



## COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Ft. Lewis College, Durango, CO

May 23, 2014

### Meeting Notes

#### COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Stewart Jacks, Chair  
Catherine Condon  
Celene Hawkins  
Herb Becker  
Michael Howe  
Dale Ryden (via phone)  
Tom Pitts  
Stanley Pollack  
Ted Kowalski  
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, Program Biologist

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:

Natasha Cuylear, CC Alternate  
Beverly Heffernan, CC Alternate  
Bill Miller – BC Chair (via phone)  
Tom Wesche – BC Member  
Brian Westfall – BC Member  
Mark McKinstry – BC Member  
Eliza Gilbert – BC Member  
Steve Harris, BC Alternate  
Wayne Hubert – Peer Reviewer  
Steve Ross – Peer Reviewer  
Maria O'Brien  
Patty Corbetta  
Marian Wimsatt  
Carrie Lile  
Mike Ruhl  
Chris Cheek  
Richard Grimes  
Steven Platania  
Susan Behery  
Ryan Christianson

Jicarilla Apache Nation  
Bureau of Reclamation  
SUIT  
Water Development Interests  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
State of New Mexico  
Water Development Interests  
Hubert Fisheries Consulting  
Eco-Consulting Services and UNM  
BHP Billiton  
BHP Billiton  
BHP Billiton  
Southwestern Water Conservation District  
NM Department of Game and Fish  
Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife  
Arizona Public Service  
American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Bureau of Reclamation

**Introductions/changes to agenda** – Jacks welcomed the group. He announced that Tom Sinclair, the Service’s Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries in Atlanta, had been selected to fill behind Jim Brooks and will start in about a month. He will have internal discussions to determine if he will continue as CC Chair or Sinclair. Pitts asked to add “Meeting format” to the agenda. The agenda item, “Draft proposal for modifying SJR flow recommendations,” was moved to later in the meeting so Kowalski, who would be arriving late, could participate in the discussion.

**Approval of Feb 14 2014 conference call summary** – Whitmore said the current version includes all minor changes received. She highlighted a sentence on page three that Pitts asked to add regarding sole sourcing of Program funds. Since it was something Uilenberg said, she wanted him to approve of the verbiage before adding it. The sentence was added and the summary approved.

**2014 Long-Range Plan** – Whitmore said the 2014 draft LRP has been reviewed and revised several times by the BC. The primary changes made, other than routine updates, were moving actions and tasks around to make Elements 1-3 (population augmentation, habitat management, and non-native fish management) recovery actions and Elements 4 and 5 (monitoring/evaluation and Program office assessment of progress toward recovery) evaluation of those recovery actions. This change helped better organize the actions and tasks and reduced redundancy. Also, Table 1 that shows which tasks address each threat was expanded to include a new column for status. She said the draft LRP is in good shape and ready for approval for the year.

Miller said a new goal (Goal 2.6) with an action and tasks was added to Element 2 (habitat management) to manage the native fish community to assist in recovery of the endangered fish. This is an important component of suitable habitat and was lacking in prior versions.

Pitts asked if the AWP elements and the LRP elements are still in-line with each other after the LRP changes. Whitmore said she will check to make sure the two documents have the same organization. Ryden moved to approve the LRP, McCarthy seconded, and the 2014 LRP was approved.

**2015 Draft Annual Work Plan and Budget** – Campbell reported this is the first draft of the 2015 AWP. The BC discussed it at their meeting on Wednesday and forwarded it to the CC for review today. Ideally, the CC should approve the 2015 AWP by the end of August or early September so Reclamation can award contracts before the end of the fiscal year. Whitmore said the AWP is fairly similar to last year’s AWP with a few exceptions including:

- A new one-year SOW from SNARRC is included for CO pikeminnow broodstock evaluation and genetic monitoring @ \$58,033.
- Reclamation’s costs for O&M of the SJRB hydrology model decreased considerably since development of Gen III will be completed in 2014.
- ASIR’s study for determining natal origin will be done in 2014 so was removed.
- \$50,000 for a workshop to evaluate flow effectiveness was included.
- A place holder for repairs at PNM fish passage was included but no costs. There will be some costs to the Program but it has not been determined yet which funds will be used.
- Costs for videography may increase because a new vendor is needed because Reclamation no longer has the helicopter used to do the work. McKinstry is looking into options

With all the current anticipated costs and estimated 2015 base funds, there is a ~\$200,000 surplus. The BC identified several high priority projects to consider for funding including:

Monitoring restored habitat – each individual P.I. monitored Phase I sites last year but Phase II sites will require more effort and may not be possible to cover under existing monitoring projects. The P.I.'s will add additional tasks to the SOWs to monitor fish and habitat if they can but there is currently no monitoring in place to look at functionality and persistence of the restored sites. McCarthy said a lot of money is being invested and it is important to know how the sites persist over time. To do this, it makes sense to monitor habitat geomorphology in those areas. Miller pointed out that the grant money used to do habitat restoration does not cover monitoring and it should be an integral part of the overall restoration plan. Miller said he was on a panel to assess what types of follow-up monitoring are being done on restored habitat across the country. They found very little monitoring is occurring. In NM, \$2 million is available for river restoration but none for monitoring of the restored habitat. The current habitat monitoring protocol is not designed to monitor functionally and persistence of individual sites and adding new work to the current habitat contract would be difficult because it was awarded through the RFP process. Campbell said he supports using Program funds for this and it should not be that expensive. There was general agreement that how river flows affect geomorphology at the restored habitat should be monitored.

Additional analysis for determining natal origin – Platania said his presentation of the previous day on his investigations into using scale ablation techniques to determine natal origin described the results. Using the ablation technique on scales proved to be unreliable and since they still have some money in the fund for 2014 they continued working on developing a reliable technique. It appears as if fin ray clips provide a much more reliable material. He plans to put together another SOW that describes the new approach. Pitts voiced concern that the outcome of this new technique is also uncertain and asked if there are other options for determining natal origin. Platania said as soon as we start picking up small fish that are not in the Program's database, the question of untagged fish will be answered but until then, fin clip ablation has promise. Ross pointed out that as the number of untagged fish increase, it will not tell you the source it will just tell you recruitment is occurring. McKinstry said it goes back to the Lake Powell survey where 40% of the razorback suckers were untagged. Platania said through his work, they are also building a library of information. Pitts said he would like a technique that can determine where the nonnative fish are coming from in the UCR.

Re-evaluation of sites for entrainment – Miller said some of the original sites identified are no longer a problem or being addressed (e.g., Hogback). The BC will be reviewing the 2004 SOW that was used for the investigation of fish entrainment in canals. A re-evaluation of that work is warranted now that there are more endangered fish in the river

Pitts wants to see six press releases done for the SJRRIP. Campbell asked who will do it. McCarthy said the SJRRIP provides over \$15,000 to the UCR Program to do I&E. He would like to see tangible products. The money provided to the UCR goes primarily to producing joint publications like Swimming Upstream and the Briefing Book. Whitmore said it has been more difficult in the last couple years with budget cuts, sequestration, and the UCR Program's dedicated public affairs position being vacant. Press releases take time and a lot of individual attention. Campbell said it is challenging for a number of reasons including restrictions on federal employee talking directly to the media. McCarthy said non-federal members of the CC and BC committees should make themselves available to talk to the press. Jacks said he will check into seeing what impediments there are to doing press releases and to improving effectiveness.

Miller said he would like to see better and more frequent updates to the Program website. He looked for an agenda for this meeting on the website and could only find a calendar entry. Campbell explained that the Program Office does not have the ability to make changes to the website. An IT staffer in the NM ES

Field Office has to make changes and he cannot always get the job done immediately. Campbell said he will look into options for reducing limitations and increasing flexibility with the website.

Pitts said the Program is made up of many partners and needs good I&E. He said the Program will need to start working on re-authorization of the funding legislation again soon and getting the message out about the Program's benefits and successes would be helpful. McCarthy said TNC has had good results with hosting field tours for congressionals and the Program should consider doing this in lead up for reauthorization in 2019.

McCarthy asked about the schedule for reviewing and completing the new SOWs. Miller said the BC will meet in June sometime to review the new SOWs and finish up the 2015 AWP. The CC should see another draft with any new SOWs in July. CC should provide comments on this draft by June 23.

**2014/2015 annual base funding update** – McKinstry reported there are no more limits imposed by sequestration and the switch to FBMS is done so getting projects funded should go smoother for 2015. The estimate for 2015 base funds in the draft AWP is solid. He said he already sent the draft 2015 AWP to contracting to get the process started. For 2014, all agreements have been processed including contracts. The only hiccup is the transfer of Reclamation's helicopter used to do the videography to National Park Service. The high-resolution lidar maps obtained this year can be used for 2014 but a new contract will be needed for 2015. Uilenberg said it would not be within the regulations to use capital funds or NFWF funds for this. He also wants to be frugal with the NFWF funds because they are limited and the most flexible funds we have. Flanigan reported NM got their new NFWF funds in place.

**BC meeting update** – Miller reported the BC had a good discussion on the draft proposal for modifying SJR flow recommendations. Because the proposal was brief, there were a lot of questions. There is general support for the proposal in the BC. Lamarra provided a good overview of how the flow recommendations have been implemented and the effects. This will be the topic of the workshop in 2015. Miller attempted to give a live demonstration of the population model at the meeting but had some technical issues. He will have them worked out by the June 23 annual hydrology meeting. Platania gave a presentation on the results of his natal origin investigations. Nate Franssen provided an update on data analysis he is doing on razorback sucker survival. The BC requested that he provide regular updates on the various data analyses he is conducting to answer key questions the BC identifies.

The BC discussed the problems with installation and operation of the remote PIT tag readers. A remote PIT tag reader at the mouth of PNM fish passage had 150 hits but only 3 of those fish went through the passage. When the screens get clogged, water velocity is reduced and fewer fish move through the passage. Reclamation is looking into a fix for the screens. The BC also discussed the need to re-evaluate sites for entrainment. As mentioned earlier, the BC identified additional new projects for potential funding in the 2015 AWP. Miller reiterated that full river mapping and photography is a key component and needed. Dave Gori and Brian Westfall gave an update on Phase II of TNC's habitat restoration project. They are currently working on getting the necessary permits and hope to stay on schedule (i.e., completion of the project in October). Approval of nonnative fish stocking procedures for the SJR has been ongoing for years. It has gone back and forth between CO and NM in the last couple years but its status is still up in the air.

The Peer Reviewers asked for BC guidance on their responsibilities. They were informed that they should review annual reports according to their expertise and respond directly to P.I.s with copy to the BC email list. They might also get periodic requests from the Program Office or others to review

proposals or documents. Their attendance at meetings is directed by McKinstry or the Program Office but they are typically asked to attend the February and May BC meetings each year to provide input.

The Navajo Dam operating rules called for a 1-week peak release but the quantity and duration of the release would not have provided much benefit to the habitat and would lower reservoir levels probably triggering shortage sharing later in the year. For these reasons, Reclamation asked the Service for a waiver to forego a spring peak release in 2014. The Program Office asked the BC for their recommendation. Miller said that it was not unanimous but eight BC members recommended not doing the peak release. The Service subsequently agreed to Reclamation's request for the waiver. Miller also reported the BC sent a memo to the CC on April 9 recommending the original tasks for evaluating and modifying structures for fish passage be completed in a timely manner to assist in the recovery of the listed species in the San Juan River. Uilenberg and the BC had some preliminary discussions in the past but nothing further. Full passage may not be needed. Miller said a formal assessment of all the passages is needed. Uilenberg pointed out that he will not pick out problem sites himself, he needs to be told which sites should be pursued.

Maria O'Brien reported that PNM, APS, TEC (new Navajo mine owner), and BHP Billiton are in informal consultation with the Service on Four Corners Power Plant and Navajo Mine Energy Project. They are consulting on post 2016 power plant operations. The project's depletions are in the baseline but the project was never consulted on. They do not expect any problems but are looking at activities to incorporate into the project and have identified addressing passage and entrainment at the APS diversion. Formal consultation is expected to start in mid-July so the timing works well for them to do this fix. They will coordinate with the Program.

Miller said the original plan for the population model was to have it available on a website so anyone could use it. Unfortunately, it is too big for the platform they had planned to use. He did not hear any interest from anyone at the BC meeting who wanted to run the model themselves so it may not need to be available on the web. He can do runs but if it gets to be a lot of runs, he will need some compensation. Condon asked if it was okay that Miller does model runs when needed. Pitts said he just wants questions answered by the model (e.g., about recruitment) and is not concerned with the Program paying for runs but asked that SUIIT put together a SOW that identifies the questions the model will answer. Miller will put together a SOW with the level of effort that will be required each year. Condon said there is a 3-year MOU between SUIIT and the Program that needs to be redone. Recognizing things change, Ryden asked if there was a provision for turning the model over to the Program in the event Miller leaves. Miller said he is not going away any time soon. Jacks reiterated what Ryden said that a license agreement for someone else to run the model may be a good idea. Condon and Miller will need to work with the tribe on it. Pitts commended SUIIT for funding development of the model.

**Capital projects update** – Uilenberg reported that the gate problems at PNM fish passage that rendered it inoperational have been fixed and it is open. The debris and sedimentation problems will be addressed next. The current plan is to have Brent Medford, an ex-Reclamation employee with expertise in dealing with build-up on screens, is being brought in for advice on the passage and another project. Uilenberg recommends funding this under capital projects unless time is an issue then he would say NFWF funds should be used. The current process is to get the tech expert's recommendations, then get the solution approved, and then fund the work.

Hogback fish weir is completed but they are having trouble with the remote PIT tag readers that were installed to test the effectiveness of the structure. They were detecting fine until pumps within the canal with variable frequency drives were turned on preventing the readers from being able to detect PIT tags.

Bob Norman is working on this and thinks they have a fairly easy inexpensive fix. McKinstry said there is a lot of interest in the effectiveness of the fish weir from others wanting to install similar structures so we need to get the testing done sooner than later.

For long-term capital project planning for the SJR, out-year projects under current authorizations are \$10 million which includes all expenditure for Hogback fish weir, APS and Fruitland, and \$9 million for Farmers Mutual Ditch repair. McCarthy mentioned that Miller's temperature report said we should think about re-visiting thermal modification at Navajo Dam. Amy Cutler looked at this and said it would not do a lot to increase habitat. Miller said she was looking at a different question and did not consider temperature depression. Whitmore said there have been some advances in this area and lower cost options that do not require radical dam modifications. Uilenberg said Cutler's report needs to be dusted off and we can move forward from there. Whitmore will locate the report and send it to the committees prior to their next meetings.

Campbell said we may want to increase the number of CO pikeminnow stocked. Uilenberg said he had specifically asked if we were good on production facilities. Ryden said we can meet the current stocking goals with existing facilities. Campbell said we are getting reproduction but slowly and it will take a long time maybe longer than the Program's timeline. Ryden said they have some flexibility and could switch razorback sucker ponds to CO pikeminnow production. Pitts said he does not want to miss stocking goals for one species at the expense of another.

**Ridges basin dam fish escapement update** – Uilenberg said the Service is requiring some monitoring for fish escapement when releases are being made from Lake Nighthorse. Platania and a group went on site recently to evaluate the options and decided that rather than do monitoring in the lowest pool as originally expected, drop 4 pool is a better option. Platania will be writing up a proposal for a sampling protocol that Reclamation will implement. Uilenberg will provide regular updates to the Program.

**Draft proposal for modifying SJR flow recommendations** – Uilenberg reported that Ryan Christianson developed the proposed modification to implementing the flow recommendations based on his experience operating Navajo Dam. The process is based on determining an end-of-season volumetric target and calculating surplus volume for the Program to use for fish each year. The process is for determining the amount of water available not how the releases will be made. A technical team will make annual release recommendations. This is being proposed, in part, because it will help avoid shortages.

Christianson said the way the current Navajo Dam decision tree calculates available water is problematic because there has been just enough water to do minimum peak releases (1-week) that really don't do much to meet the purposes of the flow recommendations. Under this process, we will always be facing shortage sharing. When a shortage is declared, all water users share the shortage including target base flows for the fish. The proposed process will protect the reservoir from a series of drought years and provide for greater flexibility in making releases for the fish.

Susan Behery, who operates Navajo Dam, reiterated the new process is just a way to calculate volume. If last year's projected shortage went into effect, it would have meant an estimated 34% reduction for all shortage sharing partners. Campbell pointed out that the Program is not a signatory to the shortage sharing agreement; it is voluntary for the Service to take reductions. Behery said we did not have a shortage because of the monsoon season. We were very lucky because the volume of run-off from monsoon precipitation was about the same as from the snowpack run-off which is very rare. The last 15 years have been much drier than the historic average and climate models show this will be the norm into the future. Behery presented several slides of analyses she did of the probability of shortages and spills

occurring based on various quantities of available water in the reservoir using historic hydrology if the reservoir had been operated to meet all current basin needs and existing target base flows (but not peak releases). The analysis can be used to determine appropriate target reservoir elevation for the start and end of the year. Five-year drought simulations using various end volumes, points to a target volume of 6,065 ft. because it gives more years before we get into a shortage situation.

Uilenberg said the proposed process will provide flexibility. The UCR Program had some of the same issues on the Yampa River before they went to a process like this. Beverly Heffernan, who works with the Flaming Gorge technical working group on environmental releases, said they switched operations from strictly trying to match releases from Flaming Gorge with the Yampa River peak to making decisions on a yearly basis to meet specific needs. Volume is calculated which tells you how much water you have to work with on a yearly basis to make releases for specific needs. The technical group makes recommendations to the Service and the UCR Program sends a letter to Reclamation about what to do. This year releases will again be made to benefit larval fish (part of a 5-year experiment).

Uilenberg said the proposal is just the first step. He would like the group to give a nod to continue to pursue this process. He asked if the Program wants to continue only trying to match the Animas River peak with Navajo Dam releases or wants something more flexible. Kowalski said this process would have to include monitoring. Uilenberg agreed that the Program's monitoring program will need to be able to adapt. McCarthy supports the proposal because of its emphasis on science-based adaptive management, but he called for a more detailed description of how the members of the Program would work together to develop and test flow-ecology hypotheses, a key part of the Flaming Gorge plan on which the proposal is based. It does not modify the flow recommendations; it modifies how the reservoir is operated to meet the flow recommendations. He pointed out that the technical working group is not outlined yet, the current monitoring scheme will need to change, and it will take additional capacity. Pitts said the Water Development Steering Committee supports the proposal but wants more details. Condon voiced concerns about reinitiation of consultation for Animas-La Plate Project. Heffernan said the Service sends a letter each year recognizing the flow recommendations might not be met. Kowalski voiced his support and would like to see this approach on Aspinall. Becker echoed the support of the others and said it should be pursued. Pollack thinks the approach warrants pursuing but thinks it might lead to a train wreck. Campbell said we are on a crash course under the current conditions (e.g., climate change). Harris said he supports pursuing the strategy and reiterated we will not be changing the criteria just how the water will be released.

**BLM's participation in the Program** – Campbell will draft a memo to BLM to inform them that their participation in the Program is a requirement of a consultation. He will need to make the connection for them that their participation in the Program is an ESA compliance requirement.

**Schedule next CC meeting(s)** - Annual Hydrology Meeting (with population model preview) – June 23; 10 am-3 pm; Public Lands Center, Durango. Whitmore will send out a Doodle poll to schedule a conference call sometime after June.