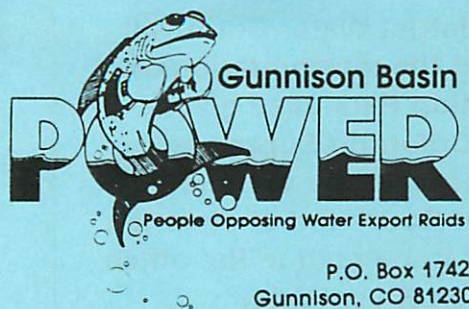


# POWERful Currents

prepared by Taylor the Trout with help from John Cope,  
Butch Clark, and members of the POWER Steering Committee

No. 1; October 1995



## POWER: Purpose and Membership

### Purpose

POWER, or People Opposing Water Export Raids, is an organization which unites Gunnison area ranchers, environmentalists, business people, seasonal and full year residents, first time and very frequent visitors to the Gunnison Valley, hikers, fishermen, hunters and boaters - all in the common purpose of opposing the trans-mountain diversion of water from the Gunnison watershed to the Front Range.

POWER's primary purpose is to preserve and enhance the way of life which now exists in the Gunnison Valley: its environment, its economy and its unique social identity---to preserve a way of life that depends upon the water in our rivers, creeks, streams, ponds and lakes.

Without the water which makes our mountain environment precious to us and those who visit us, we fear that we and our home may experience the fate of South Park or the Owens

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### AND a message from Taylor

Members and friends have asked for more background information and perspective on water issues. Most such issues are complicated and inter-related - especially something like changes in the operations of the Aspinall Unit. Meeting this need takes much more space than allowed in my "Talks." I hope this approach is helpful and will anticipate the issues likely to become hot. I will appreciate your comments.

## Union Park - - Past, Present, and Future

On last February 21, The Supreme Court of Colorado issued a decision about the proposed Union Park project which is very disappointing to POWER and citizens of the Gunnison Valley who are opposed to diverting water from the upper Gunnison watershed to cities and counties on the Front Range.

On the opposite side of the Union Park debate, proponents who want to locate a 900,000 acre-foot reservoir in Union Park as a collection point for water to be diverted to the Front Range were delighted by the court's decision.

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## The Aspinall Unit: Many Water Challenges Ahead

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### History and Purposes for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs

Three reservoirs make up the Aspinall Unit. They are lined up one after the other at the bottom of the Upper Gunnison River Basin and just above the Black Canyon National

#### **What is to admire in water?**

**... its democratic  
equity and  
constancy to its  
nature in seeking  
its own level; ...**

**James Joyce  
(1914)**

Monument. Blue Mesa is about 28 miles long and the largest reservoir or lake in Colorado. Its capacity is 941,000 acre-feet. Morrow Point is the middle reservoir with 117,000 acre-feet of storage capacity. Crystal is at the downstream end and is the smallest with a storage capacity of 25,000 acre-feet. Both Morrow Point and Crystal are deep, very steep-walled, and often compared with fjords. On average about 1.1 million acre-feet of water are managed by the Aspinall Unit's operations each year.

Planning for what became the Aspinall Unit began in the 1930s. Ideas for the Gunnison Basin's water were grandiose and, for some, terrifying. According to one early plan, all the basin's water would be diverted eastward to the Arkansas River Valley.

Strong opposition to that idea prompted a counterproposal. At the time, Colorado's water leaders were deeply concerned about rapidly

#### **Note to seekers of further detail:**

**This December the District Water Court will hear arguments about the interpretation of instruction for the Union Park case given last February by the Colorado Supreme Court. Copies of briefs filed by various parties with the Water Court and of attached supporting material can be read in the office of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District in Gunnison. Please call ahead (970-641-6065)**

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POWER: Purpose and Membership

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Valley in California: We will become an arid upland desert as metropolitan communities use our water to maintain a wasteful life style based upon the false assumption that water is limitless and cheap.

Opposition to the drying of the Gunnison watershed and to the attendant loss of the way of life which now characterizes our economy, our relationship with the environment and our community is POWER's first priority and its first line of defense against the cities of Aurora and Parker, Arapaho County and private corporations such as NECO---entities actively engaged in trying to divert our water east.

POWER's second priority is to promote wise and proper uses of water both here in the Gunnison Valley and elsewhere in Colorado and the West---uses which can be relied upon to preserve or enhance the quality of human societies and economies at the same time that they protect and nurture the environment which sustains all human societies and economies.

It is because of POWER's priorities that it is so vehemently opposed to the trans-mountain diversion schemes of Arapaho County and the Cities of Aurora and Parker. Not only are these grabs for Western Slope water a threat to our way of life, they do not seem justified to us environmentally, economically or socially.

Four of POWER's arguments for better water management for Arapahoe, Aurora and Parker are:

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1. Arapahoe County and the Cities of Aurora and Parker are, regardless of dreams for future growth, located within the State of Colorado, a high altitude desert where water is scarce. If Denver Metro cities and counties could approach their needs for water as problems in cooperative resource management rather than as para-military campaigns to grab water from the west, they could supply their needs without nearly so much cost and conflict.

Certainly responsible water management anywhere in Colorado requires informed and scrupulous attention to conservation. Yet water use in Arapahoe County and the Cities of Aurora and Parker far exceed the national norm and show no signs of improved conservation in the future.

2. Projections for population growth which form the basis of Arapahoe's and Aurora's argument for diverting water from the west are wildly inflated.

Such projections are based on erroneous predictions of an oil shale boom---predictions made during the late 70s and early 80s. Furthermore, such projections assume that 50% of any population growth that might result from an oil-shale boom would occur in the Denver Metropolitan area.

More recent population trends suggest that as Californians and others disaffected with urban blight migrate to Colorado, pristine mountain valleys will experience at least as much pressure from growth as metropolitan areas on the Eastern Slope, many of which suffer from the same problems that new migrants are seeking to escape.

3. Within the confines and definitions of Colorado's water law now in existence, there is little or no water legally available for diversion to the Eastern Slope.

This claim, a mainstay of the legal case against diverting Gunnison Watershed water to the east has been hotly contested in the courts by Arapaho, Aurora and Parker.

POWER believes that Eastern Slope counties and communities would be better advised to spend their time and money planning for sound conservation of existing water than they are to mount extended legal and political battles over the diversion of water from the west---water which POWER and citizens the Western Slope are determined to fight for drop by drop.

Until last February courts upheld the Gunnison valley's and POWER's legal claim, in effect denying Arapahoe and Aurora a legal right to water from the upper Gunnison watershed.

But in February of 1995, Colorado Supreme Court directed the Colorado District Water Court to reconsider its earlier decisions, either by recalculating the availability of water for diversion on the basis of water actually in use (rather than on the basis of legal promises of water which have been made) or by beginning the adjudication process anew.

Encouraged by this one but significant legal success, Arapahoe County and the Town of Parker are now moving forward with plans for a massive water collection project beginning in the East River Valley above Gothic--a project which will certainly divert water from The East River, Copper Creek, West and Middle Brush Creeks, Cement Creek, Deadman and Spring Creeks and which will probably also divert water from Texas Creek, Willow Creek and the Taylor River.

**The purest mountain spring  
tastes sweet to me,  
gushing from the rocks  
where mist and dew make green  
so cool and lush  
that even trout  
feel blessed.**

**from The River  
John Cope (1995)**

In this most recent trans-mountain diversion scheme, water will be collected in yet another imaginary reservoir--- to be built just upstream of Taylor and named Pieplant. From Pieplant water will be pumped to

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the Union Park Reservoir over a small hill just south of Taylor Dam. Union Park is an older and larger feature of the Arapahoe plan but is also still only a figment of thirsty imaginations.

To produce hydropower during peak demands,---an additional new feature of the Arapahoe plan---water will be pumped and flushed between two pump\power plants, one between Pieplant and Taylor, the other between Union Park and Taylor. Each pumping\ power station will be designed to produce 60 megawatts per hour at a cost of 60 million dollars each, in effect converting Taylor Park into Western Arapahoe Industrial Park.

4. Arapahoe\Aurora\Parker plans for trans-mountain diversion overlook water sources available on the Eastern Slope.

Not including water from Two Forks project, such alternative sources include:

\*Trading water rights on the South Platte in a manner to enable municipalities and agriculture to share the same water--- municipalities using the water first and agriculture using it after towns and cities have returned it to the environment in acceptably pure form.

This measure enables Eastern Slope communities to conserve by using water more than once. Providing every user with pure, unused water, as is now the case, makes effective, large-scale water conservation impossible and it guarantees that farms and mountain valleys will be dried up to slake the thirst of giants.

\*Recycling water. By cleansing used water, bringing it to standards of purity higher than those of water diverted from the west, Eastern Slope communities can satisfy their needs for clean water without causing severe environmental, economic and social damage elsewhere in the state.

\*Returning water from the western border via the Colorado Aqueduct Return Project could enable the State of Colorado to distribute water according to when and where more water is needed.

This alternative to traditional transmountain diversions from the headwaters would be built and operated by a state agency - not some private or municipal entity for its gain. Water for CARP is water remaining available from Colorado's compact entitlement after it first flows and is used through its basins of origin. It would then be diverted from the Colorado River at stateline and sent by a pipeline to where it could be released into one or a combination of the South Platte, Arkansas, or Colorado River, drainages as needed.

Under the present conglomerate of plans, municipalities and other users do not obtain or manage water on the

basis of need but grab all they are able to obtain on the assumption that the future will be driven by competition for water rather than by planning and cooperation at the state or any other level.

**CARP For more  
information contact  
Butch Clark at 519  
East Georgia Ave.,  
Gunnison, CO 81230**

### Membership

The membership of POWER numbers just short of 200. Sixty percent are residents of the Gunnison Valley, Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte, Almont, Gunnison and their environs. Forty percent are from outside the Gunnison Valley---seasonal residents, visitors, and friends. All share a deep commitment and love of the valley and to the vision of preserving this very special place..

The primary contribution of POWER members is not money, although we use every dime we receive. It is the gift of time, know-how, professional ability. We can't hope to compete with the City of Aurora in spending, but we can compete with them on the basis of the quality of information and effective arguments for our cause.

It's exhilarating and fun to work with dedicated people with expertise in law, economics, engineering, ranching, recreation, business, environmental issues, writing, public relations and sales. With a common goal and lots of talent, we may be able to save the valley for our children and grandchildren. \*\*\*\*\*

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Proponents include Arapahoe County, the cities of Aurora and Parker and NECO (the Natural Energy Resources Company). NECO is the private corporation which thought up the idea of the Union Park project. Its shareholders include entrepreneurs and originally some retired Bureau of Reclamation water engineers.

The initial concept was to collect water from the upper Gunnison watershed in Taylor Reservoir, pump it over a small hill just south and east of Taylor dam and into to Union Park. There the water would be stored and later sent eastward beneath the Continental Divide to the Denver Metro area at such time as a need for the water arose.

After NECO sold their idea to Arapahoe County, the Union Park plan was expanded to include water from the East River and its tributaries via a network of ditches and tunnels which would divert water destined for the East River to Taylor Reservoir and then over the hill to Union Park. The expanded plan also included tapping water from Spring Creek, below Taylor Dam and pumping it to Union Park.

After five years of motions and hearings that began in 1986, things didn't look good for NECO and its would-be customers. In October of 1991, the Colorado District Water Court dealt a heavy blow to the project by deciding that the amount of water available in the Upper Gunnison for diversion east was only 20,000 acre feet, hardly enough to justify the time and expense.

But NECO and proponents were persistent. They appealed District Court's decision to the Colorado Supreme Court which, in February, sent back the lower court's earlier decision, directing it to do one of two things: either reevaluate the evidence collected since 1986 using a new in-use standard or begin over with new hearings.

The basis of the Supreme Court's decision was the method used to determine how much water is available for diversion. Before the District Water Court was told

to do its work over again, it had been careful to consider conditional and absolute water rights--all claims to use water which have been legally granted as well as all actual water-using projects which have been constructed based on those claims.

The problem, according to the Supreme Court, is that many of the conditional claims do not actually use water yet but are only plans which may or may not be developed in the future. In the Supreme Court's opinion, the District Court's assessment of availability had been unrealistic, not based on actual use but, rather, on claims and plans, many of which may never develop into existing projects that use water.

NECO, the County of Arapahoe, and the Cities of Aurora and Parker are happy---first because according to the new method of calculating the availability of water there may be plenty of water for diversion east, and second because they have a good chance--- by requesting a new trial--- of throwing out all the previously developed evidence against their claim as well as eliminating all the legal and political mistakes they made between 1986 and 1995.

Several times in years past, the Supreme Court had indicated that conditional rights should be considered in estimating the water availability for a proposal such as Union Park. Now there is also some confusion in water resource policy arising from what appears to some as a very significant change in the Court's thinking.

Notwithstanding the setback of the February Supreme Court decision, there are many strategies, circumstances, and arguments still to be used by POWER and others who oppose trans-mountain diversion of Upper Gunnison water.

First among these anti-diversion strategies is to highlight the huge risk that NECO and its customers are taking as they proceed in defiance of the fact that the water they want has already been promised to conditional users.

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If they go ahead with their project, they could easily find themselves high, dry and in deep debt because prior conditional claims have turned into absolute claims. In such a case, water from the Upper Gunnison would be taken away from Aurora, NECO et al in order to supply the uses of prior claims which had changed their status from conditional to absolute.

Second among these possibilities is the fact that availability of water in the Upper Gunnison is only one issue that must be decided before Union Park can be built. Subsequent questions that must be answered to the satisfaction of courts are:

#### Feasibility of the Project

- \* Is there a real need for the water to which Arapahoe et al lay claim?
- \* Is the Union Park project the best economic solution to Arapahoe's, Aurora's, and Parker's problems of growth vs water supply?
- \* Is there or will there be in the near future a local or regional demand for peak power?
- \* Are there more state-of-the-art and cost effective technologies capable of providing electrical power at times of peak demand to distant entities, such as Los Angeles and southern California, initially the intended users of electrical power generated by the Union Park project?
- \* Who are now the intended users of electrical power from Union Park and do they really need this power?

#### Permits

\*Will Arapahoe et al be able to obtain the necessary permits from many federal, state and local agencies? It was at the permit stage that the Two Forks project was ultimately defeated.

We hope that the threat of Union Park will not persist for decades. But if it does, POWER will be present to see that the battles against trans-mountain diversion are fought with utmost commitment and endurance.

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#### **The Shape of Water Most Like Love**

**Rain is not the shape of water most like love,  
For rain nourishes fields  
Or destroys them with indifferent passion.  
The sky wears rain on its sleeve.  
Powerful and beautiful, but capricious,  
Requiring rainbows to assure us,  
Rain is not love -  
Only a love affair.**

**The ocean is not the shape of water most like  
love,  
For it is love's destination.  
Although the realm of birth, each ocean  
touches  
Every shore and action, named or not.  
A form of everything,  
Yet unable to create more of itself,  
The ocean is not love -  
Love is but one part of its history.**

**Ice is not the shape of water most like love,  
For ice is like what is called thinking,  
A patient architecture made from what  
already exists.  
Mostly at opposite poles, or high on rock,  
Ice is not love - it broods too far away  
To discover anything greater than itself.**

**Lakes are too inward, rivers divide.  
Crystals of snow all break and decay.  
Clouds and fog by definition drift.**

**What is the shape of water most like love?  
Hurricanes, unfathomed depths, and polar  
caps  
Only churn what has another source,  
The drops formed one by one for the first  
time,  
In infinite darkness and under irresistible  
force.**

**And you, who are mostly water,  
In your unrelenting solitude coupled with  
movement,  
Although you might do anything,  
Still resemble a spring  
More than you resemble rain, or the ocean  
Or an immense, distant river of ice.**

David J. Rothman (1995)

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growing uses of water far downstream on the Colorado River - especially in Arizona and California. The outcome of this controversy was the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project which fortunately does not use one drop of water from the Gunnison Basin. A separate, large reservoir project was proposed for the upper Gunnison River; it would become the Aspinall Unit.

The purpose for this second proposal was to enable development of water committed to Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming in accord with the Colorado River Compact. The reservoir unit would be one of several very large facilities placed on the Colorado River and its major tributaries. All would be designed to store water for irrigation, municipal and domestic use; produce hydropower; control floods; protect fish and wildlife; provide recreation, and manage flows.

Originally, the size of the Blue Mesa Reservoir proposal was even larger than what now exists. The upstream end would have reached the city limits of Gunnison and the capacity would have been close to 2 million acre-feet. Again after strongly expressed local opposition, the project was down-sized. Construction began on Blue Mesa in the early 1960s and finally Crystal was completed in the early 1970s.

### Senior Rights Downstream

Many users of water in the Upper Gunnison Basin looked to construction of the Aspinall Unit for a solution to some long standing problems. The most important was down stream calls. Two, large and senior water rights exist in the Lower Gunnison Basin. One is the Redlands Power Diversion project. It is a low dam located just upstream of Grand Junction and designed for irrigation and hydropower. The second is the right of the Gunnison Tunnel. Through it water flows to irrigators in the Uncompahgre Valley.

The seniority of these rights means that many junior water users in our Upper Gunnison Basin could be forced to stop using water in dry years to satisfy more senior rights located downstream. Before the dams, ranchers in the Upper Gunnison Basin were often

prevented from using water flowing past their diversions. Since completion of Blue Mesa, even in dry years, management of water by the Aspinall Unit has dealt with this problem while at the same time accomplishing its authorized purposes.

### The 2nd Filling of Taylor Reservoir

Taylor Park Reservoir was constructed in the late 1930s and decreed to the Bureau of Reclamation for the benefit of Uncompahgre Valley Water Users (UUVWUA) in 1941. Since then, it has been maintained and is being paid for by the UUVWUA. The active capacity of Taylor Reservoir below its spillway is 106,230 acre-feet. In 1986 the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District sought a water right for a second filling of this reservoir based on what is termed the 1975 Agreement. This agreement coordinates operations of the Aspinall Unit with Taylor Park Reservoir in a way that seeks to optimize flows below the reservoir in the Taylor River for fishery and recreation and to also provide some irrigation water within the Upper Gunnison Basin.

### The "60,000 Acre-Foot Subordination"

The Aspinall Unit inundated many homes, ranches, resorts, and even small towns. Its reservoirs destroyed some of the best trout fishing streams in the world. Because of the destruction caused by the Aspinall Unit, both the federal government and residents of the Gunnison Valley believed that the government owed the residents some compensation for their losses. A major item of that compensation was a political promise that residents of the Upper Valley could consume 60,000 acre-feet of water otherwise destined for the turbines in the Aspinall Unit. Although most of the benefit from this promise was expected to go to expanded agriculture, it could be used however the upper valley residents chose - with the condition that any of these future uses occur within the basin.

Unfortunately, no contract or legislation to honor the government's commitment was signed. As a result of recent proposals for transmountain diversion from the

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Basin, both the federal Bureau of Reclamation and the Colorado District Water Court, say in effect, "No contract; no water." The Bureau cautions the Upper Basin not to assume the continuation of past benefits received from the Aspinall Unit's operations.

Others, including attorneys who are members of POWER, claim that newspaper articles written to support construction, successful historical operations of the unit, oral agreements, and memos exchanged within the Bureau and between it and other agencies are tantamount to a contract. Taken as a whole they argue that these do indeed grant to Gunnison residents a 60,000 acre-foot subordination to be achieved through the operations of the Aspinall Unit. Though not "signed and sealed," this commitment is in place and works, as evidenced by almost 30 years of experience.

Nevertheless, defense against proposals to divert water from the Upper Gunnison Basin eastward has put everyone on notice of more formality and possible changes of operations at the Aspinall Unit.

### Protecting Endangered Fish

Since the late 1980s there has been an effort under the Endangered Species Act to recover two native fish in the lower Gunnison River. They are the Colorado squawfish and the razorbacked sucker. Both became endangered because of many influences upon their habitat. Dams have changed flow patterns. Water uses have changed water quality. Land uses have changed channel conditions.

These two native fish require a natural hydrograph below the Aspinall Unit. This means trying to replicate the natural pattern of water flows - high in the spring and early summer and much lower during the autumn and winter - by management of the Aspinall Unit. And, there are two other considerations. One is protecting the Gold Medal Trout fishery just below the Unit and through the Black Canyon. The other is how to provide enough water flow to allow the endangered fish to use a fish ladder passing around the Redlands Power Diversion

Dam far downstream near Grand Junction.

Managing flows for fish means, of course, taking care to ensure water released for this purpose remains in the river. It also means not releasing too much water or producing surges and floods downstream around Delta. Other water users have responded to this change in management with the worry that they may not have sufficient quantities for irrigation and other out-of-stream purposes. For them, that means reinstating calls by holders of senior water rights and loss of the 60,000 acre-foot subordination in the Upper Gunnison Basin.

To date, the fish issues and proposed management changes have provoked much discussion. So far, the only commitment is for flows at the fish ladder around the Redlands Diversion Dam. It is expected that in the future, fish issues will become a major consideration that will affect the management of the Aspinall Unit.

### Generating Electric Power

Hydroelectric power plants were constructed in each of the dams of the Aspinall Unit. The reservoirs and dams belong to the Bureau of Reclamation. However, the hour to hour operation of the electrical power generating facilities is integrated with similar facilities across 15 states by the Western Area Power Administration. In the future, electrical power generated at the Aspinall Unit will be used primarily to meet peak demands for electricity across the southwestern United States - times when the weather is unseasonably hot or cold, or when people are leaving or returning home. An aside - this future operational commitment may eliminate the need for generating additional peaking power within the area such as proposed by the Union Park Project.

Meeting peak demands requires much larger water flows through the power generating turbines at certain times of the day. This kind of demand produces abrupt changes of water level in the reservoirs - particularly in the smaller Morrow Point and Crystal reservoirs. Crystal is operated to smooth out these



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flow changes for the benefit of water users downstream needing a less changeable supply - including the fish.

For hydroelectric purposes, water from the Upper Gunnison Basin is the most valuable water in the entire Colorado River system. It can pass through more generating turbines on its journey downstream. This fact will be a major consideration in the new management direction for the Aspinall Unit in the future.

### Flood Protection

Early this last summer, residents of the Western Slope saw the successful management of the Aspinall Unit for flood control. The key idea behind this use is to prevent flood damage by releasing water in the winter and early spring to make extra storage available for the runoff from a heavy snowpack. Then management requires operating the reservoirs to fill just in time to meet the recreational needs of boaters and fishermen. And then, management requires having enough water in storage to meet irrigation needs of ranchers, and the electric power users for the rest of the year.

### The Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District

When the Aspinall Unit was authorized by Congress, conditional water rights were granted to The Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District. It was established under authority given by Colorado's legislature to conserve the water of the state, particularly to conserve water in the Upper Gunnison River Basin. The District is a governmental entity financed by property taxes. The district's rights are for several small reservoirs and canal projects proposed within the upper basin. So far, none have been built. However, the conditional water rights allow much flexibility in the use and storage of this water. In particular, these water rights allow for use of this water in conjunction with the Aspinall Unit's operations, presenting even further challenges to the management of the Aspinall Unit.

### The Black Canyon National Monument

When the Black Canyon was established as a national monument in 1933, the federal government reserved water to sustain the natural resources and features of the monument which made it unique and worthy of such designation. The actual amount of water required to achieve this purpose has yet to be quantified. However, a process to quantify this water right is underway, though moving slowly. Eventually, the actual amount is expected to come from a water supply contract between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The basic objective of the contract will be to mimic the natural hydrologic conditions of the Black Canyon. The contract will very likely commit a large quantity of water from the Upper Gunnison Basin to be managed through the Aspinall Unit. It could be that the flow pattern required for the Black Canyon National Monument is the same as or very close to the flow pattern needed to protect the endangered fish downstream. Perhaps, two purposes can be served by the same flow management plan.

### Montrose Hydroelectric Project (the AB Lateral )

There are plans to expand capacity of the Gunnison Tunnel. It now diverts water from the Gunnison River to supply irrigation water to farmers and ranchers in the Uncompahgre Valley. Some want it to also supply water for hydropower generation in Montrose. This proposal, know as the AB Lateral Project, would more than double the average 340,000 acre-feet of water diverted from the Gunnison River from the average of 1.1 million acre-feet released by the Aspinall Unit.

Water going through the tunnel will not pass through the Black Canyon. Such a large future demand upon water released from the Aspinall Unit could alter the balance between water rights, power generation, recreation, fish protection, requirements of the national mounument, and flood control that now characterizes management of the unit.

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Water Quality Downstream

Present water quality of reservoirs in the Aspinall Unit is very high. This is befitting their beauty and recreational uses. Downstream water quality of the Gunnison River is seriously degraded. Water from the Upper Gunnison Basin sent through the Gunnison Tunnel returns, after application to the soils of the Uncompahgre Valley, with large concentrations of salts and potentially dangerous levels of selenium. From the return point at Delta, there is constant degradation of water quality in the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers as they flow west, are used and reused. By the time water reaches the Mexican border, salinity levels can make it unusable for human

consumption or for agriculture.

When contaminants in the Colorado River reach such high levels, reduction or dilution of pollution is necessary. The federal salinity control program - underway since the late 1970's - is an effort to reduce salinity. One solution to the problem of salinity proposes that water contaminated with excessive salts be diluted with -- you guessed it -- purer water from the headwaters, a solution which could seriously complicate responsible efforts to manage water from the Aspinall Unit.

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An Editorial Conclusion

From these concerns and conflicts associated with management of the Aspinall Unit, two things should be very clear. First, fitting together the many considerations for management of the Aspinall Unit will be very difficult. Some say management of the three dams in the future will require more from the art of compromise than from the science of hydrology. A single change or adjustment will have many consequences.

Second, removal of water from the top of the basin's headwaters by transmountain diversion could mark an end to effective and responsible management of water flowing west from the Aspinall Unit.

Massive diversions east, resulting in diminished flows west might easily make it impossible for managers of the Aspinall Unit to meet the needs of many users within the states of the Colorado Basin.

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