



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

Conference Call/Webinar

Thursday 24 October 2018; 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Tom Sinclair, Chair
Catherine Condon
Travis Francis, CC Alternate
Stanley Pollack
Michelle Garrison
Ryan Christianson
Patrick McCarthy
Rolf Schmidt-Petersen
Leland Begay
Daryl Vigil

REPRESENTING:

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

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Melissa Mata, PO Assistant Coordinator
Scott Durst, PO Science Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, PO 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:

Jojo La, CC Alternate
Kathleen Callister, CC Alternate
Christina Noftsker, CC Alternate
Jennifer Dummas, CC Alternate
Mark McKinstry
Nathan Franssen
Jason Davis

State of Colorado
Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico
Jicarilla Apache Nation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2

1. Introductions/changes to agenda – Sinclair

No CC members had a request to add agenda items during the meeting.

2. Approve 30 July 2018 conference call summary – Gilbert

Pollock moved to approve, Schmidt-Petersen seconded, and motion was unanimously approved.

3. Review of action items identified during 30 July 2018 call – Sinclair

A. A written proposal from Biology Committee (BC) on their request to include overall budgets in their assessment of statement of work (SOW) and projects.

The request is on the BC's agenda for their next meeting (4-6 December 2018). A recent example, which suggests review of the details of budgets has importance, occurred with the 2019 annual work plan (AWP). One of the approved SOWs did not include all participating agencies' budgets.

B. A proposal from Brian Richter of Sustainable Waters with additional details on use of water rights for environmental flows.

Richter is drafting a document to address the CC's questions.

C. A 2018 budget update via email from McKinstry.

When funding had been uncertain, Reclamation contacted all Principle Investigators (PI) suggesting they save fiscal year (FY) 2018 funds for 2019. Now that FY 2019 funds have been appropriated, PIs are proceeding with their 2019 SOWs. The casualty from saving FY 2018 funding was that fall sub-adult and adult monitoring did not occur. Other efforts in 2018 indicated Razorback Sucker had a historic year of production, highlighting the data loss of not conducting fall sub-adult and adult monitoring. Reclamation does not have FY 2019 funding in hand and is working with the PO to prioritize support of SOWs. Appropriated funds have the benefit that Reclamation receives them all at one time rather than quarterly, which was how hydropower funding was distributed. However, it means a much higher level of scrutiny. Reclamation has been required to justify each activity within each SOW to the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office. The increased scrutiny could mean funding levels are not guaranteed. If Reclamation has to provide work plans for out years, the SJRIP will not be able to develop work plans each year. There is no resolution for funding out-years. This will be a complicated and challenging process as Reclamation plans budgets on a 3-year cycle. Fiscal Year 2020 has already been planned. Reclamation is currently working on FY 2021 and awaiting direction on how to do this considering the current funding environment. Depending on the direction received there could be an associated change in the way the SJRIP's annual work plan is developed. Although Reclamation has authority to fund the SJRIP, it does not mean it automatically gets funding.

D. Further discussion of Phase III to resolve outstanding questions.

This topic is on the current agenda.

4. Coordination Committee Member Updates – Sinclair

A. Review and update roster via email – Mata

This is Sinclair's last meeting as he has accepted a Service position in Portland, OR. The Service's Regional Director Amy Lueders will appoint someone into Sinclair's SJRIP position who is familiar with the San Juan. The Regional Director is currently making this decision. At the next BC meeting there will be a vote for a new BC Chair who will then liaise with the CC. Mata will be requesting updates from CC members for FY2019 roster.

B. Status of Program Coordinator position – Campbell

The position should be posted in the next few weeks. It will be posted for two weeks and open to any applicant. Representation from the CC will be included on the interview panel.

C. Status of Program Support Assistant – Campbell

Katherine Yazzie, who spent a portion of her time administratively supporting the PO, took a new job. To fill this position quickly, the Service is moving through a veteran's approval process.

5. Species Status Assess of Razorback Sucker and Downlist Recommendation – Program Office

The Service's Region 6 is the species' lead. This means they will draft and publish a proposed rule in the Federal Register in the fall of next year, when public comment will be requested.

Downlisting status takes effect 30 days once a final rule is published. Since SJRIP's purpose is to recover both endangered and threatened fish species, the downlisting will not change the SJRIP.

The CC will be kept informed as Region 6 develops a timeline for publishing of the proposed rule.

6. Status of Sufficient Progress Report – Program Office

Comments from the CC were provided to the PO in June. Since that time, Water Development Interests met with Regional Director Lueders and heard their desire to get the report finalized. Regional Director Lueders requested the PO finalize the report by the end of the calendar year. The PO expects to meet this deadline.

7. FY19 Funding Update – Callister/McKinstry

Covered in action items

8. Status of hydropower funding for FY20-23 update – Pitts

Sinclair summarized the information Pitts provided in an email. On 2 October, an amendment was passed out of the Senate's Energy and Natural Resource Committee to fund the SJRIP through appropriations rather than hydropower for FY 2020-2023. The Congressional Budget Office has not scored the bill. No further action on the bill will be taken until Congress reconvenes.

9. FY19 Annual Work Plan Update – Program Office

The CC approved the FY 2019 AWP at the higher of two budget options to provide a mechanism for the BC to make a final recommendation on larval monitoring and demographic monitoring SOWs so that approval of the AWP was not delayed. The BC will make this recommendation at its next meeting. The demographic monitoring SOW proposes to replace fall monitoring and requisition funding from the Channel Catfish diet study, so the AWP would be budget neutral. The purpose of the demographic monitoring SOW is to: 1) obtain age-specific capture and survival probabilities and abundances for endangered fishes, 2) evaluate their response to reduced summertime handling, 3) establish a framework for post-2023 monitoring, and 4) provide demographic information for the 2021 report to Congress. The BC will also be asked to consider whether the SJRIP should conduct a spring sampling trip to determine over-winter survival of the record number of Razorback Sucker juveniles produced this year. A press release from the PO, on this historic San Juan River production, is forth coming. Any spring trip would not affect the 2019 budget. An email with BC recommendations will be provided to the CC. A conference call will be scheduled to be held after the BC meeting to keep the CC informed and provide an opportunity to make decisions as needed based on BC recommendations.

10. Update Discussion on Phase 3 habitat restoration – Program Office

This agenda item was a request from the CC's last conference call. However, with this year's historic production of juvenile Razorback Sucker, the BC may need to reconsider the proposed purpose for Phase III, which was to explore factors that may be limiting survival of juveniles in the San Juan River. However, the discussion of this project brought to light a question of process between the BC and CC. There seems to have been an impasse as the BC made a recommendation unanimously but there was little support for the project from the CC. It is also unclear whether CC members should get their questions answered from their respective BC members or whether the PO should try to speak for the BC.

Some of the questions posed by the CC may be policy related rather than seeking biological justification of the project. New Mexico's concern was related to the need to obtain better information about potential hydrologic issues (detailed clarification of these concern's was provided in a subsequent email to the CC and BC). There may have been unanimous agreement by the BC but unvoiced hesitation existed which was then communicated to CC members. It is the CC's prerogative to make a decision independent of the BC's recommendation.

The SOW may have been better understood if it was part of a strategic plan. The only time the BC and CC come together is during the annual meeting and thus there is little ability for the two committees to develop strategic plans together. However, there are many unknowns pertaining to how to get to recovery (i.e., what management actions will actually work) for the San Juan River. Without the ability to try to figure these things out, like the implementation of this SOW, it will be impossible to answer some of the questions raised. We do not know near as much about the system or the species as we think we do and some of the questions raised do not have answers. For example, this year showed that habitat is not limiting as previously assumed, even though it is a component that the SJRIP has been lacking in actively managing.

The CC might have had more confidence in funding Phase III had they an opportunity to evaluate a range of options. However, this is what was done at the BC level and may be where there is a disconnection between what the BC discusses and what their CC representatives understand. There appears to be inconsistency in the process for approving capital projects. For example, the Fruitland weir was approved without the need for strategic planning, a quantification of its contribution to recovery, and was based on technology that has remained untested (i.e., Hogback Fish Weir) while these criteria appeared to preclude support for Phase III. The CC may be more comfortable with projects like the Fruitland weir and thus needs more information for a habitat project like Phase III. The CC requested the BC make a presentation to the CC at the next annual meeting, should the BC continue to support the SOW. The presentation should include information on the questions raised thus far.

11. Colorado River Basin Drought Contingency Plan – Rolf and Garrison

Both the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basin (Upper and Lower basins) have been working on drought contingency plans. In the Lower Basin, development of an agreement and operation provisions are underway, with planning to provide certain water levels at Lake Mead. In the Upper Basin, planning is for an operations agreement and a demand management storage agreement. Those focus on providing a certain elevation to Lake Powell. These will be made official through federal legislation through 2025, the year that operations of both reservoirs will be reviewed. There will also be additional companion agreements. Implementation of the drought contingency plans for the Upper Basin will rely on releases from Flaming Gorge, Aspinall and Navajo units. Currently the participating entities are developing the plan and will then request review by Recovery Programs. Release of water from the Navajo Unit will be a special case because of its uses and consideration of pool elevations. If the Navajo Unit can contribute to drought contingency, timing of water delivery would be done to try to benefit the SJRIP.

12. Scoping of future capital projects – Program Office/Christianson

At the 30 July 2018 BC meeting, future capital projects were identified and ranked. Because the CC did not approve Phase III it was removed from the list as the top priority and the remaining projects were submitted to Reclamation. This is the list that Christianson provided to the CC prior to the conference call. The CC voiced no disagreement to support Reclamation in moving forward with development of rough cost estimates for those projects.

13. Schedule next CC meeting(s)

The next in person meeting will be the annual meeting in May. This will be held in Farmington, NM at the public's request. The CC recommended a conference call be scheduled sometime within

the first three weeks of January to discuss recommendations that result from the BC's December meeting. The PO will send the CC the BC's agenda in case members wish to attend.

Action Items Developed During Meeting

- 1) A written proposal from BC on their request to include overall budgets in their assessment of SOWs and projects.
- 2) The PO will communicate BC recommendation via email to the CC after the BC's next meeting (4-6 December 2018).
- 3) Schedule a conference call in the first three weeks of January to discuss the BC's recommendations.