



San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program
Coordination Committee Conference Call
February 29, 2012

Summary

Coordination Committee Members:

Jim Brooks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celine Hawkins, CC Alternate
Herb Becker
Michael Howe
Patty Gelatt
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ted Kowalski
Brent Uilenberg
Mike Roberts
Kevin Flanigan
Absent

Representing:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
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
Bureau of Land Management

Program Management:

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

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

Other Interested Parties:

Steve Lynch, CC Alternate
Ray Alvarado, CC Alternate
Bill Miller, BC Chair
Katrina Grantz
Mike Greene
Marian Wimsatt

Bureau of Indian Affairs
State of Colorado
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Bureau of Reclamation
PNM
BHP Billiton

Approve Sept. 28, 2011 CC Meeting Summary – Whitmore said comments were received from Pitts, Oetker, Condon, and Becker and incorporated into the summary. The summary was approved.

Pollack said to add James Morel as the Navajo Nation's CC alternate replacing John Leeper who retired.

Kowalski said to add Ray Alvarado as one of the State of Colorado CC alternates.

Draft DOI Science Integrity Policy for Program Document – Pitts said he sent comments on the draft verbiage shortly before the meeting. Condon questioned the need for including verbiage in the Program Document since it applies to all DOI agencies, staff, and contractors. She suggested including just a reference to the policy under the Fish and Wildlife Service responsibilities section. Pitts agreed it would work to just include a reference and a website link that says the Program operates in accordance with the DOI Science Policy and agency step-downs of the policy. This would be included somewhere in Chapter 6 to make it clear

it is applicable to all Program participants. Condon questioned the importance of putting it into the Program Document. Campbell said it would meet an obligation to DOI to inform and to make sure all Program participants know of the policy. Pitts said that because it is a hot-button issue for some, it will be helpful to be able to show congressionals and others that science is the basis for Program activities. Campbell said the CC wrote provisions into the Program Document that allow the CC to make changes without approval by the signatories. The Program Office will find an appropriate place in Ch. 6 for a DOI Science Integrity Policy reference and get it back to the CC for final approval.

Process for Identifying, Evaluating, and Recommending Potential Recovery Actions – Campbell said that as the Program moves into the 2013 planning season, he wanted to make sure the CC and their BC members alike are familiar with the Long Range Plan (LRP) and annual revision process to avoid any misunderstandings and avoid any hiccups. The process the CC agreed to a couple years ago is fairly new for the BC and a refresher may be helpful. Condon asked if there had been any problems to date. Campbell said there was one incident of a BC member submitting an unsolicited proposal for a project. Pitts asked if it was a proposal for a project or a proposal to change the LRP. Brooks and Miller said the BC had a good discussion about the appropriate process at the last BC meeting.

Habitat Workshop Update – Campbell reported the BC will meet in April to review peer reviewer comments from the workshop and consider any recommendations for change to the BC's 2013 list of recovery priorities. Miller said it was a good workshop. Brooks commended Vince LaMarra for the good job he did consolidating and presenting all the habitat work that has been done to date. Miller said LaMarra's presentation gave everyone in attendance, including the outside peer reviewers, a very good background of what the Program has done related to habitat and what has been learned.

Hydrology Model Update – Grantz reported on the Program's first annual hydrology meeting held on October 26, 2011 in Denver. The meeting included an overview of the San Juan River Basin Hydrology Model (SJRBM) history and 2011 activities, accomplishments, analyses, and results, geared mostly toward informing technical participants. The annual meeting blended together with the Hydrologic Baseline Workgroup (HBWG) meeting held the next day which included most of the same attendees. Grantz emphasized how beneficial it was to have the technical people in the room to discuss the modeling techniques and strategies she has been working on. They provided significant input throughout the meetings. The results from analyses of the statistical approach for simplifying the model above Navajo Dam showed a significant difference in inflow and outflow from Navajo Dam and the accuracy needs to be improved. Two potential alternate methods for modeling depletions were identified for further investigation. It was suggested at the meeting that an ad hoc technical committee be formed which would provide technical assistance on modeling techniques and strategies to Grantz, more than just during the annual meeting, to improve the method used and allow for a feedback mechanism. The first meeting of this group would be sometime in April and could be accomplished via phone and web interface. Grantz said she was not exactly sure what the CC wanted in an annual hydrology report and asked for feedback/comments on the draft report that was sent out prior to the meeting.

There were some concerns/questions about the ad hoc committee. Pitts asked that Grantz provide a purpose and need description for the CC to review. Grantz will provide one to the Program Office by March 23 for distribution to the CC.

BC Update – Miller reported the BC had a 3-day meeting in February to hear preliminary project results from the 2011 field season, review the LRP, and prioritize projects for the upcoming year. He said the priorities are mostly the same as last year but they may make some changes after the habitat workshop results and comments are considered by the BC in April. They considered Steve Platania's two proposed changes to the larval fish monitoring. They cannot be implemented in 2012 because of the budget but in 2013, if funding is

an issue, the BC places a higher priority on adding two trips to better time when Colorado pikeminnow are spawning over doing otolith analyses to improve the ability to age fish. Pitts said the Water Development Steering Committee has concerns with the otolith work, primarily because it is experimental in nature and how it links to flows. Miller said it is a proven technique. Kowalski said the Glen Canyon adaptive management program is doing similar work and he is not sure he shares Pitts' concerns. He mentioned the Southern Rockies LCC is funding projects and could be a potential source of money for this type of work.

Miller reported the first year of the Lake Powell survey showed very interesting results. Ripe male and female razorback suckers and larvae were collected; evidence the species is spawning in Lake Powell. In 2012, efforts will attempt to document recruitment in Lake Powell and larval sampling will be increased. If recruitment can be documented, those fish can count toward recovery goals. The project is set to end in 2013. All 2011 results will be presented at the annual meeting in May.

Miller reported on some work American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers (ASIR) has done to determine the natal origin of razorback suckers. They can track the strontium signature in scales to correctly assign where fish were born. The method has applicability in identifying the origin of untagged razorback sucker captured in the river and Lake Powell to determine if they are from NAPI, Uvalde, or are wild recruits. It is possible that the Program could collect scales now to conduct this type of analysis in the future. The BC recommends that Platania give this presentation to the CC at their meeting after the annual meeting in May.

Miller said NM made some changes to the Nonnative Stocking Policy related to exceptions on stockings that already have a section 7 consultation. CO is currently reviewing it but has some concerns. The policy also needs to go to Utah and the Tribes. Harry Crocket, CDOW, and Eliza Gilbert, NMDGF, are putting together a cover memo explaining the policy and issues. When done, the Program Office will distribute to Utah and the Tribes for review. Brooks mentioned the Service is in the process of doing an intra-Service consultation on its Fisheries Program. Pitts emphasized the need for these to be consistent.

The BC's next scheduled meetings are April 23-24 in Farmington to go over the habitat workshop comments and May 15 in Durango, the day before the annual meeting. Whitmore said a recorder from SWCA provided a workshop summary and the Program and outside peer reviewers have provided a couple sets of comments. The Program Office was asked to put together an overall summary of the workshop and provide it to the BC and CC prior to the April meeting.

Miller said Patrick McCarthy, TNC, is a new member of the BC.

Legislative Update and 2012 DC Trip Planning - Pitts provided a brief history of the legislation to extend authorization to use hydropower revenues for the Upper Colorado River (UCR) recovery programs. The status has not changed. It was introduced in the Senate but not in the House. A "cutgo" offset of ~\$25 million will be needed to extend the authorization for approximately 8 years. The House Water and Power Subcommittee has not passed any authorizing legislation that involves "cutgo" offsets. Pitts and others prepared a report to address issues raised by Rep. McClintock (R-CA), Chair, Water and Power Subcommittee in July and answered more questions in January. Some experienced water lobbyists in DC were consulted for help and they suggested sending small groups from the States and/or water users including CREDA to DC to meet with McClintock to gain his support for the legislation. Pitts reported that water legislation introduced in the House regarding water issues in California could set a precedent that was opposed by California and other states. A number of UCR states have come out in opposition. McClintock supports the legislation and questioned why this legislation is being opposed by those who want him to support the recovery program legislation. Pitts said it is questionable if the legislation will get passed this year.

Kowalski said the CA legislation is HR1837 involving the San Joaquin River and Colorado has opposed it. He does not see it being related to the UCR legislation and believes the DC visits are worthwhile. He said Jennifer Gimbel will be in DC during that time and could be a good person to have help.

The main purpose of the March trip is to support the annual appropriations and the President budget. John Shields has scheduled most of the appointments. The planning team had hoped to fit them all into a one-week, Wednesday through Friday time frame, but Interior could only meet on the 19th so the trip will stretch over the weekend and include Monday meetings. Pitts said there has been criticism from some subcommittee and delegation staffers for having too large a group. An effort will be made to minimize the number of people at each meeting (e.g., have just NM people go to NM meetings, CO people go to CO meetings, etc.). Pitts said he believes the DC trips are critical and the programs would be quickly forgotten in the appropriations process without them. Condon said she is unclear regarding which format to use for tribal support letters. Pitts explained Congress puts out specific guidelines on format. He has the Senate's guidelines but not the House's which are different. He was waiting until he had both before providing them to the partners.

2013 Budget and Capital Projects Update – Uilenberg reported that the 2013 President's budget includes \$8,387,000 for the UCR which includes \$400,000 for activities to avoid jeopardy for a total of \$7,187,000 for both programs. He would like to use the majority of this on Orchard Mesa in 2013. Currently, Horsethief Canyon Ponds is moving along well. It should be completed in mid to late June and could start receiving fish in late June. It will be a good facility with a secure water supply and good security. For Hogback fish weir, they are working on the 638 contract with NECA for construction and it should be ready in July. Construction will occur 2012-2013 and be done in spring of 2013. Pitts thanked Uilenberg for his good work in moving all the capital projects along. Uilenberg thanked the States, Tribes, and water users, because without them funding would not continue.

Campbell said the Fish and Wildlife Service's 2013 budget for the SJRRIP is about the same as in 2012. Automatic cuts are supposed to kick in but he has not heard that the SJRRIP will not continue to be a priority.

Uilenberg asked when the Program might want to start using its space at Horsethief Ponds. Brooks said the Program does not currently need the space. Miller said the primary concern with stocking is the low return rate of Uvalde fish but the hatchery is implementing new procedures to try to improve survival. It will take a couple years to determine if those measures are successful and there are currently enough razorback sucker on station to fill the Program's stocking request for at least a couple years.

The next scheduled CC meeting is May 17, 2012, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., in Durango, the day after the annual meeting on May 16.

Action Items Identified:

- Scientific Integrity Policy reference and placement in Program Document – Program Office
- Hydrology Model Annual Report comments back to Grantz/Whitmore by March 23
- Purpose and need description of SJRBHM ad hoc technical group to CC by March 23 - Grantz
- Habitat Workshop summary to BC and CC by April BC meeting – Program Office