

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
April 21, 2011

Participation: This meeting was held at Reclamation's Grand Junction office. 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 2011 operations; projected inflows to the reservoirs for 2011; and proposed 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 continue to be used 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.

December 2010-April 2011 Operations:

December precipitation throughout most of the upper Colorado River Basin was over 150 percent and in January dropped to around 50 percent. Gunnison Basin precipitation in January was 50-70 percent and near average in February and March. The northern portion of the Gunnison Basin has had higher precipitation compared to the southern portion. Blue Mesa was

lowered to its icing target (7490 feet) in December and reached elevation 7486.8 by December 31. Currently Blue Mesa is 58 percent full with 478,000 acre-feet. Flows through the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge remained around 500 – 800 cfs during the winter and increased to around 1,100 cfs in late February.

Snow conditions in the Colorado River Basin are typical of LaNina conditions, with wetter conditions in the north as compared to the south. Northern areas are in the 120-150 percent range; Gunnison Basin above Blue Mesa at 116 percent; and southern and San Juan areas at 80-85 percent.

2011 Operations:

As of April 15, the April-July inflow to Blue Mesa is forecast at 800,000 af (111% of 30-years average) and 985,000 at Crystal. 800,000 is considered an average wet category year and would be expected to be exceeded in 35% of years. The Gunnison at Grand Junction forecast is 108% of average. The North Fork at Somerset is 125% of average.

As presently proposed average monthly releases from Crystal will be around 3900 cfs in May and 2100 cfs during the summer. Summer flows in the Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge should be in the 1100-1200 cfs range following the spring peak.

Based on the present forecast, the Black Canyon water right 1-day peak target is 6370 cfs. Final determination will be based on May 1 forecast. Several scenarios for peak flow operations were presented. Much depends on the timing of the North Fork peak. Ramping up to the peak will be at 25% of the previous day's flow or 500 cfs (whichever is greater) and daily changes will be made in 2-3 steps during the day. Ramping up and down should take around 12 days. Efforts will be made to peak in May but runoff and weather patterns may require adjustments of this goal.

Special flow requests: NPS would like to see flows of 600 cfs for Saturday and Sunday July 30 and 31 for vegetation surveys. Vegetation plots established in the early 1990's will be monitored. NPS will also conduct geomorphologic surveys in September but can work with the predicted flows of around 1000 cfs.

CDOW is collecting eggs above the Gunnison Diversion Dam and would like to be informed of significant changes in releases. Date for fall fishery survey will be provided later.

Timing of the spring peak in May was requested if possible due to high recreation use in June during the salmon fly hatch.

Dust on Snow: Chris Landry reported on the dust on snow monitoring. Red Mountain Pass is key monitoring site but also look at other sites in Gunnison Basin. This year there have been 3 minor dust events; last year there was much more activity. Dust events can affect runoff timing and research may lead to better runoff prediction tools in the future. 2009 and 2010 winters are significantly different, not sure why this is yet.

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 to cooperating agencies for a review. Comments received in April are being reviewed by Reclamation and Interior. Cooperators are working to resolve language related to the Black Canyon water right. Reclamation hopes to complete final EIS and Record of Decision by April 2012. The preferred alternative has not changed in the final EIS.

Power Office: The exciter tests at Crystal were completed successfully. No significant effect on river flows. Preparing for spill at Crystal. Blue Mesa units should be all operating next week.

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

Colorado Division of Wildlife: 3.1 million kokanee released from Roaring Judy Hatchery last week into the East River-Gunnison River-Blue Mesa. In addition, 300,000 were trucked to the reservoir. The fall of 2010 egg collection was better than expected with 5.3 million eggs collected. Continuing to remove lake trout from Blue Mesa to protect the kokanee fishery.

Fish and Wildlife Service: Supports proposed operations.

Colorado Water Conservation Board: Next Board Meeting May 17-18 in Durango. John McClow is now the vice chair of the CWCB board.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: Tunnel now diverting 800 cfs.

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. Good water conditions to the north and coordination of moving lots of power has been a challenge. Concerning spring peak, would like to see coordination with Cimarron flows to reduce powerplant bypasses. Problem in maintaining regulation and capacity reserves when passing lots of water and with ongoing maintenance.

Bureau of Land Management: Will help with public information concerning spring peak. Uncompahgre field office working on revising RMP and wild and scenic river study. See www.blm.gov.ufo.planning.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: Gunnison River festival at the river park during 3rd week of June. Has awarded \$80,000 in grants.

Colorado River Water Conservation District: Would like to see coordination with Cimarron flows and Silver Jack operations (if possible) in designing spring peak. Has awarded \$250,000 in grants this year including grant to Hartland Diversion work (construction planned for this September).

Will be announcements next week concerning settlement on upper Colorado River issues with Denver Water Board. State of River meetings: May 19th on Colorado River and June 6 on

Gunnison River. On May 26 there will be a 4-basin Round Table Meeting (Ute Water, 10 am-3pm). See www.crwcd.org.

Delta County: Concerned with high water conditions. Will keep in touch with Reclamation.

Trout Unlimited: Appreciates planned ramping rates. Working on Hartland fish passage.

Tri-County: Ridgway lower than usual but should fill. Public scoping meeting April 26 on Lease of Power Privilege at Ridgway Dam. Releases now at 300 cfs.

National Park Service: Will continue quagga mussel work.

USGS: New Cimarron gage is operating. Gage height available on web. Once calibrated, flow will also be available.

CREDA: Appreciates coordination in operation planning.

Western Resources Advocates: Appreciates information supplied; peak plans look good.

NWS: Some flooding potential this year.

Recovery Program: Aspinall study plan is now in place to evaluate new Aspinall operations. Will start monitoring endangered fish populations this summer in the Gunnison. Muscle plugs for selenium analysis were collected last year and more will be collected this year.

State Engineer: Good water supply; no problems at this time.

High Country Citizens: Working on watershed plans—Coal Creek and Upper Slate.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for August 18, 2011 at 1 pm at the Blue Mesa Visitor Center at Elk Creek.

April 21, 2011 Aspinall Operation Meeting

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

Daily Sentinel..... Gary Harmon, Dave Buchanan
Delta County IndependentBob 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 20Reeves Brown
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
Gunnison Basin POWERRalph (Butch) Clark, Ramon Reed
Gunnison River ExpeditionsHank 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*, Cary Denison*, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternel, John Trammell,
Marshall Pendergrass, Matt Mayer, Mac Cunningham
Western Colorado CongressFred Wetlauffer
Argonne National Laboratory John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
University of Montana Jack Stanford
Ridgway Guide Service.....Tim Paterson, Matt McCannel
Black Canyon Anglers.....Richard Dudginski
SelfCurt Treichel, Lynn Johnson, George Sheldon, Bo Gates, Jim
Cochran, Joe Waggoner, Ralph Files, Bill Dvorak*
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James*, Kent Holsinger
Colorado River Water Conservancy DistrictDave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt*, Eric
Kuhn, David Halford, Ray Tenney
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Tri County WaterMike Berry*, Ion Spor, Kathleen Margetts*,
Project 7Richard Margetts*
Redlands Water and Power Company..... Charles Mitisek, Mike Gross
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association..... Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher*, Steve Shea
Upper Colorado River CommissionEverett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy DistrictJohn McClow*, Frank Kugel, Greg Peterson,
Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, 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, 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, Jeremy Matlock*
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, Kathy Griravesock*, Chrystal Dean*, Jennifer Hann*,
Stacy Russ*
Bureau of Reclamation... Denny Johnson*, Phil Martin*, Ed Warner*, Steve McCall*, 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
Recovery ProgramTom Pitts*, Tom Chart*, Tom Czapla*