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Reclamation announces snowmelt forecast and expected water operations for North Platte River Basin

MILLS, Wyoming - The Wyoming Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation has prepared the March snowmelt runoff forecasts and operating plans for the North Platte River Basin.

The March 1 forecasts indicate the spring snowmelt runoff will be below average. Total April through July runoff in the North Platte River Basin above Glendo Dam is expected to be 693,000 acre-feet (af), which is 82% of the 30-year average.

The total conservation storage capacity of the North Platte Reservoir System is approximately 2,815,800 af. As of February 28, 2021, the combined storage content in the North Platte Reservoirs was 1,754,789 af, which is 116% of the 30-year average.

Current releases are 530 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Seminoe Reservoir through the Miracle Mile. Releases out of Gray Reef Reservoir are 450 cfs. Releases out of Guernsey Reservoir are 0 cfs. Based on current projections for the months of May, June, and July, the releases out of Seminoe Reservoir are expected to peak at around 2,600 cfs, while flows out of Gray Reef are expected to be in the range of approximately 2,000 to 2,600 cfs. Releases from Guernsey will be in the 2,400 to 5,100 cfs range.

Pathfinder Reservoir is not expected to spill this spring.

Reclamation, in coordination with Wyoming Game and Fish, has decided to cancel the spring flush this year due to higher than normal water storage levels in Glendo Reservoir and projected hydrologic conditions in the North Platte River below Gray Reef Dam.

In normal water years, the flushing operation is accomplished without loss of power generation and without any water being lost from the system, since water used for the flush is moved downstream to Glendo Reservoir. This year, water conditions are not favorable for the flush, but it is expected that flushing flows will resume next year if reservoir storage and river ice conditions allow.

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