

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2008 ANNUAL REPORT**

Project No.: C-14 & PIP 12C

I. Project Title: Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CRO) – Operations and I&E

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III. Project Summary:

This project involves voluntary operational coordination of selected reservoirs in the Colorado River Basin upstream from the confluence of the Colorado and Gunnison rivers. The goal is to enhance spring peak flows to improve endangered fish species habitat in the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River without diminishing reservoir yields or affecting the timing of reservoir filling. Participating reservoirs in the past have included Green Mountain and Ruedi (Reclamation), Wolford Mountain (Colorado River Water Conservation District), Dillon and Williams Fork (Denver Water), and Willow Creek and Granby (Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District & Reclamation). Coordinated Reservoir Operations occur in years when runoff conditions allow participating reservoirs to contribute without affecting their yield. The intent of CRO is to attempt to coordinate releases of inflow to enhance the natural peak flows on the Colorado for 10 days to two weeks. This typically occurs during the last week of May and the first week of June. In 2008, coordination meetings were initiated on April 21, 2008, and continued through June 9, 2008.

IV. Study Schedule: 1995 - present

V. Relationship to RIPRAP: Colorado Mainstem Action Plan 1.A.5.I.

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2008 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tasks for the FY08 Water Year included: maintaining effective participant and public communications regarding CRO operations, developing peak enhancement operating plans, performing required coordination and maintenance activities to facilitate CRO as water supply allowed.

Because of concerns that peak flows might reach flood stage, reservoir outflows were not increased during early stages of peak runoff. Instead, reservoir operators

waited until early June, when flood concerns abated, to increase reservoir releases for the Colorado River section near Grand Junction. Peak flows were lower than expected, and releases were made as streamflows started decreasing following the peak runoff in an effort to maintain desired flows in the 15-Mile Reach for additional days.

Pursuant to the CRO Implementation Plan, initial discussions were held in March following receipt of the National Weather Service's projections. From that time, coordination calls were held among the participating entities and reservoir operators developed peak enhancement operating plans.

Press releases and e-mail notifications to the public were distributed, and Reclamation conducted one interview with the Aspen Times that was published in several of the Roaring Fork Valley newspapers. Potential coordinated operations were presented at several public meetings including the Annual Ruedi Operations meeting and the State of the River Meetings for the Roaring Fork, Upper Colorado, and Upper Blue river basins.

The participating reservoirs voluntarily by-passed additional inflow above their normal operating plans as part of CROPS as follows:

Green Mountain Reservoir	400 – 450 cfs	approximately 5 days
Ruedi Reservoir	400 cfs	approximately 5 days
Windy Gap Reservoir	180 cfs	approximately 3 days
Willow Creek Reservoir	70 cfs	approximately 3 days

Wolford Mountain Reservoir, operated by the Colorado River Water Conservation District, and Williams Fork Reservoir, operated by Denver Water, had filled and were spilling during runoff. They therefore were already bypassing all inflow and could not increase their inflow bypass for CROPS. A detailed report, documenting this years operations will be prepared at a later date.

VII. Recommendations: The Recovery Program should continue to support the efforts of and encourage participation in Coordinated Reservoir Operations. The participating entities should work with the NWS Colorado River Basin Forecast Center to improve peak runoff forecasts. The ongoing effort should continue to refine and improve the coordination process, and address issues including identification of inundation levels downstream of participating reservoirs, improved communication & coordination, and improved accounting and monitoring. Additionally, the Recovery Program's I&E Committee is encouraged to work with Participants and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve public education of CRO's role and function in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

VIII. Project Status: The Coordinated Reservoir Operations is an ongoing activity and will continue to refine and improve the process and address issues identified to allow for greater effectiveness of the effort.

