



Letters

Part of a promise

To the Editor:

In an environment in which the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District is finally being held accountable for its actions and in which elections for seats on the UGRWCD board are becoming the accepted norm, it is very important for Gunnison Valley citizens to learn about important water issues and, as they do, to insist that their representatives on the Water Board act in their constituents' best interest.

The article in last Thursday's Times about the UGRWCD's signing of a subordination agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation falls considerably short of furnishing Gunnison Valley citizens with the kind of knowledge they need to make informed judgments of the Water Board's actions and to hold their representatives on the Board accountable for what they have or have not done.

To assist in furnishing important information about the subordination agreement, POWER wishes to explain five facts about the Gunnison Valley's historic relationship with the Aspinall Unit and the Bureau of Reclamation:

1. The Aspinall Unit would not have been built without the approval of Gunnison Valley

citizens. The three dams which comprise the Unit could not have been constructed if Wayne Aspinall and other Colorado representatives to the U.S. Congress during the '50s and '60s had not given their approval of the project. And without the Gunnison Valley citizens' approval, Colorado's congressional delegation made it clear that they would veto the project.

2. To secure the approval of citizens of the Gunnison Valley - many of whom had been forced to shut off irrigation water before the end of the growing season because of calls from senior downstream users - the federal government promised them 60,000 acre feet of water for consumptive use as a way of protecting their existing and future water rights. This 60,000 acre feet would protect Gunnison Valley users from the kind of senior downstream calls that had previously been made by the Uncompahgre Water Users and the Redlands Canal and it would also protect them from calls which the Aspinall Unit itself might make under its 1957 decrees.

3. Since construction of the Blue Mesa Reservoir in 1962, first of the three dams of the Aspinall Unit to be built, the

BOR has managed the flow of water downstream in a manner to protect Gunnison Valley users from any and all downstream calls.

4. The current subordination agreement between the UGRWCD and the Bureau of Reclamation covers only a minor part of the original water protection agreement - an agreement in which the BOR promised not to call on water users with priorities junior to 1957 and to release stored water as a way of protecting Upper Gunnison water users with decrees junior to 1908 (the date of the Uncompahgre Water Users' decree).

To the Editor:

I am writing just to clarify a statement made in last week's article regarding the Aspinall Subordination Agreement. Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District President Mark Schumacher's comments regarding the agreement were mis-interpreted when it was reported that once signed, the Agreement would provide coverage for water rights holders that would allow them to apply for a portion of the subordination by contacting the District, without having to go through

The current subordination agreement does not provide any Gunnison Valley users whose rights are later than 1908 (approximately 80 percent) with call protection against senior downstream users such as the Uncompahgre Water Users and the Redlands Canal. Furthermore, it offers nothing to guarantee that the managers of the Aspinall Unit will continue to release stored water to satisfy downstream calls and, in the process, to continue to protect Upper Gunnison junior decrees - as they have done from 1962 to the present.

5. What the current subordi-

nation agreement does offer, is 40,000 rather than 60,000 acre feet of protection against calls from the Aspinall Unit itself - a very minor part of the federal government's original promise to our valley.

Gunnison Valley citizens need to know these little-known facts. Otherwise, we may fall short of the knowledge that makes it possible for us to encourage the UGRWCD to continue its efforts to protect the water rights of Gunnison Valley users.

P.C. Klingsmith
President, POWER

Subordination clarification

the water court process.

Actually, the agreement does not call for any sort of application process to the District, for either new or existing junior water rights. People interested in applying for a new water right would still have to go through the normal water court procedures. What the agreement does do, is allow for individual water users that have depletions associated with water rights junior to 1957 to benefit from the subordination because they will be listed in the report that the District is required to submit to the Bureau

of Reclamation on an annual basis. This report will tabulate all water uses that benefit from the subordination, i.e. there is no need for individual applications or contracts between users and either the BOR or the District in order to benefit from the subordination.

I hope this provides some assistance to your readers in understanding this fairly complicated agreement. Let me know if you have any questions or need more information. Thank you!

Kathleen Klein
UGRWCD Manager