



Final approved May 12, 2016

Final Summary
COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL
Wednesday, February 17, 2016; 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Coordination Committee Members:

Catherine Condon – Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Darryl Vigil – Jicarilla Apache Nation
Dale Ryden – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
Tom Pitts – Water Development Interests
Stanley Pollack – Navajo Nation
Ted Kowalski – State of Colorado
Brent Uilenberg – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Kristin Green – State of New Mexico
Patrick McCarthy – The Nature Conservancy

Program Office – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2:

Sharon Whitmore
Scott Durst
Nathan Franssen

Interested Parties:

Michelle Garrison – CC Alternate, State of Colorado
Kathleen Callister – CC Alternate, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Beverly Heffernan – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mark McKinstry – BC member, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Bill Miller – BC Chair, Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Changes to agenda – Whitmore reported Sinclair (CC Chairman) would be absent due to being stranded during travels.

Approval of meeting notes – Whitmore said no comments were received on the Oct. 2, 2015 CC conference call draft notes or the Sept. 21, 2015 CC meeting drafts notes. Pitts moved to approve the minutes; Condon seconded; the notes were approved unanimously

Biology Committee (BC) update – Miller reported the BC last met Dec. 1-2, 2016 in Durango. They discussed ongoing and upcoming studies, the long-range plan, and other 2016 and 2017 priorities. The group is currently assessing flow recommendations. Highlights included raising the priority of habitat monitoring for restoration and recovery, discussion on range expansion through assessing implications of the waterfall, and stocking in the Animas River. Susan Behery (Reclamation) gave an update on the SJRB Hydrology Model. The Nature Conservancy and Farrington (ASIR) gave an update on the “diversion study” and indicated the report should be out this spring. McKinstry gave an update on the efficiency of the Hogback Diversion fish weir; those results will be presented at the Annual Meeting in May, 2016. Nonnative stocking procedures for the San Juan River Basin were presented by Mike Ruhl (NMGF) and are currently being circulated among signatories. These new stocking procedures should be in place soon.

The UCR/SJR Annual Researchers Meeting was held Jan. 12-13, 2016 at Fort Lewis College, Durango. Because of the timing of this meeting and the limited number of personnel in the Program Office (PO), Miller suggested the PO not host this meeting in the future. McCarthy stated it is good to discuss ideas with other researchers in the UCR Basin and asked if there was a way to get a similar format for the SJR group outside BC meetings? Miller agreed it is beneficial to have interactions with other researchers, but timing of the Researchers Meeting is difficult for SJR researchers and relatively few SJR researchers participated this year. Ryden explained that the UCR Basin researchers have much more time to work on their reports and they do much smaller annual reports compared to the SJR. McKinstry noted that the two programs are fundamentally different where the SJR Program is not as focused on research compared to UCR Program. Pitts suggested that we try to address the problem with the timing of the meeting rather than dropping the meeting all together. Whitmore will talk to Tom Chart about the possibility of moving the dates of the Researchers Meeting. A potential alternative to having the UCR Program's Researchers Meeting be a combined meeting of both programs, it could be a separate UCR/SJR science forum that the programs co-sponsor every 3-4 years.

Pitts asked if there was any discussion at the BC meeting about conducting population estimates. Miller responded that the discussion was limited to fish in the San Juan Arm of Lake Powell, and not in the river proper.

Next BC meeting is set for February 23-24, 2016 in Durango.

SJRB Hydrology Model Update - Whitmore reported that Reclamation met with the Service on February 4, 2016 to demonstrate the new SJRB Hydrology Gen 4 Model. Behery completed a summary of the model and sent it to Whitmore for review. After the PO reviews it, Whitmore will distribute the summary to the BC and CC. The PO will compile any comments received and forward them onto Reclamation. Pitts asked when the CC was going to see the hydrology model. Whitmore stated the 19-page summary, written by Behery and Scott Vandercliff, summarizes how the model was validated, compares the Gen 2 to Gen 4 models, and quantifies the baseline depletions. Uilenberg stated Behery is available to discuss finer details of the model and is willing to conduct another webinar to discuss the model updates. Pitts suggested the webinar be conducted before the model is approved. Uilenberg said the webinar could be conducted prior to its approval.

E-Flow Workshop #2 Update - Whitmore reported the PO took the lead in compiling data/information for the second e-flow workshop and organized a workgroup planning meeting. The PO sent a planning document with guidelines for a proposed process to the workgroup in October and requested comments. No comments were received. The meeting took place Dec. 3- 4, 2016 in Durango following the BC meeting. The PO was tasked with compiling notes and setting dates for the final workshop (scheduled for Apr. 5-6, 2016 in Albuquerque). The summary notes from the second meeting are almost completed and will be sent out as soon as possible. Condon was interested in seeing the meeting notes and is concerned that the workgroup meeting was more of a decision-making meeting rather than a planning meeting. Whitmore emphasized it was not a decision-making meeting but an effort to get as much preliminary work as could be done prior to the actual workshop, as identified at the first workshop. During the meeting, the workgroup examined various model runs of the original 1999 decision tree, the decision tree developed during the first e-flows workshop based on the new end-of-water-year storage process (EYWST)), and a slightly modified decision tree based on EYWST. All of the different flow scenarios from Behery's model runs will be presented at the final workshop for discussion and final decisions. For example, the basis and purpose of the flow recommendations were unaltered, but some of their priorities were (e.g., lowering priority of lower flow metrics). A draft new flow recommendations table and decision tree will be attached to the workgroup meeting summary that the PO will be sending out soon. Pitts indicated the water users want to attend the

next workshop. Whitmore replied that some of them attended the first workshop and are welcome to attend the second workshop. All information from Workshop #1 is posted on the SJRRIP website including the workshop notes (<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/sjrip/SJREFW.cfm>). All information from the workgroup meeting is also posted on the website (Program Working Documents link).

DC visit by the non-Federal partners – Pitts reported Condon, Pollack, McCarthy, Miller, Vigil, Mike Greene (PNM), and Aaron Chavez (SJWC) are planning to attend. The schedule for the March 15-18 DC trip is done. The 2015-2016 UCR/SJR Program Highlights/Briefing Book is in preparation and currently under review. The Briefing Book will include a supplement called “On the Path to Recovery.” Durst said he provided some SJR information for the supplement to Tom Chart. Pitts said previously, delegation members signed letters and sent them to the appropriations committee; however, this was dropped several years ago because it gave the appearance of earmarks. It is apparent these types of letters are being used again. Because many congressionals will not support the president’s budget, they may ask for the delegation letters to simply voice support for the recovery programs.

Pitts talked about their message for the DC trip this year. The programs are expiring in 2023, recovery has not occurred in the 30-years of the programs, and little progress has been made towards downlisting or delisting the species. There will be concerns considering hundreds of millions have been spent over the years with no progress in terms of change in listing status. Pitts met with the R6 Regional Director about this. The species status assessments (SSA) that are underway for Humpback Chub, Razorback Sucker, and Colorado Pikeminnow, can be used to show that downlisting is justified and that progress is being made toward recovery. McCarthy agreed that saying that SSA’s can lead to justification for downlisting is a good informal message, he emphasized the substantial progress that has been made toward recovery by the programs and this should be part of the message as well. Pitts agreed that a lot of progress has been made.

Pitts stated we need to have a serious discussion about the role of SJR in recovery of these species and the feasibility of the SJR contributing to recovery. Revising the Colorado Pikeminnow recovery plan is currently on hold but will be back on the table soon and he wants this topic to be part of that discussion. Pollack said a change in the role of the SJR in recovery of the species would be a game changing approach and asked for comment from Miller and Ryden. Ryden said we have made huge steps to help reduce the risk of extinction but a bigger question is, if we delist or downlist are we going to be in the same place 20 years from now? He added that the reason why planning for downlisting the Colorado Pikeminnow was put on hold was because of recent declines of the Green River population. Ryden said he doesn’t want to see the role of the SJR minimized and thinks there is a lot of potential for SJR to be huge part of recovery. These fish are long lived and 30 years of effort to recover them is not that long when an animal was close to extinction. It took 4-5 generations for them to become endangered in the first place and it will take some time to get them recovered. Pitts stated that in order to downlist/delist we will still have to continue all the actions to maintain the species (e.g., dam operation, passage, augmentation). We are not going to walk away. He sees recovery looking similar to what is being done by the programs now. Uilenberg stated that we have a socioeconomic risk in that we are running out of authorization time and we need to be able to point to successes. The biggest risk is to getting the needed infrastructure in place. Ryden replied that we have had a lot of successes but because they have not led to downlisting, they are not counting. Pitts stated that he thinks we are to the point of downlisting but he is not going to pre-judge anything. Whitmore stated that the SJR Program is younger than the program in the UCR, and we have not been managing flows 30 years, only about 18. Whitmore added the Service will consider the SJR’s role in recovery after the SSA’s are done. She added that the Service also does not ignore politics.

Authorizing legislation for base funding beyond FY 2019 – The non-federal partners agreed that the authorization to use Colorado hydropower revenues needs to be extended to 2023; however, they do not plan to bring it up in this election year. They will submit new legislation in the next legislative cycle.

Possible increase in capital funding - Pitts indicated the ceiling of the capital authorization may need to be increased. Uilenberg pointed out that the capital authorization allows for spending of capital funds through 2023 but there is a ceiling for capital projects (i.e., \$10 million for SJR and \$12.7 million ceiling for UCR as of 2011). Capital projects are going to need large repairs and replacements above what is in the annual funding budget and no money is currently available for O&M of existing capital projects after 2023. Pitts agreed that the ceiling needs to increase to ensure funds to 2023. Pitts doesn't think we should be talking about funding past 2023 yet and will likely need to demonstrate downlisting or delisting of species. There was general support for raising the capital funds ceiling to 2023 and beyond and agreement that this was not the year to push for it. McCarthy said next year, when they are supporting extension of the authorization, they can also support raising the ceiling for capital projects. Pitts suggested getting authorization passed is going to raise questions about the path towards recovery. He said they will need to start writing legislation for the extension in early summer/late fall.

CC Priorities for FY 2017 - Pitts said the water users are concerned that we are not doing population estimates and think they should be a budget priority for the program for next year. Condon agreed but asked about costs. Pitts replied that we don't know what will happen with nonnative fish removal and pending results after 2016, some decisions will need to be made. Durst mentioned the Masters student from USU who is looking into using remote PIT tag detections to estimate demographic parameters. McKinstry noted that this was being paid from outside the program. Pitts said if we are going to reduce or eliminate nonnative fish removal, he suggested we fill the gap with population estimates. Whitmore noted that the recruitment bottleneck should be our main concern and implementing population estimate monitoring doesn't guarantee an accurate estimate of the population every year as we've seen in the upper basin. We just need to be aware that, even with a lot of effort, we may not get expected results and doing population estimates doesn't recover the species. McKinstry said based on previous calculations, the 7-8 passes that nonnative fish removal conducts would be enough for a Razorback Sucker population estimates. He said Kevin Bestgen looked at the SJR data several years back, and determined it could be used to estimate the Razorback Sucker population in the SJR. Pitts and Condon said they want to see a SOW that includes population estimates. Whitmore said the NMFWCO recently looked into what it would take for them to switch to doing population estimates. Ryden said the cost for doing the Colorado Pikeminnow population estimates in the UCR is ~\$210,000 for 4-5 passes on 190 miles of river, June through April. The PO will pursue coordinating with P.I.'s from both programs and put together a SOW for doing population estimates. Pitts asked about the population in Lake Powell. Whitmore replied it would be much more difficult to assess numbers of fish in the lake than in the river. Ryden mentioned the Service wrestling with the endangered fish in Lake Powell and how they fit into the recovery picture.

The group discussed the pros and cons of removing the waterfall and potential for nonnative fishes to invade the SJR. Kowalski said he needed to get off the call but absolutely supports work below the waterfall. Whitmore noted that, when given the opportunity in 2011 when the reservoir levels increased for two weeks, Razorback Sucker did move into the river but it doesn't appear that nonnative fish moved up in large numbers. Whitmore also said the Service is not totally convinced that large scale moving of endangered fish from the lake to the river should be done because Razorback Suckers seem to be persisting fine below the waterfall in critical habitat and there is a risk of mortality when capturing and relocating fish. This is why we are using 2016 as a pilot project to assess relocating endangered fish above the waterfall and the potential movement of those relocated fish. Pitts asked if we could stop stocking fish and just move fish above the waterfall. Whitmore indicated that may not be feasible for Razorback Sucker because of timing.

Fish appear to congregate below the waterfall during the spawning run and would be easier to capture but when they disperse back throughout the lake, it would be very difficult to capture them in large numbers. For Colorado Pikeminnow, we haven't caught that many in the lake. We are hoping that the 2016 pilot project will shed some light on the timing issue.

McCarthy asked if we are looking into stocking in the Animas River to establish populations there. Durst replied a memo was circulated to the BC regarding stocking fish in the Animas but they have not taken a vote on it yet. Durst said some people have expressed concerns with the idea and we are working through those issues. McCarthy asked what those issues are. Durst replied that the issues are mainly questions from other parties and wanting to wait for results from the diversion study. McCarthy asked if this decision will first be addressed in the BC and Durst said "yes."

McCarthy asked about the cost effectiveness of accomplishing outreach and education by providing funding to the UCR Program, a budget line item for SJR Program. Whitmore said she received a more detailed budget from Angela Kantola and included it in the SOW, as per CC instruction. McCarthy suggested that we come up with ideas for the SJR so Melanie Fischer, UCR Information and Education Coordinator, can use them. Whitmore said the new Assistant Program Coordinator will be tasked with getting more press releases done. She anticipates the Program Office will have more opportunity to do I&E when fully staffed. The PO can come up with a list of I&E objectives to accomplish and task the new person with getting it done. Whitmore asked CC members to provide her with I&E-related ideas for developing an I&E strategy for the Program (including looking at cost effectiveness).

Selection of Assistant Program Coordinator – Whitmore said the position was advertised and about 30 applications were received. The CC had indicated interest in being involved in the selection process so she asked for volunteers. Uilenberg was the only member who responded at the time and asked that McKinstry representing Reclamation be involved. She said her, Dave Campbell, and McKinstry pared the long list down to 8 very good applicants. The next step is interviewing candidates. She said we are getting ready to schedule interviews for the first week in March and asked who was interested and available. Pitts, Condon, and McCarthy indicated they would like to be involved. Whitmore asked that the panel members, Whitmore, Campbell, McKinstry, Pitts, Condon, and McCarthy, let her know their availability. Condon asked if the hiring decision was ultimately up to the Service and Whitmore replied "yes."

Action Items - Whitmore said Sinclair sent out an action item status list prior to the meeting. Most action items have been completed or are ongoing. After receiving DOI Solicitor comments on a draft MOU between the SUIT and Service regarding access to and use of the SJR population model, Condon provided another draft to the Service on January 6, 2016. Sinclair submitted this draft to the Solicitor's Office on February 1, 2016. No responses have been received yet. New action items identified included: Whitmore will talk to Tom Chart about options for having a UCR/SJR science forum that works better for both programs, PO will develop a SOW for population estimates, and CC will provide I&E ideas to PO for development of a I&E strategy for the program.

Schedule meeting(s):

- BC meeting - Feb 23-24, 2016 in Durango
- E-flows Workshop #2 - Apr. 5-6, 2016 in Albuquerque
- SJRRIP Annual Meetings - May 10-12, 2016 in Durango