

Dated: April 15, 2014

## April 15, 2014, Water Acquisition Committee Conference Call Summary

Participants: Brent Uilenberg, Michelle Garrison, James Greer, Tom Pitts, Jana Mohrman, Tom Chart, Andrew Gilmore, Kevin McAbee, Melissa Trammell, Laura Belanger, Bart Miller, Ray Tenney, and Angela Kantola.

Assignments are indicated in the document in bold, preceded by a ">".

### **CONVENE 9:00 a.m.**

1. **Introductions, review/modify agenda**
2. **Review 12/19/13 meeting summary** – Jana said she previously added information on the Yampa roundtable and Andrew helped clarify the “April Hole” issue. The summary was approved as is.
3. **Hydrology/Water Acquisition Committee updates**
  - Price River – Kevin McAbee recalled that the PDO has been working with UDWR to discuss the potential for using their water rights at Desert Lakes WMA to assist in providing flows in the lower Price River. They met in February, UDWR and said they are interested in pursuing the idea, but physical limitations (leaky dirt ditch system, sediment build-up in a number of the ponds) preclude trying it in 2014 because those limitations require the full water right to provide waterfowl habitat. UDWR is investigating the possibility of dredging ponds and piping some of the ditch to provide additional flexibility. One idea suggested was dedicating one pond to storage for water releases (which UDWR didn’t believe would significantly impact waterfowl reproduction). Emery Water Conservation District is putting in additional meters to help monitor water that is provided to the WMA and better understand the water they’re receiving. 2014 will focus on finding funding for physical changes, but if they have the opportunity to provide water, they will do so and monitor how it works.

Jana said that in 2015, PacifiCorp will retire a power station near Price, Utah. The plant has a 25 cfs water right (same diversion structure as town of Price) that would be retired in 2015. Jana has been discussing need for water with PacifiCorp. Tom Pitts asked if we’ve talked to the State Engineer’s Office about what it would take to convert this to some kind of instream flow right; Jana said she’s only discussed it briefly with Marc Stilson. James Greer said a change of use could be filed, but much will depend on specific conditions of that water right (>James will ask Marc about it). Jana noted that Utah has installed PIT tag readers to better understand the three species.

Jana noted that another suggestion has been to conduct an economic analysis of what a flowing stream could bring to the town of Price.

Tom Pitts asked if we've been in touch with the Price River Enhancement Committee (the group working with BLM on Price River restoration); Jana said she hasn't yet. >Tom Pitts encouraged the PDO to contact them.

- Snowpack and Flaming Gorge, Gunnison and Yampa operations – Jana reviewed hydrologic conditions (see attachment); the northern part of the basin should see moderately wet conditions, but southern/western portions are not as wet.
- White River SOW for Management Plan – Michelle Garrison has spoken with AMEC (currently working in Yampa and White basins for Basin Implementation Plan) to see if they're interested (though this will need to go out for bids); AMEC is interested and will ask if the Basin Roundtable folks are supportive. The timing of contracting may be delayed by a change in Colorado's contracting system; Michelle anticipates doing the contracting in July. >Michelle will share the draft RFP that Jana and she developed with the Committee. Key tasks in that draft RFP are:
  - ✓ Conduct 1st workshop on StateMod and initial work plan
  - ✓ Select tools and alternatives for scenario analysis with draft flow recommendations,
  - ✓ Conduct scenario analysis,
  - ✓ Draft Management Plan including a suite of recovery actions needed to offset depletion effects,
  - ✓ Develop cooperative agreement and initiate NEPA / ESA compliance, USFWS drafts PBO concurrently,
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Tom Pitts asked if we need to adjust the RIPRAP to reflect the current expected timeframe. The PDO's office checked the RIPRAP schedule for the White River Management Plan (goes through FY15), so we'll wait until next year to determine if any adjustment is needed.

- Dinosaur National Monument – Melissa Trammell said that Mark Foust has been appointed as the new supervisor (previously of Glacier NP); Melissa said she'll be briefing him on the Recovery Program and the Flaming Gorge flow request tomorrow.
- Colorado State Water Plan: Colorado Roundtables – Jana said she's discussed endangered species needs with Yampa and Colorado roundtable participants. The three west slope roundtables list similar priorities in their basin implementation plans, which include "ensure that endangered species needs do not negatively impact future in-basin uses." Bart Miller asked if the nonconsumptive uses are incorporating endangered species flow needs; Jana said they are. Andrew Gilmore said the Colorado Roundtable is using existing modeling. Michelle said the draft basin implementation plans are due in July. They will be reviewed internally, but Michelle doesn't know who else may be reviewing them. CWCB staff is responsible for incorporating the basin implementation plans into a draft Statewide Water Plan that will go out for public review (probably preceded by IBCC committees review). >Michelle will find out the review

process for the basin plans and get that information back to the Committee. Tom Pitts asked how the Recovery Program will be addressed in the State Water Plan. Michelle said Becky's section will draft it and Michelle's section will review.

- Geomorphology work group – Tom Chart said this group has been discussing validating the spring flow recommendations as related to channel processes (stems back to Cory William's project #85f). What's necessary to achieve sediment transport as identified in the Pitlick report. Cory's results were inconclusive as related to duration, but called into question the half bank and bank full recommendations. The Geomorphology work group's task is to help interpret results and how doing on sediment transport throughout basin. The group consists of: *LaGory, Chart, Jana, Pitlick, Williams, Tom Pitts, Dan Luecke early on, Jack Schmidt, David Topping, Bart Miller, Toby Minear, Laura Belanger, Dave Lytle, Paul Grams, Andrew Gilmore, Dave Campbell, Blair Greimann*. The group has looked at thresholds for initial and significant motion on the Gunnison, but also broader uncertainties and what are main questions for spring peak portion of flow recommendations basinwide. Group recommended four focus areas (and has recognized where they're being addressed: (1) peak flows needed to maintain the connection of floodplain wetlands to the main channel; (2) peak flows needed to prevent channel narrowing; (3) peak flows needed to maintain spawning habitats and other gravel and cobble-bed benthic habitats; and (4) peak flows needed to build and maintain connected backwater habitats. Kirk LaGory is making the first round of changes to a white paper it will go out for the second time for the work group's review at the end of next week. The next step will be to work the recommendations into the Programs work planning and research. Also considering tapping into the fine-sediment monitoring stations that Cory Williams is placing in the Yampa and Green Rivers and perhaps expand those somewhat. Tom said he anticipates sharing the white paper with the Water Acquisition and Biology committees sometime this summer. Tom Pitts said underlying motive for this effort is that update flow recommendations so they can pass muster with states (one requirement of delisting is legal protection of flows). Tom is concerned about the draft white paper's 5-year study plan, since the Program needs to get to final flow recommendations as soon as possible. Tom Chart agreed that the committees will need to discuss this.

Jana said that given this year's moderately wet conditions, there's potential for bedload transport, and we have an opportunity to apply measuring equipment that won't be used in San Joaquin River. For the cost of travel (\$4,200), a California USGS hydrologist funds would set up hydrophones on three locations in the Gunnison River to measure material movement during bankfull. Suspended sediment has a high-pitched sound frequency, whereas the heavier the material the lower the sound frequency as they bang around on the bed of the river. USGS would install the hydrophones then provide an abbreviated "methods" paper to report results. Tom Chart said this is a little "cart before the horse," but bedload sampling is very expensive, and acoustic detection may be a useful tool. John Pitlick thought it worth pursuing as a proof of concept approach taking advantage of bigger flows in Gunnison this year. If the PDO can figure out how to pay for USGS travel, this would be way of testing this technique and getting some preliminary information. Jana has asked USGS for a brief proposal outlining what we'd get out of this. Tom Chart said the Program would have to be clear that providing travel funds to test the technique in 2014 **does not** commit the Program to a long-term approach (the Program will prioritize any new work based on the outcome of the white paper). If May 1 runoff is only average, we'd have only two days of bankfull flows, which might be risky, but moderately wet

conditions would provide ten days at bankfull and could be worth the effort. >Jana will share the proposal with the WAC for e-mail approval.

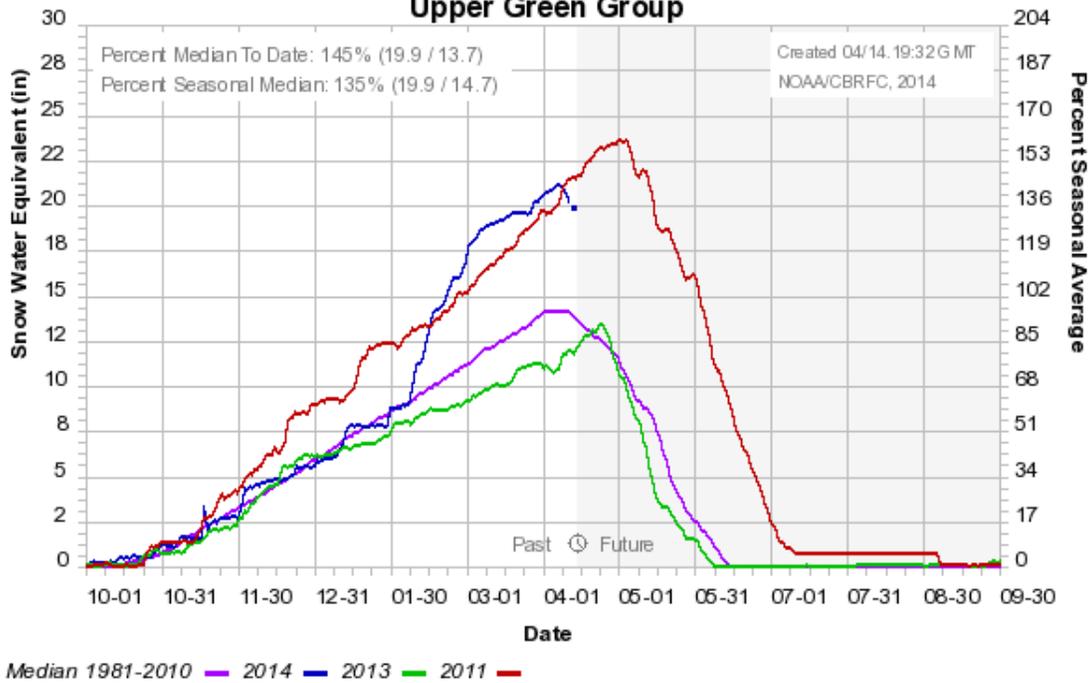
- GRUWAT – James Greer said they’re working on analyzing modeling results. They’ve had conference calls with Bob Muth and Larry Crist (flow recommendation authors). James has drafted a document on how they will analyze the modeling results. One concern is that the recommendations expected that classifications during baseflow operations generally remain the same during a season; however the ROD allows changes to meet reservoir stage targets and when modelled these classifications change quite often. Therefore, Utah is working on how to analyze model results based on this discrepancy. James said he should have a draft document in the next couple of weeks and results within next couple of months. Utah also is waiting for information from Reclamation on how they set the classifications in their rules/model and should receive that this week. James believes they’re still on track with the revised RIPRAP schedule.
- 15-Mile Reach “April Hole” – Tom Pitts alerted his executive committee to the problem and the need to address it and subsequently held a meeting at Colorado Water Congress in late January to discuss. Questions: is it predictable, if predicted in future, what can be done, and what the original causes were. A subsequent conference call indicated that in late March 2013 there were NOAA predictions that flows could drop as low as 200 cfs in the 15 Mile Reach (identified in HUP phone call), but the recovery program was unsure of what actions could be taken, the majority were concerned about maintaining as much storage as possible for late summer use. Then severe cold caused flows to drop even lower (below 50 cfs). The concern is now being factored into HUP calls and Tom Pitts thinks a future response would be very different (therefore, the likelihood of this happening again are reduced). One recommendation was that if these conditions were to develop again, water users need a target to aim for (e.g., 200, 500, 600 cfs?) to work on mitigation measures. Tom Pitts will prepare a summary memo. The issue also raised question about the availability of FWS and other pools for early April releases. Jana added that they’ve met with HUP group in person and on phone and folks seem willing to help as they are able (e.g., perhaps operate the two check structures above Grand Junction a little differently) if the situation were to develop again. Had this year been a dry year, we had carry-over water we might have used from Granby. Tom Pitts said using carry-over water is one of the ideas suggested for how to solve the problem when/if it occurs. Tom Pitts said this also will relate to CFOPS operation. The April Hole is not a threat this year. Jana and Tom Chart thanked Tom Pitts for his leadership on this and said how much the PDO appreciates everyone’s cooperation. Tom Pitts noted that if the situation developed again in a future year, it’s possible that the group could decide to let flows drop if expect water needed more later, but would need to make that decision openly (and weigh in biologists concerns early on). We may need to ask the State Engineer if we could legally release water in April. Tom Chart said it will be very helpful to understand what our options are if we face these conditions again.
- CFOPS – Tom Pitts updated the last draft and sent it to the working group April 2 to identify additional information needs to finalize. Tom has asked for feedback by April 23 (and has heard back from Denver Water). When he has a credible draft, Tom will send to this Committee for review.

4. **DC briefing trip** – Tom Pitts said they met with the congressional delegations, appropriations and authorizing committees, and the Administration last week. Tom Pitts couldn't attend the meetings with the Administration, but Henry Maddux reported that they went well. Across-the-board, bipartisan support of the recovery programs remains. The trip participants asked the delegation to support of the appropriations in Reclamation's and the Service's budgets. Some of the members offered to talk to or send letters to appropriations subcommittees (we no longer do broad support letters). Tom said they let the delegation know that in 2017 we expect to ask for extension of power revenue funding (expires in 2019). Trip participants remain convinced of the critical nature of these in-person contacts in Washington, D.C. to keep the recovery programs before our delegation. Tom Pitts said the briefing document was excellent and well-received and thanked Melanie Fischer for all her work on it as well as her help with the trip arrangements. Tom said Pete Cavalli's luncheon presentation went well, but attendance was again low, so they don't plan to do these lunches in the future. Melissa Trammell said the National Park Service representative who attended the Interior meeting appreciated it very much. Tom Pitts and Henry Maddux will prepare a brief trip report.
5. **Capital projects update** – Brent Uilenberg said that the OMID check structures are completed and are operating, so he expects some reduced diversion this summer as a result. Reclamation is now working to determine the performance metric for this conservation system. The next phase of construction is the regulating reservoir; a design package and bid documents have been submitted and they plan to award the contract this year with construction planned for fall of 2014 completion summer 2015 (with potential irrigation water savings in late 2015). The best approach for Phase 3 construction looks like "miscellaneous structures" (pipeline, SCADA, valve and other control systems at the end of the system), and then Reclamation will determine funds remaining for piping. Full completion is anticipated in FY16 or possibly FY17, depending on funding. Tusher Wash PIT installation is complete (also at Hogback). A fish barrier weir is being considered at Tusher, similar to Hogback, so this year's Hogback results will be important. A draft O&M contract was provided to water users for their review (would want to get this in place prior to award of construction contract). Results of 2013 operation of the Grand Valley Water Management project are overdue because Reclamation is reviewing diversion records with Division 5.
6. **Schedule next meeting, webinar, or conference call** – Jana suggested another meeting in the fall after base flows unless something else comes up earlier (e.g., geomorphology white paper). Jana will send out a Doodle poll at the appropriate time. Other items for Committee consideration may include Tom's write-up on the April Hole and an approach to evaluating Green River flow recommendations.

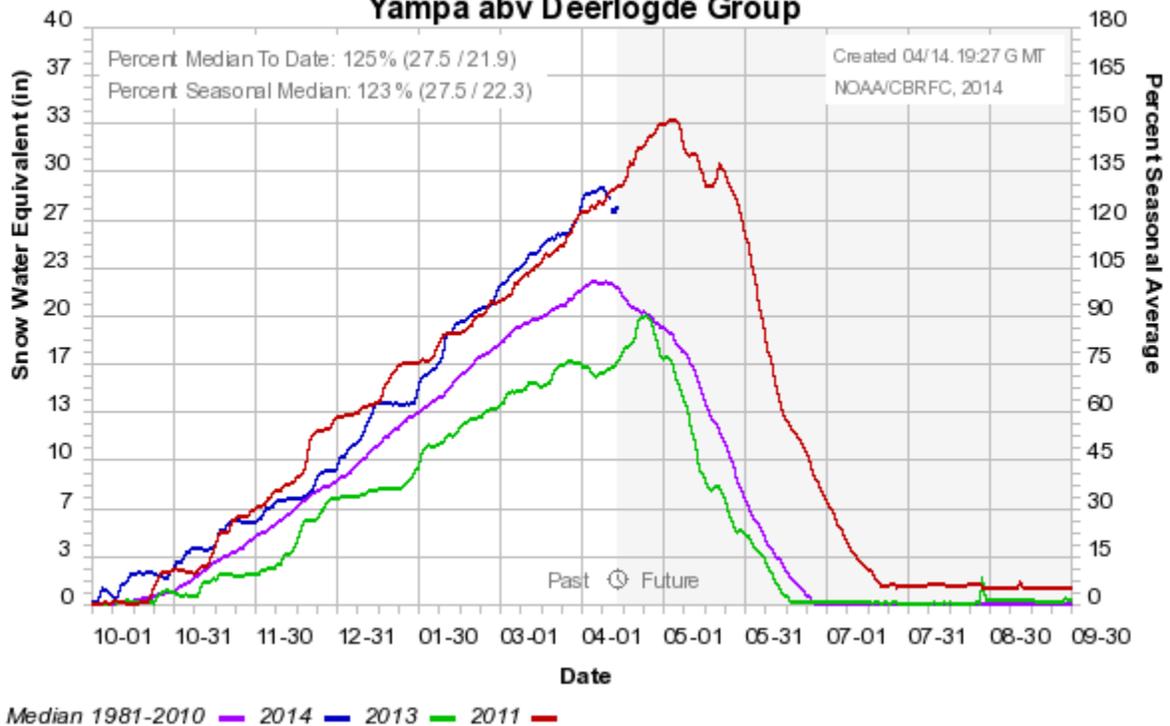
**ADJOURN 10:51 a.m.**

Attachment

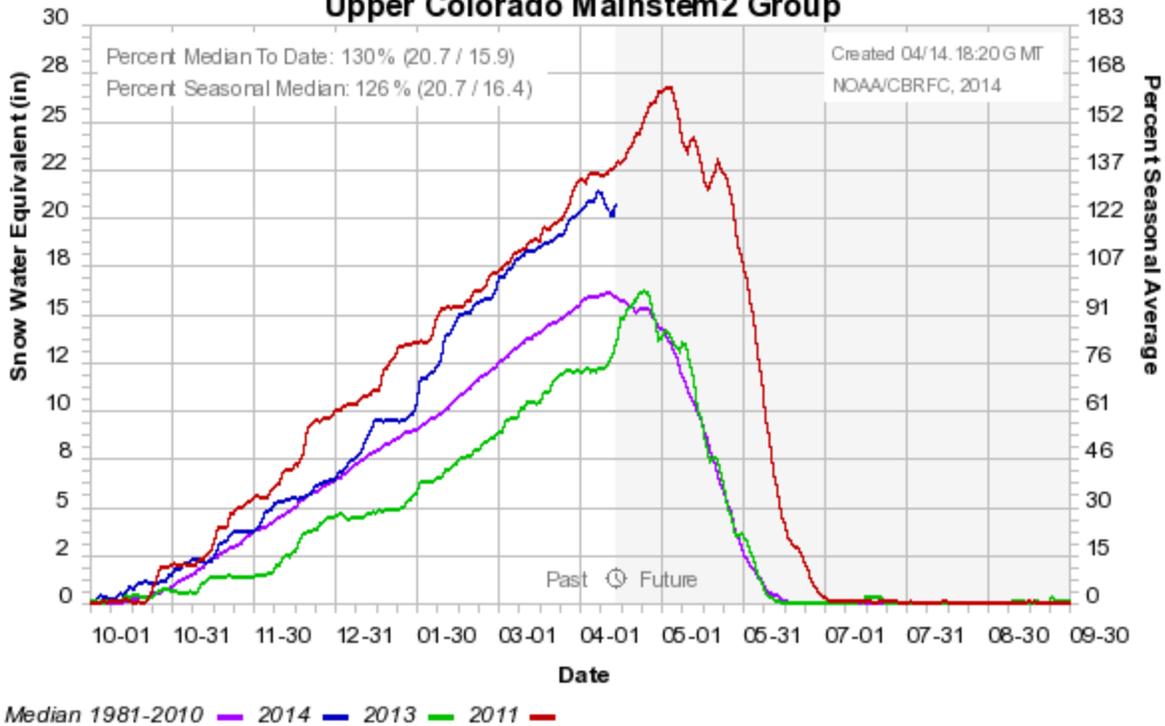
### Colorado Basin River Forecast Center Upper Green Group



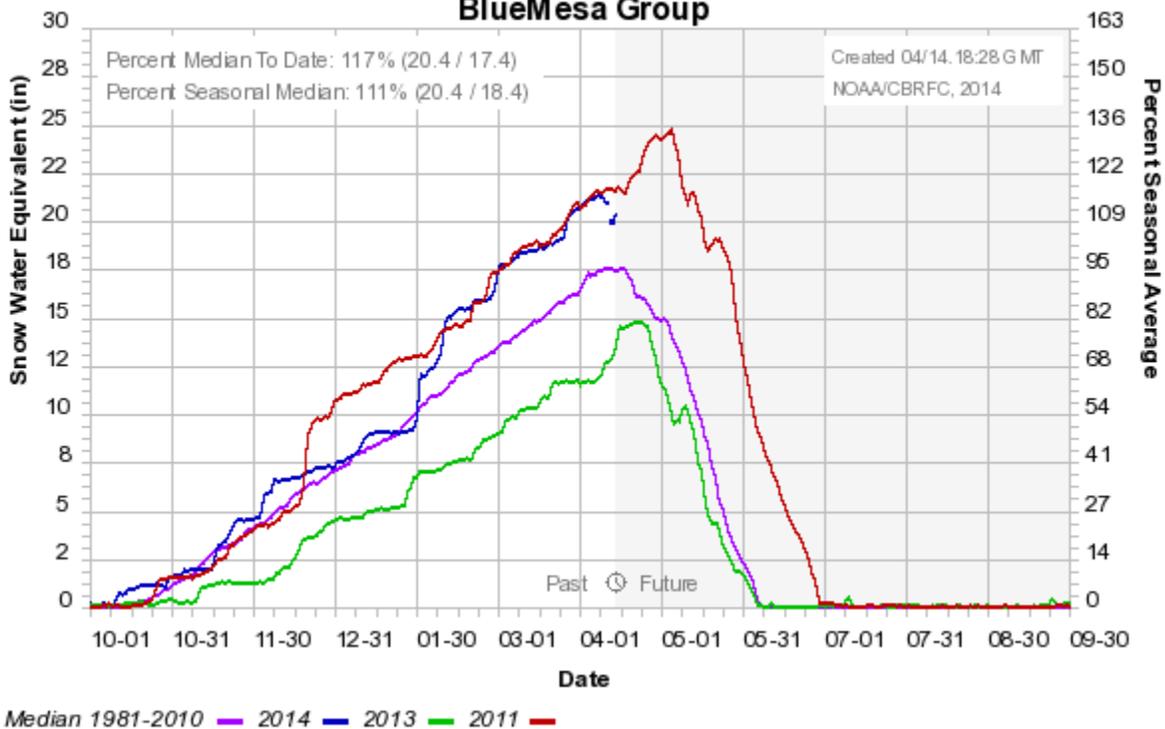
### Colorado Basin River Forecast Center Yampa abv Deerlogde Group



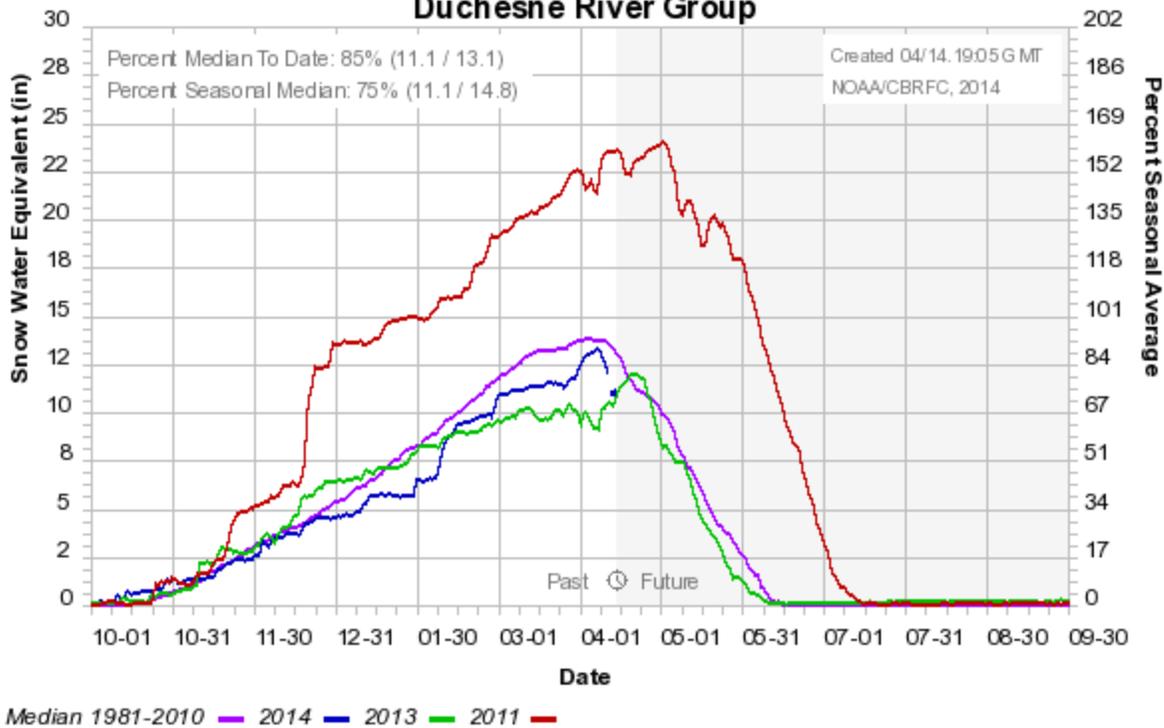
**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center  
Upper Colorado Mainstem2 Group**



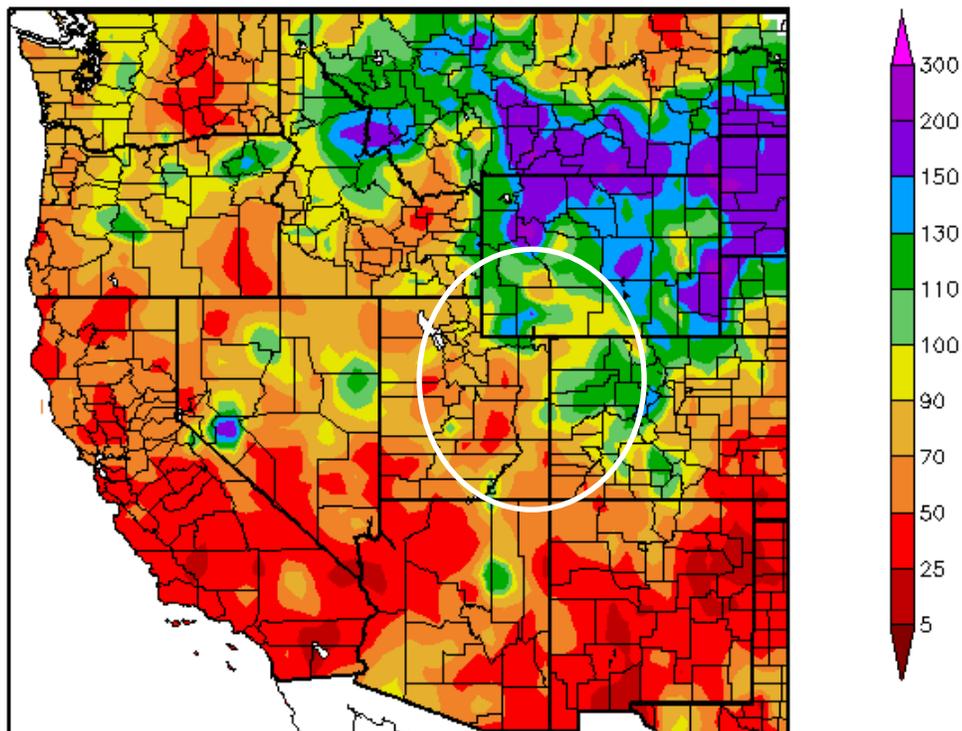
**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center  
BlueMesa Group**



**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center  
Duchesne River Group**



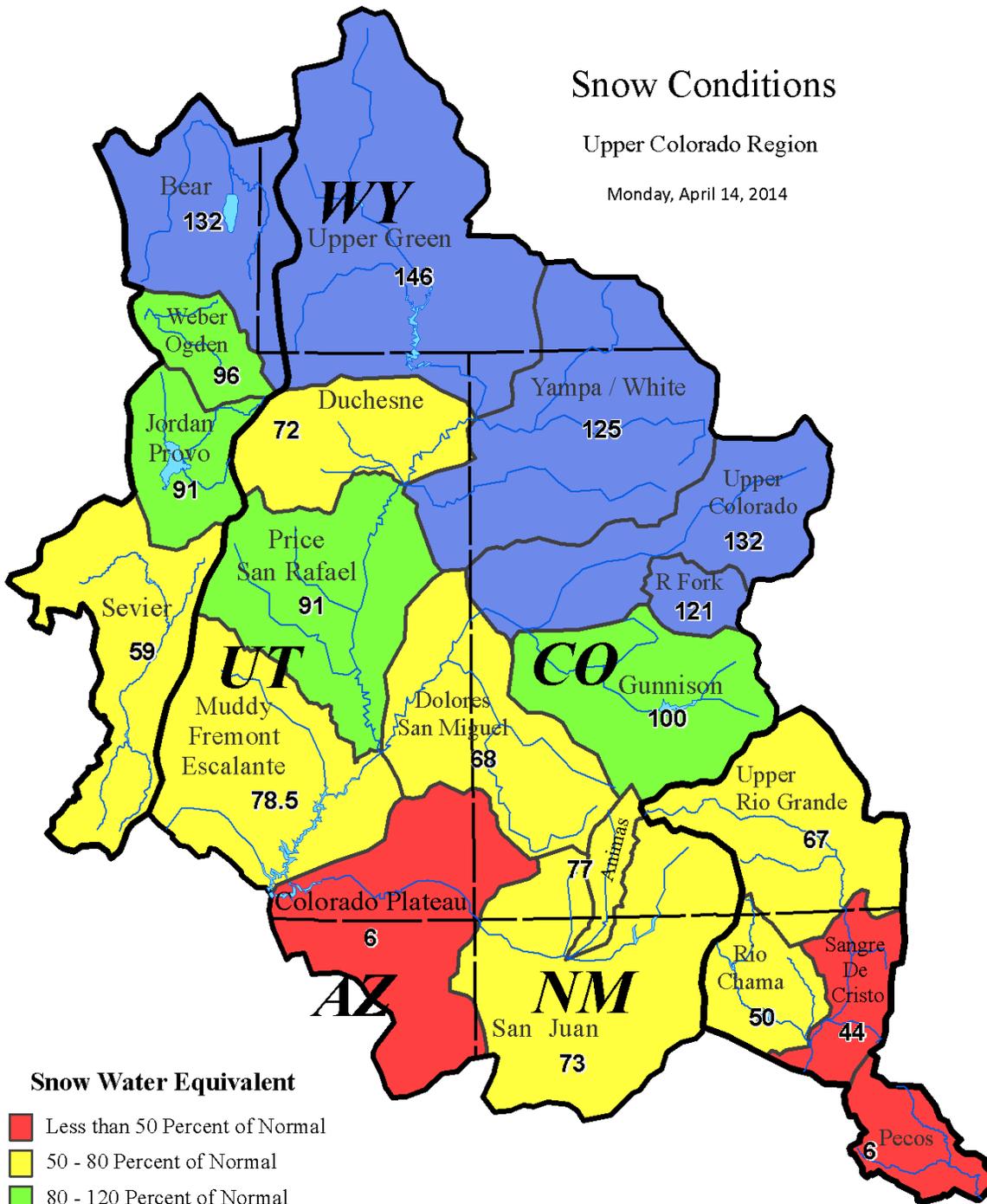
**Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)  
10/1/2013 – 4/13/2014**



# Snow Conditions

Upper Colorado Region

Monday, April 14, 2014



## Snow Water Equivalent

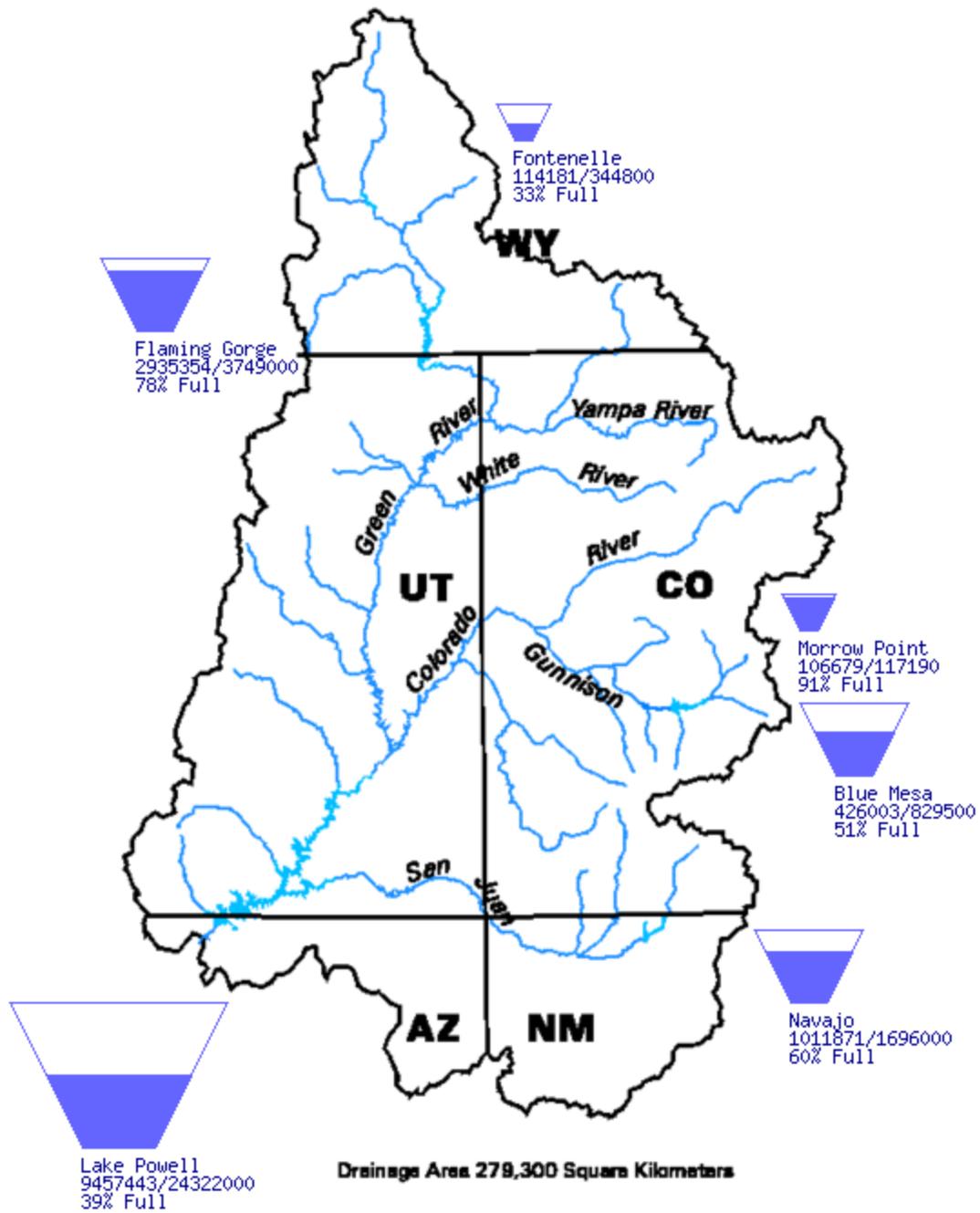
- Less than 50 Percent of Normal
- 50 - 80 Percent of Normal
- 80 - 120 Percent of Normal
- 120 - 150 Percent of Normal
- Greater than 150 Percent of Normal

Data Provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service

Upper Colorado  
**GIS**  
Region

Data Current as of:  
04/13/2014

## Upper Colorado River Drainage Basin



# Cooperative Water Management Provides Flows for Endangered Fishes

**Green River:** provides spring and baseflows, Flaming Gorge, ROD Feb. 2006

**Duchesne River:** provides spring and baseflows, BO July 1998

**15-Mile Reach—Colorado River:** Flows managed with reservoir pools and an irrigation efficiency project (Grand Valley Water Management, GVWM) (see table, top right and graph lower left), PBO Dec. 1999

**Price River:** minimum flows, Position Paper May 2012

**Coordinated Water Releases (1997-2013) Benefit Endangered Fishes in the 15-Mile Reach in the Colorado River**

Reservoirs		Acre-Feet	
Granby	43,871	Green Mtn	534,513
GVWM	113,692	Ruedi	301,750
Williams Fork	94,213	Willow Creek	9,853
Windy Gap	3,718	Wolford Mtn	143,616

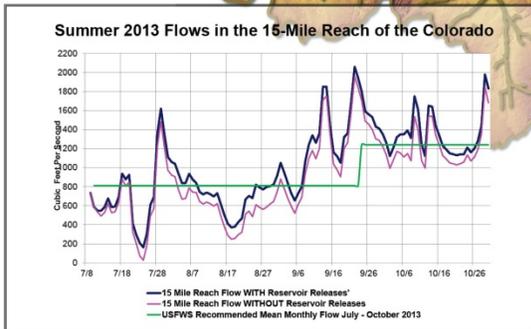
**Total Ac-Ft: 1,245,226**

**Yampa:** Elkhead Reservoir to manage baseflows, PBO Jan. 2005

**White River:** future Water Management Plan, PBO TBD

**Aspinall Unit:** assists to meet fish flows in Gunnison and Colorado Rivers, ROD May 2012

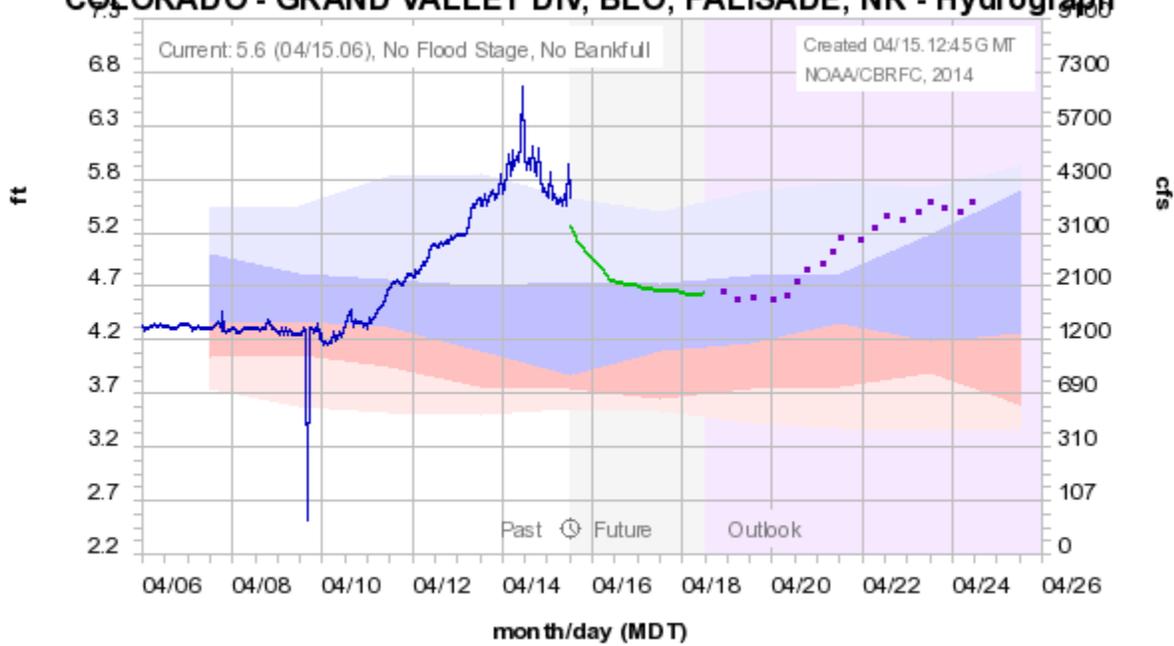
**San Juan River:** Navajo Reservoir releases to meet spring and base-flow target, ROD July 2006



**Reservoirs**  
**Critical Habitat**

**ROD = Record of Decision**  
**PBO = Programmatic Biological Opinion**

**Colorado Basin River Forecast Center**  
**COLORADO - GRAND VALLEY DIV, BLO, PALISADE, NR - Hydrograph**



Observed **—** Forecast (04/14.16:00) **—** Outlook (increasing uncertainty) **•••**  
 Historical Exceedance Probability (USGS): 90-75% **□** 75-50% **□** 50-25% **□** 25-10% **□**