



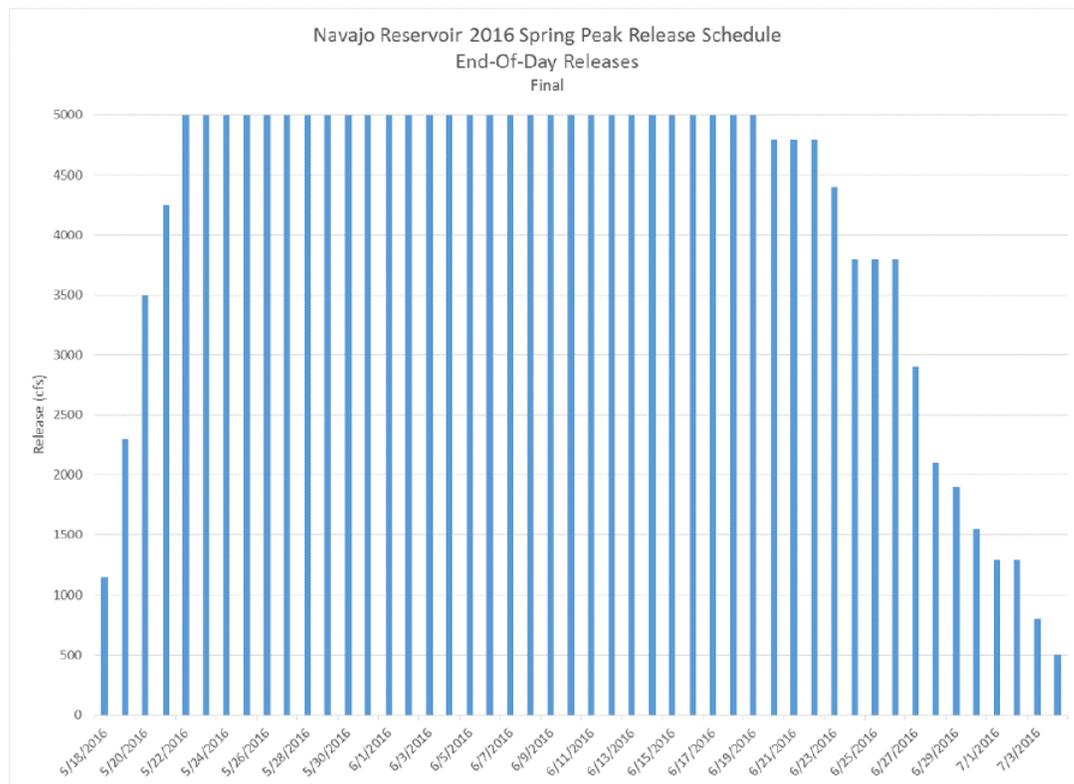
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 19, 2016

NAVAJO NATION PUBLIC NOTICE
SCHEDULED NAVAJO RESERVOIR SPRING RELEASE

United States Bureau of Reclamation Spring Release Schedule

“The Bureau of Reclamation has finalized this year's scheduled spring peak release from Navajo Reservoir. The attached chart shows the end of day release rates throughout the spring peak release period. Reclamation will begin to increase the release on Wednesday, May 18th, 2016 at 1:00 AM, reaching 5,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) on Sunday, May 22nd at approximately 11:00 AM. The release will stay at 5,000 cfs for up to 31 days, or until the spring runoff on the Animas River is complete. If all 31 days at peak are utilized, the release will begin decreasing on Thursday, June 23rd at approximately 9:00 AM, reaching 500 cfs on Monday, July 4th at approximately 4:00 AM, where it will remain until further notice.”¹



Source: <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/notice/pdfs/2016SPR.png>

Purpose of the Navajo Reservoir Spring Peak Release

¹ Source: http://www.usbr.gov/uc/wcao/water/rsvrs/notice/nav_rel.html

The scheduled release from the Navajo reservoir implements a requirement of the flow recommendations for the San Juan River that were developed by the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (Program) to operate the dam in a manner that ensures the river will “mimic” a natural hydrograph. The peak release is intended to coincide with peak flows from the Animas River in order to improve the habitat for endangered fish in the San Juan River.

“The purpose of [the Program] is to protect and recover endangered fishes in the San Juan River Basin while water development proceeds in compliance with all applicable Federal and State laws. Endangered species include the [Colorado pikeminnow](#) (formerly known as the Colorado squawfish), *Ptychocheilus lucius*, and the [razorback sucker](#), *Xyrauchen texanus*. It is anticipated that actions taken under this Program will also provide benefits to other native fishes in the Basin and prevent them from becoming endangered in the future.

The specific goals of the Program are:

- To conserve populations of the Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker in the Basin consistent with recovery goals established under the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.
- To proceed with water development in the Basin in compliance with Federal and State laws, interstate compacts, Supreme Court decrees, and Federal trust responsibilities to the Southern Utes, Ute Mountain Utes, Jicarillas, and the Navajos.”²

The Program benefits all Navajo water development projects, including the Navajo Indian Irrigation Program and the farms at Hogback and Fruitland, by providing the environmental compliance required under the Endangered Species Act. The Navajo Nation is an active participant in the Program.

NNEPA’s Role

The NNEPA’s highest priority remains the protection of public health and the environment. Therefore, in anticipation of increased flows, NNEPA will continue to monitor the San Juan River (SJR), including sediment and water quality. We will also conduct additional studies into the future, including fish tissue studies.

NNEPA is a collaborative agency with the USGS, which maintains a gaging station at Aztec, NM, in order to receive alerts about any potential increases in contaminants. The gaging station measures the turbidity (which is a measure of cloudiness in the water). When the turbidity rises, it is an indication of potential contamination, and responses to these events may include:

1. The Executive Director of NNEPA may order a shutdown of water flowing to the farms at the canals in the head gates at Upper Fruitland and Hogback.

² Source: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/sjrip/GB_BI.cfm

2. Any shutdown of the canals will remain in effect until laboratory results indicate that concentrations of metals in sediment and water in the SJR are within acceptable parameters. NNEPA's Water Quality Program staff will continue to sample and monitor the at the entry of the Upper Fruitland and Hogback irrigation canals to ensure that the water is within acceptable parameters.
3. NNEPA will contact and inform all affected communities along the SJR through radio announcements and local meetings. These public meetings will attempt to address any concerns or issues that may occur during the shutdown of the irrigation canals.

Our laboratory results currently indicate that concentrations of metals in sediment and water in the SJR and entering the irrigation canals are within acceptable parameters. We therefore recommended opening the canals with conditions. NNEPA based its decisions and actions on Navajo Nation Water Quality Standards, which can be viewed at <http://www.navajonationepa.org/Pdf%20files/NNSurfaceWaterQualityStan.pdf>. We will continue to use these standards going forward.

Any additional questions or concerns may be directed to:
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