

**Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting**  
**April 28, 2016, 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.

**2016 Aspinall Unit Operations – Erik Knight (USBR)**

Snowpack Summary: Currently, the Gunnison River Basin has 85% of normal snow water conditions. The Gunnison Basin experienced a seasonal peak of 89% of normal, while the North Fork Basin and the Uncompahgre Basin experienced peaks of 84% and 82% respectively.

Reservoir Status: Blue Mesa Reservoir is 68% full. Taylor Park Reservoir is 66% full. Ridgway Reservoir is 83% full. Silverjack Reservoir is 56% full. The teacup diagram included in the meeting handouts depicted Paonia Reservoir as being 6% full, however there is an issue with the elevation sensors, and the reservoir is actually 12% 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: The April 15<sup>th</sup> forecasted unregulated inflow to Blue Mesa Reservoir is 515,000 AF, which is right at the boundary between the moderately dry and average dry categories. If the forecast increases by 1/10 of 1%, we will be in the average dry category. The average dry category includes a duration requirement of 10 days of half-bankfull flow at the Whitewater gage, while the moderately dry category does not have a duration requirement. Blue Mesa Reservoir is expected to fill to 731 Kaf by the end of June, which is about 88% full.

Projected Operations: Assuming the forecast doesn't change, the Black Canyon peak flow is 3,197 cfs, and the Whitewater peak flow target is 8,029 cfs. In a moderately dry year, no duration requirement will need to be met. The projected Black Canyon flows to meet the Whitewater target range from 5,000 – 5,500 cfs. Reclamation will attempt to meet the peak flow requirement while the North Fork is peaking. Historically, the North Fork peaks most often during the second half of May. The peak flow forecast for the North Fork is 2,100 cfs in early May.

If the forecast remains the same and Reclamation is in a moderately dry year, the Gunnison River flow scenario includes a Black Canyon peak of 5,200 cfs and a Whitewater peak of 8,070 cfs. This will require an 8-day ramp up and a 9-day ramp down. Baseflow targets at Whitewater would be 1,050 cfs from June to August, and then 750 cfs for the remainder of the year.

If the forecast changes and Reclamation is in an average dry year, the Gunnison River flow scenario includes a Black Canyon peak of 5,600 cfs and a Whitewater peak of 8,070 cfs, and would include a 10-day duration of flows of 8,070 cfs at Whitewater. This will require an 8 day ramp up and a 9 day ramp down surrounding the duration days.

Weather Outlook: The precipitation forecast from April 27<sup>th</sup> through May 10<sup>th</sup> is above average.

### **Gunnison River Basin Runoff Forecasts – Greg Smith (CBRFC)**

Based on 1981-2010 climatology and an April 22<sup>nd</sup> model run, Blue Mesa Reservoir has a 10% change of receiving average runoff, and Taylor Park Reservoir has a 17% chance of average runoff. Last year, there was a 5% chance of Blue Mesa Reservoir receiving average runoff, and then we received above average runoff. It is unlikely this will occur again this year.

The current weather pattern is favorable, and we shouldn't really see decreasing forecasts in the near term. It is possible that abnormally warm and dry weather could decrease forecasts later on. It is likely the Blue Mesa forecast will increase on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Special Flow Requests**

CPW: CPW will be conducting their annual sampling the first full week of October. The sampling is most successful at flows between 800 – 1000 cfs. We will discuss this again at the August meeting.

BLM and TU mentioned that the earlier Reclamation can do the peak, the better, although they recognized that this is really driven by the North Fork peak.

### **Reports of Agencies**

UVWUA: They are well on their way to completing the Drop 5 hydropower plant. They should be online the later part of June.

TU: They appreciate Reclamation's communication with the various water users regarding Aspinall Operations.

UGRWCD: Their Western Water Workshop will be held June 23-25, and a tour of the Gunnison Basin will begin June 21<sup>st</sup>. The Gunnison River Festival will be held Thursday – Saturday that week. The Morrow Point boat tour will be held during the workshop. Beetle kill is making its way up north. It has entrenched Slumgullion Pass, and the trees on the north side of Blue Mesa are already infested. A few long-term board members are not seeking reappointment this year (end of June).

Western: Last spring, a large natural gas leak was discovered to be coming from a well within the Aliso Canyon underground storage facility in southern California. The leak was plugged early this year, however they want to fully test the system to before allowing it to refill. There are concerns that electricity demands will spike on hot days, and there will be too little gas available to meet Southern California's needs. There is a good chance Western may try to shift their water reserves around in an effort to support Southern California. This would involve potentially changing the timing of pre-allocated water releases from Aspinall. Changes in releases could be managed between Aspinall's reservoirs, and increased ramping would last for a few hours (not days), so there won't be a big change in reservoir flows below Crystal. These changes aren't likely to occur until the last week in September.

NPS: Boat ramps at Blue Mesa started opening April 10<sup>th</sup>. Morrow Point tour boat reservations will begin to be taken starting May 1<sup>st</sup> for tours beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>. They are replacing the breakwaters at the Lake Fork ramp.

Tri-County: They plan to fill Ridgway to two feet below the spillway. They are releasing 300 cfs and started up the big generator yesterday.

CRWCD: Their Annual Report is now available. There is a series of upcoming State of the River meetings, with the Gunnison Basin meeting being held June 6<sup>th</sup>. Sonja Chavez de Baca joined the staff.

CMU Water Center: They are the local co-host for the May 12<sup>th</sup> State of the River meeting. There is a meeting being held by the Colorado Agriculture Water Alliance regarding the future of agriculture on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Technical College in Delta.

RIGS Fly Shop: The Uncompahgre River below Ridgway dam made a near instantaneous jump from 48 cfs to near 300 cfs yesterday, and this increase was not communicated to recreationists and CPW didn't appear to know about the increase. People were trapped on rock bars and feared for their safety, as there was no notice. Questioned if these dramatic changes in rates were harmful to the fish.

\*\*Tri-County responded that they sent notice out to their usual contact list a week prior. RIGS Fly Shop will get on this list for future notices.

\*\*CPW commented that there is not a lot of data specific to the tail water at Ridgway, however ramping rates are important for fry survival, especially in June. However, bumping up is not as big of a problem as dropping flows and stranding the fry. With the channel morphology below the dam, spawning is not likely in areas where fry would get stranded by bumps up and then down. There has been a positive impact on the fishery with the introduction of the hydropower plant, because the aeration has decreased the occurrence of gas bubble trauma in the fish.

CWCB: Their next board meeting is May 18 & 19, and it will be live streamed. The Species Conservation Trust Fund will continue providing funding to the Selenium Management Program for another year. Their drought contingency planning continues. Ted Kowalski is no longer with CWCB.

BOR Power Office: East Portal Road will hopefully be open by the close of business today.

BOR Water Ops: Paul Davidson is now with Lake Powell Operations, and Rick Clayton is now in charge of Aspinall Operations.

CO River Forecast Center: They are recalibrating their forecast model to include data up to 2015. Their averages will remain the same.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, August 18, 2015 at the Elk Creek Visitors Center at Blue Mesa Reservoir**

**April 28, 2016 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\*, Wanda Lassiter,  
Chris Smith\*, Jason Young\*, Kevin Kobe\*  
**Bureau of Reclamation**.....Ed Warner, Ted Dunn, Ryan Christianson\*, Jenny Hamilton,  
Paul Davidson, Justyn Liff, Erik Knight\*,Rick Clayton\*, Grant Watson, Larry Lingerfelt,  
Randy Kramer\*, David Speas\*, David Klein, Dale Carpenter\*, Lesley McWhirter  
**CSAS-CODOS**.....Chris Landry  
**City of Grand Junction**.....Terry Franklin, Greg Trainor  
**Club 20**.....Reeves Brown  
**Colorado Department of Agriculture**.....Jim Miller  
**Colorado Mesa University**.....Hannah Holm\*  
**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 Gardunio\*  
**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**.....Jeff Wright\*  
**Fire Mountain Canal Co.**.....Steve Fletcher\*  
**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**.....Katharhynn Heidelberg  
**National Drought Mitigation Center**.....Donna Woudenberg  
**NOAA**.....Andrea Ray, Robert Webb, Klaus Wolter, 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 Rebenack\*, 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, Teddy Earley  
**Trout Unlimited**.....Pat Oglesby\*, Marshall Pendergrass, Cary Denison\*  
 Drew Peternell, John Trammell  
**UVWUA**...Ed Suppes\*, Steve Anderson\*, Steve Shea, Dennis Veo\*, Michelle Decker,  
 Tim Barrientos\*  
**Upper Gunnison River Water**.....John McClow\*, Frank Kugel\*, Ken Spann\*  
**USGS**.....Ken Leib, Bob Jenkins, Steve Anders\*, Trisha Solberg, Bryan  
 Moore\*, Bob Kimbrough  
**Xcel Energy**.....Kelly Flenniken  
**Western Area Power**....Clayton Palmer, Jeff Ackerman, Jerry Wilhite, Nancy Scheid, Tim  
 Vigil, Tanya Newman, Chrystal Dean\*, Tyson Taylor, Steve Johnson\*