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 2010 operations; inflows to the reservoirs for 2010; and operation plans for 2011 under probable maximum, most probable, and probable minimum runoff forecasts for this spring.

The Fish and Wildlife Service flow recommendations for endangered fish have been completed and published, and a final Aspinall Operations EIS is being prepared 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.

Operations:

General: Blue Mesa Reservoir capacities are described in meetings as follows: The reservoir holds 940,700 acre-feet (af). 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 2010-January 2011 Operations:

Blue Mesa was lowered to its icing target in December and reached elevation 7486.8 by December 30. Flows through the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge remained around 500 – 600 cfs during the period. December precipitation in the basin was well above average, especially in the northern portion of the basin that feeds the North Fork. December precipitation in this northern area and parts of Grand Mesa were 400 percent of average. January conditions

so far have been much drier. Overall in the basin, snowpack is 138 percent of average (January 19) and April-July inflow to Blue Mesa is projected at 780,000 af or around 110 percent of the long-term average. Inflow projections can change significantly by runoff.

2011 Operations:

Long-term weather outlook shows drier conditions over the next three months.; The Black Canyon water right calls for a 6,345 cfs one-day peak based in the January 15 runoff forecast to Blue Mesa (780,000 af). Endangered fish flow recommendations would call for a Whitewater peak of 11,700 cfs.

Snowpack is particularly high in the North Fork drainage so timing of peak release from the Aspinall Unit may need to be carefully scheduled to avoid high flows in the Delta area that could result from combined high North Fork flows with high Aspinall releases.

Black Canyon/Gunnison Gorge flows are now around 500 cfs and will increase gradually toward spring. Most likely summer base flows will be around 1,000 cfs. In the April 18-22 period, maintenance activities at Crystal Dam will require releases of around 2,150 cfs. This is required to test the exciter (An exciter is a piece of apparatus which is used to charge a rotor within a generating alternator). Dependent on Gunnison Tunnel Diversions, this could result in Black Canyon flows in the 1,500 – 1,800 cfs range.

Special flow requests: Hartland Dam construction may occur in the September-November period. Aspinall releases are generally lower in that time period so conflicts are not expected. Will review at April meeting. The City of Delta is working on the sewer plant and uses a coffer dam in the river. Work should be completed by end of March so Aspinall operations should not affect. If we see any changes in this, Reclamation will contact Delta. The National Park Service will be surveying river cross sections for a 1-mile reach downstream from Gunnison Diversion Dam but is not requesting special flows. CDOW fall monitoring has not been scheduled yet.

Gunnison Gorge Fishery Monitoring: Dan Kowalski, CDOW, reported on 2010 monitoring of the Gunnison Gorge fishery. Fall monitoring has been conducted in Ute Park reach of river since the 1980's and provides information on the fisheries response to river flows. The presentation is available at <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/mtgs/amcurrnt.html>. The fishery in the monitoring area remains in excellent shape, exceeding Gold Medal standards by five-fold. Whirling resistant rainbow trout are beginning to reproduce and while numbers are still low, the trend is encouraging. Brown trout continue to dominate the fishery with biomass estimated at 340 pounds/acre. Flash floods in August significantly reduced numbers of fry. Adult fish not significantly affected in study reach but probably more impacted downstream where effects of the flash flood were more intense. High spring flows the last several years have probably reduced fry survival but numbers remain adequate to support the fishery. Following ramping guidelines has been very important in protecting the fishery in recent years.

EIS update: Draft EIS on Aspinall operations was released in February 2009. Following public review, an advanced draft final was prepared and sent to Washington for review. This review has now been completed and an advanced draft has been provided cooperating agencies for a review to be completed in February. Reclamation hopes to complete final EIS and Record of Decision

by the end of this year. The preferred alternative has not changed in the final EIS.

South Canal Hydro: The Uncompahgre Valley Water Users and the Delta Montrose Electric Association announced that environmental and design work on a hydro project was beginning. The project would produce power from existing irrigation flows in the South Canal. Reclamation will be the lead NEPA agency and an initial scoping meeting will be scheduled for February or March. While the project would be constructed on the South Canal, irrigation flows would remain the priority and diversions from the Gunnison River would not be changed or affected.

Maintenance activities: The exciter work is scheduled for April as discussed above. Other maintenance activities scheduled should not affect river flows.

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

Colorado Division of Wildlife: Kokanee egg collection last fall was better than expected with 5.3 million eggs collected. Continuing to remove lake trout from Blue Mesa to protect the kokanee fishery. Concerned with April maintenance activities at Crystal that will increase downstream flows. Because of the overlap with timing of rainbow spawning, this could cause fish to spawn higher in the streambed in areas that might be later dewatered. In future, would recommend that this type work be done at other times of the year. Will coordinate with Reclamation to consider whether flows should remain high for all 24 hours per day or just for 8 hours per day.

Fish and Wildlife Service: Redlands Fish Ladder used by 3 pikeminnow, a razorback sucker, and a humpback last year.

Colorado Water Conservation Board: Next Board Meeting next week in Denver followed by Water Congress meeting. SWSI report will be reviewed. Working on Aspinall EIS review and the selenium reduction planning. SWSI and Drought reports will be published on CWCB website.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: February 1 is the annual meeting. All water users are invited.

Western Area Power: Equalization rules in effect with Lake Mead and above average Lake Powell inflow forecast, results in more water being released from Glen Canyon. . About 2.5 million af over normal releases. Several maintenance projects at Glen Canyon powerplants, (runner and transformer replacements) up to 3 units down at a time, so some generation will be lost over the next three months. Problem in maintaining regulation and reserves when passing lots of water.

Bureau of Land Management: Uncompahgre field office working on revising RMP and wild and scenic river study. Public stakeholder group has begun..they will provide recommendations. January 24 is next meeting, check BLM or River District web page. See www.blm.gov.ufo.planning.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: Paul Hudgeons is new board member from Lake City area. Work on the 75 Diversion Dam (just downstream from Twin Bridges—oldest water right in basin) has been completed. Purposes include improving the diversion and benefitting the water park. Riparian assessment completed between Almont and McCabe Lane Bridge. 83% of the 12 mile segment is properly functioning. Largest impact is due to housing. Also will participate in Colorado Water Trust workshop February 4th at Fair Grounds.

Colorado State Engineer: Compiling last year's diversion records. New governor emphasizes importance of water to the state. Budget has been float since 2007 so expenditures are being carefully monitored (Bob bought his own pencil) Received 65 water court applications in December, mostly due diligence.

Chris Landry: Thanks to Upper Gunnison Board, Tri-County, CWCB, River District, and Reclamation for support of snow monitoring program. No dust events yet this year, but last year the events did not begin until late March. Dust cannot be forecasted, USGS looking at sampling dust to trace back to source areas.

Colorado River Water Conservation District: Working on Selenium Management Plan, this plan is of importance to all water users. Encouraging selenium trend data from the USGS showing 20 percent reduction in se load since the late 1980's. Expressed concern that operations EIS is taking so long to complete. It is an important element of the Gunnison Basin Programmatic Biological Opinion and needs to be completed to preserve the PBO and its benefits to the basin. CRWCD active on Round Tables and IBC. Water Supply Grant Program is open until January 31.

Trout Unlimited: Gunnison Gorge Anglers taking lead in facilitating the replacement of the Relief Ditch Diversion on the Gunnison River. Purposes are reducing boating hazards, protecting irrigation diversions, and reducing bank erosion. Funds have been raised for design studies and will begin looking for construction funds.

Tri-County: Releases will be steady unless forecast changes. Working with Reclamation on Safety of Dam work on seismic activity. Also beginning studies on developing run of the river hydropower at Ridgway.

National Park Service: Summer jobs are on the internet.

Riggs Fly Shop: Increased Uncompahgre winter flows below Ridgway Dam (50 cfs) are better than last years monthly average of 46 cfs.

USGS: Should have new Cimarron gage operating by April. At first will just record water height. Flows will be recorded later when the correlation between flow and gage height is established.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for April 21st 2011 in Reclamation's Grand Junction office.

January 20, 2011 Aspinall Operation Meeting

*An asterisk indicates person attended the meeting in person or by phone

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
Western Resource Advocates Bart Miller
Club 20 Reeves Brown
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
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, Tom Minerick
Matt Owens Fly CompanyMatt Owens
Trout Unlimited...Pat Oglesby, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternel, John Trammell, Marshall Pendergrass*,
Matt Mayer, Mac Cunningham
Western Colorado Congress Fred Wetlaufer
Argonne National Laboratory John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
University of Montana Jack Stanford
Ridgway Guide Service..... Tim Paterson*, Matt McCannel*
Black Canyon Anglers.....Richard Dudgeonski
SelfCurt Treichel, Lynn Johnson, George Sheldon, Bo Gates, Marlene
Zanatell, Jim Cochran, Jim Hokit, Richard Girvan, Coll Stanton, Joe Waggoner, Ralph Files*
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James, Kent Holsinger*
Colorado River Water Conservation DistrictDave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt*, Eric
Kuhn, Bill Trampe, David Halford, Ray Tenney
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Tri County WaterMike Berry*, Ion Spor, Kathleen Margetts,
Project 7 Richard Margetts
Redlands Water and Power Company Charles Mitisek, Mike Gross
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association.Marc Catlin*, Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher*, Steve Shea*
Upper Colorado River CommissionEverett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy District John McClow*, Frank Kugel*, Greg Peterson,
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..... Lanny Sloan, Steve Glammeyer*, Glen Black*, Barry
Bullard, Jim Brown, Wilma Ervin
Delta County Emergency Management.....Rob Fiedler

Mesa County Emergency Management.....
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, Luke Reschke, Jason Ullmann
Colorado Division of Wildlife...John Alves, Dan Brauch, Sherman Hebein, Dan Kowalski*, David Graf, Ryan Swygman, Jay Skinner, Pat Martinez, Rick Anderson, Mark Uppendahl
Colorado Water Conservation Board...Ray Alvarado, Michelle Garrison*, Rick Brown, Steve Miller
Congressman Scott Tipton
Senator Mark Udall
Senator Michael Bennet Trudy Kareus
Army Corps of Engineers.....
Bureau of Land Management Roy Smith, Rooster Barnhart*, Karen Tucker, Edd Franz*, Forest Zerbe, Jesse Kirthorp, Peter Dennett, Julie Stotler, Ryan Mathis, Michelle Bailey, Patrick Pratchett
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, Dan Gude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Clayton Frazier, Norm Henderson
National Weather Service..... Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak, Jim Pringle, Bryon Lawrence, Bill Reed, Aldis Strautius*
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration..... Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann, Brad Udall, Kevin Werner*, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox*
NRCS..... Paul Van Ryzin, Tom Pagano, Mike Gillespie, John Scott
U.S. Geological Survey..... David Brown, 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, Bill Wilson*, Clayton Palmer, Carma Edgell, Jeff Ackerman*, Kathy Crane, Ken Green, Annette Falvo, Ken Otto, Gary Burton; Margaret Matte, Dave Shelton, Jennifer Henn*, Chris Brown, Shane Messawo, Rachelle Fellin, Laurie Moore, Sam Lofton*
Bureau of Reclamation... Ed Warner*, Steve McCall*, Joe Austin, Grant Watson, Ted Dunn*, Dan Crabtree*, Terry Stroh, Carol DeAngelis*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock*, Erik Knight*, Nancy Coulam, Laurie Jones, Josh Dunham*, Heather Patno, Dennis Kubly, Dave Harpman, Dawn Munger, Tom Ryan*, and Keith Twehous
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
Painted Sky RCD..... Cary Denison*, Mike Drake
National Drought Mitigation Center.....Donna Woudenberg
CSAS-CODOS.....Chris Landry*
Delta Montrose Electric Association..... Jim Heneghan*