



Approved Summary
BIOLOGY COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL
18 July 2016; 8am – 12pm

Attendees

Biology Committee Members:

Bill Miller – Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Jacob Mazzone – Jicarilla Apache Nation
Brian Westfall – Bureau of Indian Affairs
Jason Davis – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 2
Mark McKinstry – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Benjamin Schleicher – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 6
Vince Lamarra – Navajo Nation
Harry Crockett – State of Colorado
Mike Ruhl & Matthew Zeigler – State of New Mexico
Tom Wesche – Water Development Interests
Dale Lyons (alternate) – Conservation Interests

Peer Reviewers:

Brian Bledsoe – University of Georgia

Program Management:

Sharon Whitmore
Melissa Mata-Gonzales
Scott Durst
Nathan Franssen

Other Interested Parties:

Mike Farrington – ASIR
Tom Turner – University of New Mexico
Bobby Duran – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 2
Thomas Sinclair – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 2
Brian Hines – Utah Department of Wildlife Resources
Carrie Lile – SWCD
Chris Cheek – Purdue University
Keith Gido – Kansas State University
Patrick McCarthy – Conservation Interests
Tom Pitts – Water Development Interests

Introductions/changes to agenda

Approve draft summary from 10 May 2016 BC meeting

- Franssen incorporated comments from Wesche and McKinstry into the draft summary of the May 10 BC meeting. Wesche motioned to approve the draft summary, Mazzone seconded and the summary was approved unanimously.

Use of blind compiled comments from BC members and peer reviewers

- Miller stated he liked the way the comments were summarized but does not think the use of completely blind comments was necessary. He would at least like to see reviewer comments identified as BC members, Peer Reviewers, or other interested parties.
- Whitmore agreed the review of the annual workplan could have worked better but the Program Office (PO) did not anticipate that some BC members would like to have their comments remain anonymous. Nonetheless, she thought these were the best and most thorough set of comments the PO has ever received on the annual workplan. Additionally, the Program Document does not state that these comments need to be presented to the BC before they are sent to the CC. The PO thought summarizing blind comments and showing the BC was the PO's attempt at transparency while still honoring individual requests for anonymity. Whitmore also stated the BC is the technical group while the CC is more of the political aspect of the Program, limiting the need for individual reviewers to be identified.
- Durst stated the PO agrees with Miller and that BC members and Peer Reviewer comments should at least be identified.
- McKinstry, McCarthy, Wesche, Crockett, and Bledsoe all supported blind comments but thought the PO should at least identifying BC members, Peer Review, or interested parties.
- McKinstry also suggested comments should be blind to the PO staff. Durst stated the PO is working on getting the new office assistant hired and hopefully that person will be responsible for summarizing comments, so the PO will also be subjected to blind reviews.
- Crockett questioned how blind reviews will fit in with the "openness" of verbal reviews at meetings. Durst suggested that we have comments by BC members completed before the May meeting.
- Bledsoe said some of his comments on a pdf of the habitat SOW did not make it into the summary. Franssen stated he would send out that document to the PIs who wrote the habitat SOW.
- The PO will outline their new proposed review process and schedule a discussion of it at the next BC meeting.

Discuss draft FY 2017 Annual Work Plan and comments on 2017 SOWs – Program Office

- Whitmore introduced the draft budget for the 2017 annual workplan and suggested the group go through it by element and individual SOWs.
- Element 1. Miller asked why the project "Determine effective number of RBS & CPM breeders in SJR" was supported by the PO when it only had marginal support by the reviewers. Davis seconded Miller's question and also added he was unsure how we would use this information to inform management actions. Franssen responded that there was some support for this project by reviewers and this project was one of maybe two SOWs that would actually assess the problem of lack of recruitment. Additionally, the Program probably shouldn't discount investigations that assess problems for recovery just because we don't know how that new information would change management actions. Wesche said his comments were neutral and just wanted to see more details, he suggested that if there is money available he would be supportive of the project. Durst stated that comments by reviewers will be addressed in the new SOWs. Mazzone was supportive

of this project and stated the Program really needs to be able to start checking off potential problems for recruitment. McKinstry said this project would also start to get at the question about population numbers.

- Element 2. Whitmore stated the new money from FCCP will fund the SJR Habitat Restoration Phase III work by TNC. Lyons gave a quick update and stated they have a contract for \$150,000 with BIA but it ends at the end of this year. They are working on getting an extension for the end of 2017 and they have been working with Jeff Cole to get that completed. Wesche asked if there was a draft SOW for this project, Lyons said he would send it out to everyone. McKinstry asked if these habitat areas were going to be at new locations and Lyons said yes, but the wetland would be at the Phase II secondary channel. Mark also asked if TNC had been in touch with Keller/Bliesner about that wetland site because their surveys suggested the elevation might be a little high. Lyons said they will look into it and if that site won't work, they will find another one. Westfall said Keller/Bliesner had some concerns about that site and thought it needed to be investigated further. Durst ran into Jim from Recapture Lodge and he again voiced his support for a wetland on his property.
- Element 3. Whitmore stated it is the USFWS's position that at this time nonnative fish removal is ESA compliance and the PO supports the new nonnative fish removal experiment for at least two more years with annual evaluation. Wesche is not supportive of the SOW until the results from the first year of the experiment have been compiled. Mazzone said one year of the experiment is likely not enough time to see results and asked if results are positive would the Program be ready to scrap the new design too? Wesche said he would not want to completely do away with nonnative fish removal but may want to tweak the program after seeing the results. Whitmore said tweaks to the program can be made at the annual evaluation meetings. Ruhl said habitat augmentation is something that we could invest more heavily in, and this is not the first evaluation of the nonnative fish removal program, yet he supports the current short term experiment but wants to see results before it gets funded. McKinstry is supportive of the experiment, but cautioned people that one year of results may be clouded by other outside forces that may impact effects of nonnative fish removal such as the high flows this spring. McKinstry reiterated that funding other projects other than nonnative fish removal is going to be very difficult if the Program decides to not fund it next fall, so funding for this project is going to move forward in the meantime. Whitmore noted that \$50,000 from FCCP will support nonnative fish removal. Miller echoes Wesche's concerns and native fish abundances have not changed since nonnative removal began. He suggested the PO or nonnative fish removal crews investigate the impact of Channel Catfish on endangered fish recovery and want to see results of the first year of data before making a decision. McKinstry said Miller is really referring to competition issues with Channel Catfish but those are really difficult effects to assess. Miller asked if there are resource limitations and suggested we need to understand lower trophic levels. Additionally, the recovery plan states we should remove "problematic nonnatives", however, it is not known if Channel Catfish are problematic. McKinstry agreed but said it would take a lot of time and money to assess the effects of Channel Catfish on lower trophic levels. Davis also agreed that we need to investigate these issues but opined that it would not be wise to stop nonnative removal while these questions are being answered so as not to lose progress.
- Element 4. Razorback suckers in SJR-Lake Powell complex. Tom Wesche said the SOW lacked the level of detail he would like to see, particularly about safety issues. Guido said the SOW was limited because of the unknowns about sampling below the waterfall but they are going to focus on increasing the number of recaptures. They are also planning reconnaissance trip to look at the specifics of sampling to get a better idea of how population estimates could be conducted. Additionally, they will work with Grand Junction FWCO and Utah DWR to include their sampling efforts in the lake to overall population estimates. Guido also agreed crews will need to be careful in the field due to its remoteness, but he already has two people in queue for the project

that have the skills to conduct that type of work. Wesche asked if the SOW will be revised and Whitmore said yes, all PIs will revise their SOW if asked. McKisntry stated he has been in contact with Utah DWR and Grand Junction FWCO and they have increased their captures in the Colorado River arm of Lake Powell after sampling the San Juan Arm. The efforts in the lake will be prolonged by reducing the number of people working. There has also been some discussion with teaming up with Mary Conner (Utah State University) to work on population abundance models for Razorback Suckers below the waterfall.

- Element 5. Peer review. Durst stated the PO, BOR, and the current Peer Reviewers are in the process of revising that SOW, and they will hopefully have that out soon. Whitmore said the current SOW in the workplan is not the new revised SOW, however, the new SOW will be in the workplan before it is sent to the CC. McKisntry stated this new SOW is going to be more specific about what reviewers are supposed to do, as well as have them look closer at SOWs rather than annual reports.
- New SOWs. UNM data integration. Wesche said there are several SOW that are using PIT tag data, didn't he see somewhere where the PO was going to compile all the uses of the PIT tags? Wesche was also concerned that the PO should be involved with any data integration that would occur at UNM. Franssen said that the PO is working with Turner on the SOW and the PO plans on being heavily involved with and help organize the data integration efforts. Miller asked if this SOW will be revised and Whitmore said it would be before being sent to the CC.
- New SOWs. Trophic ecology of Colorado Pikeminnow. The PO supported this project because it was only one of two SOW that were aimed at recruitment bottlenecks in the San Juan River, however, they did have several things they wanted addressed before it would be funded. Cheek said most comments were about condition and length-weight relationships of Colorado Pikeminnow in the SJR compared to the upper basin. He said Franssen had already conducted these analysis and Pikeminnow in the San Juan River do weigh less than fish of the same size in the upper basin. Ruhl said he thoroughly supported this project and we need to do more to look at recruitment bottlenecks. Whitmore said with certain deadlines looming, figuring out where these bottlenecks are occurring is of the greatest concern. Mazzone agreed and stated he was very supportive of this project.
- New SOWs. Habitat Monitoring. Whitmore said there was not a lot of support for the 'menu' idea of habitat monitoring and doesn't think the details of habitat monitoring have been fleshed out yet. The PO agreed to obtain digital imagery this year but suggest we set up a working group to revisit new habitat monitoring. Temperature monitoring will not be included in the new SOW and thinks we should use 2017 to revise how we conduct habitat monitoring. McKisntry wanted to change his comments on the habitat monitoring SOW because of this year's high water and purported habitat changes, and supports one final year of habitat monitoring as it has been conducted it the past. Lamarra said he thought the group was going to be more pragmatic about the habitat SOW and they really lacked guidance from the BC. He suggested it would be really important to conduct the proposed habitat monitoring after the high flows this year. Miller said the reason they gave a 'menu' approach was because that is what the BC asked for and because they were limited by contractual work. Moreover, it is frustrating to develop a SOW because habitat monitoring is dependent on flows. Wesche is supportive but would like to see a detailed SOW. Bledsoe was supportive for another year of habitat monitoring and of the 'menu' approach to allow different monitoring in different flow years. He suggested the present SOW be simplified by including a matrix of hypotheses and what habitat monitoring would be used to test them. He also thinks we should be moving towards a more multiple-scaled approach to habitat monitoring. Westfall was supportive of conducting the habitat monitoring this year because of the high flows but asked Lamarra if it would require mapping habitats from maps on floating the river. Lamarra said the cost would be the same but would it would be better if floated so they could see if some tree-covered secondary channels were flowing. Durst said PO is supportive but wants to see the

several issues on the provided supporting document addressed. Westfall asked what it means that the PO supports this SOW, are we going to get this done? Whitmore said yes, if they can address the issues the PO raised, we will work on getting it completed.

- New SOWs. Population estimates. Franssen discussed the new “Pathway to population estimates” document supplied by the PO. Because of specific down- and delisting criteria, the PO is not supportive of conducting population estimates at this time. However, they would support pop estimates once recruitment reach certain levels. These “population estimate triggers” are outlined in the document. Wesche said he like the idea of having triggers and was happy to see the service put this position on paper. He would like to see the document be reviewed by the BC and peer review.

Recap decision points, schedule next meeting/call, and review assigned action items

- Only the three SOWs on the conditionally funded projects list have to respond to PO comments and have revisions back to the PO by August 1. All other SOWs which are planned to be funded are should address all reviewer comments and be returned to the PO by August 1.
- The “Pathway to population estimates” document should be reviewed by the BC and Peer Reviewers by October 31.
- The next BC meeting will occur late November or early December with specific dates determined via doodle polling over the information super highway.
- The PO will draft an outline for the new strategy for blind reviews on BC documents before the next meeting.

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG
(Updated 20 July 2016)

Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Or ignation Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
1	Provide RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data		P.I.'s to the Program Office	Annually before Jan. 1		
2	Provide Preliminary Draft Report Presentations		Project Leads (authors)	Annually at Feb. meeting		
3	Review LRP		BC	Annually at fall meeting		
4	Review Peer Review Comments from the February and May meetings		BC	Annually at fall meeting		
5	Provide Draft Reports		Project Leads (authors) to Program Office	Annually by end of March		
6	Scopes of Work		Project Leads to Program Office	Annually by end of March		
7	Provide Final Reports		Project Leads (authors) to Program Office	Annually by end of June		
8	Annual Data Delivery		PIs to Program Office	Annually by June 30		
9	T&E Species Data		BC to Program Office	Annually by Dec. 31		
10	Annually compile T&E data and Program progress into summary to address overall Program recovery goals/objectives for presentation at annual meeting		Program Office/BC	By Annual Meeting in May		
11	Distribute Consolidated Data and list of annual data collected and available in the Program's database		Program Office to BC	Annually by Jan. 31		
12	Recapture analysis on PIT tagged fish		Durst	Annually by March		

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13	Coordinate CPM stocking closely with Reclamation to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases		Project Leads	Annually		
14	BC and Peer Reviewer comments on SOW to PIs and PO	5/10/16	BC and Peer Reviewers	6/15/16		6/15/16
15	BC send ranks list of FY17 SOW to PO	5/10/16	BC to PO	6/15/16		6/15/16
16	BC comments to response to comments on Animas Stocking proposal	5/10/16	BC to PO	6/15/16		6/15/16
17	SOW to conduct population estimates for Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker	2/20/15	PO	5/12/15	6/15/16	
18	BC comments on RBS augmentation to Furr	2/22/15	BC to Furr	5/3/16	6/15/16	6/15/16
19	Revise RBS Augmentation Goals (based on the outcome of experimental stocking and analysis by Franssen and Durst). What is the appropriate numbers of fish to stock?	5/10/10	FWS Fisheries/Program Office	5/2011 – provide update and extend as needed	6/15/16	6/15/16
20	Pursue Non-native fish stocking procedures	11/5/09	Crockett and Ruhl	2/23/16	12/15/16	
21	Pursue effects study on Hg/pikeminnow with other groups/programs	1/14/10	Program Office lead	ongoing		
22	Include benchmarks for recovery in LRP	12/5/14	Whitmore	1/5/15	9/30/16	

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Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Or ignation Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
23	Status updates for the LRP	12/2/15	PIs to Whitmore	2/23/16	9/30/16	
24	Investigate Upper Basin requests for STReAMS database funding	12/2/15	Whitmore	3/31/16	9/30/16	
25	Revised SOWs sent to the PO	06/18/16	PIs to PO	8/1/16		
26	Review "Pathway to population estimates"	06/18/16	BC and Peer Review to PO	10/31/16		
27	Draft new BC review process (i.e., blind comments)	06/18/16	PO	11/1/16		

* Items were re-numbered after changes were made

Yellow highlight indicates annual action items

Green highlight indicates new action items

Red highlight indicates completed action items that will be removed from the next iteration of the Action Item Log

Date	Annual Tasks	PO	CC	BC	P.I.
Oct.	Reclamation administers contracts	X			
Nov.	BC Meeting (peer reviews typically do not attend this meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data integration results from previous year • Identify questions for annual data integration • Discuss Program priorities • LRP review and provide recommendations (with pros and cons) to PO • Appoint new BC Chair (every two years) 	X		X	
Dec. 31	RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data to Program Office				X
January	Notification/update of Program rosters/mailling lists	X			
January	Executive meeting (Program Office; Reclamation Fund Manager; CC and BC Chairs) to do preliminary planning for upcoming year	X	X	X	
January	Updated LRP to BC and CC for review	X	X		
January	Reclamation provides a determination of perturbation for BC Review.	X			
Jan. 31	Distribute consolidated PIT tag data and post other data	X			
February	BC Meeting (peer reviewers are expected to attend this meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for Annual Meeting • Provide preliminary results; draft report presentations • Final review of updated LRP • Review annual data integration priorities 	X		X	X
Feb/Mar	Final updated LRP to CC (with explanation of input included/not included)	X			
March	CC approval of LRP				
March	Annual guidance/solicitation for SOWs based on LRP/list of prioritized projects	X			
March 31	Draft final reports and SOWs due to Program Office			X	X
April	Preliminary draft Annual Workplan and Budget	X			
May	Annual Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program overview • P.I. presentations • Review preliminary draft AWP • Committee reports 	X	X	X	X
May	Annual hydrology meeting to review and solicit information regarding the San Juan River Basin Hydrology Model	X			
June/July	Draft Annual Workplan and Budget	X			
June 30	Provide final reports and data sets to Program Office				X
July	Final reports posted on website	X			
August	Tech review of draft AWP; recommendations with pros and cons to Program Office			X	
August	Revise AWP based on input and transmit final draft to CC with documentation of all input	X			
Sept.	Review and approve final AWP		X		

Sept.	Post final AWP to website	X			
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