

WCS-PPage
ENV-4.00/PRJ-13.00

Subject: Navajo Unit Operations

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of our January 23, 2001 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-January forecast predicted the most probable April-July inflow to Navajo Reservoir for this runoff season at 735,000 acre feet or about 95% percent of average seasonal runoff. Runoff predictions often change significantly between January and May, so inflow predictions should be considered **very preliminary** at this time.

-Maintenance and repair work on the two 72" hollow jet valves contract work is on schedule and should be completed by mid-March.

_____ - Based on preliminary forecasted inflows, and the Biology Committee's desire to have high releases in the spring versus the fall or winter, we will attempt to make a spring release from Navajo Dam for endangered fish.

~ - We will attempt to adjust releases from the dam, as necessary, to maintain a target base flow of between 500 cfs and 1000 cfs in the critical habitat section of the San Juan River. Minimum releases from the reservoir are scheduled to be 500 cfs, with the exception of the proposed low-flow test planned for this summer during which releases will be dropped to 250 cfs for a period ranging from five to ten days.

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 **Monday, April 23, 2001 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,

/s/

Pat Page, Team Leader
Water Management Team
Resource Management Division

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-PPage, RSwickard, JSimons, KLashmett, KBeck, MCharito, BDodd, MVelasquez

Distribution list (e/encl)

NAVAJO UNIT OPERATIONS MEETING

January 23, 2001

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

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.

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

August-December 2000 Operation:

- Monthly basin inflows to Navajo Reservoir from August to December ranged from 21% to 56% of average. Total inflow for this period was 92,300 acre-feet. Reservoir releases for this time varied from 900 cfs to 500 cfs. Navajo Reservoir elevation was thirty feet below the spillway at elevation 6,055 feet, on December 31, 2000.

Preliminary January-July 2001 Operation:

–Based on the mid-January April-July forecast, the most probable April-July inflow to Navajo Reservoir was 735,000 acre-feet or 95 percent of the 30-year average.

- As outlined in the Operating Rule Decision Tree from the San Juan Recovery Implementation Program Flow Recommendations, and with the forecasted inflows expected for Most Probable conditions a spring peak release from Navajo Dam is not asked for this year. If inflows forecasted under Most Probable conditions do occur, and average inflows continue into the next water year, a release would be asked for in the fall or winter to meet desired target reservoir elevations in the spring of 2002. This being the case, the Biology Committee has indicated that a minimum spring fish release would be preferred in lieu of high fall or winter releases to meet target elevations. Therefore, based on present preliminary forecasted inflows, we will attempt to make a spring release for endangered fish species this year.

–The flow recommendations for the endangered fish call for target base flows in the critical habitat section of the San Juan River of between 500 cfs and 1,000 cfs. Reclamation

will attempt to adjust releases to meet this criteria, with the minimum release being 500 cfs. A twenty four hour notice will be provided to interested parties and the media before releases are increased. A one week notice will be given before a decrease is made.

–The Navajo Reservoir Operations Environmental Impact Statement team has rescheduled a proposed low flow test for late June to early July with the releases being reduced to 250 cfs for a period ranging from five to ten days. During this test, data will be collected to evaluate impacts on all involved resources.

Other Comments:

–A representative of the Bloomfield Irrigation District expressed concerns regarding the low flow test. Reclamation will initiate a public involvement program on the low flow test to gather input from all potentially affected parties. The Navajo Reservoir Operations EIS (discussed below) will address the impacts caused by high and low flows released from the reservoir.

Bureau of Reclamation:

–Reclamation will prepare an 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 EIS is scheduled for release for public review in February 2002. Public comment period will be March and April 2002. This is the next opportunity for formal public participation. It should be noted, however, that this schedule could be revised in the future. Comments and concerns are welcome at any time by contacting Ken Beck at 970-385-6558. Information is also available at Reclamation's Internet web site: www.uc.usbr.gov (select Environmental Programs, Navajo Dam and Reservoir Site).

–A bill authorizing construction of a scaled-down Animas-La Plata Project was passed in December. The project includes a pumping plant on the Animas River at Durango, a pipeline to carry the water to Ridges Basin southwest of Durango, a dam in the basin to create a reservoir that would store the water, and a pipeline from Farmington to Shiprock to serve the Navajo Nation.

Meeting Minutes - The current meeting minutes are located at Reclamation's Internet web site: www.uc.usbr.gov (select Reservoir Operations, Reservoirs, Navajo Reservoir, Meeting Notes).

Next Meeting - Scheduled for **1:00 p.m. on Monday, April 23**, at the Civic Center in Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street).