

**Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting
January 18, 2018 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 – Ryan Christianson (USBR)

Operations Past and Present: From September 2017 to mid-January 2018, Blue Mesa content dropped 229,000 acre-feet (AF). Blue Mesa content is currently 573,000 AF. During this same time period, Gunnison River flows at Whitewater have consistently remained above the 1,050 cfs target. As of January 16, 2018, the conditions of reservoirs in the basin are as follows:

Reservoir	% of Capacity
Paonia	16%
Taylor Park	71%
Crystal	86%
Morrow Point	92%
Blue Mesa	69%
Ridgway	73%
Silver Jack	22%

Snow Conditions: October 2017 was mostly dry, with the monthly precipitation in the Gunnison Basin around 70% of average. November 2017 was still dry, and December 2017 ended up being one of the driest Decembers on record for many Snotel sites in the Gunnison Basin. The first half of January saw snow accumulation continue to fall behind the historical average rate of accumulation. As of January 17, 2018, the Gunnison Basin’s snow water equivalent is at 46% of normal. The situation is slightly better in the headwaters of the Gunnison River basin upstream of Blue Mesa Reservoir where snow conditions are currently 67% of normal.

Runoff Forecasts and Future Operations: The January 1st Blue Mesa Forecasted April-July Inflow was 435,000 acre-feet. By mid-January, this forecast decreased to 420,000 acre-feet. This forecast would categorize 2018 as a Moderately Dry year. If the forecast were to remain unchanged, a Moderately Dry year would result in a desired Whitewater peak of 4,180 cfs. There would be no requirement for duration days at peak flow or half bankfull flow. Assuming the forecast doesn’t change for the May 1st forecast, the Black Canyon Peak Flow would be 1,750 cfs, with May 1st to July 25th shoulder flows of 300 cfs. Baseflow targets at Whitewater would be 1,050 throughout the remainder of winter.

Under the current runoff forecast scenario Blue Mesa Reservoir is projected to fill to an elevation of 7501.4 feet with a maximum content of 673,000 AF.

2018 Weather Outlook – Aldis Strautins (NWS)

Winter weather conditions in 2017-2018 have been the opposite of what was experienced last year. We have moved out of the weak La Nina pattern towards Neutral conditions this winter. The probabilities favor a return to Neutral conditions during early 2018. The second half of January is forecast to experience closer to average precipitation conditions which would be an improvement over what we have seen so far. There is a fairly good chance for wetter conditions to arrive in February. The spring months are currently projected to have better chances for drier than average conditions.

The drought monitor shows that drought conditions have expanded across western Colorado over the fall and winter months of 2017. This drought expansion pattern is spread across all of the 4 corner states of the southwest.

Crystal Tailrace Bathymetric Survey

A bathymetric survey was conducted at the tailrace of Crystal Reservoir to determine if spills over Crystal Dam were scouring out the plunge pool. The survey is required after each significant spill event. The survey showed significant sediment accumulation within the stilling pool. It is not clear where the source of this material would come from although it is suspected to be originating from erosion of the east canyon wall. Even with this finding, comparisons with the 2014 survey do not show any significant changes in the stilling basin bathymetry.

Special Flow Requests and Discussion

None

Reports of Agencies and Organizations

DWR: Water users coming up with ways to deal with drought. North Fork is really hurting. Lots of work anticipated for water commissioners.

USGS: New gages in the Elk Creek, Crested Butte area in conjunction with EPA (seasonal gage). Gunnison R below Tomichi gage installed last fall is fully operational.

BLM: Recreation use below North Fork confluence has doubled/tripled.

FMC: Trying to bring up reservoir elevation/storage. 10-15 cfs inflow into Paonia.

Center for Snow and Avalanche Studies: 2 feet of snow at Red Mtn Pass, concerns with dry soil moisture conditions and dust

UVWUA: Lots of construction going on. Ed Suppes retiring this year.

Tri-County: Ridgway Reservoir is lower this time of year compared with past conditions. Was 6,000 AF higher in 2002 than today. Cutting releases to 50 cfs and maybe to minimum streamflow level of 30 cfs.

NPS: ANS inspections this January.

WAPA: Energy prices are average right now. Expect they will increase when cold weather arrives.

TU: Doing their best to conserve water. Working on system conservation projects. Would be supportive of lower flows through the Black Canyon, critical period is late April into May.

CWCB: Board meeting next week, accepting Grant applications, talking drought contingency planning. Lake Powell forecast to drop further. Severance tax is negative this year, programs will be cut or reduced.

BOR Curecanti Field Office: Blue Mesa stilling basin dewatering will be required for penstock work. Will need to use spillway to release water.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, April 17, 2018 @ 1:00 PM at the WCAO Reclamation Office in Grand Junction, CO.

January 17, 2018 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, Katy Smith
Bureau of Reclamation.....Ed Warner*, Ted Dunn, Ryan Christianson*, Jenny Ward, Paul Davidson, Justyn Liff, Erik Knight, Rick Clayton*, Grant Watson*, Larry Lingerfelt*, Randy Kramer*, David Speas, David Klein, Dale Carpenter, Lesley McWhirter, Vern Harrell, Jed Parker, Jesus Hernandez, Amanda Ewing, Wayne Holland*
CSAS-CODOS.....Jeff Derry*, Chris Landry*
City of Grand Junction.....Terry Franklin, Greg Trainor
Club 20.....Reeves Brown
Colorado Department of Agriculture.....Jim Miller
Colorado Emergency Management.....Drew Petersen
Colorado Mesa University.....Hannah Holm
Colorado River Energy Distributors.....Leslie James
Colorado River District...Dave Kanzer, Jim Pokrandt, Eric Kuhn, Sonja Chavez*
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.....Betsy Suerth*, Glen Black **Delta**
County Emergency Management.....Jeff Wright
Dolores WCD.....Ken Curtis
Fire Mountain Canal Co.....Steve Fletcher*
Fish and Wildlife Service.....Dale Ryden, , DarekElverud
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*, Kim Hartwig, Christine Landrum, Mark
 Wondzell, Melissa Trammell, Jenny Rebenack, Rob Billerbeck, Bruce Noble, Gene Seagle
National Weather Service..... Aldis Strautins*, Megan Stackhouse
NRCS.....Brian Domonkos, Lexi Landers, Karl Wetlaufer, Mage Hultstrand
North Fork Water Conservancy.....Tom Alvey
Precision Water Resources Engineering.....Mike Coleman
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*, Teddy Early*, Kathleen Margetts, Tony Mitchell*
Trout Unlimited..... Marshall Pendergrass*, Cary Denison* Drew Peternell,
 John Trammell, Jesse Kruthaupt*
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, Tim Vigil, Tanya Newman, Chrystal Dean*, Tyson Taylor, Steve Johnson, Rachel Grubbs