



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

Conference Call/Webinar

Thursday 31 May 2018; 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Meeting Summary

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Stewart Jacks, Chair Alternate
Catherine Condon
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Michelle Garrison
Ryan Christianson
Patrick McCarthy
Rolf Schmidt-Petersen
Leland Begay

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
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
The Nature Conservancy
State of New Mexico (NM)
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

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

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Jason Davis, Biology Committee (BC) Chair
JoJo La, CC Alternate
Kathleen Callister, CC Alternate
Paul Harms, CC Alternate
Lorelyn Hall, CC Alternate
Susan Behery
Susan Millsap
Henry Day

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
State of Colorado
Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
Arizona Public Service (APS)

1. Introductions/changes to agenda – Jacks

Amy Lueders, Service Region 2 Director, would like to hear from CC members. A briefing can be organized through Mata.

2. Approval of 16 January 2018 conference call summary – Gilbert

The draft 16 January 2018 conference call notes incorporated comments from Condon, Pitts, Schmidt-Petersen, Sharon Whitmore, and Harms. Comments were also received from Behery notifying SJRIP that meetings with Schmidt-Petersen would be postponed until after the NM legislative session. Ryden sent comments indicating that despite a federal government shutdown there was representation from the SJRIP at the Joint SJRIP and Upper Colorado River Recovery Program (CRRP) Annual Researcher's meeting. The comments from Behery and Ryden were not incorporated into the 16 January 2018 notes but are incorporated herein.

3. Review of action items identified during 16 January 2018 call – Mata

- a. The PO will more closely follow the Program Document timelines for preparing and revising CC meeting notes and seeking CC approval.
 - a. Status: ongoing
- b. Behery should coordinate with Schmidt-Petersen and Harms to address NM Hydrology Model comments previously submitted by Kristin Green.
 - a. Status: Behery has been coordinating with Schmidt-Petersen and Harms. Through those meetings a few proposed changes were made to the document. Those will be sent to the CC with other documents today. Behery will await response from CC and PO to see if proposed changes should be implemented and would like feedback on whether the changes are realistic. Schmidt-Petersen indicated he had other questions and would like to talk with the overall committee about changes. To accomplish this Behery will schedule a meeting for a more detailed discussion.
- c. The PO will transmit SOWs and BC comments associated with the four additional Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 projects to the CC. The CC will have one week to review the information before an email vote of approval is taken.
 - a. Status: completed
- d. Pollack will work with Jason John and Christianson to try to determine the entity that will be responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Fruitland Fish Weir.
 - a. Status: topic is on current agenda
- e. The PO will develop a white paper describing the Pros and Cons of using Capital Funds verses NFWF Funds to reimburse the costs of the Fruitland Fish Weir and other potential Capital Projects.
 - a. Status: topic is on current agenda
- f. Whitmore will officially invite the CC to participate in the 7 February 2018 Post-2023 Planning conference call/webinar.
 - a. Status: completed
- g. The CC requested Behery provide members with each section of the Hydrology Model documentation as it is completed so that the review can be broken into manageable units.
 - a. Status: the first installation was sent on 12 March 2018. The next installation will be sent out after this conference call.
- h. The PO will survey CC and BC members as to a time to hold the Annual Meeting. The CC would prefer meeting during the 30 May–1June timeframe, while the BC would prefer the 15–17 May timeframe.
 - a. Status: completed. At a spring Navajo Dam Operations meeting a member of the public requested that some SJRIP Annual Meetings be held in Farmington, NM. This request was supported by CC members.

4. Feedback/discussion on Annual Meeting format – PO

The synthesis that was included as part of the new Annual Meeting format was considered useful and helped provide perspective for the invited topic presentations. Invited topic presentations like the one given for Capital Projects should just focus on key issues or invited topic presentations should be streamlined to only include: objectives, results, relevance to recovery, recommendation, and discussion. Opinion was mixed as to whether topic presentations should include methodology and data. If these aspects of a project are not presented then the CC and public are relying on the interpretation of the presenter; the audience may prefer to make their own judgements. However, the BC would have resolved methodology and data interpretation issues prior to the Annual Meeting presentations. Methodology and data may be useful for new and/or complex topics and

could be available for discussion but not part of the primary presentation. More time should be given to the open forum. For some CC members it was difficult to respond on the spot with discussion and structuring the open forum may result in more conversation. It was suggested that the BC could develop questions to be used to structure the open forum discussion. Conversation with BC representatives prior to the meeting may also help CC members focus questions or issues they'd like to raise during the meeting. There was a request that all participants in the meeting, presenters and audience, be timely. The PO suggested the CC might prefer other options than a full day meeting and suggested three: 1) shorten the meeting to half a day that is a streamlined overview with no topic presentations and the majority of the time for discussion, 2) stop holding the meeting and develop ways to communicate the prior year's information to the public and CC members, and 3) continue to hold a full day annual meeting between the BC, CC, PO and public. Support was voiced for continuing to hold a full day annual meeting.

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

Context in relation to LRP, recruitment bottlenecks, and Program priorities

A short (2+ page) document accompanied the 2019 Draft Annual Work Plan (AWP). The PO asked whether this was what the CC wanted. More clarity on how emerging information changed scopes of work (SOW) or resulted in submission of new SOWs was requested as well as reasons for each SOW's inclusion into the AWP.

AWP SOWs and technical review process

This year the PO only requested review of new SOWs or those that had substantial changes. However, all SOWs were made available to BC members and Peer Reviewers to make comments at their discretion. Those SOWs which received comments from BC and Peer Reviewers as well as those that had greater than a 3% change in their budget were reviewed by the PO with CC members. Davis indicated that the BC had just completed a similar process with the exception of reviewing budgets and there was little need for extensive discussion which was attributed to the new streamlined review process.

Compiled BC comments and PO recommendations

No comments were made in regards to this item.

6. BC Update – Davis

The BC had a meeting in February to discuss and review the prior year's projects and data generated. During that meeting it was decided that SOW annual reports will be shortened to reporting of major findings and more comprehensive reports submitted less frequently. The Phase III project was recommended to be forwarded to CC for consideration. The PO had revised documentation for Navajo Dam operations to support San Juan River flow recommendations and the BC approved that document be forward to CC. The BC identified several bottlenecks to recruitment and recovery with potential paths forward and some of those are now projects included in the 2019 draft AWP. A BC conference call was held in March and the BC decided to support stocking 400,000 calcein marked age 0 Colorado Pikeminnow this fall. The BC recommended approval of a request from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to provide a pulse flow release from Navajo Dam to support its Simon Canyon wetland restoration project. The purpose of the wetland project is to reduce sedimentation input into the San Juan River from the canyon. The most recent BC meeting occurred in May, prior to the Annual Meeting. This meeting focused on review of the 2019 draft AWP. Because some changes were suggested to individual SOWs, the BC will review those proposals and will make a recommendation to the CC. The Peer Reviewers

provided an overview report to the SJRIP after the February BC meeting. During the May BC meeting, it was decided that this report will be used during the November meeting to help the BC plan future work. A small BC working group is considering alternatives to the Colorado Pikeminnow augmentation plan. Prioritization of Capital Projects and elevating base flows were also discussed during the May meeting.

7. Update on SJRIP Peer Review and transition to Science Advisory group – Program Office

The BC recommended this topic be added to the CC agenda for consideration. The idea would be for the Peer Review group to provide a more programmatic overview and ideas on how to better gather knowledge of the system rather than peer review which is oriented towards analysis of methodology and interpretation of results. Clarification of roles between the BC and the Peer Reviewers was requested and it was suggested that Peer Reviewers currently do the same thing as BC members but provide an outside perspective. To maintain a fresh perspective from the Peer Reviewer or Science Advisory group rotation of people may need to occur. There would be trade-offs with rotating people in regards to the time it would take for new reviewers to obtain an understanding of the complexities of the system and the SJRIP. The 2019 Peer Review SOW budget was increased to provide reviewers more time to attend meetings and review documents to better make higher level recommendations. This budget would be the cap for FY 2019 whether or not Peer Review transitions to a Science Advisory group. It is not expected that the Peer Review group would help in development of the post-2023 recommendation. A memo from the PO to the CC was requested that would outline what this change in Peer Review would look like.

8. Long Range Plan update – Mata

Appendix A will be updated after each annual meeting and uploaded to the SJRIP website. Revision of the Long Range Plan is on hold until revisions to Recovery Plans and Recovery Implementation Strategies have begun. Drafting the Long Range Plan will then occur in parallel with those documents or those documents may become incorporated as the Long Range Plan.

9. Discussion of annual Hydrology Model meeting – Condon

Condon indicated that the 2017 annual hydrology model meeting contained too much discussion regarding the roles and responsibilities relating to the model and not enough information regarding updates to the model. A more detailed discussion about the model was requested for the next meeting. An in person meeting was suggested for this year.

10. Update on changes to Program Document – CC Workgroup

Finalization of the document was on hold until decisions in regards to a table/figure were made. The work group agreed to try to schedule a call between members of the work group prior to the CC's next call so that those decisions can be made. Approving the Program Document should be on the agenda for the July/August CC call.

11. 2018 San Juan River Environmental Flows/Navajo Dam Release Update – Program Office

The BC recommended the document to the CC for review and adoption. No comments from the CC were received. The document is considered a living document and can be revisited as new information is gathered. No flow targets were changed but operations from Navajo Dam were changed to forgo short releases so that longer releases could be made to meet higher flow targets. No opposition to adopting the document was voiced and the document was considered adopted.

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

The last update from Utah was received in April from Paul Badame. A draft letter from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Director to upper levels of Utah government is in development to support Utah becoming a signatory.

13. FY18 appropriations/DC trip update – Pitts

The trip occurred the week of 19 March 2018. The briefings continue to be important to explain how these programs support many interests. During the trip, recovery program delegates said funds in Western Area Power Administration's budget, which were requested be removed by the Office of Management and Budget, would remain in the appropriations bill. Verification that these funds are in the appropriations bill is occurring. Coordination will need to be maintained between all program entities as the process proceeds.

14. Update on Recovery Programs post-2023 – Pitts

The annual funding legislation includes a report to be submitted which will include the status of species and negotiated future funding of the SJRIP and CRRP based on program needs after 2023. The discussions between program participants are underway. It was suggested that a draft of the report be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior at the end of fiscal year 2020.

15. 2017/2018 annual base funding update – Mata

Reclamation is on target for getting most new agreements in place.

16. Capital funding/capital projects update – Christianson

Guidance of CC process to move capital projects forward

The PO requested guidance from the CC on the process to get Capital Projects onto Reclamation's out year budget and implemented. Reclamation needs a two year lead to allocate funds for a project. A 2014 memo from the BC was sent to CC with recommendations but were not moved onto Reclamation's out year list. The PO is unsure what happened to those projects once they were recommended by the BC. There is a sense of urgency to get Capital Project onto Reclamation's out year budget list given the 2023 funding deadline. Providing the CC a prioritized list might be better than approving projects one at a time. The PO will develop and provide a list to the BC for their 10 July 2018 call. The list resulting from that discussion will then be forwarded to CC with biological rationales for the CC's consideration during their next meeting. Reclamation has \$21 million unspent in the Capital Projects fund with \$7 million unidentified for specific future projects.

17. BC recommendation to move forward with Phase 3 habitat restoration

Questions of water rights

A recruitment bottleneck for Razorback Sucker larvae was identified and this project was recommended by the BC to help the SJRIP determine ways to alleviate this bottleneck. The project will assess whether large stable low velocity habitats are the habitat type that is limiting recruitment. This information could lead to other habitat management options other than building similar wetlands (e.g. elevated baseflows and excavation of the downstream portion of secondary channels). The project may also be able to quantify the amount of habitat required to produce a given number of juvenile Razorback Sucker. If so this would inform the program as to the amount of habitat needed in the system to support more robust larval fish recruitment each year. The project is proposed to be built on the Navajo Nation and the PO is working with the Navajo Nation to resolve water rights. This could be done through a water permit. The Phase III rationale will be sent to CC and put on the next agenda for a decision.

18. Fish passage at APS Weir

Funds for this project are in Reclamation's budget for 2020 and 2021. APS is less of a barrier than PNM but there are still passage issues at APS. A couple of strategies for the APS weir can be investigated which are not as expensive as that provided in Reclamation's out year budget. There are efforts underway at PNM this summer to improve passage that may not require a costly retrofit.

19. Decision on funding Fruitland Fish Weir

An interagency contract needs to be completed between Reclamation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for use of Capital Funds and that negotiation is underway. There is already a contract in place between Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Navajo Nation which would allow transfer of funds to the Navajo Nation if the Navajo Nation decides to be the party responsible for contracting the project. The preferred option is to put a contract in place between Reclamation and BIA but if this cannot occur there may be a need to use the currently available NFWF funds. If so, that fund would be completely spent. (Note: New Mexico still needs to contribute additional funds to meet its capital project commitment). If the fish weir is not constructed but the Fruitland irrigation diversion is upgraded there will be a violation of the terms of the project's Biological Opinion.

20. Schedule next CC meeting(s)

The PO will send a doodle poll to CC members.

Action Items Developed During Meeting

- 1) Behery will send out current sections of Hydrology Model documentation.
- 2) Behery will organize a meeting to discuss changes to Hydrology Model documentation.
- 3) Behery will organize an in person meeting for this year's Hydrology Model meeting.
- 4) A memo from the PO to the CC was requested which would outline suggested changes of Peer Review to a Science Advisory group.
- 5) If the Program Document workgroup is able to discuss and finalize the proposed revisions to the Program Document prior to the July/August CC call, approving the Program Document will be on the agenda.
- 6) 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.
- 7) The PO will send the Phase III habitat restoration statement of work to the CC for their review and consideration.
- 8) The PO will send a doodle poll to CC members to schedule the next conference call.