

**Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting
January 22, 2015 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 typically occurring in January, April, and August of each year.

Aspinall Unit Operations – Erik Knight (USBR)

Snow Conditions: October 2014 was very dry, with the monthly precipitation in the majority of the Gunnison Basin between 50 and 69% of average. November and December 2014 had wetter conditions, with the Gunnison Basin experiencing over 100% average monthly precipitation. Conditions dried up a bit in January 2015, and the Gunnison Basin’s snow water equivalent is now at 88% of normal.

Operations Past and Present: Over the September 2014 to mid-January 2015, Blue Mesa content dropped 75,0000 acre-feet, resulting in the reservoir being one foot under the icing target. During this same time period, Gunnison River flows at Whitewater fluctuated between 1,100 and 2,400 cfs. As of January 20, 2015, the conditions of reservoirs in the basin are as follows:

Reservoir	% of Capacity
Paonia	5%
Taylor Park	75%
Crystal	87%
Morrow Point	95%
Blue Mesa	67%
Ridgway	93%
Silver Jack	60%

Forecasts and Future Operations: The January 1st Blue Mesa Forecasted April-July Inflow was 690,000 acre-feet. By mid-January, this forecast dropped to 660,000 acre-feet. This forecast would categorize 2015 as an Average Dry year. If the forecast were to remain unchanged, an Average Dry year would result in a desired Whitewater peak of 8,070 cfs. The duration of half bank flows (also 8,070 cfs) would be 10 days. Assuming the forecast doesn’t change for the May 1st forecast, the Black Canyon Peak Flow would be 5,407 cfs, with May 1st to July 25th shoulder flows of 570 cfs. Baseflow targets at Whitewater would be 1,050 throughout the remainder of the year.

Should these forecasted inflow conditions remain unchanged, a possible spring peak operations scenario would involve ramping up releases around mid-May to reach the Whitewater peak and the 10 day half bankfull duration. Flows would be just over 5,000 cfs in the Black Canyon.

Down ramping would begin at the end of May, with flows returning to just over 1,000 cfs in the Black Canyon in early June.

2015 Weather Outlook – Aldis Strautins (NWS)

The existence of weak El Nino conditions is 55-60% likely for January to March 2015. This prediction just lowered from 60-65%. El Nino conditions generally result in dry and warm conditions north of Colorado and wet and cool conditions south of Colorado, however the current weather patterns haven't been classical El Nino patterns. There is a probability of increased precipitation throughout the spring months.

Forecasts		
Time Period	Temperature	Precipitation
6-10 Day	↑ probability of ↑ temperature	↑ probability of ↓ precipitation
8-14 Day	↑ probability of ↑ temperature	↑ probability of ↓ precipitation
February	↑ probability of ↑ temperature	↑ probability of ↑ precipitation
February/March/April	↓ temperature	↑ probability of ↑ precipitation
March/April/May	↓ temperature	↑ probability of ↑ precipitation

**KEY: ↑ = increased; ↓ = decreased; ↓↑ = equal chances

The drought monitor has essentially remained unchanged since September 2014, however if Colorado does not receive much precipitation in the next couple of weeks, drought conditions may expand northward.

Special Flow Requests and Discussion

Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association needs to do some repair work on their dam at the East Portal this spring. Flows will need to be around 350 cfs and work is expected to take 1 – 2 days.

Reports of Agencies and Organizations

NRCS – As of January 1st, the snowpack was 99% of median. Today it is 86% of median, which reflects decline of 13%. This doesn't necessarily mean we lost snow pack, but we definitely have not added to our snowpack.

BLM – The trout in the Gunnison below Crystal did well in the high flows last year, however use and recreation numbers were down last year due to the high flows.

NPS – Bruce Noble has replaced Connie Rudd as superintendent of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area.

FWS – In 2014, over 13,000 fish went through the fish ladder in the lower Gunnison, and about 30 were endangered fish. These numbers indicate a good year. Because of the Aspinnall ROD, they are able to operate the fish ladder year-round. Things are going well from their perspective.

WAPA – February will be tight, as four units are out at Glen Canyon, however energy prices are great right now for supplementing peak energy demands.

Power Office – There is repair work planned on the Morrow Point Stilling Basin this year.

Water Resources – Doesn't foresee administration issues this year with the exception of possible issues in the Surface Creek and North Fork areas if snow pack doesn't increase.

CWCB – A board meeting is scheduled for January 26th and 27th. Severance tax applications are due at the end of the month. The contingency plan regarding Lake Powell's minimum power pool is still ongoing, and it looks like possible mitigative efforts may include a combination of releases from Flaming Gorge, cloud seeding, and volunteer demand management.

River District – Tom Alvey is the new Vice President from Delta County. There are also two new board members from the Gunnison Basin area. The River District just received an \$8 Million Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant to help implement water efficiency improvements in four areas. Their 2015 Grant Program is closing at the end of the month. There is \$250,000 available.

Tri-County – Ridgway Reservoir is 93% full, and they are taking on storage nearly daily. The warm temperatures have been melting the snow. They're putting about 60 cfs down river and running the small generator at optimum flow. They'll stay at these operations the remainder of winter, and then (if it is an average winter), they will fire up the big generator in March or April. They will save water as long as possible for the water users.

UVWUA – 6 more miles of pipe completed this winter. Hydropower may come online earlier this season.

Upper Gunnison – They have a vacancy on their board, and they need a director from the Crested Butte division. The Gunnison whitewater park is about to undergo construction, as the lowest drop failed and needs repair. They have a water workshop June 17 – 19.

Montrose – The new whitewater park is looking great, and its construction is close to being completed.

Trout Unlimited – They are a partner in the RCPP and are excited. They have completed relief ditch diversion modification. Gunnison River appears to be in excellent condition.

CPW – The high flows were great for the rainbow trout. There has been a significant increase in biomass in the trout in the canyon. The ramping rates were really supportive of the fish.

Black Canyon Anglers – The river is awesome/beautiful right now. Ben Olson is no longer with the Black Canyon Anglers. They appreciate the "planned" May ramp as discussed in the presentation.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 23, 2015 @ 1:00 PM at the WCAO Reclamation Office in Grand Junction, CO.

January 22, 2015 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 Dudginski
Bureau of Land Management.....Rooster Barnhart, Edd Franz*, Karen Tucker
Bureau of Reclamation.....Ed Warner*, Ted Dunn, Ryan Christianson*, Jenny Hamilton*, Jane Blair, Paul Davidson*, Justyn Hock*, Erik Knight*,Rick Clayton*, Grant Watson, Larry Lingerfelt*, Randy Kramer*, Steven Ferris*, David Klein*
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 , Karen Kwon
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.....Dale Ryden*, 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
City of Montrose.....Stephen Alcorn*, Bob Nicholson*
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, Greg Smith
National Park Service.....Michael Dale*, Ken Stahlnecker*, Christine Landrum, Mark Wondzell, Melissa Trammell, Jenny Howes, Rob Billerbeck, Bruce Noble*

National Weather Service..... Aldis Strautins*
NRCS..... Brian Domonkos*, Lexi Landers*, Karl Wetlaufer*,
 Mage Hultstrand*
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