



## San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program

### Coordination Committee Meeting

May 17, 2012

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Public Land Center, Durango, CO

### Meeting Notes

#### Coordination Committee Members:

Jim Brooks, Chair  
Catherine Condon  
Celine Hawkins, CC Alternate  
Herb Becker  
Pearl Chamberlain  
Patty Gelatt  
Tom Pitts  
Stanley Pollack  
Ray Alvarado  
Brent Uilenberg  
Taylor Hawes  
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

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

#### Other Interested Parties:

Mike Oetker, CC Alternate  
Bill Miller, BC Chair  
Mark McKinstry, BC Rep.  
Tom Wesche, BC Rep.  
Patrick McCarthy, BC Rep.  
Jason Davis, BC Rep.  
Steve Ross  
Ron Ryel  
Melynda Roberts  
Katrina Grantz  
Kristine Blickenstaff  
Steve Harris  
Carrie Lile  
Marian Wimsatt  
Steven Platania  
Kevin Terry

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Development Interests  
The Nature Conservancy  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2  
Program Peer Reviewer  
Program Peer Reviewer  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Southwestern Water Conservation District  
BHP Billiton  
ASIR  
Jicarilla Apache Nation

**Approval of February 29, 2012 Conference Call Summary** – Whitmore received comments from Brooks, Condon, and Pitts. All changes were incorporated into the version in the CC folders. Marian Wimsatt, BHP Billiton, said she was on the conference call but not listed in the attendee’s list. Becker moved to approve the summary with Wimsatt’s name added; Pitts seconded; the summary was approved.

**2012 Long-Range Plan** – Whitmore reported she updated the LRP for 2012 and sent it to the CC prior to the meeting. The only comments/edits she had were from Tom Wesche on the Appendix A tables. She incorporated his edits but he also had some good questions that will be useful for continuing to improve the tables. She said the LRP is intended to be a working document and asked if it needs to be “finalized” each year. Pitts said sufficient progress relies on the LRP and he would prefer it to be approved by the CC each year which also lines up better with the Section 7 Principles. Whitmore will post the draft 2012 LRP on the website and solicit comments/input from the BC and the CC with the goal of the CC approving the LRP for 2012 during their August conference call.

**2013 Draft Annual Work Plan and Budget** – Campbell went through the draft 2013 AWP. The budget totals for six of the Service SOWs include administrative overhead costs of 17-22%. It was an oversight that they were not reduced to the agreed-to 50% of the standard rate (11%). The totals are correct in the budget spreadsheet and will be changed in the SOWs.

Data Integration and Synthesis – A new SOW is included to accomplish needed data integration and synthesis. It entails hiring a post-doctoral research associate for a two-year period with an option for a third year. The research associate will be affiliated with University of New Mexico and will work closely with several Principal Investigators, the Program Office, and the BC. Pitts asked what would make the project go from two years to three years. Campbell said part of the project will initially be to define specific data integration tasks and the time required to accomplish them.

Lake Powell Survey – The BC recommends not doing the Lake Powell fish survey in 2013 but doing several targeted studies. The committee does not want to do another survey without summarizing/analyzing the data first. The details of the analysis have not been worked out yet but it could possibly be done by Travis Francis’s crew or possibly the post-doctoral research associate. The BC recommendation is that the funds set aside for Lake Powell would be used to do the summary analysis and report for the Lake Powell work, scale analysis to determine natal origin, investigate opercular deformities, conduct a habitat retrospective study, and expand monitoring to upper portions of the study area (Animas River and San Juan River upstream of the Animas confluence).

Using elemental analysis of San Juan River razorback sucker to determine their natal origin – Platania gave a presentation on scale analyses his firm, American Southwest Ichthological Researchers, has been investigating. The purpose of the work was to determine if scales could be used to correctly assign the natal origins of razorback sucker. Determining the origin of untagged fish captured in the river and Lake Powell to determine if they are wild recruits has been recognized as an “issue” by the BC for several years. This method could provide a non-lethal way to accomplish this.

Scales were taken from “known” source populations at Uvalde and Dexter in 2011 and from razorback sucker in the river during two NNR sampling trips. Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (ICPMS) was used to determine water signatures, determine elemental scale differences, and use “known” results as a benchmark for 7 wild fish. The method was to do “blind” analysis of scales to assign each wild fish to natal origin category (e.g., wild, Uvalde, Dexter, undetermined). The plasma

mass spectrometry machine at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution was used to perform the analysis in January 2012. Using strontium, they were able to identify unique water signatures for Dexter, Uvalde, NAPI, and the river. Using these known signatures, they were able to correctly identify natal origin of all “known” wild fish and assign natal origin to previously untagged “wild” fish. The results showed no sign of recruitment from wild spawned fish in 7 samples analyzed.

Their conclusions were that the methodology is sound and proven for this task. That is, it provides results regarding natal origin, provides non-lethal technique for data acquisition, provides results on location throughout life-cycle, and field data easily (economically) acquired via existing projects.

Pitts asked about cost. Platania said using the facility at Woods Hole is a fixed cost for the machine at \$1,500 per day (24-hours). The number of slides that can be processed in one day depends on how many scale burns are needed and the amount of prior preparation. It takes more burns with fish caught in the wild than hatchery fish which are of known origin. Harris asked how large of a crew is needed to process the scales at the facility. Platania said three people are ideal; primarily to watch the machine. The biggest cost is labor for post processing. Pitts asked how many samples need to be processed to get statistically valid results. Ryel responded that it would be a similar process as larval sampling, you start small, and then as you want to find out more, you transition into quantifying the numbers. Pitts said that if the technique can answer if we are getting recruitment and it is relatively cheap, he supports it.

Campbell said the number of untagged fish captured was originally at ~8% then increased to ~30% presumably as result of the large number of untagged razorback sucker stocked from NAPI ponds in 2006-2007. Many of those fish have been captured and are now tagged and the number of untagged fish captured has decreased to ~15% in the past two years. In Lake Powell, the number of unmarked fish was 40% in 2011. Knowing the natal origin of those untagged fish would remove speculation and this technique could provide the answer to that question. Crews are currently collecting scales from all untagged fish and they can be analyzed at any time. Hawes asked if unknown signatures are found, could it be determined if they came from the Upper Colorado River (UCR). Platania said all it would take is get scales from UCR hatchery fish and identify those signatures.

Campbell asked the peer reviewers to comment. Ryel said it is necessary to identify natal origin of unmarked fish and this technique provides the best opportunity. Ross said this method has great potential for the Program.

Campbell said he would like Platania to bring a proposal back with costs for CC consideration. Pitts said this could be also applicable for the UCR Program and they could possibly contribute funding for research and development of the technique. Campbell said he would look into having Platania present at the Upper Colorado River July BC meeting. Brooks asked about other facilities that could be used other than Woods Hole. Is there competition?

Assuming the CC approves the SOW, the CC supports moving forward with the scale analysis project.

Operculum deformities in larval fish - Campbell said this is another issue the BC prioritized. Becker asked how it affects recovery. Campbell said if 47% of the larval fish have deformities, the number of fish that could recruit into the population could be cut by half. The magnitude of the problem needs to be determined. Miller commented this could also relate to answering the question of why we do not see recruitment. The BC tasked Platania with going back to the archived samples to assess the proportion of larval with deformities to determine if there has been an increase over time. Platania pointed out his

analysis will provide ratios, water temperature, and flow but it will not provide causality and no correlations. He said they have added a new column on their data sheets so this information will now be recorded and readily available. Ryel said this information is needed. Campbell would like Platania to provide a budget to do this retrospective analysis. It will be part of the larval sampling SOW and part of future process as Platania mentioned.

Assuming the CC approves the SOW, the CC supports moving forward with the operculum deformity retrospective inventory.

Retrospective analysis of complex river reaches – This study would entail using the historic data set to look at channel simplification over time. It would assess which areas are staying complex and which ones are simplifying. This is important information for identifying additional sites for restoration. Harris asked if Keller-Bliesner already did this. Miller said Keller-Bliesner's data will be used but they did not do this type of analysis. It will be economical because existing data can be used and it will look at specific locations not the entire river. McCarthy said the idea came out of the habitat monitoring workshop and was based on a fluvial geomorphological perspective. The Program needs to get a better handle on channel complexity which will help enable better site selection. Miller and LaMarra will submit a proposal for this work as part of the habitat monitoring SOW.

River videography – The BC tasked LaMarra with looking into other options for river photography. There are numerous products available that would be an improvement over the current method. The program needs geo-referenced photography. The current product has to be post processed to get this which is expensive and time consuming. Miller said another recommendation that came out of the workshop is the need to document habitat conditions under varying flow levels. Ross said it was also identified at the workshop that we need to look at what is going on outside the river banks. The current photography is taken in one flight during low flows and is limited to the river channel. Various satellite imagery products can be acquired to capture various flows and provide broader swaths to capture more of the flood plain. Miller mentioned the potential to get base maps without vegetation with LiDAR. They will be looking into these other options and the habitat monitoring SOW will be revised based on what is found.

Whitmore asked if O&M for Horsethief Canyon Ponds needs to be included for 2013. Uilenberg said the facility should be operational in June so he assumes it will need to be included in the 2013 budget.

Whitmore said the AWP budget spreadsheet format was modified in 2011 to accommodate the change in funding sources. She asked if the CC wanted any other format changes. Uilenberg said it looks good for now recognizing the "Reclamation Funding" category may change. Campbell said he is working on getting all in-kind contributions accounted for in the spreadsheet but still needs to include in-kind contributions from TNC RERI project and SUIT population model.

The BC will review new and updated SOWs and input from the CC at their July 9 conference call. The Program Office will revise the draft 2013 AWP and provide it to the CC for review and comment by the end of July. Further discussion of the draft AWP will be on the agenda for the August CC conference call. A CC meeting will be scheduled to approve the 2013 AWP by the end of September.

**Stationary PIT Tag Reader Update** - McKinstry reported on progress related to stationary PIT tag readers. He got a team together to look at potential locations for PIT tag readers. Three sites were identified at PNM Weir, Hogback, and Mexican Hat. BioMark provided cost estimates for each site. He

said the original estimate for Mexican Hat (\$147,000) was for a non-directional reader but the BC recommended installing a directional reader so fish movement can be detected as well as presence. He obtained a new estimate for a directional reader at Mexican Hat. Costs for all identified readers include:

	Labor	Non-Labor	Total
Mexican Hat	\$31,472	\$229,884	\$261,356
PNM Weir	\$25,852	\$206,273	\$232,125
Hogback	\$19,108	\$45,568	\$64,676
Totals	\$76,432	\$481,725	<b>\$558,157</b>

He said the cost for labor will be paid by the NFWF account and the capital costs (equipment) will be paid by Reclamation through our appropriated money for the Program. Uilenberg said there is some flexibility with capital funds because OMID is not getting funded. Campbell pointed out the CC already approved the funding and installation of the readers and emphasized the importance of being able to detect tagged fish without electrofishing. McKinstry said the readers will provide valuable additional information but cannot provide population estimates. Pitts asked about O&M. McKinstry said there will be some. Harris asked about the comfort level on the viability of the systems already in place (e.g., McElmo) and will they be subject to vandalism. The UCR Program has several in place and they work great. McKinstry said the readers will be set up with the ability to remotely transfer data. Management of the data has not been totally worked through yet but the expectation is that Scott Durst in the Program Office would handle this. It could be a potential problem as the amount of data could be immense. Miller said a good programmer could easily automate processes to make data transfer and management easier and he offered up one of his staff members to help do this.

Uilenberg moved to fund the purchase and installation of the identified passive PIT tag detectors; Pitts seconded and the CC approved.

**Capital Projects Update** – Uilenberg reported construction of the Hogback Fish Weir is estimated at \$2-3 million. Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (NECA) will do the construction. The package is in procurement and should be completed in late June. Construction will start after the irrigation season. Project completion is expected by spring 2013.

**BC Report** – Miller said the BC has really taken to heart the recommendations that came out of the habitat monitoring workshop and are looking at changes to the current protocol. A subgroup was formed to identify data gaps and the BC selected the priority studies mentioned earlier, i.e., retrospective complex reach analysis, opercular deformities, and natal origin scale work. In addition, Dale Ryden and Eliza Gilbert were asked to modify their 2013 SOWs to incorporate monitoring further upstream to monitor stocking that is being done higher upstream and LaMarra modified the habitat monitoring SOW to include the RERI sites.

Miller reported John Pitlick will be out of the country on a sabbatical for a year. The BC voted to bring in Brian Bledsoe as a peer reviewer to replace him retaining that geomorphology expertise. Campbell said Pitlick told him that even though he will be gone for a while, he would still like to be involved in the Program. The CC indicated they were okay with having two geomorphology peer reviewers.

**March Congressional Briefing/FY13 Appropriations** – Pitts reported on the annual Washington trip. They did the usual rounds; i.e., four state congressional offices, authorizing and appropriations subcommittees, and Reclamation and Service directorates. There is still good support for the Programs. They did not ask for support letters as it has become passé in DC because of the appearance of earmarks. An Energy and Water Appropriations bill for the FY2013 budget was passed in the Senate and Pitts is hopeful something will be passed in the House. Pitts said it is important they continue to show up each year or support for the Programs will be dropped. For more information, a trip report documenting the March 2012 visits in Washington, DC, written by John Shields, is available.

**Annual Funding Legislation Update and Planning** – Pitts reported Robert King and John Shields had a good meeting with Tom McClintock, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power, on March 20. Chairman McClintock stated he would not oppose passage of the recovery programs' annual base funding legislation if Rep. Rob Bishop of Utah and Rep. Scott Tipton of Colorado, who are both members of the House Natural Resources Water and Power Subcommittee, are "on board" supporting its enactment. Pitts said both congressmen are supportive of the Programs. Rep. Bishop, a senior member of the House Resources Committee is holding off on submitting the legislation until the "cutgo" offset was resolved. More recently, he is willing to introduce the bill with the intent that "cutgo" can be resolved later.

Nothing has changed on the Senate side. A placeholder bill was introduced last year and a hearing was held. The Senate is waiting on a House bill. The buzz in DC is that after the election, an omnibus bill will come out of the Senate during the lame duck session. To get the UCR recovery programs legislation in the omnibus bill, it will need to have some standing, so it needs to get marked up and passed by the House Natural Resources Committee. The bill will have bipartisan support with 12 co-sponsors. Pitts is hopeful Rep. Bishop will introduce the bill but it is uncertain whether or not that will occur. At this time, there are no guarantees that the bill will be passed.

Brooks mentioned Rep. Lujan used information on the Program at a recent hearing. Harris said he and Bruce Whitehead will be visiting Rep. Tipton to insure he is on board. Pitts said the Water Users have asked for visits with Republican members to get them back onboard with support. Hawes asked if they need any help. Pitts said they are just waiting for Bishop to introduce the bill. Becker thanked them for their efforts.

**DOI Science Integrity Policy Reference in Program Doc** – Whitmore said she sent out Program Document Ch. 6 with a reference to the DOI Science Integrity Policy inserted. She incorporated edits received from Condon and Pitts as follows:

*"The DOI established a policy entitled "Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities" (Jan. 28, 2011) to ensure and maintain scientific and scholarly ethical standards in Departmental decision-making (<http://elips.doi.gov/elips/0/doc/3045/Page1.aspx>). The policy applies to all DOI employees and all contractors, cooperators, partners, permittees, and volunteers who assist with developing or applying the results of scientific and scholarly activities. The Program operates in accordance with this policy, including future updates of this policy."*

Becker asked if this verbiage should be included in contracts. The CC agreed it should be inserted into Program SOWs and RFPs. Becker moved to approve insertion of the verbiage in the Program Document; Pitts seconded; CC approved.

**Press releases for the San Juan** – Pitts said he thinks the Program has a great record but needs to do a better job conveying it. More press is needed. He said we saw terrific news yesterday at the annual meeting. He has encouraged Debbie Felker to get plugged in and had asked her to come to the annual meeting but she had a conflict. He is in support of providing Felker with additional money if it would help get more press for the Program. Campbell said providing more money to the UCR I&E program probably will not help as Felker's plate is full with just the UCR. He said she does a great job working with the SJR Program each year on Swimming Upstream and the Highlights book to insure SJR news is included. Oetker said there are many ways to do this other than just with press releases but it takes time. Hawes said writers need to be found that would write 2 or 3 articles on the SJR Program. This will be put on the agenda as an ongoing topic.

**May 17 RERI Project Tour** – McCarthy gave the group additional details on the TNC tour of RERI sites. They will be convening in Farmington following the CC meeting and caravan to the sites. He invited everyone to attend.

**Annual Hydrology Model Meeting Report** – Grantz reported she revised the 2011 annual hydrology report based on comments. Whitmore sent it to the CC on April 11 in an email that also addressed the task Grantz was given by the CC to put together a purpose and need statement for a proposed ad hoc technical committee to provide her with technical input on the SJRB hydrology model. Reclamation and the Service decided that formalizing an information exchange process that is inherently intended to be informal was unnecessary. Rather than forming an ad hoc technical committee, Reclamation will continue to contact technical folks for input and feedback on issues related to the hydrology model, as needed. Grantz will continue to provide progress reports on these communications and status of the model at Hydrology Baseline Workgroup meetings, SJRRIP annual meetings, and the Annual Hydrology meeting.

Grantz said they have completed all the work on the model identified since the last meeting and will be ready to show data by the end of July. She would like to have this year's annual hydrology meeting in October in the SJR Basin. The last one was held in the Denver and numerous individuals indicated they would like to attend but in the Basin. She will work on setting a date for the meeting and will send out an email. She asked to convene the Hydrology Baseline Workgroup.

A Hydrology Baseline Workgroup meeting was scheduled for August 9, 2012 in Albuquerque.

Pitts said yesterday's presentations illustrated tremendous Program success with the numbers and size classes of fish being captured. This was done with collaboration and is an ESA success story. Oetker said political officials talk about these Programs a lot but we need to be vigilant in telling the story. Brooks said the Program's 20-year anniversary is in October of this year and he is proud to have been a participant, even if it does take a lot of time.

**Schedule next meeting** – A conference call was scheduled for August 21; 10-12; agenda topics include approval of the 2012 LRP, approval of the draft 2013 Annual Work Plan, and revisiting the publicity issue.