

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2006 ANNUAL REPORT**

PROJECT NUMBER: C-14 & PIP 12C

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

II. Principal Investigator(s):

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III. Project Summary:

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 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 sufficiently high 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 ten days to two weeks. This typically occurs during the last week of May and the first week of June.

Despite an ongoing drought, poor runoff conditions, and low reservoir contents, reservoir operators were able to make limited coordinated releases to enhance peak flows in 2006. The project continues to seek improvement of the coordination process, public involvement, and participation of additional reservoirs.

IV. Study Schedule: 1995 - present

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

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2006 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tasks for the FY06 Water Year included: maintaining effective participant and public communications regarding CRO operations, developing peak enhancement operating plans, performing required coordination and maintenance to facilitate CRO as water supply allowed.

This year, the water supply did allow for a CRO release, albeit a shortened one. Pursuant to the CRO Implementation Plan, initial discussions were held in March following receipt of the National Weather Service's projections. From that time, approximately ten coordination calls were held amongst the participating entities and each of them 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.

While snowpack estimates at the beginning of the spring looked very favorable, unfortunately, unseasonably hot weather the last two weeks of May and wind reduced snowpack at elevations above 10,000 feet. Despite the late dry conditions, significant CRO releases of inflow were able to be made during the third through the last week of May. Beginning on May 19th Ruedi, Green Mountain, Dillon, Williams Fork and Wolford Mountain reservoirs coordinated releases of inflow. Green Mountain, Dillon and Wolford releases ceased on the 25th. Williams Fork and Ruedi releases ceased on the 29th and 30th, respectively. Just over 2,000 cfs was added to the peak flows on the Colorado from May 21 through May 24 and, collectively, the participating reservoirs retimed releases of approximately 28,500 acre feet of inflow.

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 Team is encouraged to work with Participants and Fish and Wildlife 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.

