



**COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL
April 3, 2013**

Draft Meeting Notes

Coordination Committee Members:

Jim Brooks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ray Alvarado
Brent Uilenberg
Kevin Flanigan
Patrick McCarthy
Absent
Absent

Representing:

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

Program Management:

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

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

Other Interested Parties:

Kristin Green, CC Alternate
Bill Miller, BC Chair
Mark McKinstry, BC Rep.
Sarah Conn

State of New Mexico
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Sequester impacts and the Ridges Basin fish escapement analysis were added to the agenda.

Dale Ryden will be replacing Patty Gelatt as Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6, CC representative. Ryden said the change is not official until the next meeting and he was just sitting in for Gelatt at this meeting.

Approval of Nov. 9, 2012 conference call notes – Whitmore received comments from Alvarado, Pitts, and Green. She was not able to incorporate the Pitts and Green comments prior to the meeting but sent Pitts comments to the CC mailing list prior to the call. Condon indicated she had some minor edits to add and would send them. McCarthy said to replace “selenium” with “riparian area” in the habitat restoration activities section. Becker moved to approve the meeting summary with the changes, Pollack seconded, and the summary was approved.

2013 Long Range Plan Update – Whitmore sent out the most recent draft 2013 LRP on March 28. This draft includes modifications made by the BC during their conference call on March 26. The BC also identified areas to be addressed for next year’s version. Miller said the new format has improved the document by reducing a lot of redundancy and including status updates of the tasks in the Appendix A tables. Elements #2 and #4 still include redundancies and will be addressed in the 2014 LRP. The BC plans to approve the 2013 LRP during a conference call on April 19. Pitts agreed the document is much improved.

CC members should provide comments to Whitmore before the April 19 BC conference call. CC approval of the 2013 LRP will be on the agenda for the May 9 CC meeting.

2013 DC Trip Update – McCarthy, who went on the trip for the first time, reported. He said it was well worth the time and he learned a lot. He liked this year’s four-day trip format which did not involve staying over a weekend. Recovery Program representatives attended 34 briefing meetings with Congressional staffers and key Interior agencies over four days. He thanked John Shields for scheduling all of the meetings and coordinating logistics. The key messages of the briefings were the importance of the Programs, updates on progress toward recovery, and thanking the delegates for their support in passing HR 6060, against all odds. Because the President’s budget was not yet final, non-federal participants could not provide support letters for appropriations for the Programs as in the past. McCarthy said concerns expressed during the meetings included the delay in the downlisting date for Colorado pikeminnow, i.e., moving goal posts, and the slow pace of progress (e.g., NNF removal). One Senate staffer referred to the Programs as being boondoggles. The non-federal participants explained why the Programs are considered highly worthwhile and effective by participants. Pitts explained the value of the Programs in providing much needed regulatory certainty for the tribes, states and water users. McCarthy also heard strong support for the Programs’ success, from congressional staffers and the federal agencies. He said Bill Miller’s participation was critical since Program staff could not attend to provide technical information and he thanked the Tribe for letting him go. McCarthy recognized the importance of doing the briefings every year to garner continued support for the Programs.

Condon said some of the complaints voiced could have been diffused with a positive initial delivery. McCarthy agreed that the message should be calibrated so it does not lead to negativity. They both agreed that Miller’s message was good. McCarthy and Condon were not there for the last day of meetings. Miller said they had a good visit with Congressman Lamborn’s office on the last day. Miller said he was able to provide technical information about the species and habitat but the Program Directors could talk about Program details better than him.

Pitts reiterated that Miller did a great job responding to technical questions regarding the status of the fish and the Programs’ activities and provided an excellent presentation for the congressional luncheon. He said Mike Greene, PNM, also attended and provided the perspective of the economic benefits of the Programs to the regulated community. Pitts is convinced that it is essential to do these trips each year or the Programs would be forgotten. He said because there is no President’s budget yet, they are not asking for support letters from the partners this year. The President’s budget is to be released April 10 and House members are to identify their priorities by April 16 so there is not time to do much. House and Senate members of the four states’ delegations were asked to include the Programs in their funding priorities that are communicated to the appropriations committees.

Sequester/Annual Funding Update – McKinstry reported Reclamation has been receiving mixed messages for months about whether or not the sequester will affect hydropower revenues. Recently, Reclamation was informed the funds will be affected with a 5% decrease. Although he still is not sure what the implications of the sequester might be, he is moving forward with processing the FY2013 contracts in the way Reclamation received them. Regardless, he does not believe the funds will be affected in FY2013. Uilenberg agreed and mentioned an OMB document that says the funds will be affected but not until FY2014. McKinstry said FY2014 SOW’s are being submitted as usual. Any unusual provisions that may occur as a result of the sequester should be dealt with by the Program Office not by individuals or agencies.

McKinstry said he started moving forward with funding the SJR Program’s FY2013 SOW’s in October but ran into problems. To date, no SJR Program 2013 contracts have been awarded. Some good news is that Reclamation finally got the Navajo Nation 2012 funds at the beginning of 2013 which will allow them to

fully operate the passage in 2013. Because of problems with contracts last year, the Nation was not able to fully operate the fish passage at the PNM weir in 2012. Navajo Nation should also be first in line to get its funds awarded this year. McKinstry described how Reclamation is combining projects with multiple SOW's under individual contracts this year. The SOW's in the AWP; however, will be listed under individual projects for easier tracking of recovery activities.

Pitts asked if project leaders were able to hire people to do the work. Brooks said in Region 2 he has been able to get waivers to the hiring freeze to hire people. Ryden, in Region 6, said he should have 11 people on staff right now but only has four. Sarah Conn, who is temporarily filling in for Mike Oetker in Region 2, said they should know more in a week or two. Brooks said when the FWS finds out what the budget/hiring situation is, he will send out an email to update to the CC. Pitts emphasized that it is not just a budget issue, it is also an ESA compliance issue. Once the actual budgets are known, there may be a need to have further discussions regarding ESA compliance. This issue will be on the May agenda and, hopefully, there will be more information by then. Pitts mentioned this problem to the Service directorate during the March meetings and asked for support to ensure hiring of temporary employees this summer.

Capital Projects Update – Uilenberg reported that Hogback fish weir is almost done and should be completed and taking water April 15. McKinstry said he needs to do some measurements for the remote pit tag meter before the canal has water in it. Uilenberg said to coordinate with Ray Cardenas, the Construction Field Inspector. Design and preconstruction work for fish passage at APS weir will proceed after a decision is made on point of lateral for the Navajo-Gallup project.

Uilenberg recounted that the Horsethief Canyon fish rearing ponds were constructed for both the Upper Basin (5/6) and San Juan (1/6) programs and paid for with capital appropriated funds. Reclamation is working with the two programs and states to bring the capital funds (appropriated and NFWF accounts) into balance as per P.L. 106-392.

Sufficient Progress Report – Campbell reported the February 2013 Sufficient Progress Report is in the FWS Regional Office awaiting the signature of the Regional Director. He expects it to be signed soon.

Biology Committee Meeting Report – Miller reported the Annual Researcher's Meeting held on January 15-16 in Moab and sponsored for the first time by the SJR Program was a success. He said the Program Office did a great job organizing the meeting and a lot of SJR researchers attended and gave presentations. He said the format of the February 20-21 BC meeting was similar to past years. The researchers reported on the results of their projects and data collected in 2012. The CC will get status updates during the Annual Meeting on May 8. He mentioned the improved LRP and that the principal investigators will provide status updates each year on LRP tasks for which they are responsible.

The BC reviewed and discussed the results of the sleeve valve fish passage analysis at Ridges Basin Dam done by Reclamation. The sleeve valve is 100% effective on fish at full pool but some small fish passed through at lower lake levels. Eggs can pass through with viability at all lake levels. The BC recognizes the difficulty in getting to 100% but also does not want another source of nonnative fish in the SJR system. The Animas-La Plata biological opinion (BO) specifies no escapement from Ridges Basin Dam. The primary question concerns the risk to the native SJR fish community. Miller said he compiled BC comments on the Ridges Basin sleeve valve report into a memo and it is being reviewed by BC members. The BC will provide recommendations to the Program Office on the potential for fish escapement from Lake Nighthorse, how the fishery could be impacted, and what could be done to make the sleeve valve 100% effective. The FWS has to decide if the project is in compliance with the ESA. Region 6 is the lead on the BO and the final decision-maker. The BC will discuss the Ridges Basin recommendations, LRP, and plan for May meetings during a conference call on April 19.

Pitts voiced water user concerns about potential operations constraints at Lake Nighthorse. Campbell said preventing escapement of nonnative fish from the reservoir was included as a conservation measure in Reclamation's biological assessment of the project. This means it is considered part of the project and was included in the jeopardy analysis in the biological opinion. Uilenberg said he did a summary of ESA compliance associated with the project and preventing fish escapement from Ridges Basin is described in Conservation Measure #5. He said consideration should be given to the measures in place at Ridges Basin Dam which are far better than the other structures in the basin and the prohibitive costs of making it 100% effective at preventing escapement. Campbell reiterated that Region 6 has the lead and he will be providing Patty Gelatt with the BC comments and any other comments received.

Hawkins said she reviewed the BC comments Miller sent out and asked if the BC will be recommending operations constraints. Miller said nothing has been decided yet but numerous options have been discussed for minimizing potential adverse effects. The reservoir could be operated in certain ways that could minimize effects. He recognized that there are no fish in the reservoir that are not currently in the river but we also do not want the reservoir to cause an appreciable accretion to nonnative fish already in the system. At this point, numerous measures including operations are being considered but nothing has been decided. McKinstry reiterated that Ridges Basin has better nonnative fish escapement control than most other dams in SJR Basin and, if not for the BO, it would be held up as a shining example of a great control structure.

Uilenberg said he is waiting for the BC comments and a final decision from Gelatt regarding ESA compliance but can provide the draft report to anyone who would like a copy. Pitts and Hawkins indicated they wanted a copy. The Program Office will post it on the SJRRIP website. Condon asked if the CC has a role in this issue. Campbell said yes and that the Program Office will keep the CC up-to-date on the issue.

Annual Hydrology Meeting (Feb. 22) update – Whitmore reported the second Annual Hydrology Meeting was held on February 22, 2013 in Durango. About 20 people attended. Kristine Blickenstaff, the primary Reclamation modeler, gave an update on SJR hydrology model development. There was good exchange of information and ideas between Reclamation and the attendees. A report of the meeting is about done and Whitmore will send it to CC members probably before the end of the week.

Next Meetings:

- BC Conference Call – April 19, 1-3 p.m.
- BC Meeting - May 7 from 8am - 4:30 p.m. at the USFS Public Lands Bldg.
- Annual Meeting – May 8 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at Ft. Lewis College
- CC Meeting - May 9 from 8 a.m. - noon at the Doubletree Motel