



COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL July 31, 2013

Meeting Notes

COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Jim Brooks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ted Kowalski
Brent Uilenberg
Kevin Flanigan
Patrick McCarthy
Michael Howe
Absent

REPRESENTING:

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

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Kristin Green, CC Alternate
Beverly Heffernan, CC Alternate
Bill Miller, BC Chair
Natasha Cuylear
Mark McKinstry
Ted Dunn
Rob Waldman
Ivan Artichoker
Ed Warner

State of New Mexico
Bureau of Reclamation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Reclamation
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Bureau of Reclamation

Agenda additions included:

- Status of transfer of equipment from Uvalde to Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility
- Capital Projects Update: Status of decision re: APS Fish Passage per Navajo-Gallup Pipeline decision
- Status of Recovery Plans and Pitts letter to Region 6 RD
- Status of Population Model

APPROVAL OF MAY 9, 2013 CONFERENCE CALL NOTES – Whitmore incorporated comments received from Condon in the most recent version of the meeting notes. She was not able to incorporate comments from McCarthy prior to the meeting but they are minor. Becker moved to approve the meeting summary with McCarthy's edits; Condon seconded; the summary was approved.

RIDGES BASIN DAM FISH ESCAPEMENT STUDY – Campbell provided a chronology of the issue.

- Reclamation requested a technical review from the BC of their report, *Ridges Basin Dam Sleeve Valve Passage Analysis of Nonnative Fish and Embryos at Increasing Depths and Pressures*, in February.
- Program peer reviewers and BC members provided input on the technical aspects of the report and on the implications on the biology of the endangered fish of having less than 100% fish escapement.
- In May, the BC approved a memo from the BC to the Program Office with recommendations regarding Ridges Basin Dam sleeve valve.
- Campbell sent the BC recommendations with a draft memo from the Program Office to the Service Region 6 to the CC on May 14 for their comments/input.
- Comments were received from Pitts, Becker, Condon, Hawkins, and Uilenberg.
- A Jun 18-20 email discussion among CC members resulted in the topic being included on the agenda for this conference call.

Uilenberg said the time line was accurate but he does not agree with everything in the BC memo. He reiterated the comments he provided and believes that the measures currently in place at the dam are in compliance with the Animas-LaPlata biological opinion. Becker said the memo should not have gone to Patty Gelatt, Service Region 6, without CC involvement. Campbell said it has not been sent to Gelatt yet. Brooks asked how Uilenberg/Reclamation plans to work with the Service on the consultation. Condon asked what the options are if the CC does not agree with the BC recommendations, to submit no comments or send comments individually. Kowalski said Colorado CC and BC members do not agree with the BC recommendations. He thought they were overly hardline and would like to send individual comments.

Pollack asked about process and voiced concern that it might not be appropriate for the Program's committees to be interfering in a sec. 7 consultation. He questioned if the CC is even in a position to do this. Pitts recognized that the Service is the decision-maker. Ryden said he discussed the issue with Gelatt. The decision will be made between Reclamation and the Service Region 6. She indicated it is Reclamation's responsibility to initiate the conversation with her office. Ryden said he presumes she will take comments from anyone who wants to provide them. Brooks said the CC needs to decide how to deal with the BC and CC comments on this issue. All of the comments to-date are documented in the public record. Pitts moved that the BC recommendations not be sent and that Reclamation enter into discussions with the Service Region 6 on biological opinion compliance; Becker seconded; and the motion was approved.

Pitts emphasized that in the future, if someone wants to have the BC provide technical reports and/or recommendations, they need to go through the proper procedures. Whitmore pointed out that all requests for hydrology model runs are required to go through the Program Office for CC approval. The group agreed all such requests to technical committees need to go through the Program Office for CC approval.

APPROVAL OF 2014 DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND BUDGET – Whitmore gave background on AWP progression. She said the May 2 version of the draft AWP had a \$186,332 deficit. Some savings were found by decreasing overhead costs in Dexter's SOWs from 11% to 3% (+ \$13,793), removing 2014 workshop (+\$50,000), and combining Program Office SOWs, re-distributing some salary and decreasing Education & Outreach (+\$36,018). These cuts resulted in a \$87,525 deficit.

The BC considered potential options for further decreasing the 2014 budget deficit during its June 4 conference call. Options considered were to forego specific activities within 2014 projects, forego entire project(s) for 2014, and/or keep SOWs at 2013 levels, if practicable. The outcome of the BC meeting was for the Principal Investigators to review their projects, prioritize activities, and propose specific activities that could be omitted for 2014 without compromising the recovery objectives. They were also directed to provide justification and pros/cons for dropping any activity. The BC had a conference call on July 2 to discuss the potential cost cutting options submitted.

In the interim, the Program Office found some additional savings including removing the PIT Tags SOW (Reclamation agreed to cover expenses for 2014; +\$55,000), decreasing the Education & Outreach transfer to Upper Colorado River (UCR) Program (+\$2,140), and including carryover in the Program Office SOW (+50,000). These changes resulted in a \$1,085 surplus so cuts to individual projects were not needed.

Pitts asked if sequestration was reflected in the budget. Whitmore said the formula used to estimate the available base funds for 2014 included sequestration. McKinstry pointed out the formula he used was his best guess based on the information he has been provided but he is not sure what the final numbers will be. Pitts asked that the group go through the AWP element by element.

Element 1 – Population Augmentation - Pitts asked if NAPI was achieving its goal of producing 10,500 razorbacks per year. Whitmore said the 10,500 number is how many fish NAPI ponds receive from Dexter (3,500 per 3 ponds). They estimate 4,200-6,300 fish will be harvested out of the ponds and stocked into the river based on a 40-60% survival rate. That goal has been met the last three years even with one pond being out of commission in 2012. Whitmore will make sure this is clearly described in the SOW.

Status of transfer of equipment from Uvalde to Horsethief - Ryden said they have been in discussions with Uvalde NFH to transfer Program equipment to other facilities after the 2014 field season is over. He explained the increase in the Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility budget from 2013 to 2014. In 2013, production is just getting underway and the handling of any fish for the San Juan River will be free. In the future, they will be providing ~2,000-4,000 fish for the San Juan Program at a relatively low cost. The 2014 amount reflects the approximate costs to the Program from now on.

Element 2 – Habitat – McKinstry reported the Navajo Nation contracts were the first San Juan River contracts done this year. All their work was combined under one contract. The contract is in place and they are in full operation. Pitts asked about no costs being included for PNM O&M. Whitmore said \$25,000 was included for several years to cover contingencies but nothing has been included for the past couple years because no repairs were necessary and they had carry-over. McKinstry said there were some repairs needed at the passage this year but PNM's contract had expired so they used NAPI equipment and manpower to do the work. PNM has a new contract in place now that can be used to pay them to do work at the passage, if necessary, but an amount they might spend in a year cannot be estimated. Uilenberg agreed that costs cannot be estimated because it is only for extraordinary problems that may or may not arise. He said this type of thing happens quite often with the UCR Program but it is unpredictable. Basically, Reclamation has a way to pay them but their contract does not specifically include PNM O&M. Brooks said NN and the Service do all the routine O&M under their SOW. Pitts said he wants to insure that: 1) if we need PNM to do repairs, we can use them; and, 2) if they are needed, we can pay them. Uilenberg confirmed this is so.

Whitmore said two SOWs will be included in the 2014 AWP that have only in-kind contributions but no costs to the Program, TNC's Channel Restoration and SUIT's Population Model. Pitts said they both need to have a numbered SOW in the AWP and their contributions need to be in the Program Highlights report to Congress. McCarthy asked if there are other projects being done in coordination with the Program but not being funded by the Program. When this occurs, Pitts said they should be described in a SOW and included in the AWP.

Capital Projects Update: Status of decision re: APS Fish Passage per Navajo Gallup Pipeline decision - Uilenberg said no decision on the siting of the Navajo-Gallup lateral has been made yet but he does not think it will at APS. Green agreed and expects the draft plan submitted for the APS site will probably be eliminated as a viable option. Uilenberg said the appraisal-level design for a lateral at Hogback ties off the channel side of the fish weir. It looks like a BC-recommended fish passage at APS will need to be a stand-alone project.

Element 3 – Non-Native Species – The only issue identified was to make sure the title and budget summary includes both “upper” and “middle” reaches.

Element 4 – Monitoring and Evaluation – Pitts had concerns with the lack of detail in SOW 14-23 *Data Integration and Synthesis*. He said it is currently too vague to be approved. McCarthy agreed and said it could be strengthened by leading with management questions instead of research questions. It should also make mention of questions from the 2012 BC monitoring workshop and should be linked to the flow recommendations. He said the P.I.’s need to work closely with the BC on data integration. Whitmore said Nate Franssen, the P.I., has been working closely with the Program Office, other P.I.’s, and has been updating the BC. He gave a presentation at the Annual Meeting. She said it looks as if the SOW for the two-year project was not updated from 2013. This could have occurred when UNM combined their SOWs for Reclamation contracting and then separated them for the AWP.

Miller said he has seen some reports from Franssen but would like to see a list of the work being done. McKinstry said when the 2013 SOW was done, Franssen was not even on board yet and they just had a list of research questions. Since then, Franssen has worked with the P.I.s and the Program, identified which questions to answer, and has several papers close to publication. Pitts said he was concerned the Program will not get the products. Campbell assured him we will get the products. Pitts questioned the need to pay for four individuals to travel to Durango and asked if the BC has seen the manuscripts. McKinstry said Franssen has provided the BC with status reports on what he is doing and the process of publishing manuscripts includes peer reviews; however, it would not be inappropriate for a committee-type review of a Postdoc’s manuscripts. The Program Office and McKinstry will work with Franssen to update the SOW and include additional detail.

Pitts said the Habitat/Temperature Monitoring SOW budget does not have enough detail. McKinstry said the contract was awarded through the RFP process and providing detailed budget information is against Reclamation’s regulations for awarding competitive contracts. McCarthy said he was glad to see monitoring of the RERI sites still included. Whitmore explained that removing monitoring of the RERI sites was identified as a potential budget-cutting option but enough other cuts were found that all the SOWs could be kept whole.

Status of Population Model - Miller said the model should be completed in about a week, preliminary runs done by August, and everything completed by the end of the fiscal year. Pitts said it will be a valuable tool and thanked SUIT for providing the funding. Suit offered to give a presentation at the next in-person CC.

Campbell reported there is not enough money in the budget for workshops in 2014. Plans are to have one or more environmental flow workshops starting in 2015 in support of the flow recommendations revision. There is a draft SOW on the table for a two-year effort involving 2-3 workshops and numerous other work and work products. He said there is not a detailed budget yet but an estimate puts it at ~\$125,000 per year.

Element 5 – Program Coordination – Campbell said Reclamation just completed a new 5-year contract for Program Management so he expects the Program Office will get its 2013 funding soon. Since it is coming so late in the year, he included \$50,000 of carry-over in the budget. To further pare back, most outreach activities the Program Office does (e.g., participating in school events, buying promotional items, etc.) were cut for 2014. Existing staff will work closely with the UCR Program on the annual newsletter, briefing book, and new social media sites. The UCR Program’s new administrative person will be covering some of the I&E work and they may also get part of a I&E position from their Regional Office.

McKinstry was asked when the 2014 AWP needs to be approved. He said the earlier the better but the first possible obligations for next year will not be possible until February/March because Reclamation will have a three month black out period from October to December to switch to a new budget management system. He said he already submitted the draft 2014 SOWs so they will be in the system and can be funded as soon as possible.

Whitmore will quality check all SOWs and address comments provided by Pitts prior to the next CC meeting and input received at this meeting. The Program Office will have a revised 2014 AWP back out to the CC on August 19. A CC conference call was scheduled for September 4 @ 10 a.m.

2013/2014 Annual Base Funding Update – McKinstry said he suspects there may be some 2013 SJR contracts that will not get awarded by the end of the fiscal year. He said Navajo Nation, UDWR, NMGFD, UNM, the Program Office, and Lake Powell survey (for next year with other Reclamation funding) are done. Larval fish and habitat/temperature monitoring should get done but he is doubtful that Service Region 2 and 6, Uvalde NFH, and Dexter NFH will be completed by October 1. Brooks said his project office is currently using Service funds to get by for now but if they do not get any money by the end of the fiscal year, they will have to stop doing nonnative fish removal after October 1. Pitts emphasized this could put the Program out of ESA compliance. Ryden said the timing of the funding is also a problem as the money could go away before they even get it. McKinstry's prediction is that Dexter will get their 2013 funds after December and their 2014 money in February/March.

Pitts said the CC needs to be updated on the funding situation and if it is going to affect the Program's ability to do recovery activities. Brooks said he will let the CC know if his money does not come by the end of the fiscal year and provide a description of which activities will be affected.

Status of Recovery Plans and Pitts letter to Region 6 RD – Campbell reported Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan progress is on schedule. He just got another draft this week to review and the team will be convening in Denver August 19-20. They will have a draft done for internal review in September after which it will go to the two Programs and the public. He does not think the other species recovery teams are in place yet but individuals have been identified for the razorback sucker recovery team.

Pitts said when the date for Colorado pikeminnow downlisting was changed from 2013 to 2018, the credibility of the the UCR and SJR programs was affected. The delay caused considerable concern among members of the congressional delegations and the subcommittees--long-time supporters of appropriations for the programs. Approximately \$300 million has been spent on the two programs and they are not going to last forever. He emphasized in his letter to the Region 6 Regional Director that the Service needs to expedite development of the revised recovery plans for all four fish. The water users are concerned that if the revised recovery plans do not get completed sooner than later there will be delays in the downlist/delist process and additional requirements that have not been factored in to the current budgets and time frames could be added. As we get closer to critical deadlines, Congress and participants in both programs are going to be asking about the status of the species with respect to achieving recovery, the goal of the programs. Without demonstrated progress toward recovery, support could erode both in Congress and among program participants. In his letter, he said he wants to see benchmarks and accountability in the recovery plans. Pitts said if he gets a response from Region 6 to his letter, he will update the CC.

Schedule next CC meeting - September 4 @ 10 a.m.; conference call