

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
NAVAJO RESERVOIR COORDINATION MEETING
August 20th, 2024
SUMMARY

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of the August 20th, 2024 meeting to coordinate Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) operation of the Navajo Unit. The meeting was held in person at the Farmington Civic Center, with a virtual option via Microsoft Teams video and by phone.

Summary points of the meeting:

- Inflows for Water Year 2024 have been below average. For Navajo Reservoir in particular, the April through July modified unregulated inflow was 71% of average.
- The reservoir peaked on July 4th with a pool elevation of 6,053.46 ft, approximately 10 ft below the average peak.
- The reservoir is expected to end the water year (September 30th) between 6039 and 6049 ft (between 63 and 70% full).
- The models for the next six months show above average temperatures and below average precipitation, which is consistent with La Niña conditions.
- Most basins got to average snow water equivalent, but the low soil moisture, in part, led to below-average runoff volumes.
- The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) are requesting a release of 10,000 acre-feet of their subcontracted water from the Jicarilla Apache Nation (JAN) in early winter to study the effects of backwater habitats on species in the San Juan River.

Copies of the material presented, and past meeting notes are available online at:
<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/cs/nvd.html>

If you have any suggestions on improving the operation meetings or the summaries of the meetings, please let us know.

Next meeting date: January 21, 2025 (*tentative*). The January meeting will be entirely virtual this year to eliminate issues related to weather and travel. Please contact sbehery@usbr.gov for questions or updates.

NAVAJO UNIT OPERATIONS MEETING

August 20th, 2024

Participation: This meeting was held in person and virtually via Microsoft Teams. The attendance list is attached.

Purpose of Meeting: The purpose of these meetings, held annually in January, April, and August, is to gather input for determining upcoming operations for Navajo Reservoir. This input is used in Reclamation's development of an overall 24-month study for operation of Reclamation projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin, which includes plans for Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, Aspinall Unit and Navajo. Input from individuals, organizations, and agencies, along with other factors such as weather, water rights, endangered species requirements, flood control, hydro power, recreation, fish and wildlife management, and reservoir levels, will be considered in the development of these reservoir operation plans. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the San Juan River and Navajo Reservoir.

Operations in WY 2024 so far and Current Conditions in the Basin

Susan Behery, Reclamation, Western Colorado Area Office

The meeting began with a review of the releases and inflows from Navajo Dam since October. Water Year 2024 began on October 1, 2023, with Navajo holding 1,146 kaf of live storage (520 kaf active storage) at elevation 6046.6 ft. Since the beginning of the water year, Navajo Modified Unregulated Inflow (MUI) has totaled 560 thousand acre-feet (kaf). Navajo release has totaled 275 kaf. The calculated evaporation has totaled 21 kaf. Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP) has diverted 162 kaf for both NIIP and the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project (NGWSP)'s Cutter Lateral. San Juan Chama Project has diverted 71 kaf above Navajo Reservoir.

Releases are made for the authorized purposes of the Navajo Unit, and to attempt to maintain a target base flow through the endangered fish critical habitat reach of the San Juan River (Farmington to Lake Powell). The San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRIP) recommends a target base flow of between 500 cfs and 1,000 cfs through the critical habitat area. The target base flow is calculated as the weekly average of gaged flows throughout the critical habitat area. The target baseflow has been maintained consistently through out WY2024.

Pool elevation at Navajo Reservoir has been below average, remaining in the 70th percentile throughout WY2024.

As of August 18th, McPhee holds 255,357 af (67% of live storage). Lake Nighthorse is at 114,272 af (99% of live storage) after being topped off in June. Lemon is at 26,449 af (66% of live storage). Vallecito is at 92,550 af (74% live storage), and Jackson is at 6,518 af (66% of live storage). Navajo is at 1,133,250 af (69% of live storage).

Around the Upper Colorado River Drainage Basin: Flaming Gorge is 87% full, Blue Mesa is 72% full, Fontanelle is 82% full, Morrow Point is 95% full, and Lake Powell is 41% full.

Hydrologic Outlook

Erin Walter, National Weather Service (NWS), Grand Junction

The precipitation and temperature in Southwestern Colorado has been variable depending on the month. May was an average temperature and slightly dry; June was the 3rd warmest on record (5.5 degrees warmer than average) and extremely wet in the San Juans; July was warm with slightly dry conditions. Drought in the Four Corners area has slightly improved since May, due to our wet June, but parts are still in the D0, or abnormally dry, range.

Short term forecast: The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) predicts warm conditions for the next two weeks with near-normal precipitation.

Fall/Winter Outlook: Climate models show the likely development of La Niña conditions forming this year and lasting throughout the winter, although the development seems weaker and more delayed than usual. For southern Colorado, this could lead to less precipitation than usual. The models for the next three months show above average temperatures and below average precipitation, and models for the winter months show the same.

Go to <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/> for more information.

Water Year 2024 Runoff Review

Wolfgang Hanft, Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC), Salt Lake City

The current water year started with below average soil moisture last fall. All areas in the San Juan Basin were between 30 and 100% of average soil moisture, with most areas in the 50 to 70% range. Below average conditions like this predictably led to decreased runoff efficiency, which is exactly what we saw.

For most basins in this area, late winter and spring storms got us up to an average or slight above average snow water equivalent (SWE), with similar timing to the average peak, as well. Despite being near-normal, the snow melted at a slightly faster than normal rate, and the low soil moisture led to below average runoff volumes across the entire basin.

Proposed Operations for remainder of WY 2024

Susan Behery – Reclamation, Western Colorado Area Office

For the remainder of summer and early fall, releases from Navajo are expected to stay between 500 and 700 cfs. Pool elevation at the end of the water year (September 30th) will most likely be between 6039 and 6049 ft (between 63 and 70% full).

As mentioned earlier, there will be a second 10,000 af release for the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to support endangered

species and support compact requirements. Colleen Cunningham, NMISC described the release further. This release is scheduled for early winter and will look at the backwater habitats to see what other fish species use those areas, and help determine the difference in transit losses (evapotranspiration) between late summer and early winter. As with the recent release, it will be a 15-day release period and the additional flows will be added to the baseflow. The release will be structured in the following way: 5 days of adding 250cfs, 5 days of adding 500cfs, and finally another 5 days adding 250cfs. The water being released is subcontracted from the Jicarilla-Apache Nation, and will likely lead to a peak around 900cfs released from the dam; the average winter baseflow release will likely be 400cfs.

Currently, forecasts for water year 2025 include a 40% chance of having a spring release from Navajo. This forecast takes into account current storage and baseflow conditions, and a range of historical hydrology between 1991 and 2020. The January 2025 meeting will have a slightly more precise estimate of how likely a spring release will be, so stay tuned.

Drilling update (Kelsey Deckert, O&M Group Chief) Exploratory drilling has been happening on the dam and will continue through 2025, but the roads will be open for another few weeks. Starting on September 11th, the road across the crest of the dam, NM 539, will close for an extended period of time. After this work is completed, the road across the face of the dam, NM 511, will have a single-lane closure. The road impacts are currently scheduled through May of 2025 and are subject to change. See the Navajo Dam Water Operations webpage ([Navajo Reservoir | Water Operations | UC Region | Bureau of Reclamation \(usbr.gov\)](#)) for the most current information.

Additionally, routine maintenance that happens about every ten years will be occurring this October and November to the 6x13 gates on the main penstock. The power plant will be shut down and releases will occur through the 4x4 during this work.

Agency Updates

San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program (SJRIP): On August 6th, the Coordination Committee approved the FY2025 budget and workplan. Now it is up to congress. Upcoming meetings: Biology Meeting in Durango December 3-5, Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program's Researchers meeting at Fort Lewis College January 28-29 of 2025 up at Fort Lewis College. Email Scott Durst for more information.

San Juan Watershed group meeting August 21st at the Civic Center.

Linda Corwin brought to the attention of the group a Reuters article on flooding in China that is exacerbated by sedimentation and related it to ongoing sedimentation and challenges with flushing releases along the San Juan River. The article link is here:

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/record-floods-raise-questions-chinas-050234921.html>

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission will be doing their crop survey in the coming week. Three vehicles will be driving up the roads on the Animas and San Juan Rivers between the

Hogback and Navajo Reservoir, and between the state line on the Animas down to Farmington. For questions call Christina Noftsker at the NMISC.

NAPI will be shutting down diversions to NIIP for the year on October 18th.

Links

- Navajo Project Notices: https://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/notice/nav_rel.html
- Navajo Monthly Forecast Update: <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/cs/nvd.html>
- UC Water Operations Home: <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/index.html>
- Teacups: <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/basin/index.html>
- 24-Month Study: <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/index.html>
- DROA: <https://www.usbr.gov/dcp/droa.html>

Attendance List

Scott Miller	APS
Stacy Dodd	Bloomfield Irrigation District
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Linda Corwin	Bloomfield, NM
Kelsey Deckert	Bureau of Reclamation
Kerri Pedersen	Bureau of Reclamation
Reece Carpenter	Bureau of Reclamation
Alwyna Sandoval	City of Bloomfield
Prudence Brady	City of Bloomfield
Jamie Shockey	City of Farmington
Rochelle Brown	City of Farmington
Paul Montoia	City of Farmington, retired
Wolfgang Hanft	Colorado Basin River Forecast Center, SLC
Robert Sterrett	Farmington Fire
Tom Miller	Farmington Fire
Scott Durst	FWS, SJRIP
Tom Chart	Grand River Consulting, Water User Rep to SJRIP BC
Kathi Smith	Hammond Conservancy District
Les Larson	Hillside Irrigation District
Jen Dumas	Jicarilla Apache Nation
Shrestha Sanskriti	Keller-Bliesner Engineering
Jeanette Joe	NAPI
Lionel Haskie	NAPI
Renae Pablo	NAPI
Roselyn Yazzie	NAPI
Vincent Cowboy	NAPI

Erin Walter	National Weather Service, Grand Junction
Steve Austin	Navajo Nation EPA
Ed Tso	NDEM
Marc Wethington	New Mexico Game and Fish
Christina Noftsker	NMISC
Colleen Cunningham	NMISC
Trevor Birt	NMISC
Miles Juett	NMOSE
Shawn Williams	NMOSE
David Shoultz	NTUA, NGWSP Op's Manager
Ed Warner	Reclamation
Justyn Liff	Reclamation
Lee Traynham	Reclamation
Malcolm Begay	Reclamation
Malcolm Begay	Reclamation
Nathaniel Todea	Reclamation
Susan Behery	Reclamation
Susan Behery	Reclamation
Erik Knight	Reclamation WCAO
Marc Miller	Reclamation WCAO
Tammy Gallegos	San Juan County Utah
Sherice Snell	San Juan Water Commission
Jim Dumont	Senator Martin Heinrich's Office
Carrie Padgett	SWWCD
Joe Trungale	TNC
David Albright	Tri-City Recorder
Clayton Johnston	Turley Manzanares
John Utton	Utton & Kery
Andy Strasser	William J. Miller Engineers, Inc
Chief Hook	
Dave Zeller	NAPI
Desiree Chavez	Bloomfield Irrigation District
Hank (FEUS)	
Joe Hubbard	
Jude Duran	
Ranee Deechilly	
Richard Blecha	
Scott Brake	
Suzy Wieser	