



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

**27 July 2021
Draft Meeting Summary**

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Debra Hill, CC alternate, acting chair
Lorelyn Hall, CC alternate
Jennifer Dumas, CC alternate
Michelle Garrison
Susan Millsap
Crystal Tulley-Cordova
Travis Francis, CC alternate
Tom Pitts
Leland Begay
Roland Becenti
Rolf Schmidt-Petersen
Ryan Christianson
Absent

REPRESENTING:

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

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, Assistant Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator
James Sykes, Program Support Assistant

Service, Region 2
Service, Region 2
Service, Region 2
Service, Region 2

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Jojo La, CC alternate
Ali Effati, CC alternate
Colleen Cunningham, CC alternate
Matthew Zeigler, BC chair
William Miller, BC member
Jacob Mazzone, BC member
Carrie Padgett, BC alternate
Lee Traynham, CC alternate
Mark McKinstry, BC member
Jeff Arnold
Benjamin Schleicher, BC member
Nathan Franssen
Shawn Sartorius
Melody Saltzgeber
Leslie James

State of Colorado
State of New Mexico
State of New Mexico
State of New Mexico
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Water users
Reclamation
Reclamation
National Park Service
Service, Region 6
Service, Region 2
Service, Region 2
Service, Region 2
Colorado River Energy Distribution Association

Introductions and changes/additions to agenda – Hill

Mata introduced Hill as the new CC alternate for Service, Region 2 and chair for the meeting given Jason Davis' absence. Hill is the Large River Restoration and Recovery Program branch chief at the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office.

Additionally, Effati will serve as a CC alternate for the State of New Mexico, Traynham will serve as a CC alternate for Reclamation replacing Kathy Callister, and Tulley-Cordova will shift from CC alternate to CC representative for Navajo Nation with Stanley Pollack becoming the Navajo Nation's CC alternate.

Hill reminded the group that votes will be cast by CC leads, unless they are not present and would be cast by the CC alternates.

Schmidt-Petersen asked that an update on the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) be added to the agenda.

Review of Action Items identified during 5 May 2021 meeting – Mata

1. The PO in coordination with Region 6 will summarize the contribution of Lake Powell to recovery. Mata will review Service documents re: the role of Colorado pikeminnow in Lake Powell in recovery and report back to the CC. CC will write a memo to the Service requesting the Service's opinion of the contribution of Lake Powell in recovery.
Update: Mata indicated that this action item has been a low priority due to efforts on post-2023. The Service is waiting for a CC memo before taking further action.
2. Gilbert will organize a small group to incorporate Section 7 Principles comments. This action item is on today's agenda. A new draft Section 7 Principle has been developed and will be distributed to CC for review. Once changes are approved by the CC, the Service will seek its solicitor's review.
Update: Mata will distribute the draft later this week and give the CC 4-weeks to review.
3. The PO will develop an initial draft clarifying Appendix A of the Long-Range plan and send that to the BC for development of the 2021 long-range plan appendix A.
Update: The PO sent this draft for review and it's on today's agenda.
4. The Service will make an assessment on using the Navajo Gallup Depletion Guarantee in Hydrology Modelling for future section 7 consultations. This action item is ongoing.
Update: The PO has received NN comments and will work with the Service's Regional Office to move this forward.
5. The PO will work with New Mexico to resolve comments on the quick reference SJRIP roles and responsibilities.
Update: New Mexico and the PO determined this wasn't a priority while the group is working on post-2023 planning.
6. Mata will coordinate with NPS to figure out next steps and provide a written proposal to the CC as appropriate. Ongoing.
Update: Since this process isn't defined in the Program Document, Mata proposes the CC write a letter to NPS asking them to participate in the SJRIP. Because the NPS has authority in the lower San Juan River, Piute Farms Waterfall, and the San Juan arm of Lake Powell, their membership in the SJRIP could be a significant benefit to the SJRIP. Mata offered to draft a letter that would be put up for CC vote. If this process is satisfactory, it should be added to the Program Document to outline how new signatories are added to the SJRIP.
7. Mata will ensure the SJRIP's Long Range Plan and Sufficient Progress Report tasks agree.

Update: Mata confirmed that all recommendations from the Service's Sufficient Progress Report are already included in the SJRIP's Long Range Plan. The Service recommended the completion of a variety of Recovery Management Actions in its Sufficient Progress Report to ensure the SJRIP implements recovery activities prioritized in the Long Range Plan and continues to provide sufficient progress for recovery of Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker so the SJRIP can serve as the ESA compliance mechanism for water development, management, and operations in the San Juan River Basin.

Approve 5 May 2021 meeting summary (vote) – Franssen

Franssen received comments from Pitts, Christianson, La, James, and Cunningham. There may have been some confusion because the order of the summary wasn't consistent with the meeting agenda. All suggested changes were accepted. Schmidt-Peterson motioned to approve the summary, Garrison seconded. There was no opposition and the summary was approved as final.

Update on Drought Response Operation Agreement – Schmidt-Petersen

Water levels in Lake Powell dropped dramatically over the past few months due to the ongoing dry conditions in the Upper Colorado River Basin. In June 2021, Reclamation projected that Lake Powell may fall below the critical elevation of 3,525 feet in February 2022. Reclamation informed the Upper Basin States that it intended to act under the emergency provision of the DROA giving the Secretary discretion to take action in case of an "imminent need." Following DROA discussions with Upper and Lower Basin States, Reclamation considered releases from Flaming Gorge, Blue Mesa, and Navajo to boost the elevation in Lake Powell. The schedule of DROA releases was finalized in early July and there is a planned release of 20,000 acre feet (af) from Navajo Reservoir over November and December as a small increase of baseflows to boost the reservoir elevation of Lake Powell. This DROA release is in addition to releases to maintain target baseflows in the San Juan River. Releases from Navajo Reservoir would occur after the irrigation season and follow larger releases from Flaming Gorge and Blue Mesa. This volume of release would drop Navajo Reservoir's elevation by 2 feet but Navajo Reservoir is still expected to end the water year 30 feet above the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP) intake. Schmidt-Petersen suggested scheduling periodic updates on the implementation of the DROA. Since the next CC meeting isn't typically scheduled until May, brief meetings this fall would be helpful to keep everyone in the loop on these operations.

During yesterday's BC meeting, operational flexibility of the planned DROA releases from Navajo was discussed and there was a desire to release that 20,000 af over a shorter timeframe as an elevated baseflow to move sediment. All indications are that there is substantial operational flexibility so further discussion with Reclamation would be helpful to refine the nature of the release the BC is requesting.

Fiscal year 2022 Recovery Program Funding – Pitts

The President's budget includes \$21.4M of Reclamation appropriations for Colorado River Conservation, which is understood to include funding for the SJRIP, Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program, and Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program. Additionally, the President's budget included \$5.7M for funding capital projects. This bill has moved out of the House sub-committee for consideration by the full committee. Pitts is confident that there will not be an issue once the bill reaches the Senate.

La indicated that the draft bill being considered for infrastructure includes \$50M for conservation within the Colorado River Basin (see page 466 in the .pdf: <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/50847FFD-724B-4BB4-94E0-D8E1FC9C7ABC>).

Status of amendments to Recovery Program authorizing legislation – Pitts

Recovery Program partners continue to work on developing amendments and supporting language to keep the Recovery Programs functional through 2023 and continue them post-2023. Introduced amendments included the previous requirement that Cooperative Agreements be renewed one year before reauthorization was removed. Also revisions were made so legislation is consistent with Reclamation's 3-year funding cycle. Finally, the deadline for the Secretary of the Interior's report was extended by one year, now due on September 30, 2022. Pitts thanked Katie Duncan from Colorado for writing the amendments and supporting language. The deadline for the Secretary of the Interior's report was extended to 30 September 2022.

Biology Committee (BC) meeting update – Zeigler

Zeigler reported on the last two BC meetings held on 6 and 26 July 2021. The first meeting focused on review and discussion of the PO's recommended FY2022 annual work plan (AWP). The BC concurred with the inclusion of the four new scopes of work (SOW) and dropping the spring age-1 razorback sucker monitoring since that age class can be collected during other monitoring efforts. Once concerns over the adequacy of funding for SNARRC to conduct additional genetics were resolved, the BC supported the PO's recommended FY2022 work plan and recommended the work plan receive approval from the CC. During the BC's second meeting in July they discussed the failure of the Phase III off-channel wetland and stocking locations this fall for age-1 Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker.

San Juan River Basin diversion prioritization – Zeigler

Zeigler provided some background and an overview of the prioritization document. The BC conducted this prioritization as a follow-up on the earlier Lyons et al. 2016 report (<https://www.fws.gov/southwest/sjrip/SJARDS.cfm>), to make progress on tasks already included in the Long Range Plan (https://www.fws.gov/southwest/sjrip/pdf/DOC_2016_SJRRIP_Long_Range_Plan.pdf), and based on guidance received from the post-2023 funding group to identify potential future capital projects. The prioritization was based on a primary evaluation that included the diversion structures' spatial location, distribution of listed fishes, and habitat thermal suitability. A secondary assessment included the BC's expert opinion on the threat of entrainment and passage impediment based on each

diversions' structural characteristics. The BC ranked diversion structures in the San Juan and Animas Rivers based on these criteria and the PO summarized BC responses to identify a prioritized list of structures that would be in need of further assessment and implementation of potential diversion structure projects. Finally, the document describes a path forward and outlines a checklist to encourage and streamline project evaluation and any potential implementation process.

Pitts outlined the water users' opposition to what he characterized as a "piecemeal" approach to including the Animas River in recovery for the SJRIP. Pitts indicated there are too many unknowns to proceed with recovery activities in the Animas River and asked what is the role of the Animas River to achieve recovery? La and Garrison echoed these concerns. The prioritization document detailed a process of gathering more information during diversion assessments to determine what is needed for recovery and the habitats the listed fish are attempting to use. The BC recognizes that range expansion and increasing habitat connectivity unequivocally improve the prospects for species recovery in the San Juan River Basin. Francis commended the effort of the BC to develop this diversion prioritization. Cunningham indicated that it seems the CC isn't currently ready to approve the prioritization document but it should be considered at a future meeting.

Mazzone asked what data would be necessary to satisfy CC questions. The prioritization document acknowledges that assessment and implementation of diversion projects would take place with willing diversion owners and efforts would be made to mutually benefit fish and water users. Pitts asked about the need for flow augmentation, fish screening, and habitat restoration in the Animas River and suggested tabling this document until those questions could be addressed. NMISC appreciates the BC's efforts in developing the priority list but acknowledges the water users' and Colorado's concerns. Millsap motioned to approve prioritization of the first seven diversions, which are in the San Juan River. Effati suggested the discussion be tabled because the agenda item does not require a decision point. Further discussion and approval of the BC's diversion prioritization will occur at a future CC meeting.

Fiscal year 2022 draft Annual Work Plan (AWP) approval (vote) – Mata

Prior to the meeting Mata sent the latest draft FY2022 AWP for CC review. This version of the AWP included substantial funding from the Four Corners Power Plant NFWF account. Mata described the SOW development and BC review process. The PO and BC prioritized SOWs that addressed recruitment bottlenecks for listed species. Mata worked with PIs to streamline budgets and identify opportunities for cost savings. Due to the failure of the Phase III wetland, the scope to monitor that site in 2022 was removed. The Remote Biologist SOW was similarly modified. Mata noted that SOW-12 for PIT tags and equipment now includes capital funding for a PIT tag antenna installation near Slickhorn Canyon. Installation of an antenna at this site was approved in FY2021 but funding wasn't allocated until the current AWP. The Peer Review SOW was reduced because Mel Warren is the only current Peer Reviewer for the SJRIP. Also, the I&E SOW was updated to reflect explicit objectives and increased costs.

Pitts said that he couldn't determine why SOW-43 to stock razorback sucker in Lake Powell was included in the AWP. McKinstry explained that this work is trying to assess recruitment in Lake Powell. In FY2022, fish ~200 mm TL will be stocked to see if they recruit to the adult life stage. In future years, smaller fish would be stocked to determine what size the bottleneck to recruitment is occurring in Lake Powell. Monitoring to assess recruitment of these stocked fish is being carried out by other work in Lake Powell that's funded outside of the SJRIP. All fish throughout the Colorado River Basin count for recovery so determining if recruitment can occur in Lake Powell would be important information. To date, the only documented consistent razorback sucker recruitment of wild

fish occurs in Lake Mead. The fish stocked for this effort in Lake Powell are supplemental fish from Horsethief Canyon that are provided at no additional cost to the SJRIP.

La asked about questions on SOW-47 (Using nonnative vegetation to enhance in-stream habitat for native fishes) that were brought up by Colorado's BC representative. These concerns were satisfactorily addressed in the PIs' response to comments. La also asked about the removal of SOW-19b (Monitoring age-1 razorback sucker) and Mata explained there wasn't sufficient funding to include it along with the other new SOWs. The new SOWs were a higher priority compared to SOW-19b. Furthermore, other SOWs included in the AWP would have the opportunity to fulfill the objectives of SOW-19b (in particular, SOW-19a Demographic Monitoring). Like all AWP, unfunded projects can be considered in future years.

Francis expressed concern about the recent focus on research compared to management. McKinstry explained that the upcoming nonnative fish workshop will try to address the future of nonnative fish management in the San Juan River. It's important for management efforts to include an evaluation component so they can be modified as appropriate. All the SJRIP's research projects seek to identify and ameliorate outstanding management issues in the San Juan River Basin. The BC has been struggling with new ideas for management actions but they recognize that management actions need some type of evaluation to determine what does and what doesn't work to promote recovery.

Pitts asked if razorback sucker hybridization was being addressed. Hybridization is being assessed from age-1 suckers collected in 2021, in on-going work Nb work (SOW-2), and other new SOWs. Razorback sucker hybrids do not contribute toward species recovery. Pitts motion to approve the FY2022 AWP, Christianson seconded, and the AWP was approved without opposition.

Phase III update – Mata

Mata reported that the Phase III off-channel wetland was damaged on 8 June 2021 due to the increased flows in the San Juan River. The concrete inlet and outlet structures failed so the wetland is connected to the secondary channel and mainstem San Juan River. Previous monitoring indicated the site was entraining larval razorback sucker (one of its major objectives). Continued monitoring will determine wetland use by the listed fishes. The BC recommended armoring the inlet with existing materials and having no control at the inlet or outlet so the wetland functions at a secondary channel wetland. This amount of work will incur no further cost to the SJRIP. The BC will continue to discuss options for moving ahead with Phase III at its 30 November – 2 December meeting.

Hogback update – McKinstry/Christianson

The estimate from Keller-Bliesner of \$1.2M to rehabilitate the Hogback pumps so they wouldn't interfere with PIT tag antennas at the facility is out of date and the new cost estimate from Navajo Nation is ~\$3M. Bob Norman has substantial experience at Hogback and is working to come up with less expensive solutions. Christianson will have discussions with Navajo Nation to ensure any potential solutions address their needs. Mata suggested that there may be funding opportunities related to the Gold King Mine spill.

Capital project fund request (vote) – Mata/Christianson

The installation of the PIT tag antenna near Slickhorn Canyon was covered in SOW-12 with the approval of the FY2022 AWP. Mata will update the FY2022 AWP to reflect the use of FY2021 capital

funds to cover the purchase of necessary equipment for this project. But there was an increase from \$9K to \$16K to cover the installation. The antenna will be anchored in cobble so it should stay in place during high flow events. All data collected by the antenna will be uploaded to STReaMS. Pitts motioned to approve additional funding, Francis seconded, there was no opposition, and additional funding for this antenna installation was approved.

The cost of the fish processing facility at NAPI has increased from the CC's previously approved funding of ~\$175K to an estimate of \$214,724. The shortfall of ~\$40K is due to cost increases related to COVID. All other infrastructure improvements at NAPI have been completed. The fish processing facility can be built before this year's harvest at NAPI. McKinstry suggested using NFWF funds to cover this increased cost to ensure the project can be completed prior to the upcoming NAPI harvest. Pitts motioned to approve this additional funding with NFWF, Francis seconded, no opposition, and NFWF funding is approved to cover this cost increase.

Long Range Plan Appendix A clarifications (vote) – Gilbert

Gilbert reported on the PO's effort to clean up Appendix A from the Long Range Plan (LRP) to decrease duplication and verbosity. Gilbert received comments from Zeigler, Miller, and Keith and kept those comments in Track Changes for CC review. The PO made substantial edits mostly by lumping tasks but didn't change the substance or content of the tasks. Tasks were made more general by eliminating details that would be covered in SOWs. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure tasks were consistent with the Service's recommendations in the Sufficient Progress report. Pitts suggested that end dates be updated to some realistic timeframe but the PO kept end dates as 2023 given the lack of an authorization post-2023. Mata suggested that an estimated end date that exceeded 20023 could be entered. Pitts suggested development of language to guide SOW approval based on tasks in the LRP. Pitts motioned to approve Appendix A with his suggested additions, Francis seconded, no CC opposition, and LRP Appendix A is approved.

Update post-2023 – Garrison

Garrison reported on the post-2023 funding group's effort to break down relevant topics into smaller pieces to develop draft language for reauthorization. The group has agreed to a 15-year term for reauthorization. Identifying program efficiencies to save time, money, and increase coordination are a work in progress. Agreement for capital project funding is on the agenda for an upcoming post-2023 meeting. State and private-public funding are on the table for capital funding. All post-2023 recommendations will receive review from the SJRIP's CC. The post-2023 group continues to work to identify annual funding sources and level that will make up the shortfall in hydropower funding. The post-2023 group is simultaneously working on the Report to Congress and draft legislation

Schedule next meeting – Hill

The CC typically doesn't have another scheduled meeting until May 2022 but there are several topics that will need attention prior to then. Cunningham suggested setting up doodle polls for two meetings. Topics for a September meeting include a DROA update, NPS participation in the SJRIP letter, Section 7 Principles path forward, and the BC's diversion prioritization recommendation. A follow up DROA update would be scheduled for November.

**ACTIONS ITEMS FROM 27 July 2021
COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

1. CC will write a memo to the Service requesting the Service's opinion of the contribution of Lake Powell in recovery.
2. Mata will distribute the Section 7 Principles draft and give the CC 4-weeks to review and comment.
3. The PO will update the Long-Range Plan to reflect the updated and approved Appendix A.
4. The Service will make an assessment on using the Navajo Gallup Depletion Guarantee in Hydrology Modelling for future section 7 consultations and coordinate with Regional Office.
5. Mata will draft a letter for invite NPS as a recovery partner for the CC consideration.
6. Mata will send out the CC Roster for updates and give 2-weeks for updates.
7. The PO will update the FY22 AWP to reflect where FY21 funds are being used for capital projects.
8. The PO will send out two doodle polls for CC meetings in September and November. Among the agenda items for these meetings will be updates on the planned DROA releases from Navajo Reservoir.