



**SAN JUAN RIVER BASIN RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
COORDINATION COMMITTEE
Conference Call/Webinar**

Tuesday, January 16, 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Final Meeting Summary

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Tom Sinclair, Chair
Catherine Condon
Roland Becenti
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Michelle Garrison
Ryan Christianson
Patrick McCarthy
Rolf Schmidt-Petersen
Leland Begay

REPRESENTING:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
Water Development Interests
Navajo Nation
State of Colorado (CO)
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
The Nature Conservancy
State of New Mexico (NM)
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (not in attendance)

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Sharon Whitmore, PO Coordinator
Melissa Mata, PO Assistant Coordinator
Scott Durst, PO Science Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, PO Biologist
Nathan Franssen, Four Corner Power Plant
Biologist
Mark McKinstry, Biology Committee (BC)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BLM)

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Carlee Brown, CC Alternate
Kathleen Callister, CC Alternate
Paul Harms, CC Alternate
Jason John, CC Alternate
Jason Davis, BC Chair
Bobby Duran, BC Alternate
Aaron Chavez
Paul Montoya
Henry Day
Susan Millsap

State of Colorado
Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico
Navajo Nation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
San Juan Water Commission
City of Farmington
Arizona Public Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NM Ecological
Services Office

Introductions/Changes to Agenda – Added Hydrology Model documentation

Coordination Committee Member Changes – The PO recently asked for CC representation updates and those were provided as follows: 1) BIA was asked to provide an alternate and Becenti was appointed; 2) Pollack will remain as Navajo Nation’s representative; 3) Christianson is Reclamation’s representative and Callister will remain as the alternate; 4) Schmidt-Petersen is the new representative

for the State of New Mexico and Harms remains as alternate; 5) The BLM representative position is vacant and the PO will continue working with them to identify a representative; and 6) Begay will remain as a CC alternate for Ute Mountain Ute and the PO will work with him to identify a representative.

Approval of May 18, 2017 and August 1, 2017 Meeting Summaries – The meeting summaries will be provided for comment and review per the Program Document. This will entail a shorter deadline for comment and deadlines will be in emails requesting comments. If no comments are received, the comments process will be considered completed. Comments on the May summary were received from three CC members and additional comments were received today. Comments were mostly grammatical although a suggestion was made to list action items at the end of the summary and this will now occur. Comments on the August meeting summary were received from two CC members. Those notes were resent with the agenda for this meeting and additional comments were received requesting minor changes. Pitts moved to approve the summaries, Condon seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

Review of Action Items from May 18 and August 1, 2017 Meetings

- 1) Whitmore will work with Brian Hines, a State of Utah (UT) biologist, to prepare documents for the Governor of UT's signature to include UT in the Cooperative Agreement establishing the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRRIP). Status: Ongoing. The PO contacted Krissy Wilson who was informed by Henry Maddux that the request had been moved forward. Paul Badame is now UT's point of contact.
- 2) Whitmore will work with the States of CO and NM to clarify appropriate uses of the SJRRIP's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) account. Status: Ongoing - on agenda.
- 3) McKinstry will investigate potential mechanisms for funding operational and maintenance (O&M) needs at SJRRIP facilities and habitat restoration sites in the basin. Status: Completed. A \$50,000 placeholder was included in the annual workplan that will come from the Four Corner's NFWF fund, if needed. The Four Corner's NFWF fund can be accessed quickly, making it a good source for emergencies. The PO is also working with principal investigators (PIs) to include O&M into statements of work (SOW). O&M is now included in Navajo Agricultural Product Industry pond and Public Service of NM fish passage SOW.
- 4) The New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office will revise the proposed remote biologist scope of work to provide more detail as to the position's responsibilities and realized cost savings from other scopes of work currently being considered for funding within fiscal year (FY) 2018 Annual Work Plan (AWP). Status: Completed – the revised scope of work was transmitted to CC Members on July 5, 2017.
- 5) The CC workgroup that is editing the Program Document will suggest additional changes to the document in light of recent revisions to the AWP development process. So far the workgroup has made progress on language to eliminate most potential conflicts of interest, removed the secret ballot requirement from BC Chair voting, and removed the requirement that the BC Chair rotate every two years among the different BC members. Status: Ongoing. Revisions to the AWP and Budget Development process has been more complicated than expected. The AWP also includes Long Range Plan Development and Annual Long Range Plan Revision Processes, so the new strategy for the Long Range Plan needs to be incorporated. The new AWP process has been implemented for almost a year. Once issues with the process have been identified and corrected, language describing it will be drafted. It is helpful to communicate the process in a schematic but since the AWP encompasses three fiscal years the result is awkward. It was suggested that the figure could be deleted or broken into multiple figures. Revisions will also include language to describe the CC's request to the PO to provide an annual briefing paper giving an overview of the SJRRIP. The PO will be drafting revisions

in the next couple of weeks and provide that draft to the CC workgroup. Christianson will begin participating in this workgroup. Revisions of the Program Document were initiated due to concerns over conflicts of interest and rotation of BC members through the Chair position. BC members no longer consider budgets when providing technical review and Davis was elected as the new Chair. Until revisions are approved, the 2012 Program Document is in effect.

- 6) For future AWP development, the PO will provide the CC with a “10,000-foot-level” two-page briefing document to accompany the initial May draft AWP. This document will put the draft AWP and budget estimate in the context of the Long Range Plan, SJRRIP goals, project priorities, and progress toward recovery. Status: Ongoing and guidance from CC to PO would be welcome.
- 7) At future May Annual Meetings, the PO will coordinate with the various PIs to provide a synthesis of results from the previous year’s work across each Program Element, progress toward recovery with respect to species status, and recommended next steps. Status: Ongoing and guidance from CC to PO would be welcome.
- 8) The CC asks that the University of New Mexico (UNM) post-doc present information on the status of the data integration work to the BC and the CC at the next Annual Meeting. Status: To be completed in May 2018. During the November 30, 2017 BC Nonnative Fish Removal Workshop, UNM (Scott Clark) presented results of data integration related to age-specific Colorado Pikeminnow survival to help the BC’s discussion.
- 9) Kristin Green will work with Susan Behery to prioritize and possibly eliminate some comments/issues raised by NM regarding the Hydrology Model. Whitmore will provide Green with copies of notes from past Hydrology Workgroup meetings to facilitate this action. Status: Hydrology Model meeting-related files were sent to Green on August 9, 2017. Green was going to pare down her list of comments, but left NM Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) before doing so. Behery began going through the comments but only Sections C and D. Behery will coordinate with the appropriate NM ISC representative on changes that she thinks are reasonable. She expects to have it done by mid to late January. Schmidt-Petersen suggested Behery call him to discuss this. Christianson said Behery is reviewing comments and flagging those that she can respond to. She will not be making changes to hydrology model during this process.
- 10) CC 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. Status: No CC comments were received. The workgroup is still drafting revisions to AWP Development Process. An update will be provided during the January 16, 2018 CC conference call.
- 11) The PO will contact BIA regarding options to improve their ability to participate in CC meetings and conference calls. Status: BIA appointed a CC alternate (Becenti) to provide better meeting coverage.
- 12) Uilenberg requests guidance from the CC regarding the preferred funding source for the Fruitland irrigation canal fish weir. State capital project cost share funds held in trust by the NFWF or appropriated capital funds could be used for this project. Uilenberg will provide CC members with a brief summary of the funding options. Status: Completed August 3, 2017. No agreement was reached between the email and this meeting and the PO is looking for CC guidance (see agenda item).
- 13) The CC would like to see a concept paper describing the proposed Phase III Habitat Restoration Project (Phase III Project), its purpose, and budget estimates. Status: A draft Phase III Project conceptual design report is being reviewed by the BC. Davis reported the BC had a lengthy conversation about the wetland entraining Razorback Sucker and how this could address an observed bottleneck between the transition from larval to juvenile life-stages. A project description was sent to the BC prior to their meeting. Because it was largely engineering, the BC requested additional biological information be incorporated in the next version. The BC provided written comments on the project description and the PO is working with project proponents to address those comments. The

revised documents will be submitted to the BC prior to the February meeting for review. After this review, BC members will be asked to determine if the project should be recommended to the CC. The PO and Sinclair will be visiting Stewart Lake, a facility in the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Upper Basin) similar to that proposed for the Phase III Project. This was a BC recommendation.

14) Action item lists will be included on future agendas.

Nonnative Fish Workshop Summary

- Summary of Nonnative Fish Workshop – The PO sent a workshop summary and recommendation to the CC on January 8, 2018. There was no effect of the removal effort on indices of fish densities (i.e., catch per unit effort or population estimates). Population estimates were imprecise due to the low number of Channel Catfish tagged and recaptured. In 2017, a difference was detected in the reduction of Channel Catfish sizes. Movement rates were substantially lower in 2017 compared to 2016 and were likely the reason a reduction in the size structure was able to be detected. Clark's analysis indicated an apparent capture effect on survival estimates of age 2-3 Colorado Pikeminnow; this age class seems to suffer high mortality after being captured. This is one reason changes to the nonnative program were recommended by the BC. During the workshop, BC participants were provided various options on how the nonnative fish management program might continue. These ranged from continuation of the current program to complete cessation of nonnative fish management. Those options were discussed and voted on at the workshop. The recommendation is summarized below.

- Revised 2018 Nonnative Fish SOW and Budget/PO Recommendations - Peer reviewers, BC members, and the PO agreed the SJRRIP needs to continue to address the threat of nonnative fish and the best way forward is to support Kansas State University's two year study (2018 and 2019) that was previously approved by CC. The BC then developed a set of points to be addressed in a new nonnative fish management SOW. The PIs addressed these points in the new SOW sent to the CC on 8 January, 2018. In that email the PO included its recommendation for nonnative management and compiled BC comments.

- CC Discussion and Vote on 2018 Nonnative Fish Management - Clark's survivorship analysis is preliminary. In general, Colorado Pikeminnow capture affect seems to vary by age - higher mortality with age 2 and 3 fish than for age 1 or adult fish. The BC and peer reviewers recommended age 1 and adult fish continue to be handled so passive integrated transponder tags could be implanted but age 2 and 3 fish will not be captured. This was incorporated into the new SOW. Pitts moved to approve summaries, Ryden seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

- Additional 2018 SOWs - The new nonnative fish management SOW resulted in a savings of ~\$153,000. This was also communicated in the January 8, 2018 email to the CC. To utilize these funds, SJRRIP partners were asked to submit SOWs. Four were received by the PO on January 5, 2018 and sent to the BC for technical comments. Those were received by the PO on January 12, 2018. The short time-frame precluded distribution of the SOWs and compiled BC comments to the CC. The BC supported including all four SOWs in the 2018 AWP. No negative comments were received in regards to any of the new SOWs. Based on BC and PO's reviews, the PO recommends funding all four SOWs. This would result in ~\$800 budget deficit but the PO can work with PIs to balance the budget. The CC requested a week to review the new SOWs and will vote on approval via email. The PO will send the completed new SOWs, compiled BC's comments, and the PO's recommendation to the CC. Each CC member will review the new SOWs and provide their vote to the PO within one week.

BC Update – Davis said many of the updates from the BC meeting have already been discussed (i.e., nonnative fish workshop, Phase III Project, and new FY 2018 SOWs). Other discussion items included identifying potential bottlenecks to recovery and new projects which could alleviate factors

contributing to the bottlenecks. Discussion topics included the ability of base flows to provide nursery habitat and trade-offs; management of population augmentation was discussed within the framework of flow and predator training, genetic diversity, and triggers to suspend or reduce stocking effort; and manually opening secondary channel head structures. The BC was informed that Southwestern Native Aquatic Resource Recovery Center has been collecting Colorado Pikeminnow brood stock. The next BC meeting will be presentations of 2017 data and the last day of those meetings will be the recruitment bottleneck workshop requested by CC.

Program Document Revision Update – Discussed under Review of Action Items

Capital Projects – This was a discussion item at the last CC meeting (i.e., use of the state-in-kind NFWF or Reclamation Capital Project funds to construct the Fruitland irrigation canal fish weir, Phase III Project, and/or APS weir fish passage). Uilenberg sent a set of options on August 3, 2017 as requested by CC but that communication did not resolve how the decisions would be made. The PO needs the CC’s guidance for funding all of these projects.

- Fruitland Irrigation Canal Fish Weir – The CC previously approved \$972,000 for this project but didn’t specify which funds would be used. The compliance work is completed and funds for construction need to be identified so contracts and O&M agreements can be developed and entered into by appropriate agencies. Reclamation would like to use the state-in-kind NFWF account for the project. Contracting with this NFWF fund is easier than with Reclamation Capital Project funds. However, the NFWF fund does not currently have enough in it to cover the entire project (a deficit of ~\$50,000). It might also be useful to have a reserve in this fund for emergencies. Reducing the fund but maintaining a reserve may be beneficial as it will show that the states are fulfilling their cost share obligation (CO contributed all of its ~\$1.08 million commitment and NM has contributed ~\$1.9 million of its ~\$2.7 million commitment). Spending out this fund may provide a means for NM to finish contributing its remaining capital obligation of ~\$800,000 to the fund. Schmidt-Petersen will look into ways to understand the cost share requirements, status, and how NM might fulfill its obligation. Construction is likely to begin this coming fall/winter but the Navajo Nation and BIA need a contract and O&M agreement with Reclamation to transfer the money. This money is also needed earlier than the construction deadline as it is supposed to cover engineering design. Reclamation Capital Projects funds have been budgeted by Reclamation for this project for FY 2019. Some funds are available this year to purchase equipment because the Upper Basin did not spend all of the funds appropriated to them. The specific project proponents on the O&M contract need to be identified before it can be developed. Reclamation would prefer to contract with San Juan Dineh Water Users since they interact with the irrigation system daily but the Navajo Nation may want to be the direct contact. If the CC approves spending all of the state-in-kind NFWF account, \$50,000 will need to be allocated from the Reclamation Capital Projects fund. Christianson will be the contact for Reclamation and his name was already provided to BIA, who was the lead agency for the Biological Opinion. The PO sent BIA a copy of the Hogback irrigation canal diversion O&M agreement to use as a template. Pollack will follow up with the Navajo Nation and John will follow up with Navajo Department of Water Resources who currently operates the Fruitland irrigation diversion structure. They may not object to Reclamation contracting directly with the water users. The PO will provide a project description to those who will be involved. The Biological Opinion which includes a project description is online at the SJRRIP’s website. The CC requested the PO and Reclamation work with NM and CO to provide a pro and con brief on which funds to use. A CC conference call will be scheduled to decide which fund(s) to use for construction of this project.

- APS Fish Weir Passage - The BC has recommended to the CC that constructing a fish passage at the APS weir needs to be initiated.

- Habitat Restoration Phase III Project Concept Plan - Reclamation Capital Projects fund can be used for this project.

Funding Updates – The federal budget is under a continuing resolution which ends this Friday. Since Reclamation does not receive its annual budget in one lump sum under a continuing resolution few projects have received their funding. UNM and the Navajo Nation have been prioritized for funding because their agreements expire this year. Last year all contracts had to be reviewed by the Secretary of Interior and it will happen again this year and any contract >\$100,000 (i.e., grants and cooperative agreements like those with universities) will also be reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget. The process added 2 additional months to contracting last year and it is unknown how much time will be added this year. Obtaining a waiver for each agreement is not guaranteed. Although no contracts sent last year were rejected, no approvals have been received for FY 2018 agreements many of which were submitted in October and November 2017. Passive integrated tag antennas for the Fruitland irrigation diversion project will be purchased this year for use in by the SJRRIP as the Upper Basin program did not spend all its appropriated funds. Those funds will be applied to the SJRRIP's ceiling.

Post-2023 Planning - The legislation deadline was based on recovery goals written for each of the four endangered fishes. The most extended recovery was for Razorback Sucker and it was expected to occur by 2023. It is not currently expected that the four species will be recovered by this time. Two species may be downlisted (Humpback Chub and Razorback Sucker). Both the Upper Basin and SJRRIP will have to continue in some form for some time. Even if species recovery occurred by 2023, ongoing activities would have to be continued and funded such as fish screens, fish passages, and flow management for Navajo Reservoir. The cooperative agreement establishing the SJRRIP also expires in 2023. The two programs, their funding, and organizational participation will need to be renegotiated. The effort expended in the 1980s and early 1990s to develop these programs was extensive and a similar effort will be required to determine the programs' structure post-2023. The recent bill introduced to the U.S. Congress to extend annual funding to 2023 requires a report by the Secretary of Interior be submitted in 2021. This report will define both recovery programs' needs beyond 2023 and recommend results from negotiations. It is in the best interest of partners of both recovery programs to come to an agreement and make a proposal to the U.S. Congress.

- 1:00 PM February 7, 2018 Conference Call/Webinar - Pitts sent an email to the CC requesting their participation in this conference call. The call is organizational to start discussions on planning, schedules, and what subgroups will need to be convened. Pitts sent an email listing some issues that should be discussed at this meeting and the PO forwarded a similar one from the Upper Basin. It is important that SJRRIP members participate and be involved in these conversations. A document listing issues that need to be discussed and a rough schedule is in development by the Upper Basin and will be provided before the conference call. Kevin McAbee from the Upper Basin office is the contact (Kevin.McAbee@fws.gov).

- 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, April 10, 2018 Meeting/ Webinar/Conference call - This meeting will be the follow up to the February 7, 2017 conference call and was rescheduled to April 26, 2018.

Congressional Activities

- Annual Funding Legislation - The annual funding authorization expires in 2019 and a bill to extend it to 2023 was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (House) on November 28, 2017 by UT Representative John Curtis. The bill received bi-partisan support from each state's House delegation (CO, NM, UT, and Wyoming) and numerous letters of support were submitted from water users, tribes, and The Nature Conservancy. The bill passed out of the House subcommittee to be

considered by the full committee. It will be combined with a few non-controversial bills and will then be sent to the House floor for a vote. CO Senator Cory Gardner introduced a parallel bill in the U.S. Senate and a hearing will be held. Letters of support will be submitted and it is expected to be passed in this chamber. It took a lot of effort to get to this point and Pitts was thanked by CC members for all his time and effort in this matter.

- March, 2018 DC trip - This trip is being scheduled for March 19–23, 2018 and will include three days of meetings with members of the U.S. Congress, committees, the directorates of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Reclamation, Office of Management and Budget, and non-governmental organizations to get support for inclusion of the recovery programs into the FY 2019 budget. SJRRIP participants have been told that the briefings are useful to maintain support in Congress and in the administration. The SJRRIP has been well represented in the past and CO will likely participate this year. Since the new BC chair is a federal employee and cannot attend, other BC members are invited to go. Bill Miller (BC Member – Southern Ute) will be going as well as Paul Badame (UT). It is useful to have biologists attend these meetings to highlight the programs' purpose to recover species and to direct questions of species status to credible biologists. The difficulty of meeting the 2023 recovery goals and the need for post-2023 activities will be discussed candidly.

Schedule Meetings (Durango, CO)

- BC Meeting – February 20-22, 2018
 - Schedule SJRRIP Annual Meetings (BC-1st day; Annual Meeting-2nd day; CC-3rd day)
 - May 15-17, 2018 (BC preference) - This week is in conflict with CC representatives' schedules
 - May 22-24, 2018 (back-up) - This week is in conflict with fewer CC representatives' schedules.
- The meeting will be scheduled for 30 May – 1 June unless the BC cannot accommodate this week, the meeting will remain on 22-23 May and the CC will have a conference call at a later date. The PO will work with the BC to make this determination.

The researchers meeting will be attended by the PO (Whitmore, Durst, and Franssen) as well as Sinclair, McKinstry, Ryden, Jacob Mazzone (BC member - Jicarilla Apache Nation), and Joey Schleicher (BC member U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6). There are ongoing discussions as to whether the meeting format will change in the future.

Hydrology Model (added agenda item) - Behery sent out a schedule for documenting the hydrology model. Pitts requested each section be sent out once finished. This would allow the CC to be better prepared to comment on the final document once drafted. Christianson would pass this request on to Behery and she can decide if she wants comment after each section or to wait until the final draft. Condon requested an agenda item for the May meeting to discuss the format of the annual hydrology meeting.

Action Items Developed During Meeting

- 1) The PO and CC will follow the Program Document timelines for preparing and revising meeting notes and seeking committee approval.
- 2) Behery should coordinate with Schmidt-Petersen and Harms to address NM ISC Hydrology Model comments previously submitted by Green.
- 3) The PO will transmit the new 2018 proposed SOWs and BC comments to CC members. CC members will have one week to review the information and email their vote to the PO.
- 4) Mata will email the last communications in regards to establishing a contract for construction and O&M agreement for the Fruitland irrigation canal fish weir to Christianson, who will lead the effort in making the appropriate contacts to develop a contract and O&M agreement.

- 5) The PO will work with Reclamation, NM, and CO to determine the pros and cons of using Reclamation Capital Funds versus State NFWF funds to pay for the costs of the Fruitland irrigation canal fish weir and other potential SJRRIP capital projects.
- 6) The PO will meet with Schmidt-Petersen, the new NM CC representative, and bring him up to speed on the SJRRIP and the State's involvement.
- 7) Condon requested a discussion of the annual Hydrology Model meeting be included on the May CC meeting agenda.
- 8) Whitmore will officially invite CC members to participate in the April 26, 2018 Post-2023 planning conference call/webinar.
- 9) The CC requested Behery provide members with each section of the Hydrology Model documentation as it is completed so review can be broken up into manageable units.
- 10) The PO will send out a doodle poll to schedule the May CC meeting.