

WCS-PPage  
ADM-10.00

Subject: Navajo Unit Operations

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a summary of our August 15, 2002, meeting to coordinate Reclamation's operation of the Navajo Unit. The meeting was held in Farmington's Civic Center.

Highlights of the meeting include:

—This year's April through July runoff set an all time record low of 69,733 acre-feet or 10 percent of normal inflow into Navajo Reservoir. The April through July release was 197,000 acre-feet or 45% of average.

—If an average snowfall occurs this winter, there will be a peak spring release in 2003.

—A core group will be organized due to the extreme drought conditions to discuss whether to advise the Secretary of the Interior to declare a shortage and how this shortage should be shared by water users. Those with contracts and water rights will have the most impact on the decision. Reclamation will be sending out information as to when and where the first meeting will be held.

—Reclamation will continue to adjust releases from the reservoir, as necessary, to attempt to maintain a weekly average target base flow of between 500 cfs and 1,000 cfs in the critical habitat section of the San Juan River. Minimum releases from the reservoir will be 500 cfs this winter.

—There will be three public hearings on the draft Navajo Reservoir Operations Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS); 1) On October 1, 2002, 6 to 9 p.m., Farmington Civic Center, Farmington NM 2) on October 2, 2002, 6 to 9 p.m., Doubletree Hotel, Durango CO and 3) on October 3, 2002, 6 to 9 p.m., Community Center, Bluff UT. Written comments on the DEIS are due by November 4, 2002, and should be submitted to Ken Beck, Bureau of Reclamation, 835 East Second Avenue, Suite 400, Durango CO 81301; telephone (970) 385-6558; e-mail: navcomments@uc.usbr.gov.

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 **Thursday, January 21, 2003 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, DCrabtree, SMcCall, JOzga, KOzga., 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

August 15, 2002

**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.

### **2002 Operation**

–Handouts provided included a review of the 2002 operation, and proposed operation scenarios for the water year 2003.

### **April-July 2002 Operation**

–The April through July inflow was 69,700 acre-feet or 10 percent, an all time record low. The release to the San Juan River, during this time frame was 197,000 acre-feet or 45 percent of average. The April through July release for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project was 123,500 acre-feet. The reservoir water surface elevation at the end of July was 6029.87 feet which corresponds with 1,007,200 acre-feet.

–As outlined in the (San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Plan (SJRBRIP) Operating Rule Decision Tree and with an average or above average inflow forecast for this winter and next spring, a peak spring release from Navajo Dam will be required for 2003.

–The flow recommendations for the endangered fish call for weekly average target base flows in the critical habitat section of the San Juan River of between 500 cfs and 1,000 cfs. Reclamation will adjust releases to attempt to meet this criteria, with the minimum release being 500 cfs this winter. To the extent possible, a twenty four hour notice will be provided to interested parties and the media before releases are increased and a one week notice will be given before a decrease is made. The one week notice for a decrease only applies in a non-flood control situation.

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

Arizona Raft Adventures – Does the rafting industry have any influence concerning releases

from Navajo Reservoir?

A: Not unless they obtain a water or storage right.

#### New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides

Bureau of Land Management – How critical are the peak fish releases in the spring? The fish are surviving with no peak release during 2002. A: Fish are being monitored, they may not need a peak release during this drought period.

Q: Did culinary, M&I have their flows met this year? A: Yes, everyone's needs were met, where as without the dam being in place, there would have been shortage this year.

Q: Will next years river flows look similar to this year? A: It all depends on the winter snowfall. If the Animas River inflows go up, then Navajo will release less to still meet the fish requirements.

Q: What is the accuracy of the forecasts predicted for next year?

A: Can predict up to five days with high accuracy, after that it is all based on previous records. It's like driving fast through the fog, not sure what's out there.

Q: How would Animas La Plata Project (ALP) affect operations in a similar year like this in the future.

A: ALP would have no affect on operations of Navajo Reservoir.

Colorado Water Resources – What are the non-power releases of 860 cfs for? A: Non-power releases are for maintaining the habitat in the endangered fish recovery area.

Q: How much water do the fish need? A: The reach between Farmington and Lake Powell needs to be maintained between 500 and 1,000 cfs on a seven day average.

Q: What does the term live capacity mean? A: Live capacity is the water that can be released from the dam to the river through the outlet works.

National Weather Service will continue to provide forecasts to assist Reclamation in decision making.

Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work with Reclamation concerning the endangered fish habitat requirements.

Bureau of Indian Affairs – NIIP – What do we do about a shortage situation? A: Reclamation believes it is to early to declare a shortage. Let's get folks together over the next few months to discuss criteria to declare a shortage. Develop criteria and action by November 1, 2002.

Reclamation will be sending out letters next week concerning organizing this group.

#### San Juan Citizens Alliance –

Navajo Nation – How is the seven day moving average for critical fish habitat arrived at? A: It is the average of the two highest gauging stations on the San Juan River in a seven day period.

Q: What are interests in maintaining 500 cfs release in the winter? A: This is necessary for the fishery below the dam. There is a current court decree which does not allow releases below 500 cfs.

Q: Has Reclamation considered dipping into the 500 cfs minimum in order to increase probability of staying above elevation 5,990 feet. (Below this level NIIP can not release water through their head works.) A: EIS is considering however, it would take a court decree to change this injunction. Therefore it would not help for next spring.

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

Hammond Water Conservancy District

West Hammond Domestic Water Association

Keller-Bliesner Engineering representing BIA

City of Bloomfield

Public Service of New Mexico

Soaring Eagle Lodge - How much water is required by other users, such as City of Farmington and others with water rights? A: Releases can not be below 500 cfs because of the current injunction. The diversion rights are between 160 and 200 cfs. Inflow must be released to meet water rights. There is no contract with BLM for recreation purposes.

City of Farmington

Bloomfield Irrigation District

Southwest Water Conservation District asked are the high peak flows necessary? Reclamation will work closely with Fish and Wildlife Service to make this determination for next year.

Q: By using the last 39 years of records don't you miss critical years similar to this one?

A: The 39 years cover data from the construction of the dam through the present. Some numbers were obtained from the San Juan River model.

Agency/Input

Bureau of Land Management – Need as much data as possible to give to the public who calls concerning what the river is doing. Realize during this drought that water is limited. There has been enough water all summer to float a boat.

Other Comments:

–Reclamation is preparing the Navajo Reservoir Operations Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to describe the environmental impacts of alternatives for operating the dam and reservoir to implement the SJRBRIP flow recommendations. Comments and concerns are welcome at any time by contacting Ken Beck at 970-385-6558.

Next Meeting - Scheduled for **1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21, 2003** at the Civic Center in Farmington, New Mexico (200 West Arrington Street).

Attendance List – August 15, 2002 Navajo Operations Meeting

Ashcroft, Nick, West Hammond Domestic Water Assoc., Bloomfield NM  
Ashman, Rob, Public Service Company of NM, Waterflow NM  
Austin, Steve, Navajo EPA, Shiprock NM  
Bliesner, Ron, Keller-Bliesner Engineering, Logan UT  
Boretsky, John, New Mexico Council of Outfitters & Guides, Albuquerque NM  
Branstetter, Brian, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque NM  
Carithers, Aaron, Anasazi Anglers, Hesperus CO  
Crabtree, Dan, Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction CO  
Cutler, Chris, Bureau of Reclamation, Salt Lake City, UT  
Cutler, Richard, Private, Farmington NM  
Eckley, John R., City of Bloomfield, Bloomfield NM  
Harris, Steve, Southwest Conservancy District, Durango CO  
Himmerich, David, Bureau of Land Management, Monticello UT  
Johnson, Lawrence W., Soaring Eagle Lodge, Navajo Dam NM  
Lane, Teresa, Hammond Conservancy District, Bloomfield, NM  
Leeper, John, Navajo Nation Division of Water Resources, Window Rock, AZ  
Lonie, Steve, Arizona Raft Adventures, Flagstaff AZ  
Martinez, Jose E., Bloomfield Irrigation District, Bloomfield NM  
Nordby, Brett, Colorado Division of Water Resources, Durango CO  
Page, Pat, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Parry, Brian, Bureau of Reclamation, Salt Lake City, UT  
Pollack, Stanley, Navajo Nation Dept. of Justice, Window Rock AZ  
Richmond, Linda, Bureau of Land Management, Bluff UT  
Ruybalid, Casimiro, City of Bloomfield, Bloomfield NM  
Scott, Jack, Aztec NM  
Simons, John, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Sims, Michael, City of Farmington, Farmington NM  
Smith, Raymond, Bureau of Indian Affairs, NIIP, Farmington NM  
Smith, Russell, Hammond, Bloomfield NM  
Stant, Jack, West Hammond Domestic Water, Bloomfield NM  
Swickard, Ruth, Bureau of Reclamation, Durango CO  
Tavener, John, San Juan Guide Association, Aztec NM  
Tsosie, Bernadette, Navajo Nation –Water Management Branch, Ft. Defiance AZ  
Turney, Pat, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, Santa Fe NM  
Uilenberg, Brent, Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction CO  
Valverde, Art, Bureau of Reclamation, Farmington NM  
Walden, Larry, Bureau of Reclamation, Farmington NM  
Warner, Chuck, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Durango CO  
Warner, Ed, Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction CO  
Weiss, John, Colorado State Parks, Arboles CO  
Wethington, Marc, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Navajo Dam NM