



**SAN JUAN RIVER BASIN RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
(SJRIIP) COORDINATION COMMITTEE**

Conference Call/Webinar
Tuesday 31 July 2018; 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Meeting Summary

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Susan Millsap, substitute Chair
Catherine Condon
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Jojo La
Ryan Christianson
Patrick McCarthy
Christina Noftsker
Leland Begay
Daryl Vigil

REPRESENTING:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service), Region 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 6
Water Development Interests
Navajo Nation
State of Colorado (CO)
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
State of New Mexico (NM)
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Scott Durst, PO acting Coordinator
Melissa Mata, PO Assistant Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, PO Biologist
Nathan Franssen, Four Corner Power Plant
Biologist

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Kathleen Callister, CC Alternate
Susan Behery
Paul Badame
Brian Richter
Vince Vasquez

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
State of Utah
Sustainable Water
Water Asset Management

1. Introductions/changes to agenda – Millsap

At the direction of Amy Lueders, the Service's Region 2 Regional Director, Millsap will chair this meeting as Tom Sinclair and his alternate, Stewart Jacks, were unavailable. New Mexico's representative and primary alternate were not able to attend this meeting and thus Noftsker, is present as NM's secondary alternate. From this point forward, Noftsker will serve as NM's primary alternate. As pertains to voting procedures, Noftsker can submit NM's vote during today's meeting.

2. Approve 31 May 2018 conference call summary – Gilbert

Comments were received from Condon and Pitts. These were incorporated into the final draft. A typographical error was corrected. Ryden moved to approve the summary and Condon seconded. With no objections, the summary was approved.

3. Review of action items identified during 31 May 2018 call – Millsap

a) Susan Behery will send out current sections of Hydrology Model documentation.

This action item is on-going and Behery will send out the next section within the week.

- b) Behery will organize a meeting to discuss changes to the Hydrology Model documentation.
The meeting is scheduled for 14 August 2018 in Durango, CO.
- c) Behery will organize an in person meeting for this year's Hydrology Model meeting.
The meeting is scheduled for 14 August 2018 in Durango, CO.
- d) A memo from the PO to the CC was requested which would outline suggested changes of Peer Review to a Science Advisory group.
This action item is on-going.
- e) Approving the Program Document will be on the agenda for the July/August CC call. A call between members of the Program Document workgroup should happen prior to the CC's next call so that any final edits are part of what is provided for approval.
This was accomplished and is on today's agenda.
- f) The PO will develop a list of Capital Projects for the BC to review and recommend to the CC. The BC review will occur during their 10 July 2018 conference call with the intent of the CC receiving a recommendation to consider at their next conference call.
This was accomplished and is on today's agenda.
- g) The PO will send the Phase III habitat restoration statement of work to the CC for their review and consideration.
This was accomplished and is on today's agenda.
- h) The PO will send a doodle poll to CC members to schedule the next conference call.
This was accomplished and resulted in today's meeting.

4. Biology Committee (BC) Update – Davis

Jason Davis was not available and Durst gave the update. The main topic at the BC's last meeting, which was held in July, was the fiscal year (FY) 2019 annual work plan (AWP). The first item discussed under this topic was a proposal the PO made to balance the AWP budget. The proposal was to adjust larval sampling by either removing April from the long-term monitoring statement of work (SOW) or remove the SOW for sampling larvae below the waterfall. The BC was unable to make a recommendation and both options are included in the FY 2019 AWP. The BC would like to make a recommendation to the CC after their next meeting (December 2018) where they will use this year's data to help make a decision. The second main item discussed, pertaining to the AWP, was a proposal to conduct endangered fish demographic monitoring. This new effort would focus on obtaining age specific demographics of each endangered fish, evaluate the response to lessened handling, obtain age specific abundance, and start what might become post-2023 monitoring. Funding this SOW in FY 2019 would require reallocating the adult monitoring SOW and a portion of the effort that was to be provided to support the catfish diet study. Conducting the demographic study would result in the loss of community monitoring for at least one year and reduced data collection for the catfish diet study. The BC could not come to consensus on this proposal and defaulted to proceeding with the adult monitoring and support of catfish diet study SOWs. Discussion will continue at the next BC meeting. The BC may make a recommendation to the CC then, to transition to demographic monitoring for FY 2019. Such a recommendation would be budget neutral. The second priority topic discussed at the BC meeting was recommendation of the prioritized list of capital projects, which the CC had requested from the BC. The list provided to the CC for today's meeting was recommended by the BC during their July meeting. The BC's next meeting is 4-6 December 2018. Other important updates included changes to SJRIP personnel: 1) the remote biologist hired by New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office will be starting 5 August 2018; 2) Howard Brandenburg, who has been long time employee and larval fish expert with American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers, is moving to Australia; and 3) Jason Davis is taking a

position with the Service's Region 2 Regional Office. He is currently serving as BC chair and with his departure the BC chair will become vacant. A vote in December will be held to fill the BC Chair for a one-year term (to complete the BC chair term and return to 2-year terms starting in 2019). The Service's Region 2 will decide who to assign to its BC seat.

5. Approve 2019 Draft Annual Work Plan and Budget – Program Office

- a. The first AWP draft was \$38K over budget. Through conversations with Principal Investigators and with the options provided to change larval fish surveys, the current budget is balanced with a slight surplus. The CC was provided two budgets, one with both larval fish options included and one that included a single option. The PO asked that the larger budget be considered for approval so Reclamation could move forward with contracting. As stated earlier, the BC will make a recommendation to the CC at their next meeting as to which larval fish option implement. The SOW New-6, is a proposal to conduct maintenance of secondary channel habitat restoration projects (Phases I and II). These were projects funded by sources outside the SJRIP. These secondary channels provide additional low velocity habitat to the two endangered fishes as multiple life-stages of both species have been found to use these secondary channels. If this SOW is approved, it will be the first time that SJRIP has allocated funding to habitat restoration. This SOW is for one year but there are no guarantees that additional maintenance will not be needed in the future. The maintenance cost is relatively small compared to what it was to restore the secondary channels. There is a placeholder in the AWP for capital project repairs of ~\$50K and these could be used for any project. The precise activities of SOW 17 and 19 might be reallocated to demographic monitoring but the overall AWP budget would remain neutral. There is no proposal to modify SOW 26. Condon moved to approve the FY 2019 AWP hydropower base funding budget at the higher level. This was seconded by Vigil. With no objections, the motion was approved.
- b. BC request to use effort (i.e., overall cost) to make more informed evaluation of SOWs and projects
 During the BC's last meeting, several members expressed that they had a difficult time evaluating the technical merits of one project or modified proposal over another when they were unable to understand the overall cost of the projects. The BC requested the ability to review each SOW's overall costs when considering their recommendations to the CC. Providing this information to the BC is not consistent with the recent changes made to the Program Document. The CC asked that the BC describe what they are doing now and what they are requesting be changed.

6. Approve funding for Phase III habitat restoration – Program Office

Pitts summarized his concerns as stated in a memo sent to the PO and CC prior to the meeting. Pitts stated that the current proposal asks whether Razorback Sucker larvae produced in the San Juan River can recruit into juveniles when provided large, stable, low-velocity habitat that is free of large-bodied nonnative predators. Pitts stated that the Program knows the answer to this query, which is yes. He stated that the Water Development Interests did not support the Phase III project. Other concern was expressed that we do not know how big or how many off channel habitats would be required because we do not know how many fish these would produce. However, to address this question quantitatively, at least one off-channel pond would need to be constructed. We also do not know if simply removing predators will result in recruitment, as in Stewart Lake. Lake Mead has Razorback Sucker recruitment even in the presence of a large nonnative fish community and confounds the idea that recovery is simply limited by the presence of predators. The San Juan River has a relatively low predator burden but we do not know if Razorback Sucker larvae will survive to juveniles when provided stable low velocity habitat. We

could make assumptions and estimate how many connected floodplain habitats are necessary for a self-sustaining population but that effort might be outside that which can be confidently predicted. The BC is in unanimous support of this project based on its biological merit. This project would provide an empirically informed assessment of the amount of habitat that can produce a given number of Razorback Sucker. Conducting management through an experimental approach has resulted in the SJRIP having an increased ability to make more informed and targeted management decisions. It is the Service's position that recovery is attainable in the San Juan River. New Mexico was not opposed to habitat creation but thought some of the lessons learned from similar efforts conducted in the middle Rio Grande should be considered. The SJRIP has yet to spend any funds to actively produce habitat for Razorback Sucker to alleviate the larvae to juvenile recruitment bottleneck. The cost is relatively small as compared to what has been spent on reducing entrainment from water diversion structures. The funds would support construction and permitting. Costs for monitoring, which would likely be minimal, would be added to current monitoring SOWs once the project was in place. If the CC does not approve Phase III today, more time could be given to further discussion. La motioned to continue discussion of this item at a future date while acknowledging that the BC unanimously recommended proceeding with this project to the CC. There is no timeframe in which a decision on this project has to be made. However, it was suggested the conversation continue sometime prior to the end of the calendar year. McCarthy seconded the motion and with no objections it was approved.

7. Presentation on the potential availability of environmental water to support fish recovery – Brian Richter, Sustainable Water and Vince Vasquez, Water Asset Management.

Brian Richter has been working on instream flows for many years and led the Global Water Program for TNC. He left TNC in 2017 and is now working independently for Sustainable Waters, a water education organization that promotes sustainable water use and management with governments, corporations, universities, and local communities. Richter has been working with a private equity group called Water Asset Management (WAM) that manages a global portfolio of water investments. Sustainable Waters and WAM have the potential to make 10,000-25,000 acre-feet of water available to the SJRIP. They are in active discussions with a water right holder and wanted to explore the SJRIP's level of interest in subleasing this water right. A short description of the concept was distributed with today's meeting agenda. The water would come through Navajo Reservoir and the SJRIP would have the opportunity to shape the timing of the water delivery to Lake Powell. The strategy would be to pair environmental flows with an end use storage benefit in Lake Powell. Sustainable Waters and WAM would hope for a multi-year financial commitment from the SJRIP. Many details would need to be worked out as pertains to environmental flows, shepherding, water rights, regulatory considerations, etc. However, prior to figuring out all the details, Richter and WAM wanted to know whether there was interest from the SJRIP. Richter and WAM have been in similar conversations with Reclamation in regards to the 15-mile reach in the upper Colorado River. Some in the CC voiced interest in having many of their questions answered in a more detailed proposal that could be put forward for consideration. Richter and Vasquez responded that they are interested in developing a more fully fleshed-out proposal and presenting it for the CC's consideration at a future meeting.

8. Approve prioritized capital projects – Program Office

A list of 7 projects was recommended to the CC during the BC's last meeting. The list is composed of some projects that were part of a list of items recommended to the CC in 2014 through a memo from Bill Miller, the BC Chair at that time, others from the long-range plan (LRP), and the unanimously BC recommended Phase III habitat restoration project. Phase III was recommended as the top priority. Arizona Public Service (APS) diversion, Fruitland

diversion, the lower Animas River pump station #2, and Farmers Mutual Ditch diversion were projects listed in the 2014 memo. The lower Animas River pump station #2 is not part of the list as a fish passage was constructed by the City of Farmington when they refurbished their diversion last year. A decision was made to discuss Phase III separately from the other items on the list. The Public Service of New Mexico (PNM) passage is a concern because recent evaluation indicated few fish were using the passage. However, a number of simple changes to the passage were made this year, including opening the trap in the spring and adding substrate, that resulted in more Razorback Sucker being moved upstream this year than in all prior years combined. The PNM passage was put on the list in case other actions need to occur. Since those actions are not known right now or the possible costs, the project was listed as an out year priority. Some of these projects are already on Reclamation's list like APS but others are not. It takes CC approval and then Reclamation must request the funds. This process takes multiple years due to the federal budget cycle, although there is the potential to move some funds around once they have been allocated if other projects take priority within a given year. The next year that any new projects could be funded would be 2021. A project on Reclamation's list with money allocated does not in and of itself require the project be conducted. Prioritization should be through biological information with respect to contribution to recovery. Since the list does not provide that information, it is difficult to make a decision to change the priorities from what was recommended by the BC. There is no proposed retrofit project for Hogback since entrainment over the weir has not been fully evaluated. There are some possible options to retrofit the structure once an evaluation indicates what issues may still persist. There are potential ideas for designs for APS and the waterfall. These were suggested by the fish passage experts who were given a tour of the San Juan River, through Reclamation support, this past spring. Ryden made a motion to approve the capital project list items 2-7 as written. McCarthy seconded the motion and with no objections it was approved.

9. Update and approve changes to Program Document – CC Workgroup

The Program Document was originally revised due to conflict of interest issues within the BC and changes to the BC Chair. The final changes were made in Chapter 6 in the text, figures, and tables, which also include description of the AWP and LRP processes. Pitts commented that the original language in the 2005 Program Document states, “the Service will provide \$200,000 in cash and in-kind services to the Program...” The 18 July 2018 proposed revised Program Document states “the Service will provide cash and in-kind services to the Program, up to \$200,000...” Pitts made a request prior to the meeting that Program Document be amended to say “the Service will provide \$200K...” rather than use the term “up to”. Since 2010, the Service has provided the \$200K. Prior to 2010, the funds the Service had allocated for the SJRIP were less than \$200K annually. The Water Development Interests met with the Service's Regional Director at the time (Dr. Benjamin Tuggle) to ensure the Service's contribution was made in full. The PO has begun conversations with the Service's leadership on what changes to this language are appropriate from the Service's perspective. Pitts made a motion to approve the Program Document with the clarification that the date of revision also state that changes were only made to Chapter 6. Vigil seconded the motion and it was approved with no objections.

10. Update on status of Utah joining the SJRIP – Program Office

Badame is working with the Utah Department of Natural Resources Recovery Program Office and with the Water Resource Department to develop the line of thought to present to the governor which best describes the benefits of becoming a program partner. The Water Development Interests and States of NM and CO indicated they could be contacted to provide their perspectives on how being a program partner has been beneficial.

11. Update on Recovery Programs post-2023 – Pitts

Several CC members have been participating in the conversations surrounding how the SRJIP and Upper Colorado River Recovery Program (UCRRP) may be structured once the agreements and program authorizations expire in 2023. The authorizing legislation that passed the House in March 2018 year (but that is still pending in the Senate) would require that the Secretary of the Interior provide to the U.S. Congress in 2021 a report that details “any activities to be carried out under the Recovery Implementation Program after September 30, 2023; and the projected cost of [these] activities.” The SJRIP and UCRRP will likely need to submit a draft report to the Secretary of the Interior in 2020. Both the SRJIP and the UCRRP have been assessing how program elements will fit into post-2023 recovery efforts.

12. Status of FY2019 annual hydropower funding – Pitts

Western Area Power Administration’s (WAPA) FY 2019 budget included funding for both the SJRIP and UCRRP with Colorado River hydropower revenues that are accrued in the Colorado River basin fund, as has been done for 18 years, pursuant to recovery programs’ federal authorizing legislation. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed WAPA to send the funds back to the U.S. Treasury rather than to Reclamation, which usually distributes the funds to the programs. An option may be appropriation of funds by Congress. There are some efforts to get the funds appropriated just for this year. There is pending legislation (now in the WRDA bill) to reauthorize hydropower funds for 2020-2023. Pitts was informed that the chair of the senate appropriation committee is preparing a letter that the 7-basin states’ delegation will be asked to sign. The letter will be sent to OMB asking to rescind the passback directive. There are some concerns about how appropriated funds would be scored pertaining to Reclamation’s budget. There is significant risk of losing funding for FY 2019. It may be prudent to figure out what might happen if there is a reduction of funding. ESA compliance is provided by fully funding the SJRIP and there are concerns that a loss or reduction in funding will compromise this compliance. The SJRIP and UCRRP POs have not prioritized how projects would be funded in the event of a reduction of funding. The Water Development Interests have been communicating their concerns to Congressional representatives that they will lose ESA compliance for their water development projects. Reclamation as well as members of Congress may have some conversations with OMB.

13. 2018 annual base funding update – McKinstry

Mark McKinstry was absent from today’s call and can prepare an email to distribute to the group to provide any updates he has to report.

14. Capital funding/capital projects update – Christianson

Ryan Christianson sent a spreadsheet to the group detailing the funds that have been allocated for capital projects and the remaining balance under the cost ceiling. Farmers Mutual Ditch may include rehabilitation of the diversion structure to prevent entrainment but might also include shoring up a cliff along the side of the ditch. The SJRIP program is going to fund the weir wall at the Fruitland diversion and this was approved in a prior year. Reclamation is pursuing an interagency agreement to get funds to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, who is funding the rehabilitation of the Fruitland diversion structure. The take statement in the Biological Opinion for this project is based on the fish weir being in place at the same time that the diversion is rehabilitated. Mata was at the 60% engineering design meeting for the Fruitland diversion structure, which includes a fish passage, and was informed that the current designs would not be adequate to keep the fish passage inundated at low flows. The engineering firm will be communicating with the Service to figure out how to design the diversion and fish passage to function correctly.

15. Hydrological baseline workgroup meeting on 14 August 2018

Behery will be sending a draft agenda to the CC this week and will request comments on that agenda. The meeting will be in Durango, CO and Behery suggested that people come in person to the meeting but a call in and webinar will be available. The meeting is scheduled for 10:00-2:00 but it is not expected to go that long. The next piece of documentation for the Hydrology model will be sent out this week.

16. Schedule next CC meeting(s)

A Doodle Poll will be sent out with dates for first the part of November where topics such as changes to the Program Document suggested by Pitts will be discussed. A separate meeting may be necessary in September or early October depending on the outcome of the return of FY 2019 hydropower funding to WAPA. Such a meeting would only include this topic.

Action Items

1. A written proposal from BC on their request to include overall budgets in their assessment of SOWs and projects.
2. A proposal from Richter with additional details on use of water rights for environmental flows.
3. A 2018 budget update via email from McKinstry.
4. Further discussion of Phase III to resolve outstanding questions.
5. A Doodle Poll for an early November meeting.