

GJ-151  
ENV-4.00  
PRJ-13.00

Subject: Wayne N. Aspinall Unit Operation - Coordination Meeting

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed for your information is a summary of the Aspinall Unit operations meeting held on January 31, 1995. Handouts from the meeting are not enclosed; anyone wanting a set should contact us.

The next meeting will be held in this office at 12:30 p.m. on April 19, 1995. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Warner at (303) 248-0654 or Steve McCall at 248-0638.

Sincerely,

Carol DeAngelis  
Area Manager

Enclosure

cc: Chief, Curecanti Field Branch  
Attention: CCI-100 (w/encl)

Regional Director, Salt Lake City UT  
Attention: UC-430, UC-440, UC-600, UC-700 (ea w/encl)

Solicitors Office, Salt Lake City UT  
Attention: Scott Loveless

bcc: GJ-400, GJ-430, GJ-140, GJ-150 (2 sets), GJ-140 (ea w/encl)

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Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting  
January 31, 1995

The subject meeting was held in Grand Junction, Colorado. An attendance list is attached. New participants included Tom Alvey - North Fork Water Conservancy District, Bill Fowler - Sigma Consultants, Tom Bemis and Greg Peterson - Gunnison stockgrowers, and Dave Kanzer - Colorado River Water Conservation District.

The purpose of the meeting was to review operation of the Aspinall Unit over the August through December period, and set the operation plan for the upcoming period (January through April). Setting operation includes consideration of supply forecasts and input from interested participants. Results will be incorporated into Reclamation's "Operation Plan for Colorado River System Reservoirs" (24-Month Operation Plan).

August-December 1994 Operation: Brad Vickers reviewed graphs on actual vs. planned operations. The amount of inflow to Blue Mesa was predicted accurately, but it came in different than expected. It was lower than expected in September, and higher in October. Releases were increased to reach the December 31 target level.

Forecast and Proposed 1995 Operation: Planned operation print-outs for each of the Aspinall Unit reservoirs (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal) were discussed for the minimum, most, and maximum probable water supply forecasts. As of January 15, snowpack was 113% of average. Most probable runoff into Blue Mesa for the April-July is forecast at 96% of average (670,000 AF).

Graphs of flows below the tunnel for the proposed operation plan were based on tunnel diversions of representative supply years (1992 - minimum probable; 1991 - most probable; 1987 - maximum probable). Under most probable conditions, flows of 700 cfs are provided from January through March. Spring peak flows would be 1,700-1,800 cfs. The Fish and Wildlife Service is hoping for as high a peak as possible, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife noted the peak flow should be finished before June 10 to protect trout. Under most probable and maximum probable supplies, a significant amount of water would bypass the Crystal powerplant in April and May to avoid spills at Blue Mesa and Morrow Point Dams. Reclamation will notify affected parties in March if a decision is needed to increase releases due to higher inflows.

July-August flows below the tunnel would be cut back to 600-1,000 cfs, and would slowly increase in September-December as diversions through the Gunnison Tunnel go down. Under most probable inflows, Blue Mesa would come close to filling in July. Storage at the end of December would be about 2 feet below the minimum target level. Unless supply is at minimum probable levels, there is adequate storage for meeting the desired minimum 300 cfs flow below Redlands diversion dam for endangered fish in July-October.

There were no suggestions for revising the proposed operations.

Handouts also included tables of monthly average flows recorded at the gages below the tunnel and near Whitewater from October 1993 through January 1995, data from Reclamation's new gage below Redlands since February 1994, and the Computation of the Delivery to the NPS.

Special Flow Requests: The Uncompahgre Valley Water Users noted farmers are plowing now; if dry, warm weather continues, tunnel diversions may begin a week early. The Fish and Wildlife Service is hoping for a second year of high spring flows. They are also looking for opportunities to validate stream channel measurements downstream from the Redlands Diversion Dam that were taken at 300 cfs; it was noted that the flows are currently around that level. Colorado Division of Wildlife requested 600 cfs on Monday-Thursday in the last week of September (September 25-28). Western Area Power Administration requested that work requiring special flows maximize use of weekends whenever possible to maintain flexibility in their meeting demands for power. Reclamation's Curecanti Field Office reported no special flows are expected for maintenance of the powerplants. Warranty and inspection work is now being done for generators at Morrow Point and Blue Mesa in a manner that does not interrupt generation capabilities; this work should be completed prior to spring runoff.

#### Agency/Organization Activities and Comments

**Colorado Water Conservation Board** - We provided input to the operation matrix (discussed later). The third negotiation session for the interim contract to provide flows to endangered fish below Redlands was held this morning.

**National Park Service (NPS)** - In cooperation with Reclamation and others, Blue Mesa creel, limnology and entrainment studies continue. For the entrainment study at Blue Mesa, the nets were installed and are working. This work was coordinated with Jack Sage (of Reclamation's Curecanti Field Division). The Black Canyon has obtained a set of 1934 photos of the canyon, and will take photos at the same location in 1995. The flows were very low, but they do not intend to duplicate the flows for the photos.

Two weeks ago, Curecanti National Recreation Area received a new pontoon tour boat for use at Morrow Point. Before spring run-off, Western and NPS should coordinate some tests to see how it runs at different elevations and releases.

**Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)** - Studies on the effects of Aspinall operations on endangered fish continue, and now emphasize making physical measurements of flow conditions. This is the first big year for studies on geomorphology on the Gunnison River, and on the Colorado River downstream from Rifle. Bob Burdick continues to sample fish below Redlands. The previously mentioned cross-sections at 300 cfs flows below Redlands need to be duplicated to confirm habitat availability. In the July-October period, it will be important to maintain the 300 cfs flow below Redlands before the passageway is constructed to provide baseline data. Another study on the Colorado River is of young squawfish, and the nursery habitat-flow relationship.

**U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)** - USGS announced a meeting scheduled on March 1 on how to better meet various measurement needs. To help set agenda or for more information, contact Ed Wilson in Grand Junction (245-5257 x 3033).

**Upper Gunnison River Conservancy District** - Tyler Martineau asked if there was any news on the proposed contract for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument. Chuck Pettee (NPS) responded that a meeting is scheduled in February to discuss issues between Reclamation and NPS. Major questions include the scope of NEPA compliance.

**Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association** - Jim Hokit asked about the status of National Park Service studies. The vegetation study results are available; Chuck Pettee will make sure Jim receives a copy. NPS is now compiling results of last year's data; wet year data is being compared to dry years. Differences in vegetation are shown.

**Colorado River Water Conservation District** - Mike Gross asked for information about the EIS on the NPS water supply contract. In resolving NEPA issues on the Monuments's reserved right, will we be going with a contract or adjudication? Chuck Pettee answered the NPS still prefers to go with a negotiated contract, and then take the contract into court to quantify their right. The question still remains how to mesh NEPA with negotiated adjudication. Steve McCall (Reclamation) noted that the wild card that will be important in determining how we operate the Aspinall Unit is the Biological Opinion, and that all processes go together. We haven't worked on the contract in the last year; while it's not in limbo, it's also not progressing.

**Colorado Division of Wildlife** - Sherman Hebein reported Blue Mesa creel census results of 500,000 hours. Kokanee and rainbow trout catch are highest. Of rainbow stocked, there is <10% return -- which is low. The kokanee salmon fishery in the reservoir is very good, and the fall run is the most important in the West. Kokanee eggs from this fish are used throughout Colorado and in other western states. In the Gunnison Gorge, rainbow trout recruitment was good in 1993, but may be very poor in 1994 due to confirmed detection of whirling disease. Rainbow recruitment targets have not been met for several years; brown trout recruitment levels are being met.

**Bureau of Land Management** - Roy Smith noted that due to budget limitations, they are in their third year of extending studies in the Gorge. Studies are of channel and flood morphology and riparian species composition based on different flow regimes. It's still too early for preliminary results.

**Western Area Power Administration** - Western is concerning about structuring spring peak flows between Flaming Gorge and Aspinall so they don't occur at the same time. Remember, Aspinall is the only CRSP Unit left that can provide flexibility for capacity. This winter, electric rates were low (1/2 price sale); Western took advantage and "banked" a lot of water. We can expect more power outages as deregulation and increasing demands by easterners affect stability of the system.

Flow Matrix Development: The matrix is a planning tool that is still under development. Reclamation hopes to have it in a form that will be useful at the next meeting. We have received letters from the National Park Service and Colorado Water Conservation Board, and are hoping to take suggestions in the Board's letter a step further. This will involve designing a new matrix in which needs of the different interests would be identified for each month. Reclamation will be getting more information out on this approach.

Emergency Power Needs: Due to the wake-up call of last summer's power emergency, a need was identified to improve emergency planning and notification processes for the Aspinall Unit. Reclamation and Western are planning to have something for discussion at the April meeting. There are different types of emergencies with different response patterns that need to be considered. Last week, a public meeting was held on Aspinall dam, mostly related to potential dam failure and flood planning. Haven't heard how successful it was; however, we do know we need to better mesh Western and Reclamation's needs.

Next Meeting - was set for April 19, 1995 -- Same time and place (12:30 at Reclamation's Grand Junction Office)

Attendance List  
Aspinall Unit Operations Meeting - January 31, 1995

Trout Unlimited	Pat Oglesby	303-434-3912
Gunnison stockgrowers	Ted Bemis	303-641-1517
	Greg Peterson	303-641-0863
Sigma Consultants, Inc.	Bill Fowler	508-443-5660
North Fork Water Conservancy District	Tom Alvey	303-872-3911
Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District	Tyler Martineau	303-641-6065
Colorado River Water Conservation District	Mike Gross	303-945-8522
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Randy Seaholm	303-866-3441
Colorado Division of Water Resources	Ken Knox	303-249-6622
Colorado Division of Wildlife	Sherman Hebein	303-641-0088
Upper Colorado River Commission	Clint Stevens	801-531-1150
Western Area Power Administration	Gary Burton	303-275-1725
	Jeff Ackerman	303-240-6209
	Chris Brown	303-240-6210
U.S. Geological Survey	Paul von Guerard	303-245-5257 x3014
Fish and Wildlife Service	George Smith	303-236-5322
	Keith Rose	303-243-2778
	Chuck McAda	303-245-9319
Bureau of Land Management	Roy Smith	303-239-3940
National Park Service	John Welch	303-249-7036
	Chuck Pettee	303-225-3535
	Rick Harris	303-641-2337
Bureau of Reclamation	Brad Vickers	801-524-5576
	Jim Schumacher	303-240-6300
	Lorrie West	303-248-0635
	Steve McCall	303-248-0638
	Coll Stanton	303-248-0660
	Ed Warner	303-248-0654