

Aspinall Unit Operations Coordination Meeting
September 5, 2013

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 which are usually held in January, April, and August is to gather input for determining upcoming operations of the Aspinall Unit (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 includes plans for Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, and Navajo Units, as well as the Aspinall Unit. Operation of the Aspinall Unit considers forecasted inflows to the reservoirs, hydropower and flood control needs, existing water rights, minimum instream flows, target elevations for reservoirs; flow needs and flow recommendations 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.

The presentation included data on 2012-2013 operations; inflows to the reservoirs to date; and projected most probable, minimum, and maximum inflow forecasts for the remainder 2013; and potential operations for 2014.

The Fish and Wildlife Service flow recommendations for endangered fish were completed in 2003 and a final Aspinall Operations EIS and Record of Decision have been completed. Therefore operations to meet the flow recommendations have begun. In addition, the water right for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison 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.

Forecast Center and National Weather Service

A presentation was made by Aldis Strautins with the National Weather Service.

Aldis provided information regarding long-range weather forecasts for Colorado and the Gunnison Basin. In the fall of 2012 the beginning of El Nino conditions was seen but this shifted toward neutral conditions during the winter and remained. It appears that a neutral ENSO will be continuing through early 2014 although it may transition toward a weak El Nino as we have never gone into a La Nina after a Neutral year. El Nino's generally cause wetter weather in the southern portion of the U.S. while La Nina's cause wetter weather in the north. Colorado is in the middle and the Gunnison Basin is even more middle thus making things fairly unpredictable. Neutral years can be wetter or

dryer. Both short term (6-10 days) and long term (1-4 month) forecasts predict higher probability of above average temperatures and above average precipitation.

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 af; inactive capacity is 81,100 af; and dead storage is 111,200. Live capacity is the active plus inactive, which totals 829, 500af. Discussions during operation meetings use live capacity.

Gunnison Basin Reservoirs: In 2012, Paonia and Silver Jack were the only Reclamation reservoirs to fill because of the limited runoff. In 2013 Paonia, Ridgway, Fruitgrowers, and Silver Jack filled. Presently Blue Mesa is 42% full, Taylor Park is 68% full; Ridgway 86%; Paonia 5%; and Silver Jack 49%.

2013 Operations: 2012 conditions resulted in widespread poor water conditions leading into 2013. The May 1, 2013 April-July inflow forecast for Blue Mesa was 335,000 af. The actual 2013 April-July inflow to Blue Mesa Reservoir was 346,000 af, the fifth lowest since 1937 and categorized as a “Dry Year” exceeded 93% of the time. The April-July runoff at the Whitewater gage near Grand Junction was only 22 percent of average.

The maximum 2013 end-of-month content of Blue Mesa occurred at the end of June and was 440,000 af corresponding to an elevation of 7470.58 ft. This is about 49 feet short of full.

Based on the May 1, 2013 inflow forecast to Blue Mesa, the Black Canyon National Park water right equation computed a 1-day drought adjusted peak of 685 cfs. Releases from Crystal dam fulfilled the terms of the Record of Decision for the Aspinall Operations EIS and other authorized and decreed purposes which resulted in a maximum flow in the Black Canyon National Park of 703 cfs. Under this year’s hydrologic conditions, the Record of Decision computes a requirement for a 900 cfs peak and 900 cfs baseflow at the USGS gage at Whitewater which were met.

Precipitation in the Gunnison Basin in June, 2013 was well below 50% of average, very similar to 2012; monsoonal flow developed in July and precipitation was over 130% of average. August precipitation was below average in the northwest portion of the basin and above average in the south.

Black Canyon flows January to late June were around 300 cfs and increased to 700 cfs for two weeks before decreasing to the 600 cfs range in mid-July in response to increased precipitation in the lower basin.

Special Flow Requests: No special flow requests were indicated.

Reports:

State Engineer: 2013 turned out to be much different than anticipated in April. Snow and cool spring delayed runoff. Southern areas received more rain which helped water administration and growers but doesn't help ground water recharge much. Uncompahgre Valley Water Users will probably rollover most of first fill. As the rain has stopped baseflows have subsided.

CRWCD: Still troubled with dry trend. Dodged a serious bullet this year. Annual Water Seminar will be held Friday September 13th at the Two Rivers Convention Center in Grand Junction. There will be talks on drought, and Colorado River Operations. There will be a Budget Workshop on Thursday the 12th and Uncompahgre Tour.

National Park Service: Numbers indicate visitation at Blue Mesa was down slightly this summer, but more people were on trails. Trail numbers are not recorded or added to the Blue Mesa total. Fishing and boat tours have been good. Crystal and Black Canyon visitation has been up. Can hear the river at 300 cfs.

Trout Unlimited: Marshall Pendergrass presented photos of side inflow flooding to the Black Canyon. The course and depth of the Gunnison River has been changed in several locations due to thunderstorms, flash flooding and sediment deposition which took place in July. The Relief Ditch Diversion restoration work is complete but needs a little tweaking this fall.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife: There has been an oxygen sag with higher temperatures. Some stressed fish and kokanee mortality. Low storage level results in less than desirable conditions. Rainbows are fairing well; switched to catchable size from Hotchkiss Fish Hatchery. Expect kokanee to spawn in October.

Power Office: Curecanti will begin their annual maintenance process this month. No special projects upcoming.

UVWUA: Wrapping up the year. Currently about 850 cfs in the Gunnison Tunnel. Reducing diversions next week. There was a little more demand this fall with growers adjusting to dry summer conditions and then planting fall crops. Both hydroplants are up and running.

Western: Drought continues to impact WAPA. Generation limited throughout the system due to low flows. 7.48 MAF release from Glen Canyon is official.

Tri-County: Survived another year. Hydropower project is under construction. Current storage is about 4300 af above average. Rain has helped. Anticipate general testing of hydroplant in February (small unit) and May (large Unit). Penstocks are complete. Plan to remove coffer dam September 20th.

BLM: Low water season. Outfitters bummed in early June, prefer flows 500 – 550 cfs for rafting.

USGS: No major issues.

Gunnison Power: Rocky Mountain Research Station has published some books describing threats to ecosystems. They are downloadable. Cover page copies will be included with this meeting summary.

CWCB: Board meeting will be held September 24 and 25 in Telluride. Agenda will be posted soon. Continue to work on plans for future dryness.

Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District: With Lake City and Hinsdale County, completed improvements of Lake San Cristobal which filled this year. Releases made from Long Lake to comply with CWCB instream flow right on the Slate River. Steve Glazer said hi, disappointed the phone wasn't working. Also, NRCS has made notification that manual snow course readings will be discontinued. Funding is going away but NRCS is willing to reconsider and is looking for input.

Next Meeting: January 23rd at Holiday Inn Express, Montrose Colorado

September 5, 2013 Aspinall Operation Meeting Attendance

*indicates person attended meeting in person or by phone

Argonne National LaboratoryJohn Hayse, Kirk Lagory
Black Canyon Anglers.....Richard Dudgeonski
Bureau of Land Management.....Rooster Barnhart, Edd Franz, Ryan Mathis*
Bureau of Reclamation....Ed Warner*, Dan Crabtree*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock, Erik Knight*, Grant Watson*, Rick Clayton*
CSAS-CODOS.....Chris Landry
City of Grand Junction.....Terry Franklin, Greg Trainor
Citizens.....Curt Treichel*
Colorado Department of Agriculture.....Jim Miller
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James
Colorado River Water Conservation District...Dave Kanzer*, Jim Pokrandt, Eric Kuhn
Colorado State University.....Brett Johnson
Colorado Division of Water Resources...Pat McDermott, Bob Hurford, Scott King, Richard Rozman, Luke Reschke, Jason Ullmann*
Colorado Parks and Wildlife....Jay Skinner, John Alves, Dan Brauch*, Dan Kowalski, David Graf, Eric Gardinio
Colorado Water Conservation Board...Michelle Garrison*, Ray Alvarado, Steve Miller, Ted Kowalski
Daily Sentinel.....Dave Buchanan*
Delta County Independent.....Bob Borchardt

Delta County Commissioners.....
Delta County.....
City of Delta.....Steve Glaminage, Glen Black
Delta County Emergency Management.....Rob Fiedler
Fish and Wildlife Service.....Patty Gelatt, Jana Mohrman,
Dale Ryden
Gunnison Country Times.....Michelle Burkhart
Gunnison Basin POWER..... Butch Clark*, Ramon Reed
Gunnison County Commissioners.....
Gunnison River Expeditions.....Al DeGrange
High Country Citizens Alliance.....Steve Glazer, Jennifer Boch, Wendy McDermott
Interior Solicitor.....John Bezdek
Montrose Daily Press.....James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer
National Drought Mitigation Center.....Donna Woudenberg
NOAA.....Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Wieckmann, Brad Udall,
Kevin Werner, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox, Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak
National Park Service....Michael Dale*, Connie Rudd*, Ken Stahlnecker, Mark
Wondzell, Melissa Trammell, Allison Robb
National Weather Service.....Greg Smith, Brenda Alcorn, Aldis Strautius*
NRCS.....
North Fork Water Conservancy.....Tom Alvey
Project 7.....Adam Turner*
Recovery Program.....Tom Pitts, Tom Chart
Redland Water and Power.....
Ridgway Guide Service.....Tim Paterson, Matt McCannel
Tri-County Water.....Mike Berry, Ion Spor*, Kathleen Margetts, Norm Brooks
Trout Unlimited.....Pat Oglesby*, Marshall Pendergrass*, Cary Denison*,
Drew Peternel, John Trammell, Mac Cunningham, Jesse Kruthaupt*
UVWUA...Ed Suppes*, Steve Fletcher*, Steve Shea, Aaron English, Dennis Veo,
Michelle Decker
Upper Gunnison River Water.....John McClow*, Frank Kugel*, Greg Peterson
USGS.....David Brown*, Bob Jenkins, Steve Anders, Trisha Solberg
Water Center, CMU.....Hanna Holm
Western Area Power....Clayton Palmer, Jeff Ackerman, Jerry Wilhite*, Nancy Scheid,
Tim Vigil, Tanya Newman, Chrystal Dean*
Western Colorado Congress.....Fred Wetlaufer
Western Resource Advocates.....Bart Miller
Xcel Energy.....Fred Eggleston