

WCS-PPage  
ADM-10.00

Subject: Navajo Unit Operations Meeting Notes

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of our August 17, 2004, meeting to coordinate Reclamation's operation of the Navajo Unit. The meeting was held in Farmington's Civic Center.

Highlights of the meeting include:

– The April through July actual inflow to Navajo Reservoir was 436,000 or 64 percent of the 30-year average.

– Releases are currently at 800 cubic feet per second (cfs) and adjustments to the releases will continue to be made as necessary to react to changing weather and stream flow conditions. The reservoir elevation on August 17, 2004 was 6025.31 feet which corresponds to 962,200 acre-feet of live storage; the reservoir is still recovering from the extremely low 2002 water year.

– No shortage was declared during the 2004 irrigation season, all demands have been met. With the recent rapid decline of tributary inflows downstream from the dam, the average weekly flow through the critical habitat for the endangered fish has been below the 400 cfs target base flow since August 5, 2004. Reclamation has been increasing the release from Navajo Reservoir since August 4, 2004, in an attempt to get back to the 400 cfs target base flow.

- The preliminary inflow forecast for 2005 is estimated to be around 79% of the 30 year average. However, this is very preliminary and will change as updated forecasts become available.

– The Navajo Reservoir Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been delayed pending completion of a biological opinion under the Endangered Species Act. There is no scheduled date for the FEIS to be completed. A Record of Decision would be signed a minimum of one month after the FEIS is released to the public.

–Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for reservoir operations for 2004. The preferred alternative in the EA was a minimum allowable release of 350 cfs throughout the irrigation season. An EA is being prepared for operations this winter (November 2004 to April 2005), and, if the ROD is not signed by the spring of 2005, an EA will be prepared for the 2005 irrigation season.

–The maintenance and repair work on the auxiliary outlet works gates is on schedule and anticipated to be completed by the end of this year.

If you have any suggestions on improving the operation meetings or the summaries of the meetings, please let us know. The next operation meeting will be held on **Tuesday, January 18, 2005 at 1:00 in the Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street)**. If

you have questions, please call Pat Page at (970) 385-6560 or Ruth Swickard at (970) 385-6523.

Sincerely,

Pat Page  
Water Management Group Chief

Enclosure

BC: Regional Director, Salt Lake City, UT

Attention: UC-400, UC-434, UC-438, UC-600, UC-723, UC-720, UC-726 (ea w/encl)

Director, Technical Service Center, Denver, CO

Attention: D-8510 (w/encl)

WCG-CDeAngelis, SMoyer, EWarner, DCrabtree, SMcCall, KOzga, CStanton, MSteves, JHock (ea w/encl)

WCD-PPage, RSwickard, JSimons, Klashmett, KBeck, MChiarito, BDodd, MVelasquez  
(ea w/encl)

## NAVAJO UNIT OPERATIONS MEETING

August 17, 2004

**Participation:** This meeting was held in Farmington, New Mexico at the Civic Center. The attendance list is attached.

**Purpose of Meeting:** The purpose of these meetings-- held 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.

### **2004 Water Year Summary**

The actual inflow into Navajo Reservoir during April through July 2004 was 436,000 or 64 percent of the 30 year average. The reservoir water surface elevation on August 17, 2004 was 6025.31 feet which corresponds to 962,200 acre-feet of live storage. The preliminary inflow forecast for 2005 is estimated to be around 79% of the 30 year average. However, this is very preliminary and will change as updated forecasts become available.

USGS calibrates the four gauges on the San Juan River below Navajo Reservoir at least twice a month; however the shift is not applied immediately to the website and there can be some discrepancies. The gauge at Bluff is the best gauge and is only calibrated once a month. There can be a large difference between Four Corners and Bluff gauges due to losses from phreatophytes and evaporation.

We are attempting to meet a target flow of 400 cfs downstream from the Animas River confluence, based on a seven-day average, although there have been days of flow below 400 cfs. Adjustments to the releases will be made as necessary to react to changing weather and stream flow conditions in order to meet downstream needs, including maintaining the target base flow for the endangered fish. The release from the reservoir is currently at 800 cfs.

### **Preliminary 2005 Operation**

The preliminary inflow forecast for 2005 is estimated to be around 79% of the 30 year average. However, this is very preliminary and will change as updated forecasts become available. As outlined in the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRIP) Operating Rule Decision Tree, under the most probable forecast for April through July, a spring peak release would be possible for seven days at 5,000 cfs, centered on June 4<sup>th</sup>. This is very preliminary; final decisions will be made next spring.

### **Navajo Dam Maintenance Activities**

The contract work for repair and maintenance of the auxiliary outlet works gates is on schedule and should be completed by the end of the year.

### **Navajo Reservoir / San Juan River Shortage Sharing**

Ten major water users in the San Juan River Basin developed and endorsed an agreement entitled, "Recommendations for San Juan River Operations and Administration for 2004" on October 21, 2003. While shortages have not been declared so far this year (and are not anticipated for the remainder of the year), the recommendations call for users to limit their diversions to the amounts and/or rates set forth in the agreement. This will allow for recovery of storage in Navajo Reservoir.

### **Navajo Reservoir Operations Environmental Impact Statement**

The Navajo Reservoir Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to describe the environmental impacts of alternatives for operating the dam and reservoir to implement the SJRIP flow recommendations has not been completed. The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Reclamation are trying to resolve issues associated with the Service completing a final biological opinion. The FEIS cannot be completed until the biological opinion is finalized. A Record of Decision would be signed a minimum of one month after the FEIS is released to the public.

With the expected continued delay in the FEIS, Reclamation has begun preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for winter 2004-2005 operations in order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The preferred alternative will be a minimum allowable release of 250 cfs from November 1, 2004, until the start of irrigation season (April 2005).

### **Agency/Organization Activities and Discussion of Related Activities**

**Navajo Nation** - during this irrigation season, irrigation diversions at Hogback and Fruitland have been limited as per the Recommendations for San Juan River Operations and Administration for 2004. A shortage did not have to be declared and everyone who participated should be proud. It was a real win-win situation.

**PNM** – the power plants have reduced their diversions, also. The Recommendations allowed everyone to survive the drought.

**Bloomfield Irrigation District** – started their irrigation release later than usual to save water. There was confusion on the shortage-sharing agreement (Recommendations for San Juan River Operations and Administration for 2004) regarding maximum diversion rates.

**BLM** – questioned which aspect of the flow recommendations (peak spring flows or target base flows) was more important for the fish. Asked if some of this water (that was released during

spring peak releases) could be saved to help with late season flows to keep the river higher during dry years. Response given was that both the peak releases and target base flows are important in mimicking the natural hydrograph. The flow recommendations are designed to aid in fish reproduction and to improve habitat. Expressed concerned about the low flows currently in the Bluff area.

**Wild Rivers Expeditions** – not having a great summer due to the low flows in the river, however, realized continuing drought conditions in the basin. Questioned the reliability/accuracy of the Four Corners gauge.

**Navajo State Parks** –having a good year with the higher reservoir levels.

**Colorado State Parks** – are also having a good year. Stated that they experienced the lowest elevation at which they can still operate (6,005 feet, which occurred last year). Recognized the bottom of active capacity being 5,990, but wanted Reclamation to keep in mind the 6,005 foot elevation when making decisions.

**New Mexico State Engineer's Office** – the state's website is up and running, still doing a few adjustments but feel free to visit the site at [www.ose.state.nm.us](http://www.ose.state.nm.us) -- click on button labeled Active Water Resource Management. The site contains information on diversions and stream flows. If you need any help or have any questions call Shawn Williams in the Aztec office at (505) 334-4572.

**New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission** - In response to a question from audience members, NMISC restated the State's position that they committed in the SJRIP to protect releases from storage made for the benefit of endangered fish. NMISC asked Reclamation if, under the operations identified in the EIS, inflow would be passed through the reservoir up to the amount necessary to satisfy downstream senior water rights. Reclamation's answer was "yes".

**Next Meeting** - Scheduled for **1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 18, 2005** at the Civic Center in Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street).

## **Attendance List – April 17, 2004 Navajo Operations Meeting**

Ashman, Rob, San Juan Generation Station, PNM, Waterflow NM  
Bloomfield, Dave, Arizona Public Service, Fruitland NM  
Crawford, Carroll, Bloomfield Irrigation District and Citizen, Farmington NM  
Cutler, Chris, Bureau of Reclamation, Salt Lake City UT  
Davila, Jennifer, Wild Rivers, Bluff UT  
Davis, Luci, BHP Billiton, Farmington NM  
Horner, Gary, Self, Farmington NM  
Kraft, Amy, Southwestern Water Conservation District, Durango CO  
Krakow, Bob, BIA-NIIP, Farmington NM  
Lane, Teresa, Hammond Conservancy District, Bloomfield NM  
Lashmett, Kirk, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Larvey, Matt, Public Service of New Mexico, Albuquerque NM  
Lee, Keith, San Juan Water Commission, Aztec NM  
McCall, Steve, Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction CO  
McKinstry, Mark, Bureau of Reclamation, Salt Lake City UT  
Montoia, Paul A., City of Farmington, Farmington NM  
Mueller, Steve, New Mexico State Parks, Navajo Dam NM  
Oxford, Bob, Citizen, Farmington NM  
Page, Pat, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Renfro, Jim, Lee Acres Water Association, Farmington NM  
Richmond, Linda, Bureau of Land Management, Bluff UT  
Sander, Melanie, Wild Rivers, Bluff UT  
Simons, John, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Sorrelhorse, James, Navajo Nation Dept. of Emergency Management, Shiprock NM  
Sosa, Nathan, Wild Rivers, Bluff UT  
Swickard, Ruth, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Tsosie, Bernadette, Navajo Nation, Water Management Branch, Ft. Defiance AZ  
Warner, Ed, Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction CO  
Weiss, John, Colorado State Parks, Arboles CO  
Williams, Shawn, NM State Engineer's Office, Aztec NM