



COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Conference Call Summary

August 1, 2017

COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Tom Sinclair, Chair
Catherine Condon
Absent
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Michelle Garrison
Brent Uilenberg
Patrick McCarthy
Absent
Vacant
Darryl Vigil
Kristin Green

REPRESENTING:

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

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Carlee Brown, CC Alternate
Bill Miller – BC Chair
Kathleen Callister, CC Alternate
Mark McKinstry – BC Member
Susan Behery
Ryan Christianson
Lisa Yellow Eagle

State of Colorado
SUIT
Reclamation
Reclamation
Reclamation
Reclamation
NN

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:

Sharon Whitmore, Program Coordinator
Melissa Mata, Asst. Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator
Nathan Franssen, FCPP Biologist
Eliza Gilbert, Program Biologist

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Introductions/changes to agenda – Sinclair said the only changes to the agenda were provided by Tom Pitts via email.

Approval of May 18, 2017 CC meeting notes – Mata reported that she received comments from Condon, Pitts and McCarthy, all of which have been incorporated into the current version of the notes. Because some of the comments were received today, she wants to review the incorporated edits before finalizing. Approval of the May 18, 2017 will be postponed until the next CC meeting.

2018 Draft Annual Work Plan (AWP) and Budget – Whitmore reported she sent a second draft of the FY2018 AWP, an updated AWP Budget Comparison, and the AWP PO Recommendations to the CC on July 21. The Program Office worked with the Primary Investigators (PIs) on all Scopes of

Work (SOW) that had more than a 3% percent changed from 2017 to see if the increases were justified. The Budget Comparison shows some budgets were decreased and a reason is provided for those that did not. An Action Item from the last CC meeting was for the PO to provide a 10,000 foot level view of why we support certain SOWs within each element. The AWP PO Recommendations document includes a section under each Recovery Element/SOW titled, "Future Direction." This is a start at providing a 10,000 foot level view but the PO is still working on how to best address that Action Item in preparation for the 2019 AWP development process. Whitmore suggested that we go through the AWP line by line.

- *Element 1: Management and Augmentation of Populations and Protection of Genetic Integrity* projects are all standard ongoing projects that the Program Office recommends be funded. In addition, Whitmore added that the Pit Tag Project might be offset with Four Corners Power Plant mitigation funds.
- *Element 2 - Protection, Management, and Augmentation of Habitat.* The substantial increase in the SJR Hydrology Model budget was for Reclamation to address a large quantity of comments from NMISC on the model. Behery said most of the budget increase is for the Riverware modeler's involvement but it will also take her a lot of work to go through all the comments in preparation for addressing them. She was able to decrease the budget by coming up with a step-wise process to address the comments. Green mentioned that Behery did contact her asking if NMISC could prioritize the comments that they would like Reclamation to address first. Condon asked how Reclamation is going to address NMISC comments and if the CC will see a final product from their response to comments. Condon is concerned about the changes that Reclamation has made to the model. Behery said there would be no structural changes to the model. Anticipated changes will deal with the depletion numbers and documenting where they came from. The increased budget reflects the time to review comments, meet with the PO, and annotate how we respond to comments. Condon stated that this brings her back to many years ago when John Whipple provided similar comments on issues that the CC resolved and now we are going to spend more money to do the same all over again. Green mentioned that this was brought to her attention but she was not involved with the Program at that time so does not have the information readily available to make a comparison. Behery mentioned that she also was not with the Program then but knows that Reclamation has documentation on how comments were addressed in the past but she will need time to find and collate that information.

Pitts said he agrees with Condon that the issues have been resolved. The validation summary came out last summer, comments were received, and now we need a document with response to comments. Pitts would like to see a document that includes comments and how they were addressed.

Whitmore said the Program Office has meeting summaries from all hydrology subgroup meetings and will provide them to Green. Green will work with Behery to prioritize and possibly eliminate some comments/issues raised by the NMISC regarding the Hydrology Model. Behery said that she will work with Mata to help address the comments. Uilenberg thanked Green for being flexible and prioritizing comments to be addressed. Garrison also thanked both Green and Behery for being flexible and said a chronology of all the documentation related to hydrology model development should be created if it has not already been done.

Condon asked why 25 days are needed for doing model runs and analyses. Behery explained that it is a ballpark estimate because she cannot anticipate how many model runs will be needed.

McKinstry stated that he thought Reclamation does model runs per request from the PO. Behery said yes, but again said she does not know how many runs will be needed next year. Condon asked what happens if all the days are not needed. Behery will inform McKinstry that funds may be available so they can be used for other Program needs. She pointed out that in the last two years; all the funds in the budget estimate were needed.

Whitmore said there was an increase in the budget of 7% for temperature gages because the cost per gage increased. Reclamation said these quotes are provided by USGS. Whitmore mentioned that the BC wants to get a better understanding of what kinds of data the Program is getting from the gages for the additional money and plans to have a presentation from USGS at a BC meeting soon.

- *Element 3: Management of Non-Native Aquatic Species.* There was no increase in budget between 2017 and 2018. The budget includes a \$50,361 offset from the FCPP NFWF account.
- *Element 4: Monitoring and Evaluation of Fish and Habitat in Support of Recovery Actions.* The PO recommends all projects on the list for funding. Whitmore went through each SOW within Element 4.

SOW 18 - This is the SJRIP's contribution in support of the UCR-SJR centralized database. This new SOW was provided by the lead agency, the CO Natural Heritage Program. The budget will be \$15,000 in 2018 and \$10,000 in subsequent years.

SOWs 19-22 – These are the Program's standardized long term monitoring projects. None of the budgets increased more than 3% except for young-of-year (YOY)/small-bodied fish monitoring (SOW 20) and specimen curation (SOW 22). The BC wanted to include an additional sampling effort for when YOY fish are found to be abundant further downstream. If fish crews catch many wild fish, they will have the option to sample more, however, use of the additional funds will be dependent on the number of YOY captured. The increase in SOW 22 is due to correcting a math error from 2017.

SOW 23 - The increase for this scope, Integration of Long-term Monitoring Data, was because universities nationwide, including UNM, adopted a standardization of post-doctoral salary, which increased. Condon asked if the Program is paying for the entire post-doctoral salary and if the postdoc is solely working on SJR data integration. Franssen said yes. Condon asked if the postdoc student could provide a powerpoint presentation of the work he is doing for the CC. According to his SOW, his first report will occur at the February BC meeting when all P.I.'s provide preliminary results of the field season. McKinstry added that the postdoc just started in August and the timing of the postdocs' arrival does not completely match up with the scope. The PO will insure the UNM postdoc presents information on the status of the data integration work to the CC at the next Annual Meeting.

SOW 26 and 27 - These two new projects were identified by the BC to answer outstanding questions. Both SOWs were reviewed by the BC and received broad support based on the information that could be obtained from such projects.

SOW 28 - This new SOW came into the SOW review process late but has since been reviewed by the BC. The PI modified the SOW based on comments and provided a response to comments to the BC, and the SOW was approved by the BC.

SOW 30 – The budget for this project was decreased because the original budget included equipment needed to get the project started but because of funding delays, the equipment was purchased using FCPP NFWF funds instead of base funds.

SOW 32 - This SOW provides important documentation of the endangered fish populations in the SJR and provides documentation of many fish that would not be detected by any other means. It is budget neutral from 2017 and is supported by the BC.

- *Element 5: Program Coordination and Assessment of Progress toward Recovery.* Included in this element are the Program's standard administration SOW's. Only SOW 37, *FWS Program Management*, increased slightly due to the PO having no carry-over funds as in the previous year.
- *Element 6: Education and Outreach.*
SOW 38 provides funds to the UCR Program to support mutual I&E activities for both programs. The increase in budget is due to additional education and outreach materials purchase. New in 2018, a separate SOW for both programs is included in the AWP.

Whitmore concluded that the budget estimate shows a zero balance for base funds and a \$58,471 surplus in the FCPP NFWF fund. Sinclair said the budget could support a remote biologist and asked the CC to consider funding it. He sent out a SOW on July 5, 2017 for review. Financially it would be about \$26,000 for the first year and \$38,000 the following year due to anticipated salary increases. He received approval from his Regional Office to hire this position if the CC approves. Sinclair stated the remote biologist position would take on all the job duties that Ernie Teller had previously and additional leadership responsibilities. Uilenberg added that he supports this position and that it is money well spent to have a local biologist present in the San Juan River. Pitts stated that he also supports this position. Ryden motioned to approve, Pitts seconded, and the remote biologist proposal was approved.

Sinclair asked the CC if there were any additional comments on the AWP. Sinclair asked if there was a motion to approve the FY2018 AWP with the caveat of final approval of the nonnative fish removal after the December workshop. Pitts motioned to approve the FY2018 AWP, Ryden seconded; and the motion was approved.

Status of DOI grant/contract review; impact on 2018 funding – McKinstry provided an update and stated that there are three projects that are still not funded, KSU, Navajo Nation, and UNM. McCarthy asked McKinstry if he anticipates getting contracts over \$100,000 approved from Washington will be an annual process. McKinstry said he does not know, but it could occur again next year, and may even expand beyond contracts. McKinstry stated that this review/approval process added about a month and half to the approval process. Franssen asked when the unfunded projects could expect to be paid. McKinstry responded he does not know but the deadline when funds need to be obligated/awarded by is September 18-19 or it will not happen in this fiscal year.

Response to 5-18 Action item: The PO and Reclamation had a conference call to investigate potential mechanisms for funding operational and maintenance needs at Program facilities and habitat restoration sites in the basin. It was determined that the best solution is to put a placeholder for O&M of \$50,000 in the FCPP NFWF fund category. Because those funds can carry-over from year to year, if those funds are not needed in a year, they can be spent on other activities. Franssen said FCPP funds could be used for activities that support the Program's recovery activities, including O&M at Program facilities.

BC Update – Miller reported that Franssen is finishing the flow recommendations review process and revision document and it will be ready for BC review soon. He said Bleisner gave a presentation at the May meeting on TNC’s Phase III habitat restoration project for construction of a managed backwater along the river to provide off-channel nursery habitat. Whitmore interjected that she does not believe the CC has seen a presentation on this project yet but will put it on the agenda for discussion later. Miller said the Phase III habitat restoration project would be managed and provides a seasonal rearing habitat, something like Stewart Lake. TNC, Keller-Bliesner, and the Program Office looked at a number of sites along the river, selected two potential sites for further investigation, and Keller-Bliesner did conceptual designs of the two sites. Miller said the concept is in early development and will require a lot more discussion and planning. The BC discussed having a half-day workshop on recruitment bottlenecks in conjunction with the February BC meeting rather than a separate effort. The need to revise the Program’s 2012 Monitoring Plan and Protocols was also discussed and to potentially incorporate the protocols into the Long Range Plan. The Fall BC meeting will be held Nov. 27-28 followed by the nonnative workshop on Nov. 29 at the Public Lands Office in Durango.

Changes to Program Document – Condon reported the CC subgroup of herself, Sinclair, Uilenberg, and McCarthy met on July 27 and she sent out a revised Program Document to the CC on July 28. She received one set of comments from Ryden on the July 28 version. The subgroup is not requesting a CC vote at this time to allow for more CC discussion on the changes. The State of Utah, as a participating entity, has not been included yet but that change may be needed. To address the conflict of interest issue, “conflict of interest” was defined on page 30 and all references to “recommendations” was removed from the BC responsibilities section. Ryden said the language on page 30 could still be problematic especially if it is interpreted alone. There needs to be some way the BC can provide prioritization from a purely technical standpoint. He said the updated AWP Process may solve this but he thinks a reference to that section should be included to point readers to where they can get a better overall understanding of the process.

Condon said language was added that peer reviewers might be requested to provide recommendations to the Program Coordinator regarding SOWs and AWP for CC review. Ryden said it is not the role of the peer reviewers to provide comments regarding project prioritization. The role of scientific peer review is to decide if the science the Program thinks is important to do is the best-designed science. Whitmore said she agrees but thinks there are some situations where the peer reviewers could be asked to give their scientific opinions on priorities. For example, the Program has asked them in the past, as technical experts, to give their overall viewpoint of how the Program is progressing toward recovery of the species and if there are recovery activities they think should be done over others to be more effective. She asked if the Program wants to use the peer reviewers for strictly traditional scientific review or could their expertise be tapped for input on big picture questions too? Sinclair stated that this language was a way to allow for both types of input from the peer reviewers. McCarthy stated that the CC needs to have further discussion after they review Ryden comments. Pitts asked Condon to send out the current Program Document with Ryden’s comment for the CC to review and comment on. Sinclair said it is difficult to accommodate language that works for everyone and appreciates Ryden’s comments and any other comments that come in.

Condon said the language about the BC chair process was revised to remove previous language that voting would occur by secret ballot and participation as BC chair is mandatory. Lastly, changes were made to the AWP Development Process to reflect the new process with the BC reviewing all SOWs

early in the process. She said the workgroup does not plan to modify Figure 2, the schematic of the AWP Development Process, until the CC approves the revisions to the narrative section.

Sinclair asked CC Members to provide comments on the revised Program Document by August 22, 2017. Soon after this date, a CC conference call will be scheduled to discuss the comments and attempt to finalize the document.

Utah joining Program Update – Mata stated that Krissy Wilson from the State of Utah provided an email update about Utah joining the Program. Wilson said the state is continuing to look into the potential for Utah to become a signatory to the San Juan Recovery Program. Henry Maddux has spoken with the Director of UDNR, Mike Styler, whom is supportive of Utah’s participation. They have a few more steps to take internally. The last and final step is to get approval from Governor Gary Herbert. Mata stated she would continue to work with the State of Utah to get updates of their progress in joining the Program.

BIA representation on Coordination Committee - Pitts asked about the status of BIA representation on the CC. Mata mentioned the Program Office is working with BIA to secure consistent BIA representation. Whitmore added that we recently learned that Katherina Diemer is no longer with BLM so the Program Office is also working with BLM to get CC representation.

Update on 2017 Navajo spring peak release – Behery described the reason why we did not reach 5,000 cfs from Navajo reservoir. During the release, National Weather Service (NWS) informed Reclamation that a water level of 6.94 ft at the Archuleta gage would trigger a flood warning (NWS will round up to the flood stage of seven feet). Behery said the riverbed has apparently changed quite a bit near the stream gage causing stage measurements to be higher than normal. To avoid triggering a flood warning, they had to keep releases out of Navajo Dam between 4,700-4,800 cfs to maintain a stream gage height of 6.94 or below.

Uilenberg said this was an issue with the local community. Ryden said that we clear one hurdle and then another one appears. He is pessimistic that we will ever be able to get back to 5,000 cfs and is concerned that eventually 4,800 cfs will be our new target and then at some point 4,500 cfs. Uilenberg said all we can do is keep trying to get to 5,000 cfs but the political ramifications of not listening to community concerns will only hurt us down the road. Ryden said he understands Reclamation’s position, but we need to come up with a strategy on how to achieve the Program’s flow targets. Miller suggested that some channel work at the Archuleta gage could resolve the flood-warning trigger. He asked if the flooding was isolated or widespread. Uilenberg said people in San Juan County complained that they were having flooding issues. Navajo Nation in Utah was also experiencing over bank flooding issues at levels well below channel capacity. Miller said the solution may be longer term and require a big river restoration project to improve channel capacity.

2017/2018 annual base funding update – McKinstry said there are a few agreements that are outstanding, but everyone else should have their funds and we are right at the budget ceiling.

Capital funding/capital projects update – Uilenberg reported there are two good capital projects in the works. As part of the Fruitland Diversion Project, the Navajo Nation will construct a fish barrier in the canal. The Program will provide \$972,000 to the project. Reclamation and Navajo Nation will need to establish a long-term O&M Agreement. He has not heard back from Navajo Nation about who will be signatory on that contract. Uilenberg asked for guidance from the CC regarding the preferred funding source for the Fruitland Fish Weir. The Program’s \$972,000 contribution can come from capital funds or from the State in-kind NFWF account. Uilenberg asked if there was support within the CC for using the NFWF account. He said there is not quite enough in the account yet but

there will be when NM provides their contribution. He pointed out that 2023 is just around the corner and using NFWF funds for this project could prompt NM to provide their remaining monetary obligation to the Program. Green said she is not sure that spending that money would speed up getting NM's funds appropriated.

Uilenberg said the other project is TNC's Phase III Habitat Restoration plan to construct a seasonal rearing pond along the river. The objective is to passively capture larval endangered fish in the water column, rear them, and return them to the river. Uilenberg thinks this project is something that the Program should seriously consider. The work could be paid for with capital funds or State in-kind NFWF funds or Reclamation could do the construction in-house. He said Reclamation's Provo office can do this type of work but the drawback is getting it on their schedule and it could possibly be about two years out.

Durst asked if we use capital funds, would there be NEPA requirements. Uilenberg responded that NEPA would be required if capital funds are used or if it is done in-house by Reclamation. Whitmore added that Fruitland is on the fast track and all required environmental reviews are already being done so they would have a head start if the funding source requires NEPA review.

Pitts asked what the purpose is for the Phase III project. Uilenberg reiterated that it is to capture larval fish, raise them in a side channel pond with a screened intake to reduce the potential of adults entering the pond, and release them back to the river. McCarthy added that this type of project would be an important experiment to help address some of the bottleneck concerns. He recognizes there will be technical issues to address, but thinks it is something that the Program should attempt. McCarthy added that he does not have a preference on the three funding options because he does not understand the pros or cons of each. Pitts asked if the Phase III project is a concept or will there be a SOW. Miller said it is still in the concept phase but the BC has asked for a written description to review, comment on, and make recommendations. Pitts said it looks like we would be creating another artificial environment similar to Stewart Lake and we have already learned that if Razorback Sucker enter the wetland they will succeed, if nonnatives are not present. Pitts said he is not sure how a managed pond along the river is going to help with recovery. He asked if there is a cost estimate. Miller said there were cost estimates for several site locations in the presentation Ron Bliesner gave at the BC meeting. Whitmore said it would be helpful for the CC to see the powerpoint presentation and she can send it. Pitts said he would rather see a plan. He said he is not ready to make a decision on funding options for this project. McCarthy would like to see a description of the pros and cons of the funding options. Uilenberg will provide the CC with a brief summary of the funding options by August 3, 2017.

Uilenberg also announced that he will be retiring and Kathy Callister and Ryan Christianson will be taking over his duties.

Next SJRRIP meeting(s):

BC Meeting, 28-29 November 2017, Durango

Nonnative fish workshop, 30 November 2017, Durango

Annual Hydrology Webinar, 6 September 2017; 1-3 p.m.

Action items developed during meeting

The Coordination Committee asks that the University of New Mexico Post-Doc present information on the status of the data integration work to the Biology Committee and the Coordination Committee at the next Annual Meeting.

Green will work with Behery to prioritize and possibly eliminate some comments/issues raised by the State of New Mexico regarding the Hydrology Model. Whitmore will provide Green with copies of notes from past Hydrology Workgroup Meetings to facilitate this action.

Coordination Committee Members have until August 22, 2017 to provide comments on the revised Program Document. Soon after this date, a conference call will be scheduled to discuss the comments and attempt to finalize the document.

The Program Office will contact BIA regarding options to improve their ability to participate in Coordination Committee meetings and conference calls.

Uilenberg requests guidance from the Coordination Committee regarding the preferred funding source for the Fruitland Fish Weir. State capital project cost share funds held in trust by the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) or appropriated capital funds could be used for this project. Uilenberg will provide Committee Members with a brief summary of the funding options. [Completed August 3, 2017.](#)

The Coordination Committee would like to see a concept paper describing the proposed Phase III Habitat Restoration Project, its purpose, and budget estimates.