

Approved February 3, 2011



## **San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program**

### **Coordination Committee Meeting September 23, 2010**

#### **FINAL Meeting Notes**

#### **Coordination Committee Members:**

Jim Brooks, Chair  
Catherine Condon  
Joel Farrell  
Dan Israel  
Herb Becker  
Steve Lynch  
Al Pfister  
Tom Pitts  
Stanley Pollack  
Ted Kowalski  
Brent Uilenberg  
Patrick McCarthy  
Absent

#### **Representing:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
Bureau of Land Management  
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe  
Jicarilla Apache Nation  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 6  
Water Development Interests  
Navajo Nation  
State of Colorado  
Bureau of Reclamation  
The Nature Conservancy  
State of New Mexico

#### **Program Management:**

David Campbell, Program Coordinator  
Sharon Whitmore, Asst. Program Coordinator

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

#### **Other Interested Parties:**

Mike Oetker (Alternate)  
Michael Howe (Alternate)  
Steve Harris  
Bill Miller, BC Chair  
Jason Davis  
Cindy Murray  
Randy Kirkpatrick  
Mark McKinstry  
Celene Hawkins

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2  
Public Service Company of NM  
San Juan Water Commission  
Bureau of Reclamation  
UMUT

Maria O'Brien  
James Morel  
Ben Zimmerman  
Steve Whiteman

BHP Billiton  
Navajo Nation  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Jim Brooks announced Mike Oetker, Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries, will replace Brian Millsap as CC Alternate for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2. He introduced Pat McCarthy, the new TNC representative on the CC replacing Adrian Oglesby. He also wished Herb Becker a happy birthday.

**Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC)** - Kevin Johnson, Interim Service Coordinator for the Southern Rockies LCC, presented. LCC's are management-science partnerships established by Secretarial Order No. 3289. LCC's are self-directed partnerships that will link science with conservation actions to address climate change and other stressors within and across landscapes. They complement and build upon existing science and conservation efforts such as fish-habitat partnerships, migratory bird joint ventures, and water resources, land, and cultural partnerships. Each of 21 LCC's operate within a specific landscape/geographic area. The headwaters of the Colorado River are in the Southern Rockies LCC which includes large portions of UT, CO, AZ, and NM. Reclamation and the Service are co-leading development of the SR LCC. Funding is available to conduct outreach to partners and for initial science projects (Reclamation has \$450,000 available in 2010 and \$1 million requested in 2011). An interim steering committee is being formed and formal invitations to participate in scoping meetings will be sent. Funds are available for participation. The SR LCC will be run by a formal steering committee and support staff.

Several CC members expressed concern that LCC's add another layer/committee. Uilenberg said participation will not require cost share. The LCC will facilitate getting science needs addressed, working within and outside the government. McCarthy asked about priorities and funding. Johnson said this is a work-in-progress and all details are not yet known. McKinstry mentioned the Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit that has a similar mission and geographic scope. Israel said he is doubtful it will be successful. Campbell pointed out the tribes are not mentioned as partners. Kowalski said it is not just skepticism about another group being formed for Colorado; it is aversion to having to participate in yet another program. Campbell said that because a lot of money is going to the LLC's, they may provide a means for getting bigger landscape questions addressed that the existing programs cannot afford to address themselves. Uilenberg agreed and noted that considering the Program's tight budget, the LCC's could help leverage money.

The CC will put the topic on a future agenda for a more informed discussion. Johnson will send LCC facts sheets to the Program Office for distribution to the CC.

**Approval of May 13, 2010 Meeting Summary** – Kowalski moved to approve with one minor change; Pitts seconded; approved.

**Draft Program Document** - Whitmore sent out a full version of the Program Document on July 8, 2010 for CC review. It included all previous revisions, the new Chapter 6, and the Hydrology Model section. Some updating was needed to bring the full document up-to-date. Most changes made were to the descriptions of Program activities in Chapter 3 (e.g., Fish Passages and Fish Screens, Non-native Fish Control, Stocking of Endangered Fishes) and Figure 2, the AWP and Budget Development Process.

Comments were received from Condon and Pitts on the July 8 version. A comment from Pitts on the estimated time to achieve recovery for the Colorado pikeminnow is problematic. The years listed in the

2006 Program Document are from the 2002 recovery goals (i.e., 2006 for downlisting and 2013 for delisting). Whitmore talked to Tom Czapla who said the years listed in the 2009-2010 Highlights document came from the draft 2008 recovery goals. They state that downlisting could occur in five years (from 2008) and delisting in eight more years or 2013 and 2021. No date has been set yet for completing the draft 2008 recovery goals which will be incorporated into updated recovery plans. Pitts said to use 2013 and 2021. Whitmore asked about two of Condon's comments - what is the committee's preference for using acronyms in the Program Document and should Figure 2 be modified or removed. It was decided that acronyms will be used and a list of acronyms added and Figure 2 will be included but labeled as a "conceptual process."

Pitts moved to adopt the Program Document with the submitted changes made; Kowalski seconded; approved.

**Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) at Dexter NFH**– Oetker reported Dexter has tested positive for LMBV, a reportable pathogen under Service policy. Brooks added that it is the same virus Uvalde NFH got two years ago. LMBV is reportable because it is regulated in some states. Of Dexter's 1.2 million fish on station (16 species), two lots tested positive for the virus, a lot of 2008 year class bonytail and the Gila topminnow refuge population. No other lots, including any of the brood stock or production lots for all species including razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow, tested positive but Dexter has lost its Class A (pathogen free) status. This sets into motion a process of reporting and decision-making species-by-species, state-by-state, and recovery program-by-recovery program. If any states involved oppose stocking fish from Dexter, they will not be stocked. Brooks said it is probable that one or more states will oppose stocking. He surmised the Program's stocking program with razorback sucker will be okay, at least through 2011, because Uvalde has fish and there are other sources of razorback sucker broodstock, although Dexter is the only quagga mussel-free broodstock. Colorado pikeminnow could be problematic because Dexter is the sole source for those fish.

Israel asked about the downside of fish with the disease. Oetker said mortality from LMBV is limited to bass species but other species are carriers. This is the first time the two other species were shown to be carrying LMBV. No mortality or disease associated with the presence of the virus has been observed at Dexter. The virus has not been documented in waters in NM, AZ, and CA. Oetker said all details are yet to be determined. They have started contacting and meeting with affected States and programs. The Service is putting together fact sheets and will be distributing them.

**2011 Annual Work Plan and Budget** – Brooks explained the FY2011 AWP includes all existing fish and habitat monitoring activities and a 10-week Lake Powell survey. Total budget for the Lake Powell survey was decreased by \$25,000 due to an outside funding contribution. RFPs will be developed by Reclamation and the Service for the 2011 habitat mapping (\$62,000) and temperature monitoring (\$16,000) work so those costs are estimates. Carryover funds from FY2010 (\$80,580) are from habitat mapping and temperature monitoring work that was not contracted in FY2010. Instead of using these funds to go back and do habitat mapping from the 2010 videography, it can be used in 2011 for activities such as conducting a workshop that focuses on habitat monitoring. He said the 2009 monitoring workshops did not focus on habitat and a workshop is needed that is dedicated to developing a habitat monitoring plan for the Program that ties habitat to environmental flows. He said he asked that the Program Office include costs in the budget for this workshop in FY2011.

Miller reported the BC reviewed and considered numerous scenarios during a September 3 conference call and recommended this scenario which follows the Program's monitoring protocols. He said the BC did not discuss a workshop but they have discussed the need for collecting certain habitat data that is not

being collected under the current protocol. He said the BC would support having a workshop to develop a habitat monitoring plan to guide future habitat data collection activities and not doing the 2010 habitat mapping.

Campbell described the Lake Powell survey. It will address if endangered fish are being lost over the waterfall into the reservoir and if razorback reproduction is occurring in the San Juan Arm of Lake Powell. It will only be a one-year study and, based on the results, the Program will have to decide what is needed in future years. The survey focuses on razorback sucker but all fish species will be captured and assessed. Pitts pointed out that stocked fish do not count toward recovery and asked if fish are found reproducing in the reservoir, will they count. Campbell said the San Juan Arm of Lake Powell is part of designated critical habitat and those fish would count. Pitts asked about the part of the survey that involves acquiring, tagging, and stocking razorback sucker (pg. 12 of SOW) and will it be affected by the virus problem at Dexter. Campbell said it should not be affected because fish are available from Uvalde. Condon asked about the separation of budgets in the Nonnative Fish Control SOWs. Campbell explained several partners assist with those projects through sub-contracts. Reclamation needs the budgets separate for contracting purposes and transparency.

Brooks said his recommendations would be that the CC approves the budget but request that Reclamation obligates no funds for propagation until the LMBV details are worked out. Pitts moved to approve; Pfister seconded; the FY2011 AWP was approved with the caveat that the propagation/augmentation element might change depending on what happens with fish from Dexter.

**Uvalde NFH Capital Improvement Request** – Campbell provided a justification memo from Grant Webber for using Program funds for purchasing hatchery equipment. Campbell asked for CC approval to authorize the purchase of three pieces of equipment with funds from the NFWF account. Becker moved to approve the purchase; Israel seconded; approved.

**Draft 2010 Program Assessment** – Campbell said comments were received from Whipple, Condon, and Pitts. Most comments received were on the structure and form of the draft document. Campbell said the Program has never successfully completed a sufficient progress report. One was drafted in 2006 but it was never signed. Because there is no well-defined format for the document, he recommended forming a workgroup to develop an outline to establish a format. Pitts pointed out that if the Service tries to satisfy everyone, a sufficient progress report will never be completed. Campbell agreed that it is a Service document but he would like everyone to be comfortable with it and a well-defined format for the report would be helpful. Pitts voiced concern that forming a workgroup to define a format would delay getting a completed document that says the Program is making sufficient progress and can serve as the ESA compliance mechanism for the 800,000 acre-feet of depletions the Program is covering. Pfister said his preference is to final the current report and start working on defining an outline for future reports. Pitts agreed and indicated he too wants the Service to move forward with completing the report. Condon said the recommendations on contaminants are confusing as to who will be responsible. Campbell said the Service will take the lead not the BC. Campbell will make modifications based on comments received and get a revised document out to CC by October 8. Comments will be due back to the Program Office by October 22.

**TNC Report on Conservation Action Plan (CAP) and RERI Project** –McCarthy reported TNC has held three workshops to develop a CAP for the San Juan River Basin. The goal is an ecosystem assessment in the basin of stressors and strategies to implement to increase viability of conservation targets. It is a collective, consensus approach to conserving ecosystems, sometimes outside of administrative constraints. One more workshop will be held October 25 and 26 in Ignacio to complete the

process. More partners will be brought in and the workshop outcome will be identification of concrete strategies. TNC's goal is to wrap-up the CAP by the end of the calendar year.

McCarthy said he was concerned two weeks ago that the RERI project might die but he is happy to report they were able to get the contract completed and the project is underway with a completion date of June 30, 2012. The project purpose is to construct 6-10 secondary channels and backwater areas along the river to provide low velocity nursery habitat. TNC has contracted with Keller-Bliesner for the identification and design work and Navajo Nation will do the construction work. During a field trip in late August, potential restoration sites were identified and those sites were further refined during a follow-up conference on September 14. Site plans will be done by November 1. The goal is to have the sites completed by early fall of next year with quality checking of the functionality of the restored sites the next year. Campbell said it is important to assess if functional habitat that was formerly created by flow can be created by other means. He said the Program Office will do the environmental compliance for the project as soon as final site plans are done. A project update will be put on the agenda for the November BC meeting.

**2009-2010 Budget Report** – McKinstry reported the CC approved the 2009 budget in mid September which allowed him to get all the contracting done by November 15. The 2010 budget was again approved in September and contracts done by November 30. He said it is unprecedented among the other programs he works with that this process gets done so quickly. He commended the Program for getting the AWP's approved expediently and said he very much appreciates it.

In FY2009, total funding for the Program was \$2,580,639 (\$2,444,000 from annual funds and \$136,639 from the Service). Twenty-seven ongoing projects were funded. Funds were also used for an LRP update, three BC workshops, TNC planning for habitat restoration work, and equipment purchases for Navajo Nation. Reclamation's administrative management costs were 5.6% of the total budget (it was 5.9% in 2008). The Service's Program coordination costs were 13.6% of the total. Condon asked about the Program's peer reviewer participation and budget. McKinstry said this activity went a little over budget in 2009 for both the peer review budget (\$40,000) and workshops budget (\$30,000). Costs for both were higher than expected because three BC workshops were held and the updated LRP required additional peer review. He said all peer reviewers regularly participate except John Pitlick who has not been able to attend many meetings.

In FY2010, total funding was \$2,618,918 (\$2,412,000 from annual funds and \$206,918 from the Service). Annual funds were actually less than FY2009 due to a negative CPI (-1.3%). Twenty-eight ongoing projects were funded. Funds for the habitat work through BIA were not contracted and are being carried over into FY2011. Funds were also used for TNC planning and a nonnative fish workshop. Reclamation's administrative management costs were \$137,135 (5.6% of total) and Service Program coordination costs were \$454,588 or 17.3%.

For FY2011, total funding is not yet known. The CPI on September 21 was 1.1% which is less than expected and may decrease more. McKinstry was able to tap into Reclamation's Science and Technology Fund for \$25,000 for the Lake Powell survey and \$50,000 for a USGS/Uvalde repeated electrofishing effects study on razorback sucker.

**Lake Nighthorse** – Uilenberg reported on Reclamation's outlet works tests at Lake Nighthorse for fish escapement. The effectiveness of the outlet structure on fish mortality (delayed mortality at 72 hours) was tested at different reservoir elevations and different levels of pressure. Several fish species, at different life stages are allowed to pass through the outlet into a sleeve and are assessed. In general, mortality has been about 98.8%. Mortality increases as reservoir levels and pressure increases but the outlet structure

has not been 100% effective with eggs. The next test will be at 60 psi when reservoir elevations reach the appropriate level. Colorado Department of Wildlife (CDOW) has informally proposed to introduce blue gill, crappie, largemouth bass, and possibly saugeye/tiger muskie hybrids to control white suckers in the reservoir. Reclamation thinks white sucker may have gotten into the reservoir during construction or from upstream tributaries but they cannot say conclusively. Since an August meeting on the subject, Reclamation has been checking the pools behind the screens at the inlet structure in the Animas River and it does not appear any fish are getting through. Uilenberg summarized that there are two potential problems, fish already in the reservoir and fish escapement into the Animas and San Juan rivers. He said the EIS/BO calls for trout to be stocked in the reservoir and that is moving forward.

A discussion ensued about CDOW's proposal to stock nonnative fish. Pollack asked if the State has a mitigation obligation to stock fish in State reservoirs. There is no obligation but there is political pressure to create sport fisheries. To improve the effectiveness of the outlet structure to prevent escapement, Uilenberg said a drum screen could be added at the intake of the outlet works but that is only 99% effective. He said raising the minimum pool to increase the pressure is not an option. Pfister said only trout stocking was consulted on so, if other species are going to be stocked, reinitiation of the consultation would be required. Reclamation allowing CDOW to stock nonnative fish would be the federal nexus requiring reinitiation, whereas; there would be no federal nexus if nonnative fish are illicitly stocked. Oetker said if the State uses Federal Aid dollars, which most states do, that is also a federal nexus. Kirkpatrick said SJWC will be meeting in October and will ask that Reclamation not allow nonnative stocking to occur and he would hope the Program would do the same. Uilenberg said he is not looking for an official position from the CC; he is just presenting the information to gage reaction.

Kowalski said he will need to have some internal discussions about the issue and will strongly consider that stocking of nonnative fish would trigger reinitiation of consultation on ALP. McCarthy asked about the CC taking a position. Pitts thinks it would be difficult because of the federal representation on the committee although a BC determination may be useful. Kowalski said he will work internally then meet with CC representatives and others.

**Annual Funding Legislation Update and Planning** – Pitts reported on the status of appropriations legislation for 2012 to 2023 funding for both Recovery Programs. If appropriations are not secured, the Upper Colorado River Recovery Program will lose about \$2 million and the San Juan Recovery Program about \$1million. This could result in the loss of ESA compliance for both programs. The U.S. House of Representatives passed annual funding legislation for the Recovery Programs in May that would require agency appropriations to fund program activities other than O&M of facilities and monitoring after FY2011. In the Senate, Bingaman is still intent on keeping the Recovery Programs on power revenues but offsets will need to be found. The bill may be packaged with others into an omnibus bill. Regardless, Pitts is not confident any bills will move forward with the current political climate and a possible lame duck session. He said either the Senate will successfully pass a bill or appropriations will be needed to adequately fund the programs. Because Reclamation's FY2012 budget is already in, program funding for FY2012 could be a problem. Uilenberg confirmed that funding for the Recovery Programs is being considered in Reclamation's FY2013 budget but emphasized that the Recovery Programs are a high priority for Reclamation. It is possible Reclamation could find discretionary funds to cover appropriations in 2012, if necessary.

Pitts said the report responding to questions and concerns raised by Representative McClintock, Ranking Member, Water and Power Subcommittee, House Natural Resources Committee, and his staff regarding the Recovery Programs went out in September. He also announced that the 2011 DC Trip is scheduled for

March 16-22. In light of the current appropriations issues and the potential for new congressional representatives, the relevance of the trip is elevated.

**SJRB Hydrology Model Update** – Whitmore reported the SJRB Hydrology Baseline Workgroup met on July 21. Grantz reported on progress in converting the SJRBHM migration model to Riverware. She illustrated the complexity of how diversions and depletions are modeled above Navajo Reservoir. The migration model was designed to be nodally consistent with StateMod which includes a complex network of nodes where inflow, outflow, diversion, and depletions data are input. She is just starting the process of setting up accounts for all the nodes and estimated it would take another 3-6 months. Her goal is to have the model validated/calibrated by the end of the year. The group questioned whether the model needed to be that complex above Navajo Reservoir when the purpose of the model is to look at impacts below the dam. Grantz said she was in support of simplifying, if possible, to make updating and technology transfer of the model to others easier. The workgroup decided it would be wise to take a step back and re-evaluate the process. Grantz was tasked with writing-up various alternatives for simplifying the model, with time and cost estimates.

Whitmore reported the workgroup had a conference call on September 10 to review three options and discuss pros and cons. No one was in favor of Option 1, staying nodally consistent with StateMod (current path). There was no consensus on the other options. Using input from the workgroup, Reclamation and Service is in the process of determining a preferred approach after which the workgroup will be reconvened to further discuss. Whitmore said Reclamation and the Service are leaning toward Option 2 (aggregating StateMod nodes above Navajo Dam) but using Option 3 (one input node above the reservoir) to do some sensitivity analysis.

Several workgroup members said they thought the group had chosen Option 3. Whitmore said there was no agreement on Option 2 or 3 during the conference call. She said Grantz is putting together a write-up that will describe the discussion. Campbell reminded the group the CC determined the model is a Reclamation/Service model and that the final decision would be Reclamation and the Services' after receiving input from the sub-group. Whitmore said she will be scheduling a workgroup meeting soon to further discuss the options.

**Capital Projects** – Uilenberg reported that the well water issues at Horsethief Canyon Fish Rearing Ponds have been resolved. They expect to get a contract in place in December, begin construction in early summer, and complete the project in fall. The O&M contract for Hogback Fish Weir is done, a biological opinion should be completed in October, Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (NECA) will begin construction in winter, and the project should be operational in 2012. He said Larry Walkoviak supported carrying-over the 2010 capital funds and, with the 2011 funds, they will be able to complete the capital projects planned for 2011.

**2010 Long-Range Plan Update** – Whitmore reported that the all changes received from the last CC meeting were made and none of them were flagged as needing further CC discussion. The 2010 LRP is posted on the website.

**Remote Pit Tag System Report** – McKinstry reported on the task given him at the last CC meeting to get an estimate for installing a fixed-plate PIT-tag antenna system on the San Juan River to passively detect tagged razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow. He recently had the opportunity to tour several PIT-tag interrogation sites on tributaries to the Salmon River in Idaho. The amount and type of information they collect from these systems is impressive. He got two cost estimates from BioMark. One was for a preliminary evaluation at \$20,945 that would entail installing a “dummy” framework without the detection

equipment to test if a more permanent and serviceable structure would be needed to keep the PIT-tag detection array in place. The other estimate was for installation of a fully functioning system at a cost of \$126,434. No CC action was taken.

**Schedule next meeting** – A conference call was scheduled for October 25, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Agenda items identified were: Sufficient Progress Report, LCC concept, and LMBV update.