

# San Juan River Biology Committee Meeting

Farmington, New Mexico

15-16 February 2000

Approved - 11 April 2000

A meeting of the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program Biology Committee was held on 15-16 February 2000 in Farmington, New Mexico. The following Biology Committee members were present: Jim Brooks, Larry Crist, Frank Pfeifer, Paul Sawyer, Tom Wesche, Bill Miller, Vince Lamarra, Paul Holden, David Propst, and Ron Bliesner.

Absent: Tom Nesler

A list of all attendees and the agenda are attached.

## **Additions to Agenda/Other Business**

A discussion of the status of final reports and printing of those reports was added to the agenda for the end of the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

For the final Flow Recommendations report, the term "draft" needs to be deleted from the decision tree. There was also a brief discussion about numbers in the flow model (500 vs 600 cfs base flow) and how low should the elevation of Navajo Reservoir storage be drawn down to meet flow recommendations.

## **Review of 1/19/00 Coordination Committee meeting**

Hydrology Committee (HC): Is there a need? The level of input to the Recovery Program relative to endangered species needs and not include non-water issues that are a BOR responsibility. The Navajo Dam Operating Committee would be replaced since the flow recommendation report is final. The Biology Committee will provide response (Bliesner will draft letter) to address the focus of input by the Hydrology Committee.

The draft Outreach Plan was sent out in January for review. A need for more public information (brochures, etc.) was identified by Coordination Committee members. Comments are due by 1 March 2000 to the Program Coordinator.

Discussions on capital expenditures for Hogback and Cudei centered around funding sources and purpose of modifications. The major concern is that the Recovery Program should not fund actions not specifically designed to address endangered fish recovery.

The discussion of Navajo Dam operations suggested that the 6,000 cfs recommendation does not help meet target flow downstream. The frequency of spills (as occurred during late summer 1999) will need to be included in the EIS for Navajo Dam operations. The major concerns are to not institutionalize the 6072' reservoir elevation. o release has been forecast (as of Jan 15) for spring 2000 from Navajo Dam.

The annual work plan was approved with some minor comments. Comments were in regards to overhead charges, completion/progress reporting, categories of recovery vs. research and monitoring, GIS database, cost overrun for the Flow Recommendation Report, and the shortfall that will be made up by BOR.

## Monitoring Plan

The discussion centered around Tom Wesche's comments (handout of comments provided). Major concerns were:

- should we have a repository of field notes (at USFWS)? Yes, scanned or photocopied.
- statistics; specify for future use, basic, analysis of trends – Propst will add verbiage to flesh out details of analyses, etc.
- timing of detailed reports; add verbiage re: annual reports to elaborate on what is already being done
- terminology: diversity vs complexity vs richness (strictly define terminology)
- timing of sampling; Platania will modify verbiage for larval sampling
- curation of specimens – longevity of MSB as a repository
- larval fish sampling – add specificity
- Platania provided handout of last years results (1999)
- water quality – Platania will add verbiage
- secondary channels – Propst will add verbiage
- large-bodied fish sampling – below 1200 cfs CPUE generally goes up, but there is variability; CPUE affected by

flows, but cannot control – can control timing of trips; will not cancel or delay trips because of high flows – Ryden will add verbiage on p. 3, and verbiage on calibrating pesola's

- cobble bar characterization - somewhat subjective, Bliesner will add specificity, add flow information criteria, spacing of pebble measurements, embeddedness, etc.

- discussion of “freeze core” sampling

will replace “lost” (e.g., filled) backwaters with new backwaters for sampling

- mapping 2 of 3 miles is a minimum

- Reporting and Coordination; recommend standard “journal” format

- individual comments should be provided to Propst by March 1; Propst will incorporate by March 15

## Draft Program Evaluation Report

Paul Holden's first concern was if the proper outline for this report had been used. General comments were that the structure of report was good, but that more detail and synthesis of the results was needed. Some members indicated that too much detail appeared in some cases and more evaluation/integration was needed. There was a discussion of who this report is being written for; it is primarily a program document, to guide us on how to proceed. The group feeling was that this report should be completed prior to the updated Long Range Plan. Paul Holden suggested adding a chapter that talks about what we're doing and what points us down the road. In Chapter 5, a summary/conclusions as a basis for a set of actions on how to proceed needs to be added. It was also deemed necessary to add more detail at the back of the document.

A page by page discussion of the draft program evaluation report was then begun. General comments were that there was a need to improve the purpose statement of the document. The purpose is to evaluate research, its progress, and accomplishments toward recovery of endangered spp; future planning, direction document; where have we been, where do we need to go. The purpose of this document is to synthesize results of the 7 year research towards refining factors limiting recovery and providing future direction for management.

Chapter 2 needs to be tightened up. There is a need for more discussion of roundtail chub (more emphasis here than in the flow recommendation report), including that their original status in the river is unknown. Mechanical removal included all nonnative species, not just channel catfish and common carp. The contaminant studies have been completed. Editorial changes to Table 2.1 are needed.

Chapter 3 – Mimicry of the natural hydrograph had a detailed discussion. The primary concern that while it is

unproven as to its usefulness in recovery of the endangered fish, it is still being tested and is not complete. The term "essential" needs to be used in place of "critical" in reference to habitat (avoid legal confusion). On page 3-11 there needs to be some integration of habitat availability and use data. Need to use habitat "richness" versus "complexity" throughout; redo table 3.1 as a figure similar to figure 3.4; integrate native habitat use; expand nonnative discussion; too much subjectivity in much of the discussion/conclusions. For habitat availability, clarify reach definitions (in Table 3.3) by replacing with river miles and present as habitats per mile. Add the Gunnison River in Figure 3.14. The nonnative section has detailed results, but not many conclusions and discussion; soften the "competition" discussion. Need to define the limiting factors and address as "Impediments to Recovery". In the introduction, include a description of fluidity of recovery goals and sideboards to defining the impediments and changes that will occur.

Rest of Chapter 3 comments (after nonnative section) to be conveyed in writing to Holden.

Chapter 4 - Some items in Management Results could be placed into limiting factors in Ch. 3 (mechanical removal, stocking protocols, etc.). Other items to include but not addressed here are: suppression of red shiner with high summer flows (this could also be included in limiting factors section) and tributary work. Need to make Ch 4 more of a summary chapter, avoid redundancy from what is already in Ch 3. What is the purpose of Ch 4? Should be summary of what program has accomplished including: identification of limiting factors, solutions/mgt recommendations, overall summary of what RIP has accomplished. Can use the Management Results section as the guide for this section and put all the other detail in Ch 3. It is important to ensure more even/complete discussion of each limiting factor. It was suggested that this chapter be entitled to: Program Accomplishment Summary (or something similar). This chapter is essentially an evaluation of the LRP. Brief summary statements following format in Section 5 should be employed.

Chapter 5 - This chapter can present what we didn't do that we need to at this point in the program, what new needs to be done, and what needs to continue. This chapter needs to focus on the flow recommendation, but has to be careful to not to lose sight of some major accomplishments, e.g. growout ponds. In section 5.1, need to identify what was completed and include a discussion, e.g. razorback sucker augmentation, satisfaction of individual goals for habitat management (protection of flows?). Section 5.2 should list accomplishments separately, following LRP format. The genetics management plan needs to be wrapped up. The finalization should include the genetics report for Colorado pikeminnow results and patterned after Upper Basin RIP plan. An early version prior was drafted by Crist prior to completion of the Colorado pikeminnow report, original completion date (1997) will change to 2000. The point to remember in Chapter 5 is that we are evaluating the recovery program, not just the 7 year research efforts.

A new title (Future Recovery Needs) for Ch 5 was suggested. Inclusions would be: potential for temperature modification, studies to make determination of implementation of management actions that shouldn't necessarily hold up other potential recovery actions (stocking fish above PNM weir before warming temperatures, and identify need for different actions (include recovery, research, monitoring). In the next 3-4 months, Ron and Vince will starting putting together temp data to use in developing white paper on expanding distribution of CSF and RBS, but need to

include other aspects of the biology of the fish. Population Recovery Goals (current effort by Valdez and Ryel) - acknowledgement of this work going on and that it will be relevant to future recovery needs in SJR. Any potential recovery need identified in Ch 5 should have some groundwork laid down in Ch 3. For example, expanding range when range is not limiting now, but may be in the future. For any recovery recommendations, follow with bulleted justifications and include any ancillary issues relative to such actions as screening diversions. There is no stocking/augmentation plan for Colorado pikeminnow and we don't know what facilities are required. Also be sure to include roundtail chub, continued evaluation of flow recommendations, population goals, and others(?). The schedule stays the same. The Peer Review panel will be at the 11-12 April meeting to provide their review of the next draft.

## Long Range Plan

The discussion centered around Table 1 of the LRP, sections 5.1-5.7. Two options were considered:

- Start over from scratch, let evaluation report deal with old LRP
- Integrate new with old, end some and begin new

The committee selected the course to integrate with the old LRP (based upon experience with UBRIP). Change the narrative, but include old tables and timelines and move the milestones to year completed. The narrative will be revised to identify achievements (brief) and lead into what is going to be done (more detail). Specific sections and changes are outlined below.

5.1 - Change wording from 'Objectives' to 'Goals'. The Colorado pikeminnow population goal (IMO)- milestone is July 2000 and that date is ok. The native fish community IMO (9/1/00) is too soon and will slip.

5.2 - Add Roundtail chub restoration, identify need for habitat modification, add temperature modification, implement habitat modification (range, passage), protect lows (flow recommendations report t accepted, used in future operations and Section 7), flow recommendations - change from 1998 to 1999 (date of approval), construction schedule - follows capital improvements schedule.

5.3 - Genetics management plan - move date from 1997 to 2000, augmentation efforts through 2007 (RBS, extend to 2003, develop roundtail chub plan if needed, extend Colorado pikeminnow augmentation to 2005)

5.4 - Nonnatives: stocking policy, live baitfish use policy (needed?), develop recommendations to go to agencies, tribes, etc. regarding nonnative fish, suppression of red shiner through flow manipulations (implement if practical), mechanical removal of all nonnatives (not just channel catfish), recommendations for nonnative stockings, baitfish, import of nonnatives - mid 2001, monitoring date should be changed begin in spring 1998.

5.5 - Water Quality and Contaminants: evaluate remediation.

5.6 - Information and Education - starts in 1999.

5.7 - Adaptive Mgt Program (begins in June 2000), standardized database to be shown as continuous, identification and implementation of research to be extended to 2007, refine quantifiable recovery goals - change from milestone to continuous.

Written comments to Bliesner by 1 March

## **Razorback Sucker Propagation Activities**

Ojo Pond was washed out and some fish (razorback sucker) were salvaged, but most were lost. 17 thousand razorback larvae from Lake Mohave were stocked into one Avocet cell and none found during trapping. The other cell of Avocet was stocked with fish from Grand Valley and there was good survival and growth. Ryden and Pfeifer will harvest, tag and stock these fish this year. There is a request to Region 2 for 18 thousand fingerlings from Willow Beach (stock in new ponds, Hidden) and a request for larvae from Lake Mohave). BIA personnel (Bob and Ernie) will be dipping larvae to help/acquire fish from Lake Mohave. Large numbers of salamander larvae were collected from the one Avocet cell and it is not known if it is a problem. The SJRIP needs to start considering long-term source(s) for RBS for stocking, from hatcheries or elsewhere. The Recovery Program needs to evaluate the budget and needs for rearing facilities for presentation this fall for interim holding from March to May, before stocking into ponds.

## **Nonnative Fish Control**

Utah presented a Recapture Reservoir proposal (handout passed out) that deals with the development of a sport fishery (trout) and probably establishment of warm-water species, particularly northern pike. The major issues are escapement potential during high flow and preventative measures to be employed. - Screening to prevent escapement is estimated at a \$8-10K cost and a request from SJRIP for funding was made. The basic question is: Is it workable? The biggest concerns center around the ability to screen for all flood conditions and how much that will cost. With the comments from the committee today, the proposal will be redrafted from BC next meeting and Matt will send out the redraft prior to the next meeting.

Morgan Lake was the recipient of a unauthorized gizzard shad introduction 4-5 years ago. It is possible that this introduction was due to the inadvertent inclusion of gizzard shad in a stocking of largemouth bass fingerlings from a Fish and Wildlife Service hatchery. Options are limited to biological controls within the lake (too large a volume for use of piscine - cost prohibitive, source of potable water for power plant, continuous operation of plant and need for cooling water) and/or to physical structures to prevent escapement from the reservoir. Water is released through a tower on a controlled basis and options are being investigated to prevent escapement.

The reservoir to be created in Ridges Basin as part of the Animas - La Plata Project includes a permanent recreation pool that will support a hatchery trout fishery. The potential for the escapement of nonnative fish from Ridges Basin Reservoir is addressed in the Supplemental EIS. Some of the mitigation proposed for depletion of water from the Animas River is the construction of a pipeline from Ridges Basin Reservoir to La Plata to enhance native fish habitat and reconnect La Plata River to the San Juan River. Concerns expressed by members of the Biology Committee regarding this mitigation include: why is there mitigation in the La Plata for impacts in the Animas, potential for transfer of nonnatives (white sucker, game species), lack of detail left out on transfer of 5 cfs to the La Plata and what is the potential to screen/filter/etc. The committee decided to draft a letter from SJRIP Biology Committee to BOR on supplemental EIS (Miller will draft and send to Brooks for conveyance).

## Hydrology Committee Proposal Revisited

Formal response to Coordination Committee will be that the Biology Committee does not support the broadened purpose and Bliesner will send a draft to Brooks.

## Final Report Publications

The status of all reports is that they done or near completion. Hard copy printing of reports will be a funding item for Coordination Committee agenda. In the interim the Biology Committee will develop a standardized citation format to be used for all reports.

**Next Meeting:** 11-12 April 2000, 8:00 am (11<sup>th</sup>) to noon (12<sup>th</sup>), Farmington Civic Center.

### San Juan River Biology Committee Meeting

Farmington, New Mexico

15-16 February 2000

Attendance List (\* Biology Committee Member)

Jim Brooks, USFWS\*

Mike Buntjer, USFWS

Steve Meisner, UDWR

Larry Crist, USBR\*

Frank Pfeifer, USFWS\*

Melissa Trammell, UDWR

Dale Ryden, USFWS

Paul Sawyer, BLM\*

Tom Wesche, Water Development\*

Bill Miller, Miller Ecological (Southern Ute)\*

Vince Lamarra, ERI (Navajo Nation)\*

Steve Platania, UNM

Paul Holden, BIP/WEST (Jicarilla Apache)\*

Dave Propst, NMDGF\*

Ron Bliesner, Keller-Bliesner Engineering (BIA)\*

Matthew Andersen, UDWR

John Whipple, NMISC

Dave Barr, SJS&WD

Steve Harris, SWWCD

Keith Lawrence, ERI

Ernie Teller, BIA-NIIP

Larry Walden, USBR

Mike Japhet, CDOW

San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program

Biology Committee

Meeting Agenda

Date: 15-16 February 2000

Time: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Place: Farmington Civic Center

Farmington, New Mexico

15 February

8:00 am Additions to agenda, other business

8:15 Review of 1/19/00 Coordination Committee meeting discussions

- Hydrology Committee proposal

- Outreach Plan

- Capital Expenditures

- FY 2000 Navajo Dam Operations

- FY 2000 Workplan and Budget (includes proposed deadlines/procedures)

9:00 Finalize Monitoring Plan

9:45 Break

10:00 Review 1st Draft Program Evaluation Report

12:00 pm Lunch

1:00 Continue Review of Draft Program Evaluation Report

2:45 Break

3:00 Begin Review of Revised Long Range Plan

5:00 Adjourn

### 16 February

8:00 am Continue Review of Draft Long Range Plan

9:45 Break

10:00 Continue Review (or other business)

10:45 Razorback sucker propagation activities

11:00 Nonnative fish control

- Northern Pike (Utah)

- Gizzard shad in Morgan Lake

1:30 Action Items/Assignments

11:45 Schedule

12:00 pm Adjourn

