

Trip Report  
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HIC – CBRFC

April 5-7<sup>th</sup>, 2005

During April 5-7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 a multipurpose outreach trip was made to the WFO-GJT and southwest Colorado. Four main things were accomplished during this trip. I was accompanied by Doug Crowley (MIC, WFO-GJT), Brian Avery (SH, WFO-GJT), and Jim Pringle ( WCM, WFOGJT – for part of the trip).

We drove from Grand Junction to Durango. On the way to Durango we visited several river gaging sites. The main visit was a stop at the Hesperus gage on the La Plata River. The Flood Stage and Bankfull stage was very suspect, and we wanted to get a visual inspection to verify these stages. It was obvious the current FS and BF values were ‘way’ too low. We determined that the flood stage was about 4-5 feet above the current stage, and this would be revised which would put it at 7 feet.

The WFO-GJT office had set up a meeting with many local officials to apprise them of the large snowpacks and the highly elevated potential of flooding this spring. This meeting was held in Durango at the local USBR office. About 30 people attended this meeting, including local emergency managers, USBR, USGS, Tribe Representation, and Dept of Water Resources in Colorado. I (Dave Brandon) started the meeting with an overview of the CBRFC, how forecasts are made, a little about our web page and how the CBRFC relates to the WFO. I also passed out one of our new brochures that described the CBRFC. Brian followed up with a presentation on the state of the snowpacks, the specific forecast numbers, and potential ‘hot’ spots to watch out for. During this meeting the USBR in Durango showed great examples of how they are using the CBRFC forecasts to operate their reservoirs. They were very appreciative of the support they were receiving from the RFC and GJT offices.

A meeting was held in Pagosa Springs to discuss the recent dismantling of the USGS river gage and where we needed to go from there. The USGS was obviously upset about this, but the City ‘seemed’ to want to help out. With the high snowpacks, the NWS (and USGS) are very concerned about getting a working gage back in before the melt begins. The Pagosa City Manager and city rep, USGS, USE and NWS attended the meeting. The USGS suggested a new site be installed which is about 600-1000 feet above the old site. This would be on City land, and the city has agreed to construct a support structure on the bank where the USGS gage and NWS precipitation gages could be installed. They insured that this could be done within the next week. The advantage of this site is that the USGS has already taken some invert/slope readings and has a first cut rating curve that could readily be used. Once the City has built the structure, the USGS said that they would reinstall the gage, and inform the NWS when it was back up and running. The USGS also said that they would input the first-cut rating into the national database (this is where the NWS downloads the ratings). The main problem is that we (NWS) do not have a flood stage or bankfull for the new site. Once the gage is installed a first cut FS

and BF could be determined, but this will require an additional trip. Perhaps the USGS, when they level the gage in, could shoot a few levels to each bank and get a first cut natural BK reading.

On the last day I (Dave) spent a little time with Brian to explain some of the new features on the CBRFC web page.