

WCN-Ed Warner
ENV-4.00/PRJ-13.00

Subject: Navajo Unit Operations

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of our April 17, 2000 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 mid-April forecast predicted the most probable April-July inflow to Navajo Reservoir for this runoff season at 430,000 acre feet or 56 percent of normal. This is an increase from the mid-January April to July forecast of 350,000 acre feet or 45 percent of normal.

– Maintenance and repair work on the two 72" hollow jet valves has been scheduled to begin at the end of June, and last possibly through December. During the maintenance and repair work, these valves will be inoperable, and the total controlled release capability from Navajo will be reduced to 2,800 cfs (1,600 cfs for 4X4 gate outlet; 1,200 cfs for power plant releases).

In light of the high precipitation and runoff conditions experienced last summer and fall, present plans call for being at or below a reservoir elevation of 6072' going into July in order to provide a cushion of storage while the hollow jet valves are inoperable.

Since the time of the meeting Reclamation has finalized a plan to release a 1-day peak of 5000 cfs. Ramp up will begin on May 30, with the peak reached on June 05, and ramp down ending on June 12.

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, August 22 at 1:00 in the Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street)**. If you have questions, please call Ed Warner at (970) 248-0654 or Ruth Swickard at (970) 385-6523.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ed Warner
Water Resources Group Chief

Enclosure
Distribution (see attached list)

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)

WCN-CDeAngelis, SMoyer, EWarner, SMcCall, JOzga, CStanton, KFogelquist, MSteves,
RStorbo, JWright (ea w/ encl)

WCD-RSwickard, JSimons, SMattingly, KLashmett, KBeck, MCharito

Distribution list (e/encl)

NAVAJO OPERATIONS MEETING

April 17, 2000

Participation: This meeting was held in Farmington, New Mexico at the Civic Center.

Purpose of Meeting: The purpose of these meetings-- held in February, 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.

–Handouts provided included data on January-March 2000 operations; projected inflows to the reservoirs; and preliminary operation plans under maximum, most, and minimum probable water supply forecasts.

January-March 2000 Operation:

Monthly inflows to Navajo Reservoir over the January to March period ranged from 51% to 61% of average. Total unregulated inflow for this period was 68,500 acre-feet. Reservoir releases for this period remained at a constant 500 cfs.

Preliminary April-July 2000 Operation:

–Based on the mid-April forecast, the most probable April-July inflow to Navajo Reservoir was 430,000 acre-feet or 56 percent of the 30-year average. The January 1, April through July was 350,000 acre-feet or 45 percent of average. Even though forecasted inflows for the Most Probable conditions do not indicate a need for an endangered fish release, it is estimated that a release of approximately 82,000 acre-feet above the 500 cfs base release would be needed to reach a desired end of June target elevation of 6072'. This 6072' target elevation was set in order to provide additional storage space during the period while planned maintenance and repair work on the two 72-inch hollow jet valves makes them inoperable. This space is being provided in case a monsoon season similar to that experienced last year should repeat. Total controlled release capability during the work period (possibly running from mid-July through December) is limited to 2800 cfs (1200 cfs through the power plant; 1600 cfs through the 4x4 gate).

Several operation scenarios were presented:

–A one week ramp up, three days at 5000 cfs, and a one week ramp down would yield an

estimated end of June elevation close to the 6072' target. Meeting discussions also indicated that the target elevation could be met with a 1200 cfs release during May and June, as well as numerous other release rate and duration combinations.

– The Biology Committee recommended that given the need for a release, the minimum fish release of a one week ramp up, one week at 5000 cfs, and a one week ramp down be made. This release would yield a volume of 118,000 acre feet above the 500 cfs base release, and result in an estimated end of June elevation of 6069.4', or 2.6' below the 6072' target.

Discussion by representatives from the Biology Committee and the Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that any release rate above base flow levels and less than 5000 cfs could result in sedimentation damage to backwater habitat area. Also, a 5000 cfs release for a duration shorter than the one week recommended minimum may also result in similar sedimentation impacts.

– A continued 500 cfs base release would result in an estimated end of June elevation of 6077.7', almost 6-feet above the desired target elevation.

Following discussions of possible operation scenarios, Reclamation indicated that a decision on planned operations would be announced in a press release.

It was noted that snowpack conditions can change considerably up or down between now and runoff, so these projections should be considered preliminary.

Navajo Unit Maintenance Work:

–Maintenance and repair work on the two 72" hollow jet valves has been scheduled to begin at the end of June, and last possibly through December. During the maintenance and repair work, these valves will be inoperable, and the total controlled release capability from Navajo will be reduced to 2,800 cfs (1,600 cfs for 4X4 gate outlet; 1,200 cfs for power plant releases).

Other Comments:

–Concern was expressed by several individuals that both high and low flows cause problems with existing diversions on the river. These diversions support communities as well as irrigation companies and industries.

–The Navajo EIS, will address many of the existing problems caused by high and low flows from the reservoir.

–Concern was expressed that with the seven year endangered fish study, no data has been presented that the flow recommendations are necessarily helping the fish. Is there any proof that the fish are using the habitat created by the high flows?

–Property owners on the San Juan River expressed their unhappiness concerning not having any state or federal funds to help to build up their lost land and to prevent any future loss.

High flows can result in property losses.

–At the next meeting, it was suggested that the Biology Committee discuss available evidence between the linkage between the biological response of the endangered fishes and the recommended flows.

Bureau of Reclamation:

–Reclamation will prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describing the environmental impacts of alternatives for operating the dam and reservoir to implement the Recovery Program’s flow recommendations. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is scheduled for release for public review in October 2000. Public comment period will be November and December 2000. This is the next formal opportunity for formal public participation. However, comments and concerns are welcome at any time contact Ken Beck at 970-385-6558. Information is also available at Reclamation’s Internet web site: www.uc.usbr.gov (select Environmental Studies, Summaries, & Reports).

National Weather Service:

–Long-term models show warmer and drier conditions through out the summer. There is a chance of a repeat of last years weather.

Next Meeting - Scheduled for **1:00 on Tuesday August 22**, at the Civic Center in Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street).