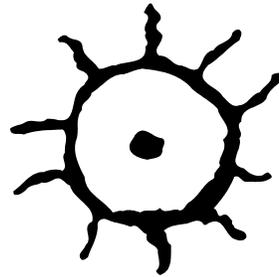


November 13, 2003

**San Juan River Basin
Recovery Implementation Program
Coordination Committee
October 03, 2003
Draft Conference Call Summary**



Coordination Committee Members

Susan Jordan
Bob Krakow
Henry Maddux
Scott McElroy
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
John Whipple

Representing:

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

Hydrology & Biology Committee Members:

Ron Bliesner, Biology Committee
Tom Chart, Biology Committee
Shirley Mondy, Program Coordinator

Representing:

U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others Present:

Bill Ostheimer

Representing:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Henry Maddux welcomed everyone to the conference call.

The main topic of discussion is the memorandum from the Biology Committee to the Coordination Committee regarding maintenance base flows for water conservation purposes. The memorandum was sent out on the listserv earlier in the week.

The current elevation of Navajo Reservoir is at 5999.15. The forecast is that at the end of the year, there will be approximately 20,000 AF in storage which is approximately the same amount that NIIP did not use. The current release from the dam is 550 cfs. It was increased yesterday and then a storm came through.

Bob Krakow reported that a dead Colorado pikeminnow was found in the PNM fish passageway with a bullhead lodged in its throat. The juvenile pikeminnow looked to be healthy and it was surmised by the operators of the PNM fish passageway that the bullhead was the cause of death of the pikeminnow.

Discussion of the September 28, 2003 memorandum from the Biology Committee, titled

“San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program Maintenance Base Flow Recommendations for Water Conservation”:

For the winter period, it is the same recommendation that the Biology Committee developed last year. (It was never implemented due to flows in the Animas River.)

There were questions about if a consultation is needed, how long would it take to get it done? There were concerns of the Service taking the full statutory timeframe to complete the consultation. Is Reclamation agreeable to asking for a consultation? Tom Chart thought they would be. The Coordination Committee would like to implement the recommendations of the memo as soon as possible. Reclamation would need to have a rapid consultation in order to get this going in early October.

There was some discussion about some of the language in the memo “...will not likely jeopardize, but may delay, the recovery of the species” This language may elevate the effects to an adverse effect and push the section 7 consultation to a biological opinion. The Biology Committee members on the call indicated that there would be increased risks to the fish, but was still probably in the “may affect, not likely to adversely affect.”

The Biology Committee is really interested in getting a spring release, and anything that we can do to conserve water for this would be helpful. John Whipple supports the need to conserve the water and supports getting something to Reclamation to cut releases as soon as possible. He does not agree, however, with certain aspects of the September 28 memorandum. He does not believe that the data are adequate to support a conclusion that flows lower than those discussed in the memorandum would not be sufficient to maintain the endangered fish populations in the San Juan River. The ensuing discussion, for example, indicated that the negative relationship between density of native fish and number of days summer flow dropped below 500 cfs that is reported in the September 28 memorandum is statistically insignificant. Whipple opined that the data and flow recommendations need to be reevaluated."

Ron Bliesner indicated that the integration of data is in process and new data is being analyzed. They are getting indicators that lower flows (250 cfs) cause crowding, but there are really no data points to support the crowding and stress factors for flows between 250 and 500 cfs.

Can we use the memo from the Biology Committee as the basis for the biological assessment (BA) or do we need a BA from Reclamation? A biological opinion is standard when there is adverse affect on the species, not just when there is jeopardy.

Reclamation is operating under the Animas-LaPlata (ALP) Biological Opinion. It is questionable whether the recommended operation would be covered in that opinion. It is probably covered somewhat because there is an extreme conditions paragraph in the Flow Recommendations. If there is a condition in the ALP Biological Opinion that allows variations in extreme conditions, then we would need confirmation from the Service and Reclamation that this fits in that definition. ***The Service and Reclamation need to look at the ALP biological opinion to see if we can move ahead quickly.***

If the drought continues, would/could we make longer periods of minimum releases to supplement flows and forego a spring peak? The Biology Committee thought going to 400 cfs as a base flow in the critical habitat was better because it might mean that there could be a spring release. If there is a median (90% of average runoff) inflow next year, we would have enough water to make a release. If we got 1,000,000 af in reservoir content then we would revert to the 500 cfs flow in the critical habitat.

A majority of the committee members were present and recommended that Reclamation operate the dam in accordance with the flow recommendations for the winter and summer periods that are contained in the September 28 Biology Committee memo and that they implement it as soon as possible. (Tom Pitts abstained from the decision).

The Service (Regions 2 and 6) and Reclamation will get together on a conference call next week to discuss the options for implementation.

Cloud Seeding Proposal from Hydrology Committee

The cloud seeding proposal did not have enough votes in the Hydrology Committee to put it forth to the Coordination Committee. There were concerns about the lack of information backing the proposal and for the lower priority compared to other projects.

Shirley Mondy will get with Pat Page and send something to the Coordination Committee on why the proposal did not move forward.