



COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL February 14, 2014

Meeting Notes

COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Stewart Jacks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Michael Howe
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ray Alvarado
Brent Uilenberg
Kevin Flanigan
Patrick McCarthy
Absent

REPRESENTING:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Reg. 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT)
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Bureau of Indian Affairs
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 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
Natasha Cuylear, CC Alternate
Benjamin Tuggle
Janet Bair
Jason Davis
Lynn Jeka
Leslie James

State of New Mexico
Jicarilla Apache Nation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Western Area Power Administration
Colorado River Energy Distributors Association

INTRODUCTION OF NEW CC CHAIR STEWART JACKS – Stewart Jacks welcomed the group and introduced himself. He is Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries in Service Region 2, Mike Oetker's predecessor. He has been in Fisheries for 25 years and has worked on Colorado River issues so has some familiarity with the SJR Program. He looks forward to getting involved and learning about the Program.

AGENDA CHANGES - PNM Fish Passage Repair was added.

APPROVAL OF DEC. 9, 2013 CONFERENCE CALL NOTES – Whitmore said she incorporated edits from Kristen Green. Uilenberg corrected the year for the President's budget from 2015 to 2014 in his funding report on page 2. Pitts added verbiage about developing threat reduction criteria in the section about recovery benchmarks on page 2. Pitts moved to approve the notes with the changes; Becker seconded; the summary was approved.

E-FLOW SCOPE OF WORK FOR REVISING FLOW RECOMMENDATIONS – Campbell reported the SOW was revised based on comments received and sent to the CC and BC on February 6. The CC also received a draft budget. He clarified he is looking for comments from the CC on process not the technical aspects of the project. Campbell summarized the SOW. TNC would facilitate a collaborative process that engages a multi-disciplinary group of scientists and technical experts (Technical Team) to evaluate the effectiveness of the 1999 flow recommendations, develop proposed updates to the flow recommendations and develop recommendations for adaptive management. The Technical Team would be selected by the Service and would be comprised of BC members, peer reviewers, independent consultants, and participating agency personnel. TNC's role would be to organize, facilitate, and provide technical and material support for the collaborative process. The Program Office would work with the Technical Team to produce science-based recommendations for updating the environmental flow releases from the Navajo Unit. To facilitate the process, TNC would use a proven process developed, tested, and implemented by TNC, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Service, and other organizations on a number of river systems across the country (sometimes referred to as the Savannah process). The proposed phased approach would include a series of workshops that engage technical experts representing a broad array of scientific and technical disciplines and multiple stakeholders. All reports would be produced by the Technical Team and subject to review by the BC and CC and Program Office.

Pitts said he called Campbell prior to the conference call for answers to some questions he had about the SOW. Campbell clarified that the Program Office would be overseeing the whole process, TNC would be primarily facilitating workshops, and Reclamation would contract separately for Technical Team members that needed reimbursement. Pitts said he still was not clear on how it will work. Campbell said the outcome of the process will be revised flow recommendations to the Program Office and will involve CC approval. Pollack said he was also confused about the process. Hawkins said she is concerned about how tribal water will be included in the environmental baseline.

Pitts said his comments about considering past BC work needs to be considered. Campbell said it will be and it is stated in the SOW. Pitts said the budget of \$470,000 seems too high and goes beyond facilitation. Condon thinks the budget is way out of line. Becker agreed. Condon said the budget and SOW do not match. Uilenberg said he was shocked with the costs. Alvarado agreed that the budget seems out of line with the SOW and that the roles and responsibilities are unclear. The question of how much the 1999 flow recommendations cost was asked.

Jacks asked for comments from the group specifically on the draft SOW on the table. Pitts said the SOW only describes what TNC will do not how the work will be done. Uilenberg said the SOW is not all facilitation. McCarthy said the SOW describes how the process will be organized, facilitated, and technical and material support provided to the Technical Team who will be producing the flow recommendations. The process described is based on an approach that has been tested and honed by the TNC and USACE. TNC has not had as much opportunity to work with Reclamation on the process but they did on the Bill Williams River in Arizona. He said the reports of that process are available and anyone can check them out. McCarthy said he wants this to work for the Program and the Service and the process can be tailored as necessary to fit the SJR Program.

Condon asked why the Savannah process was selected. Campbell said revising the flow recommendations is a Program Office responsibility according to the Program Document. The Service and the BC have determined that the flow targets are not necessarily meeting their intended purposes and need to be reviewed and revised. The Savannah process was selected by the Program Office because it is a proven, scientifically-viable way to assess flow recommendations in a manner that is consistent with a collaborative, adaptive management program. Pollack questioned the accuracy of the verbiage in the SOW on page 3 that states the Program Office and the Service will produce the flow recommendations with technical guidance from the BC

and the BC and CC will review and comment. The 2012 LRP said that the flow recommendations revisions will be approved by the CC and that needs to be put back into the LRP. Whitmore said it is still in there but in the narrative section not in Table A's status section.

Pitts has serious concerns with the flow recommendations revision being done by a Program participant. Campbell said the Program has a solicitor's opinion that the Program can sole source work to Program participants. He said putting it out as an RFP will be time consuming, be restricted to a few consulting firms, and be no less expensive. Brent Uilenberg said he is not sure that sole sourcing will comply with current procurement regulations.

Ryden said he can understand the concerns but the question is how to move forward. He suggested getting comments from CC members on what process they want to use. Condon suggested having a workshop to decide on a process. Whitmore said the Program Office is in support of the process that is on the table and is concerned that having a workshop to decide on a process will result in further delays of the flow recommendations being revised. McCarthy said everyone will need to look at all the information from 1999-2014 to come up with a scientifically sound way to do this. Campbell said a new hydrology model will be completed soon and projected depletions will need to be a major consideration in the process. McCarthy said it is important to have agreement on the process and he supports further dialogue. He said there are other models that could be used and could be investigated. He would support having a CC discussion of approaches, framework, and process. Campbell emphasized there will never be 100% agreement.

Tuggle said he would support this but said there needs to be a set time frame for the discussion so the revision process is not delayed as a result. McCarthy asked what time frame is specified in the LRP. Whitmore said the current start date is based on completion of new hydrology model which will be done in 2014. Tuggle said he thinks this warrants more discussion but does not want to miss deadlines. Whitmore said the more critical deadline would be the 2015 AWP because we want to make sure the flow recommendations revision is funded and started in 2015. The draft SOWs are due to the Program Office by March 31, the draft AWP is completed in time for the May meetings, and the CC approves the AWP in September.

Pitts asked about BC discussions on this. Miller said the BC came up with a process back in 2008 but it was tabled awaiting completion of Gen III of the hydrology model. The BC is currently providing comments on this draft SOW and will be discussing it at the BC meeting February 26-28.

CC members are to provide comments to Program Office on a process for revising the flow recommendations by March 5. Whitmore emphasized the need for each CC members to provide their opinion. She said too often only a couple members provide comments but this is an issue everyone needs to weigh in on. The Program Office will send out a poll to schedule a conference call during the weeks of March 17 and April 24.

2014/2015 FUNDING UPDATE –Whitmore reported Mark McKinstry was not able to attend this call but did provide a short email update to the Program Office. He said the Program will likely get more funds available since Reclamation now has a budget but he does not have any final numbers. He said Reclamation is moving forward with funding everyone. Uilenberg reported that the total for capital funds for 2014 will be ~\$8.5 million for both programs. He cannot address 2015 yet.

BC UPDATE – Miller said it may be a first but the CC has met twice since the BC met so he does not have anything new to report. The BC will be meeting on February 26-27 in Durango at Ft. Lewis College. They have a very full two-day agenda that includes presentations on all the monitoring and research results from 2013.

POPULATION MODEL UPDATE – Miller reported they are in the second round of calibration and have inputted all of the latest monitoring data and population estimates into the model. They are in the process of looking for different hosting software because the model is too large for the current software they are using. He will have more updates at the February BC meeting.

STATUS OF COLORADO PIKEMINNOW RECOVERY PLAN – Campbell reported a draft plan for review will go to the Service R2, R6, and Headquarters in April. The review and incorporation of comments will probably take between 1 to 2 months after which the draft plan will go to the Program participants for review, possibly June/July. Pitts voiced his concerns about the schedule delay considering the Service still has three other species recovery plans to update.

BENCHMARKS FOR RECOVERY OF ENDANGERED FISH – Whitmore said there was nothing new to report at this time. She reiterated that the BC had not yet reviewed the concept paper for developing interim benchmarks that was provided to the CC for the December 9 conference call. She will be providing it to the BC along with the draft 2014 LRP for review and discussion at their February 26-27 meeting. She also did not receive any comments from the CC on the concept paper by the mid-January deadline. The Program Office will work with the BC to develop interim benchmarks and she will include a task in the LRP for doing this. Pitts said the concept paper did not include development of criteria for threats reduction. He wants benchmarks developed for those too because simply “addressing threats” is too nebulous and he wants certainty. Whitmore said she will include a bullet for this in the concept paper that goes to the BC.

WASHINGTON DC TRIP APRIL 7-11, 2014 - Pitts said this is the non-federal participants annual “tin cup” trek to Washington D.C. to prompt Congress to provide sufficient annual appropriations for Reclamation and the Service to support the programs. They typically support what is in the President’s budget and do not ask for more. He emphasized the importance of this trip each year in reminding members of Congress, Congressional staff, appropriators, and others about the importance of the programs. He is convinced that if they did not do this each year, the programs would be forgotten and funding would be affected. Every year the two programs and the non-Federal partners put together a Program Highlights document for use during the trip. Participants from the San Juan Program going on the trip this year include Cathy Condon, Stanley Pollack, Mike Greene, Randy Kirkpatrick, Bill Miller, and Darryl Vigil. Pitts said the participants really appreciate the Southern Ute Indian Tribe supporting Bill Miller going on the trip to provide technical information since Service representatives can no longer go. Miller’s vast knowledge of the San Juan River is invaluable to the effort. Pitts said that he would be asking for letters of support to FWS and Reclamation appropriations subcommittees after the federal budget is released on or about March 4.

PNM FISH PASSAGE REPAIR – Uilenberg reported that Chris Cheek, the new biologist for Navajo Nation, who operates the PNM fish passage, reported at the November BC meeting that there are some serious problems at the passage that need to be fixed. Bob Norman, Reclamation, visited the passage to assess the problems. He found:

- 1) Both slide gates are jammed making the passage inoperable. It is critical that this gets fixed before April when the passage opens for the season. An area contractor who specializes in gates will visit the site shortly and give Reclamation an estimate for repairs.
- 2) The trash racks are creating problems by getting clogged during high flows and impairing operations. They have some ideas on how to improve them.
- 3) A sediment plug forms at the upstream end of the passage impairing operations. This problem is not unexpected as they knew it would be a problem because of the location of the passage. They also have some ideas for remedying this problem.

Uilenberg said #1 is critical and repairs will begin as soon as the contractor provides them with the estimate. Fixing #2 and #3 is not as time sensitive. The biggest problem is how to fund the repairs. It is possible that PNM could do the work but there are some contractual problems. They could contract with another firm but would have to use National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Funds (NFWF) to pay them. He asked Flanigan and Alvarado if the NFWF funds could be used for this purpose. Flanigan said NM's funds are being held up in contracting and are currently frozen because there is no agreement in place. It could be up to 60 days before this is resolved but he will check into it. Alvarado said he will talk to Kowalski about it.

The CC gave Uilenberg the go-ahead to pursue using NFWF funding for the repairs.

SCHEDULE NEXT CC MEETING – Next scheduled CC meeting is May 23, 2014; 8 a.m. – noon, in conjunction with the annual meeting. The Program Office will send out a poll to schedule a conference call during the weeks of Mar. 17 and April 24.