

**Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting**  
**April 24, 2014, 1:00 PM**

**Background:** A Record of Decision for the Aspinall Unit Operations Environmental Impact Statement was signed on May 3, 2012. The EIS modifies the operations of the Aspinall Unit to provide sufficient releases of water at times, quantities, and durations necessary to avoid jeopardy to endangered fish species and adverse modification of their designated critical habitat while maintaining and continuing to meet authorized purposes of the Aspinall Unit. Meetings regarding the operations of the Aspinall Unit are open to stakeholders, and take place tri-annually, with meetings occurring in January, April, and August of each year.

**Runoff Forecast Discussion – Greg Smith (CBRFC)**

The initial soil moisture conditions entering the winter season were pretty favorable, with 70% of normal baseflow water and 130-150% of normal tension water. Snowpack is above average, much of which can be attributed to a huge jump in snowpack in February. We are currently in the active runoff period.

**2014 Aspinall Unit Operations – Erik Knight (USBR)**

Current Conditions: Currently, the Gunnison River Basin has 92% of normal snow water conditions. The Gunnison Basin experienced a seasonal peak of 117% of normal, while the North Fork Basin and the Uncompahgre Basin experienced peaks of 98% and 104% respectively.

Reservoir Status: The Gunnison Tunnel began their diversions at the end of March. Blue Mesa Reservoir had 460,000 AF content as of April 23, 2014. The reservoir is 55% full. Taylor Park Reservoir is 65% full. Ridgway Reservoir is 85% full. Silverjack Reservoir is 78% full. Paonia is 4% full. Paonia is being kept at a low level to help sediment pass through the reservoir. There will be plenty of runoff to fill Paonia Reservoir.

Runoff Forecast: Forecasted unregulated inflow to Blue Mesa Reservoir is 126% of average, putting 2014 in the top 30% of years. The April – July unregulated inflow forecast is 850,000 AF, which is just above the boundary between the average wet and moderately wet categories.

Projected Operations: Assuming the forecast doesn't change, the peak flow target for the Black Canyon water right is 6,427 cfs. This will probably require a 7,400 – 7,600 cfs release. Releases of this magnitude will require a spill at Crystal. For the first time since the finalization of the ROD, Reclamation will have to meet Peak Flow and Duration Day Targets. A bankfull flow of 14,350 cfs will need to be maintained for 10 days. A half-bankfull flow of 8,070 will need to be maintained for 40 days. It is likely that releases from Aspinall to meet the ROD targets will be greater than what would be required for the Black Canyon water right alone.

To help determine what actions Reclamation will have to take to reach and maintain these peak flows, tributaries to the Gunnison River need to be examined. As flows from the Cimmaron River go up, releases from Morrow Point will need to be adjusted. Up to 1,000 cfs can enter Crystal Reservoir from the Cimmaron River. The timing of Silverjack Reservoir filling and

spilling will also be important. Silverjack has more storage than usual for this time of year, and it could fill by the 2nd week of May. The North Fork of the Gunnison River at Somerset has a forecasted peak of 3,200 cfs, with a runoff volume forecast of 300,000 AF. All these tributaries will contribute water to meeting the peak flow, however flows don't typically stay high for 40 days.

A comment was brought up that the peak flows and duration day targets are based on Blue Mesa inflow, and they do not take into account the rest of the Basin. While Blue Mesa is in a moderately wet year, the rest of the Gunnison Basin is not. Having to use spillways to make up for the lack of water in the rest of the basin concerns some people.

There is the potential to adjust the peak flows and durations based on the May 15 forecast.

**2014 Weather Outlook – Aldis Strautins (NWS)**

ENSO Models show us going to an El Nino pattern. We've actually tipped into the lower end of neutral. Historically, neutral years typically go to another neutral year or into El Nino. The following is forecasted:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Temperature</b>	<b>Precipitation</b>
May	Above average	Equal chances above/below average
May/June/July	Above average	Above average
June/July/August	Above average	Above average

Drought Monitor: Texas and California have areas in the highest drought category. The drought in Colorado is getting better in the west and north areas of the state, but is creeping into the South.

**Extended Operations for CRSP Reservoirs – John McClow (UCRC) & Eric Kuhn (CRWCD)**

2012 and 2013 were the worst 2 consecutive years on record for moisture in the Colorado River Basin. What would have happened if there were 2 additional similar years?

Lake Powell would drop below the minimum power pool in 2015. This would impact hydropower, which pays for CERFP and CRSP projects. It also wouldn't be able to release the fully capacity of the bypass, so we wouldn't be able to meet the Colorado River Compact.

There has been some contingency planning, and Aspinall is part of the plan. With no action, Lake Powell would be below the minimum power level 1/5 of the time. With basin demand management and re-operation plans, Lake Power would be below the minimum power level only ~3% of the time. It is expected MOAs will be established for basin demand management and re-operation plans.

**Reports of Agencies**

Reclamation: Sonar mapping of Crystal's spilling basin took place on March 17th. The river was down to 300 cfs. This was coordinated with CPW, which was pit tagging fish to monitor the effectiveness of the electric barrier at the Gunnison Tunnel. The aerators at the powerplant were off for 4 hours on Monday. Pit tagging was done on Tuesday, with nothing unusual to report. On Friday, Gas Bubble Trauma showed up. We have operated at 300 cfs numerous times, however we have not been at that level without the turbines. We don't know what the cause of the GBT was. If we ever get down to that level with similar conditions again, testing can be done to see if the cause of the nitrogen supersaturation can be determined.

Power Office: There are no issues with their equipment or their ability to use water. They will monitor rocks in the Morrow Point spilling basin, but they are good to go to use the spillway.

USGS: They have received a small increase in funding to infrastructure on INSIP program gauges. They expect to perform some maintenance work on some gauges.

BLM: Fishing in the Gunnison Gorge is a million dollar industry, with most fishing occurring in June. Looking at the proposed operation of the Aspinall Unit, they believe they will be refunding trips and fishermen will not be happy.

FWS: If projected operations at bankfull and half bankfull stage come to fruition, the FWS wants to go out in the field with hydrophones to test when the sediment starts to move. This will not be an official publication, they just want to test the method and go back and see if their recommendations for operations hold up.

Western: With the state of Glen Canyon, purchase price is going up. Aspinall Operations this spring could also drive up winter prices. They've already had to spend \$46 million purchasing power only 6 months into the year. Also, bypassing the Morrow Point powerplant will impact the spillway, which Western is responsible for maintaining and repairing. Morrow Point power won't be able to peak while there is spilling occurring at Crystal.

River District: Reminder about water planning at the state level, and there are monthly meeting with the Round Table.

UVWUA: The tunnel is running ~600 cfs. They will maintain this level for a bit and get some water out of Ridgway.

Tri-County: The powerplant is online. The reservoir is a little high for the amount of snowpack still above the basin. They will probably bump up releases, coordinating with UVWUA. They will use the water to exercise the plant. If issues arise, they can replace/repair it under warranty. They expect the Uncompahgre to have higher than normal flows for this year.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 4, 2014 at the Elk Creek Visitors Center at Blue Mesa Reservoir**

**April 24, 2014 Aspinall Operation Meeting Attendance**

**\*indicates person attended meeting in person or by phone**

**Argonne National Laboratory**.....John Hayse, Kirk Lagory  
**Black Canyon Anglers**.....Derek Kehmeier, Richard Dudgeonski  
**Bureau of Land Management**.....Rooster Barnhart\*, Edd Franz\*, Karen Tucker  
**Bureau of Reclamation**.....Ed Warner\*, Ted Dunn, Ryan Christianson\*, Jenny Hamilton\*,  
Sandra Caskey, Terry Stroh\*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson\*, Justyn Hock\*, Erik Knight\*, Grant  
Watson, Larry Lingerfelt  
**CSAS-CODOS**.....Chris Landry  
**City of Grand Junction**.....Terry Franklin, Greg Trainor  
**Club 20**.....Reeves Brown  
**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  
**Daily Sentinel**.....Dave Buchanan\*  
**Delta County Independent**.....Bob Borchardt  
**Delta County Commissioners**.....  
**Delta County**.....  
**City of Delta**.....Steve Glammeyer, Glen Black  
**Delta County Emergency Management**.....Rob Fiedler  
**Fish and Wildlife Service**.....Patty Gelatt, Jana Mohrman\*  
**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, Peter Fahmy  
**Montrose Daily Press**.....James Shea, Jason Monroe, Caitlin Switzer  
**National Drought Mitigation Center**.....Donna Woudeberg  
**NOAA**.....Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Wieckmann, Brad Udall,  
Kevin Werner, Chad McNutt, Tracy Cox, Brenda Alcorn, John Lhotak, Greg Smith\*  
**National Park Service**....Michael Dale\*, Connie Rudd, Ken Stahlnecker, Mark Wondzell,  
Melissa Trammell  
**National Weather Service**..... Aldis Strautins\*  
**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  
**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  
**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