

# Aspinall Unit Operations EIS



**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Western Colorado Area Office  
Grand Junction, Colorado**

**January 22, 2009**

**RECLAMATION**

# DEIS UPDATE



The Draft Aspinall Unit Operations EIS is scheduled to be filed on February 13<sup>th</sup> at which time it will be released to the public. The EIS will be available at <http://www.usbr.gov/uc> (click on Environmental Documents)

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## Purpose and Need

**The EIS addresses alternatives to avoid jeopardy to four endangered fish in the Gunnison and Colorado rivers downstream from the Wayne N. Aspinall Unit.**

**The alternatives focus on modifying the operation of the Aspinall Unit to provide sufficient releases of water at times, quantities, and duration necessary to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification to designated critical habitat, while maintaining authorized purposes of the Aspinall Unit.**

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## Action Alternatives

Four action alternatives are presented to address Flow Recommendations developed by the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program for downstream endangered fish and are compared to the No Action Alternative. A preferred alternative is identified.

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# Public Hearing and Comment Period

**Public Hearings are set for:**

**April 7th 6:30-9:00 pm at Gunnison  
County Fairgrounds in Gunnison**

**April 8th 6:30-9:00 pm at Bill Heddles  
Center in Delta**

**Comment period will extend to April 24<sup>th</sup>.**

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# DEIS Alternatives

- No Action Alternative**
- Risk of Spill-Alternative A**
- Fish Peak w/ Duration-Alternative B**
- Fish Peak w/ Increased Duration-Alternative C**
- Fish Peak w/ Revised Target-Alternative D**

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## No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative represents a projection of current operating practices to the most reasonable future conditions that would occur without any action alternatives being implemented.

Under the No Action Alternative, elements of the Recovery Program would continue (i.e. stocking, non-native fish control, Redlands ladder and screen). However, altering operations of the Unit to specifically assist in meeting the Flow Recommendations would not occur.

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## **Alternative A**

**Alternative A is based on managing water that is in excess of Aspinall Unit needs. The excess water is managed primarily for spring peaks.**

**Water forecasted to be bypassed or spilled at Crystal Reservoir, based on the May 1 forecast and May 1 Blue Mesa Reservoir content, is managed for a spring peak.**

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## Alternative B

**Alternative B is based on operating the Aspinall Unit to meet specific downstream targets.**

<b>Blue Mesa Forecasted April-July Inflow</b>	<b>Desired Peak at Whitewater</b>	<b>Duration of Half-Bank (8,070 cfs)</b>	<b>Duration of Bankfull (14,350 cfs)</b>
<b>Af</b>	<b>cfs</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Days</b>
<b>&lt; 381,000</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>381,000 to 516,000</b>	<b>2,600 to 8,070</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>516,001 to 709,000</b>	<b>8,070</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>709,001 to 831,000</b>	<b>8,070 to 14,350</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>831,001 to 1,123,000</b>	<b>14,350</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>&gt;1,123,000</b>	<b>14,350</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>15</b>

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# Alternative C

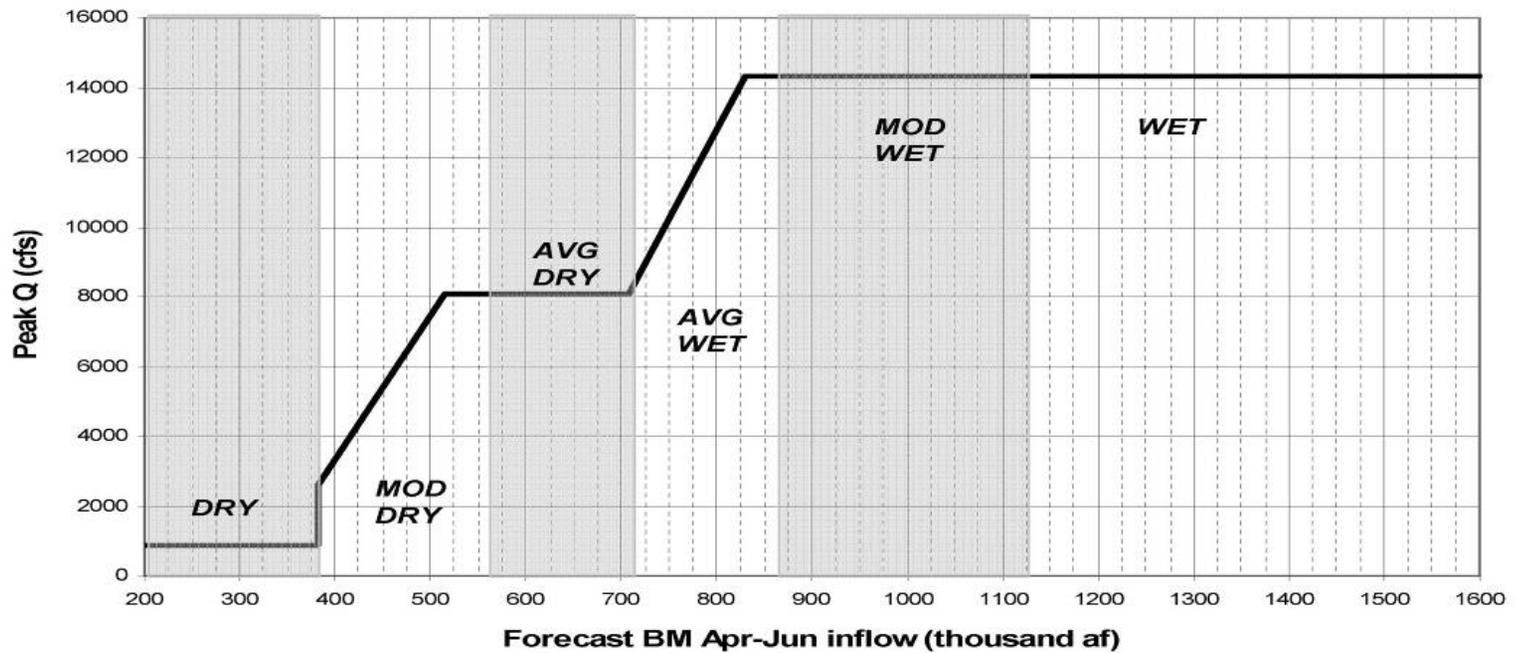
This alternative is similar to Alternative B except that the peak duration targets are increased as shown below.

Blue Mesa Forecasted April-July Inflow	Desired Peak at Whitewater	Duration of Half-Bank (8,070 cfs)	Duration of Bankfull (14,350 cfs)
Af	cfs	Days	Days
< 381,000	900	0	0
381,000 to 516,000	2,600 to 8,070	10	0
516,001 to 709,000	8,070	15	0
709,001 to 831,000	8,070 to 14,350	25	3
831,001 to 1,123,000	14,350	60	20
>1,123,000	14,350	100	25

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# Alternative B and C

## Peak Flow Target at Whitewater



## Alternative D

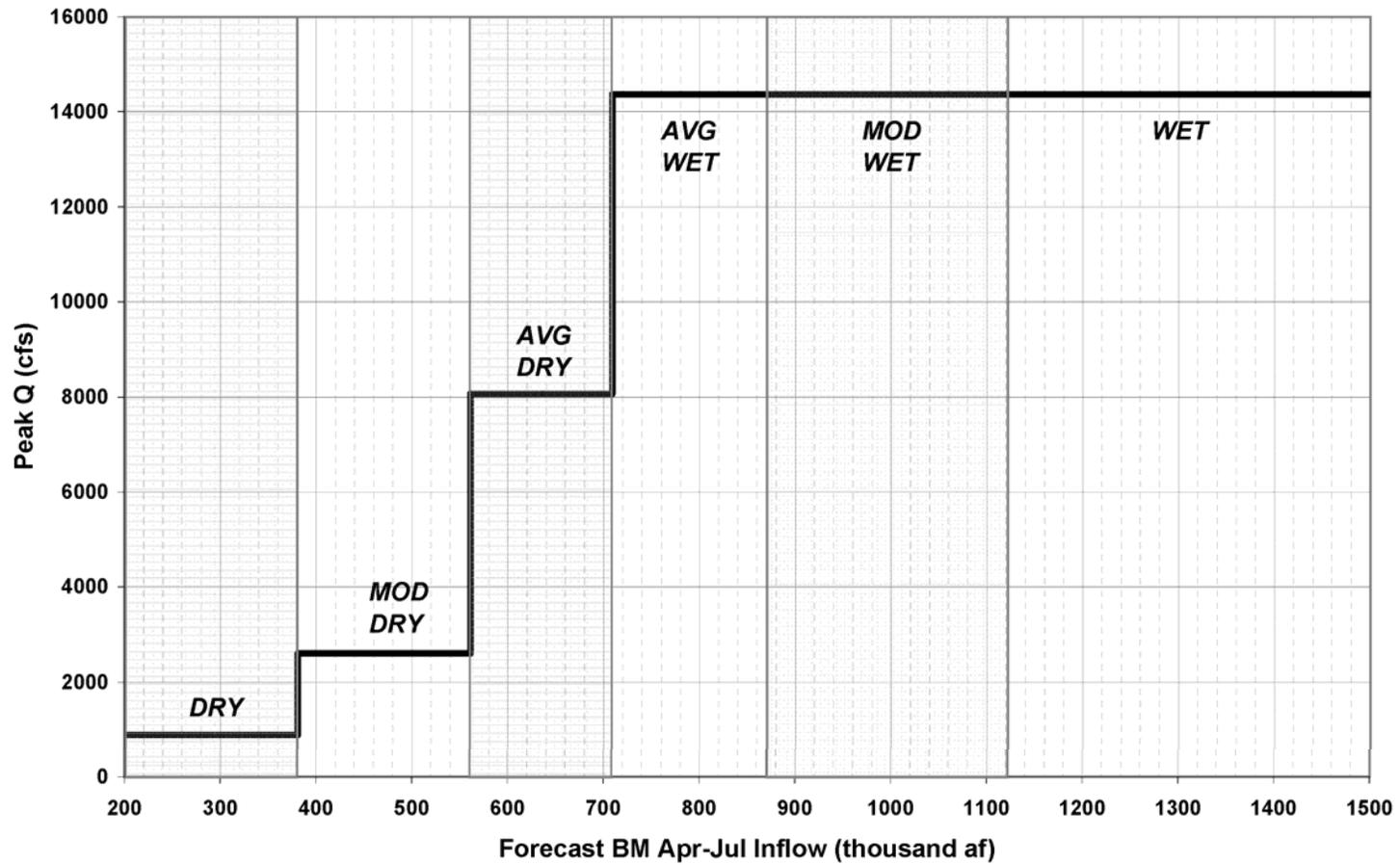
This alternative is similar to Alternative B except that the peak targets are modified as shown below.

Blue Mesa Forecasted Inflow	Desired Peak @Whitewater	Duration of Half-Bank (8,070 cfs)	Duration of Bankfull (14,350 cfs)
Af	cfs	days	days
< 381,000	900	0	0
381,000 to 561,000	2,600	0	0
561,001 to 709,000	8,070	10	0
709,001 to 871,000	14,350	20	2
871,001 to 1,123,000	14,350	40	10
> 1,123,000	14,350	60	15

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# Alternative D

## Peak Flow Target at Whitewater



# Qualitative Summary

Resource	No Action	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
<b>Qualitative Summary (Range +5 to -5)</b>					
Blue Mesa Reservoir Content	Neutral	-1	-1	-2	-1
Hydropower	Neutral	-1	-1	-2	-1
Black Canyon NP	Neutral	+1	+2	+3	+2
Flood Control	Neutral	-2	-1	-1	-1
Endangered Species	Neutral	+1	+3	+3	+2
Recreation	Neutral	-1	-2	-3	-2
Water Users	Neutral	+1	+1	+1	+1

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# Programmatic Biological Assessment

A Programmatic Biological Assessment has been provided to the Fish and Wildlife Service for their use in preparing a Programmatic Biological Opinion.

The Assessment is available at

[http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/rm/aspeis/pdfs/  
Aspinall\\_BA\\_010809.pdf](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/rm/aspeis/pdfs/Aspinall_BA_010809.pdf)

or an electronic copy can be requested at  
[aspinalleis@uc.usbr.gov](mailto:aspinalleis@uc.usbr.gov)

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# Programmatic Biological Assessment

The assessment addresses:

- Reclamation's modification of the operation of the Aspinall Unit to avoid jeopardy to downstream endangered fish.
- The continued operations of all Reclamation Projects in the Gunnison River Basin. This includes Smith Fork, Paonia, Fruitgrowers, Bostwick Park, Dallas Creek and Uncomphagre Projects.
- The continued operation of the Dolores Project.

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# Programmatic Biological Assessment

- ❑ Dallas Creek and Dolores Projects that have biological opinions that rely on the Aspinall Unit for the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative.
- ❑ Actions undertaken by the Federal Agencies of the Recovery Program including the funding and implementation of the Recovery Program in the Gunnison River Basin.
- ❑ The continued operation and use of water rights of Federal agencies in the Gunnison Basin (i.e. BLM, USFS, and NPS). These are generally small stock watering or wells and springs.

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# Programmatic Biological Assessment

- ❑ The continuation of the operation and depletions of all non-Federal projects and water users in the Gunnison Basin. Average annual depletions from these uses are estimated at approximately 250,000 to 275,000 af.
- ❑ 30,800 af of depletions from Aspinall Unit water rights subordinated to upstream uses.
- ❑ The future depletions of 3,500 af of unspecified depletions in the Gunnison Basin is also included in the action.

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# Aspinall Unit Operations EIS



## FOR MORE INFO...

Contact US Bureau of Reclamation at 970-248-0600

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or visit website at [www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao](http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao)

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