

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 1999 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT**

**RECOVERY PROGRAM
PROJECT NUMBER: PIP-7**

1. Project Title: Flaming Gorge Releases

II. Principle Investigator: Edward A. Vidmar
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III. Project Summary: Various public and private interests near the Green River are concerned about releases from Flaming Gorge Reservoir for endangered fish recovery purposes. Higher flows flood the farm lands in the low lying areas and alter the needs of the sport fishing industry in the upper reaches of the river who have expressed concern. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), through a Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Biological Opinion, has modified the releases from Flaming Gorge Dam to more closely resemble the natural hydrograph.

The Flaming Gorge Operations Working Group is comprised of all interested parties concerning Flaming Gorge operations, and has met regularly in January, April, and August to review the forecasted runoff and to establish the flow patterns for the spring, summer, fall, and winter, and still meet the requirements of the Biological Opinion. Reclamation, Western Area Power Administration (Western), and the Service are working together with the other members of the working group to attempt to operate Flaming Gorge in compliance with the Biological Opinion and meet the concerns of the interested parties.

Landowners are upset about their lands getting flooded. Research has indicated that the past practice of reducing Flaming Gorge releases as the Yampa River peaks to reduce the amount of flooding in the Jensen area may not be good operational practice related to the endangered fish in the Green River.

IV. Study Schedule: 1991 - Ongoing

22. Relationship to RIPRAP:

VI. Accomplishment of FY 99 tasks and deliverables, discussion of initial findings and shortcomings: Power plant capacity was achieved on May 11, 1999 and was maintained or exceeded until July 12, 1999. The bypass was opened on May 24, and run at 2,100 cfs until June 2, when the bypass release was raised to 4,200 cfs until June 10. The bypass releases were then raised to 6,000 cfs for a total release of 10,500 cfs until June 20th, when releases were reduced over the next 4 days to full powerplant capacity. A total of 225,000 acre-feet of water was sent through the bypass.

A peak average daily flow of 20,358 cfs was recorded at the Jensen gage on June 2, 1999. Flow at Jensen exceeded 14,000 cfs for 34 days starting on May 22nd, and running until June 24th. Flow at Jensen exceeded 18,000 cfs for 24 days starting on May 25th, running until June 7th, when flows dropped to 17,000 cfs for four days and starting again on June 11th, and running until June 21st. The Yampa River peaked at 15,600 cfs on May 26th. The flow of 14,000 cfs represents the flow at which the flooded bottom lands begin to receive water, and the 18,000 cfs flow is where private property begins to be inundated.

The usual meetings of January, April, and September were held this past year concerning Flaming Gorge releases. The smaller subgroup met at intermediate periods between the larger work group meetings. All of the goals of the work group were met by the conclusion of each of the meetings.

VII. Recommendations: Flaming Gorge will continue to be operated in compliance with the 1991 Biological Opinion, pending the release of the new Biological Opinion in 2000.

VIII. Project Status: On-Track & On-Going

IX. FY 99 Budget:

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| 1. Funds Provided: \$28,000 RIP | \$0 CRSP Revenues |
| 2. Funds Expended: \$21,000 RIP | \$0 CRSP Revenues |
| 3. Difference: \$ 7,000 \$0 | |
| 4. Recovery Program Funds Expended for Publication Charges: None | |

X. Signed: /S/ Edward A. Vidmar

Date: November 30, 1999