



**SAN JUAN RIVER BASIN RECOVERY
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (SJRIP)
BIOLOGY COMMITTEE
14 July 2020 MEETING SUMMARY**

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE (BC) MEMBERS:

Matthew Zeigler (Chair)
Harry Crockett
Jacob Mazzone
William Miller
Absent
Absent
Brian Westfall
Stephen Davenport
Dave Speas, BC Alternate
Benjamin Schleicher
Absent
Tom Wesche
Absent

REPRESENTING:

State of New Mexico
State of Colorado
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Navajo Nation
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Water Development Interests
Conservation Interests

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Jojo La, CC Alternate
Colleen Cunningham, CC Alternate
Ryan Christianson

State of Colorado
State of New Mexico
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, Biologist

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Adam Barkalow, BC Alternate
Carrie Padgett, BC Alternate
Ben Zimmerman, BC Alternate
Jerrod Bowman
T. Kim Yazzie
Nathan Franssen
Steve Mussmann
Melody Saltzgeber
Jenna Crovo
Susan Behery
Melissa Trammel
Brian Hines
Katie Creighton

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Water Development Interests
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Navajo Nation Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Navajo Nation Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. National Park Service
Utah Department of Wildlife Resources
Utah Department of Wildlife Resources

Steven Platania
Michael Farrington
Stephani Clark Barkalow
Aaron Chavez
Keith Gido
Matt Bogaard

Am. Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Am. Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Am. Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
San Juan Water Commission
Kansas State University
Kansas State University

Introductions and changes to agenda

Durst and Zeigler suggested the committee plan an additional meeting to discuss the FishBio draft report (Feasibility Assessment of Trapping Methodologies for Trap and Transport, emailed 16-July-2020) and not discuss it today as comments are not due until 20 July 2020. The committee agreed.

Approve draft summary from 12 May 2020 BC meeting; review Action Item list

Mata reviewed the action item list from the last Biology Committee (BC) meeting. Comments on the last summary were received from Zeigler, La, Miller, and Cunningham. Gilbert incorporated these comments and no further comments were received from the committee. Wesche motioned to approve the meeting summary and Miller seconded. With no further discussion, the meeting summary was approved.

Discuss PO recommended FY 2021 Annual Work Plan – PO and BC

Mata introduced the draft FY 2021 Annual Work Plan (AWP) and discussed which Scopes of Work (SOW) were omitted. “NEW4, Mitigating Stress Related Mortality in Colorado Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*) During Field Collection and Transport” was withdrawn due to interest in conducting preliminary investigations at the Dexter Hatchery before proceeding with submission. “NEW2, SJRIP Spawning Bar Creation at Piute Farms Waterfall” was also withdrawn in order to conduct further research into the SOW’s feasibility. Additionally, “SOW-17, Nonnative Fish Management” was altered by including one more removal pass (from 3 to 4) at the recommendation of the Biology Committee. Mata also noted that the cost of the Four Corners Power Plant Biologist is incorrect in the budget, but she will update that before it is sent to the Coordination Committee (CC). Durst stated that because the Spring Razorback Sucker Sampling SOW 19b was not completed in 2020 due to COVID-19, that project will carry over funds to complete the work in 2021 at no additional cost.

Wesche asked for a status update for SOW-1, Backwater Productivity Study by Whitney. Mata stated no work has been completed yet due to difficulty in awarding the funds and additional delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The money has been awarded and work will likely begin in 2021 assuming COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Miller noted his comments were not addressed and asked for that to occur before the SOW is finalized. Mata said she would ask Whitney to explicitly state in the SOW that the resultant data will be deposited in the Program Office’s database.

Speas asked Creighton if her SOW “NEW5 Colorado Pikeminnow Brood stock Collection” included fish collections in the Green River near Vernal, Utah. Creighton stated Chris Smith with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was going to collect fish in that reach.

Barkalow asked about a potential budget error from their SOW-42 Enhancing channel complexity and low-velocity habitat (2 of 2-yr project) and the proposed budget table. Mata said she would recheck the numbers.

Zeigler asked why there were not responses to comments on SOW-17 Nonnative Fish Management. Durst noted there were responses to BC comments but they were mistakenly not included in the supplied version. Mata stated the correct version with response to comments will be included in the final annual work plan.

Zeigler, Wesche, Mazzone, Davenport, Speas, Miller, Westfall, and Schleicher all voiced support for recommending the proposed FY2021 Annual Work plan provided all the above changes were made. No one was opposed to the recommendation.

Mata stated the Program will likely have to take a closer look at future budgets and find cost savings as funding will likely be decreased post 2023. Specifically, some members of the post-2023 funding group/subcommittee are concerned with the amount of funding monitoring and evaluation receives. SOWs will likely need to include budget justifications in the future.

SJRIP updates

Status of FY 2020 field activities related to COVID-19 – Principal Investigators (PIs)

Zeigler stated the small-bodied monitoring is scheduled to occur but they are not allowed to travel out of New Mexico. The shutdown of Navajo Nation already affected the 2020 channel maintenance project and will potentially affect small-bodied monitoring in the fall. There is discussion of hiring American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers (ASIR) to conduct sampling outside of Navajo Nation if possible. Barkalow did acquire flights to radio track Razorback Suckers but the proposed timing had to be altered slightly.

Platania noted Navajo Nation had originally approved their larval collection work on the Nation but since has revoked that permission due to increased outbreak of COVID-19 cases on the reservation. ASIR have not sampled for larval fish on the reservation but have increased sampling from Sand Island to Clay Hills starting in late May and sampled bi-weekly. This increased effort should result in 5 or 6 sampling runs through that reach. ASIR will start sampling from Farmington to Hatch Brother's Trading Post starting next week to look for larval Colorado Pikeminnow in that reach. ASIR may stand in for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) to collect small-bodied fishes from San Island to Clay Hills.

Creighton stated all of their spring work was canceled, but they are still planning on conducting their part of Demographic Monitoring this fall. She also noted that the PIs of that SOW recently met via conference line to discuss mitigation of COVID-19 issues of that work. Hines recounted that discussion by stating of the three passes, Utah is planning on conducting the first pass (Aug 27-Sept. 2), and the other two passes will be conducted by Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) and New Mexico FWCO in September and October. They are discussing combining efforts but keeping crews socially distant in space and time. The biggest obstacle will be the status of Navajo Nation and COVID-19. Hines will call David Nez of Navajo Nation to discuss access to the Nation. Yazzie noted that currently, non-tribal members are not allowed to access the reservation.

Yazzie discussed the status of NAPI ponds and the fish passage at PNM weir. The water supply line to the ponds burst for the 6th time recently. Aquatic Consultants Incorporated (ACI) installed a concrete shock block to support the PCV fittings and so far no other issues have occurred. Sample counts of Razorback Sucker in the ponds are going well and some fish have already been stocked. The fish passage at PNM weir is also going well. The work at the passage has not been impacted by COVID-19, and this year there has been a relatively large number of untagged Colorado Pikeminnow being collected. Mata asked for an update on the Channel Maintenance SOW. Yazzie stated that project was canceled due to COVID-19 and will be postponed until 2021. Therefore, funds planned for the SOW in 2021 will be retained to conduct the work in 2022.

Bogaard and Gido gave an update on the Razorback Sucker translocation project. They completed the proposed work at the waterfall but they have had some travel restrictions by Kansas State University. They thanked ASIR, Navajo Nation, NMDGF, and Utah DWR for their efforts as well. Overall, they captured 158 Razorback Sucker below the waterfall, implanted 41 radio tags in fish, and released them 2 kilometers upstream of the falls. Their stationary antenna at the waterfall has been in operation since March 7 and the Sand Island antenna was operational between March 27 and July 10. They sampled below PNM weir on March 22 but did not capture Razorback Sucker and were then unable to continue sampling after the “stay at home” orders were in place. They did track fish in the canyon and below the waterfall in April and May. Sixty percent of tagged fish that were translocated above the waterfall were already found in Lake Powell. Last week they placed remote antennas near Lake Powell to continue to monitor radio-tagged fish. Barkalow plans another tracking flight in mid-October. Bogaard also plans on one more tracking trip between the waterfall and Lake Powell this season.

Schleicher noted their spring Razorback Sucker sampling trip was canceled due to COVID-19 and their 2020 funds will be used to conduct the trip in 2021. Razorback Sucker were spawned at their hatchery and those fish will be stocked this fall. Bowman noted Navajo Nation will allow fish stockings to occur, both NAPI pond fish as well as Ouray’s fish.

FY 2021 budget issues

Speas presented budget updates in McKinstry’s absence. Last week the House Appropriations Committee approved a new budget package that had provisions for the transfer of power revenue funds to the Bureau of Reclamation to the sum of \$21.4 M. He noted that the Senate will still need to approve the budget but things are moving along rather quickly.

Update on VFD replacement at Hogback – McKinstry

Mata gave an update in McKinstry's absence. The CC approved funds to purchase "soft start" pumps to replace the variable frequency drives that are currently disrupting PIT antennas at the Hogback diversion. However, the original pumps were recently replaced with rental pumps, and they did not want to fix the problem on the rental equipment. So the purchased pumps are trying to be returned. In communicating with Bureau of Indian Affairs and Navajo Nation, the Hogback Section 7 consultation says they are going to replace pumps in their entirety. Miller asked if they could or could not return pumps. Mata had not heard. Miller asked if the rental pumps are still causing interference. Mata – yes, still connected to the same problem.

Mata stated that she is seeking a recommendation from the BC to seek a vote of approval from the CC to cover increased cost for PIT tag antennae at the Fruitland weir wall of \$55,442 and seek immediate approval FY2021 SOW-32b to purchase and order all the equipment needs from BioMark. The reason for the expedited vote is because Bureau of Reclamation is in the process of updating BioMark's contract and equipment needs to be ordered now to be received on time for construction this Fall. Zeigler, Mazzone, and Crockett agreed those antennas need to be installed. Mata will cc the BC listserv when she emails the CC about the increase in cost to the capital fund.

Colorado Pikeminnow adaptive management alternatives

Barkalow discussed CC comments and changes NMDGF made to the draft. Most of the CC recommended changes were associated with the disposition of stocked fish and those changes were incorporated into the document. Other significant changes to were included in the updated draft clarify the difference between the Colorado Pikeminnow Augmentation Plan versus their Adaptive Management Stocking Plan. This draft should be more in-line with everyone's goals and intents. Zeigler guessed some confusion came from CC members assuming the document was the Augmentation Plan. Changes were made to clarify that the goal of their plan was to assess alternatives to prevent stocking on top of wild fish. They will send it back out next week for the BC to review before sending it to the CC for review and approval.

Revised Razorback Sucker augmentation plan

Davenport – The final revised Razorback Sucker augmentation plan by Weston Furr is not complete after further requests for altered wording on releases of endangered fishes that are not associated with any specific SOW. Their changes should alleviate concerns about opportunistic stockings. The new draft will be sent to the Program Office for review soon before being sent on to the BC for review.

Habitat workshop summary

Mata thanked everyone for their comments on the summary. There were several comments stating the document did a good job capturing the workshop but Miller and Zeigler asked for inclusion of additional information about how the document will be used in the future. Mata agreed that a paragraph describing a path forward would be useful but asked that the BC develop that section. Miller stated his comments suggested that it was the BC's responsibility to figure out a path forward for both species and other life stages beyond larval Razorback Sucker. Miller and Zeigler were willing to draft a paragraph to be included in the summary for the BC to review. Wesche and Davenport agreed that was a good idea, Zeigler and Miller agreed to work on it.

Westfall asked Miller the timeframe he anticipated for this paragraph to be ready. Miller stated he and Zeigler will circulate their draft soon and then ask the BC if a call would be needed. Mazzone noted that the workshop concluded without a consensus on a path forward and the BC may need to regroup if conclusions are going to be made. Mata agreed and noted that a solidified path forward would also help with post 2023 planning. Wesche, Crockett, and Mazzone voiced approval of the plan.

Update on City of Bloomfield release request and updated BC recommendation

Behery – The original conference has been canceled but they are still requesting water for a smaller river paddling event in Bloomfield to establish it as an annual event. While the smaller event is still planned, George Duncan stated in a call this morning that it will only proceed if the state of New Mexico lifts travel restrictions by September or October. Behery was less enthused by the request due to the likely lower attendance and thus less impact of potential outreach for the Program. Mata noted the Service would most likely not approve their travel for outreach anyway. Westfall, Miller, Crockett, Zeigler, Wesche, and Davenport were all originally in favor of the request, but now think due to the relatively dry water year, the additional water should not be released. Behery stated that it should not be a problem as she is asked to release water frequently and has no issue with denying those requests.

Schedule upcoming meetings/calls/webinars

Zeigler asked if anyone had thoughts about how to proceed with the FishBio report on possible trapping methods below the waterfall and offered the possibility of a short call in August. Miller thought that it was a good idea as the BC should have a more in depth discussion of the report. He suggested a 2-3 hour call that could include discussion of the habitat paragraph he and Zeigler are going to write. Durst also noted that McKinstry sent out a BOR-funded request for ideas on modifying temperatures from reservoirs that could also be discussed. Zeigler will work with Durst to get out doodle poll to schedule the meeting, which will likely occur remotely.

Mata noted that the post-2023 plan on capital projects are not very detailed and the group may need to arrive at a more explicit plan for projects. She noted the group as the diversion study that could help guide that discussion as well as the paragraph Miller and Zeigler will construct about a path forward for habitat management. We also need to design a plan to protect flows. Zeigler, Wesche, and Davenport voiced support for these needs. Davenport asked Mata which is likely the most important at this time and she responded that we have some information to move on habitat and passage/entrainment but how to “provide and protect flows” seems to be our biggest

unknown and should be given priority. Mazzone agrees that shorter, more targeted webinars will likely be needed to push plans along.

Durst will send out doodle poll for the fall meeting.

Adjourn

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 29, 2020)						
Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Origination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
1	Provide RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data		PIs to PO	Before Jan. 1		
2	Provide Preliminary Draft Report Presentations		PI	At Feb. meeting		
3	Review LRP		BC	At fall meeting		
4	Review Peer Review Comments from the February and May meetings		BC	At fall meeting		
5	Provide Draft Reports		PIs to PO	By end of March		
6	Scopes of Work		PIs to PO	By end of March		
7	Provide Final Reports		PIs to PO	By end of June		
8	Annual Data Delivery		PIs to PO	By June 30		
9	T&E Species Data		BC to PO	By Dec. 31		
10	Compile T&E data and Program progress into summary to address overall Program recovery goals/objectives for presentation		PO/BC	At May meeting		
11	Distribute consolidated data and list of annual data collected and available in the Program's database		PO to BC	By Jan. 31		

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 29, 2020)						
Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Origination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
12	Recapture analysis on PIT tagged fish		Durst	By March		
13	Coordinate CPM stocking closely with BOR to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases		PIs	Annually		
14	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	NMFWCO/PO	05/2011 – provide update and extend as needed	Ongoing	
15	Pursue effects study on Hg/Colorado Pikeminnow with other groups/programs	1/14/10	PO lead		Ongoing	
16	Include benchmarks for recovery in LRP (amended to also included in Pathways document and monitoring protocols)	12/5/14	Mata	01/5/2015	Ongoing	
17	Status updates for the LRP	12/2/15	PIs to Mata	02/23/2016	Ongoing	
18	Make Program peer-reviewed publications available to Program participants	11/29/16	PO (Mata)	02/21/2017	Ongoing	
19	Disposition of Razorback <300 mm TL	02/21/17	NMFWCO	05/16/2017	Ongoing	11/28/2017 TBD 2019
20	Draft a plan for Colorado Pikeminnow stockings	02/21/17	PO, NMFWCO, and NMDGF	02/21/2017	Ongoing	
21	Coordinate aerial flights for base flow imaging	11/28/17	BC (Lamarra)/PO (Franssen)	Fall	Ongoing	

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 29, 2020)						
Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Origin ation	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
22	Rank entrainment risks for diversions included in the Diversion Study	02/019/2020	PO	Ongoing		
23	Coordinate with Upper Colorado Program on enhancing CPM broodstock	02/019/2020	PO	Ongoing		
24	Planning document for Colorado Pikeminnow rearing at NAPI	5/12/2020	NMFWCO and PO	None given		
25	Update long-range plan to reflect change in Colorado Pikeminnow stocking	5/12/2020	PO	6/30/2020		
26	Write a path forward paragraph for habitat workshop summary and send to BC for review	7/14/2020	Zeigler and Miller	None given		
27	Schedule a BC call to discuss trap and transport study, temp. mod. Study	7/14/2020	PO	None given		
28	Send the BC recommendation to the CC re: the VFDs and Fruitland's weir cost increases	7/14/2020	Mata	None given		
29	Send the final Razorback Sucker augmentation plan to PO and then BC	7/14/2020	Davenport	None given		
30	Send revised Colorado Pikeminnow Adaptive Management Stocking Plan to the BC	7/14/2020	Barkalow	None given		
31	Publish previous meeting summaries to the webpage.	7/14/2020	PO	None given		
32	Send Habitat Workshop Summary for BC review/comment	5/12/2020	PO	July 2020		July 2020
33	Submit revised SOWs	5/12/2020	PIs	6/25/2020		6/25/2020

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 29, 2020)						
Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/Origin ation	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
34	Coordinate with UCREFRP for City of Bloomfield outdoor festival outreach	5/12/2020	PO	10/1/2020		10/1/2020
35	Provide BC additional Razorback Sucker augmentation plan paragraph	5/12/2020	NMFWCO	July 2020		July 2020
36	Send WAPA white paper to BC	5/12/2020	PO			5/14/2020
37	Doodle poll for July meeting	5/12/2020	PO			5/18/2020
38	Coordinate with UCREFRP on Colorado Pikeminnow broodstock collection	5/12/2020	PO			

*Items were re-numbered after changes were made

Yellow highlight indicates annual action items

Green highlight indicates new action item

Red highlight indicates completed action items