

Aspinall Unit Operation Coordination Meeting
August 9, 2012

Participation: This meeting was held at the Elk Creek Visitors Center on Blue Mesa Reservoir. 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 2012 operations; inflows to the reservoirs for 2012; and proposed operation plans for the remainder of 2012 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 and Record of Decision have been completed. Therefore operations for the endangered fish have begun. In addition, the water right for the Black Canyon National Park has been quantified and adjudicated. These operation meetings are used 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.

Gunnison Basin Reservoirs

Paonia and Silver Jack Reservoirs both filled this year. Ridgway reached 76,000 af which is 92 percent of full capacity. Taylor Park reached 80,900 af which is 76 percent of full capacity, and Crawford reached 11,000 af which is 78% of full capacity.

January 2012-April 2012 Operations:

The fall of 2011 began with good precipitation in the Gunnison Basin; however, November through January period was much drier than normal and this trend continued into June when precipitation in the basin was only 14 percent of average. July precipitation picked up and was over 125 percent of average.

The actual April through July inflow to Blue Mesa reservoir was only 206,000 af, the third lowest level since 1937. The years of 1977 and 2002 were lower. The 206,000 af represents a dry year and would be expected to be exceeded in 95 percent of years based on 1937-2011 history. Inflow was predicted at 315,000 acre feet (af) based on April 15 data; in January the prediction was 450,000 af. In contrast, 2011 inflow was 893,000 af, representing a moderately wet year.

Actual April-July runoff at other sites included:

Gunnison River near Grand Junction (Whitewater)	18 percent of average
Ridgway Reservoir	45 percent of average
Taylor Park Reservoir	40 percent of average
Tomichi Creek	12 percent of average
North Fork near Somerset	28 percent of average
Lake Fork	50 percent of average

Blue Mesa Reservoir content peaked in April at around 543,000 af and is now at 420,000 af. Drawdown is now over 50 feet and may reach 70 feet (around 300,000 af) by October. It will take an above average snowpack in 2012-2013 to fill the reservoir next year.

Based on the May 1 2012 forecast, the Black Canyon National Park water right was 814 cfs. This was met by a 24-hour 845 cfs peak at the end of June. Flow Recommendations for endangered fish in this dry year only called for a 900 cfs peak at Whitewater which was met. Endangered fish base flow targets at the Whitewater Gage were based on drought rules for the Gunnison Basin Programmatic Biological Opinion and were 900 cfs through July and 890 cfs beginning in August; base flows were met most of the time. It was noted that meeting base flows in a drought year is difficult because of the distance between Crystal Dam and the Whitewater gage and all the variable tributary flows between the two sites. Winter flows downstream from the Gunnison Tunnel should be in the 400-500 cfs range although this may be affected by status of Redlands Diversion needs.

Special flow requests: The National Park Service will survey vegetation between August 16 and 24. Projected flows will be good for this survey and they would like to be alerted to any significant changes. Colorado Parks and Wildlife is scheduling trout monitoring in Gunnison Gorge for October 1-4 and flows of 600-900 cfs are ideal for this work. They have some flexibility in the timing. BLM mentioned that September flows are important for rafters. Construction on the Relief Ditch replacement is scheduled to begin this fall. Will keep Reclamation updated.

Power Office: Normal maintenance work on dams and powerplants this fall. There will be some investigation drilling on Blue Mesa Dam between September 12 and October 2. No projects planned that will affect river flows/reservoir operations.

Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife: Recent rains have helped small streams. Tomichi Creek has been particularly low and a voluntary fishing moratorium was in effect.

Colorado Water Conservation Board: Appreciates Upper Gunnison's assistance in holding the board meeting in Gunnison this July.

Fish and Wildlife Service: Appreciates Reclamation efforts to meet base flows in a difficult year. Have had 9,000 fish use the Redland fish ladder this year; 8,000 were native fish including 10 pikeminnow.

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users: South Canal hydropower work underway. Irrigation supplies reduced to 70 percent to conserve water. Using Ridgway water to conserve Taylor Park water.

Western Area Power: Was described that Montrose office coordinates power from Montana to the CRSP Units. There have been transmission problems this year due to fires and adjusting to new reliability standards. During September-October there will be low steady flows at Glen Canyon. Overall projecting need to purchase \$35 million in power this fall. Power purchases will be much less expensive than they were in the prior dry year of 2002 because of low natural gas prices and weakened economy.

Bureau of Land Management: Low flows in May made for difficult rafting in the Gunnison Gorge and difficult conditions for the jet boat permittee. June and July conditions were better although lower flows make rafting more technical. Described Outdoor Class Room held each year for local 6th grade students along the Gunnison River and thanked Trout Unlimited for their assistance.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservation District: Had 50th anniversary celebration of Blue Mesa construction with Gunnison Basin Round Table. Have been lots of water shortages. Working on Lake San Cristobol outlet; will improve water management. There is 7,000 af in second fill at Taylor Park.

Colorado River Water Conservation District: Hartland Diversion improvement work complete; boat passage opened in early February. Has also provided funds for replacement of Relief Ditch Diversion. CWCB provided significant funding for both. Working on selenium management program. Trend analysis shows decrease in selenium concentrations in the Gunnison River. There is a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) open until November 16 for salinity projects. The CRWCD annual seminar is September 13. Anne Castle will speak on the Colorado River Basin Study. Concerning the drought, CRWCD is investigating options for this winter, in particular addressing the Redlands water right.

Tri-County: Expect large draw on Ridgway with use of irrigation and exchange pool. Will likely result in lower flows this winter. Hydropower project is progressing and hope to start work late this fall. Now working on 404 discharge permit for the cofferdam, on power purchase agreement, and design review with Reclamation.

National Park Service: Vegetation surveys planned for August 16-24. Working on EIS for long-term management of Glen Canyon operations.

State Engineer: Water commissioners have been very busy. Some reservoirs now low; for example Paonia and Overland storage has been depleted.

Trout Unlimited: Appreciates coordination and communication this year.

High Country Citizens: Working with Western State on water issues. Working on non-consumptive water needs with the Gunnison Basin RoundTable.

Gunnison Basin Power: Several proposals in the basin being considered that could affect water supplies and quality. A copper/Molybdenum mine being considered in Tomichi headwaters; rare earth mineral development in basin south of Blue Mesa, and natural gas proposals in Delta County.

Colorado River Energy Distributors (CREDA): Department of Energy considering initiatives some of which could result in significant costs. Comments due this month...see Western Area Power Administration website under “defining the future”.

Next Meeting: The next operation meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2013 at 1 pm in the Holiday Inn Express in Montrose.

April 26, 2012 Aspinall Operation Meeting

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

Argonne National LaboratoryTom Veselka*,John Hayse, Kirk Lagory
Black Canyon Anglers.....Richard Dudginski
Bureau of Land Management Roy Smith,
Rooster Barnhart, Karen Tucker, Edd Franz*, Shawn Folkerts*. Ty Skoe*,
Bureau of Reclamation... Denny Johnson, Ed Warner*, Steve McCall*, Ted Dunn*, Dan Crabtree*,
Terry Stroh*, Jenny Hamilton*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock, Erik Knight*, Nancy Coulam,
Laurie Jones, Phil Martin, Grant Watson, Rick Clayton*, Vern Harrell
CSAS-CODOS.....Chris Landry
City of Grand Junction..... Terry Franklin, Rick Bukus, Greg Trainor
Club 20Reeves Brown
Colorado Department of Agriculture..... Jim Miller
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James*, Kent Holsinger
Colorado River Water Conservation DistrictDave Kanzer*, Don Meyer, Jim Pokrandt, Eric Kuhn,
David Halford, Ray Tenney
Colorado State University Brett Johnson
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*, Dan Kowalski, David Graf,
Ryan Swygman, Jay Skinner, Rick Anderson, Mark Uppendahl
Colorado U/CADSWES.....Edie Zagona, Satish Regonda
Colorado Water Conservation Board...Ray Alvarado, Michelle Garrison*, Rick Brown, Steve Miller
Congressman Scott Tipton.....
Daily Sentinel..... Gary Harmon, Dave Buchanan
Delta County IndependentBob Borchardt
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
Delta Montrose Electric Association..... Jim Heneghan
Department of Justice.....Dave Gehlert
Fish and Wildlife Service..... Jana Mohrman, Patty Gelatt*
Gunnison Country Times Michelle Burkhart, Will Shoemaker, Alan Wartes, Pat Daniel
Gunnison Basin POWER Ralph (Butch) Clark*, Ramon Reed
Gunnison County Commissioners Hap Channell, Paula Swenson, Jim Starr

Gunnison River Expeditions Hank Hotze, Al DeGrange
Helton & Williamsen, P.C. Duane Helton
High Country Citizens Alliance/Sierra Club Steve Glazer*, Jennifer Boch*, Wendy McDermott,
Interior Solicitors Office..... John Bezdek, Peter Fahmy
Mesa County Emergency Management.....
Montrose Daily Press James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer
National Drought Mitigation Center.....Donna Woudenberg
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration..... Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Weickmann,
Brad Udall, Kevin Werner, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox, Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak
National Park Service Connie Rudd, Ken Stahlnecker, Matt Malick, Mark Wondzell,
Melissa Trammell, Michael Dale*, Bill Johnson, Dan Gude Bockus, Bill Hansen, Clayton Frazier
National Weather Service..... Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak, Jim Pringle, Bill Reed,
Aldis Strautius*
NRCS..... Paul Van Ryzin, Tom Pagano, Mike Gillespie, John Scott
North Fork Water Conservancy District Tom Alvey
Painted Sky RCD..... Mike Drake
Project 7 Adam Turner*
Recovery Program Tom Pitts, Tom Chart
Redlands Water and Power Company Kevin Jones*
Ridgway Guide Service..... Tim Paterson, Matt McCannel
Self Ralph Files, Dick Margetts
Senator Mark Udall
Senator Michael Bennet Trudy Kareus
Tri County Water Mike Berry*, Ion Spor, Kathleen Margetts,
Norm Brooks
Trout Unlimited.... Pat Oglesby*, Cary Denison, Melinda Kassen, Drew Peternel, John Trammell,
Marshall Pendergrass*
Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher*, Steve Shea, Aaron English,
Dennis Veo
Upper Colorado River Commission Everett Sunderland
Upper Gunnison R. Water Conservancy District..... John McClow, Frank Kugel*, Greg Peterson,
Mark Schumacher, Tyler Martineau, Jim Slattery, Ken Spann, Steve Glazer*
U.S. Geological Survey..... David Brown, Bob Jenkins, Gordon Mueller, Gerhard Kuhn, Bob Boulgarz,
Steve Anders, Trisha Solberg
Western Area Power Administration..... Clayton Palmer*, Jeff Ackerman*,
Crystal Deean*, Jerry Wilhite*, Nancy Scheid, Tim Vigil, Tanya Newman
University of Colorado..... Christina Alford
Western Colorado Congress Fred Wetlaufer
Western Resource Advocates..... Bart Miller*
Xcel Energy..... Fred Eggleston, Tom Minerick