



BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
July 6, 2021 – Virtual Meeting
Summary

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE (BC) MEMBERS:

Adam Barkalow, Acting Chair
Harry Crockett
Ryan Besser
Stephen Davenport
Vince Lamarra
Colin Larrick
Jacob Mazzone
Mark McKinstry
William Miller
Carrie Padgett
Benjamin Schleicher
Brian Westfall

REPRESENTING:

State of New Mexico
State of Colorado
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Navajo Nation
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Water Development Interests
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Susan Millsap
Steve Whiteman
Michelle Garrison
Jojo La
Lee Trayhnum

The Nature Conservancy
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
State of Colorado
State of Colorado
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

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

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Christina Noftsker, CC alternate
Dan Lamarra, BC alternate
David Speas, BC alternate
Jill Wick, BC alternate
Ben Zimmerman, BC alternate
Dan Lamarra, BC alternate
Tracy Diver, BC alternate
Ron Bliesner, BC alternate
Debra Hill
Nathan Franssen

State of New Mexico
Navajo Nation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Navajo Nation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Shawn S. Sartorius	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Nate Caswell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Weston Furr	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steven Mussmann	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Melody Saltzgiver	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tildon Jones	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Manual Ulibarri	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wade Wilson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Mussmann	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Diego Araujo	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Katie Creighton	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Brian Hines	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Alyssa Richmond	San Juan SWCD
Jeff Blackburn	City of Aztec
Casey Pennock	Utah State University
Kim Yazzie	Navajo Nation
Jerrold Bowman	Navajo Nation
Steven Platania	American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Stephani Clark Barkalow	American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Michael Farrington	American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Jeff Arnold	National Park Service
Melissa Trammel	National Park Service
Cameron Corley	Arizona Public Service
Matt Owens	Public Service of New Mexico
Jamie Shockey	City of Farmington
Aaron Chavez	San Juan Water Commission
Billy Collins	Aquatic Consultants Inc.
Paul Cassidy	Aquatic Consultants Inc.

Introductions and changes to agenda

Barkalow allowed attendees to introduce themselves. Mata asked to make an announcement prior to the meeting commencing. Mata announced that the Razorback Sucker proposed rule to downlist from endangered to threatened will be published in the Federal Register tomorrow (July 7, 2021) and will be open for a 60-day comment period.

Approve draft summary from 4 May 2021 BC meeting review Action Item list

Minor comments such as typo-graphical errors and inclusion of dates were received from Keith Gido, Miller, and Zeigler were incorporated. Miller motioned to approve the meeting summary. It was second by Millsap with no objections. The May 4, 2021 BC meeting summary will be finalized and published the website.

Action items

1. Blaine Snyder will send a write up of their request to Durst to distributed to the SJRIP – completed 5 May 2021
2. PO will email details regarding Navajo Nation and Tetra Tech contaminant study – completed 5 May 2021
3. Principle investigators will respond to SOW by 4 June 2021 – completed

4. ASIR will work with Mussmann to analyze fish for hybridization – Mussman has everything they need besides a few outstanding samples from the museum to proceed with this work in the future.
5. BC will provide review/comment of the draft waterfall trap and transport to Gilbert by 1 June 2021. Comments were received and incorporated into a final draft that was emailed out to the Coordination Committee.
6. PO will email the BC seeking input on Appendix A of the Long-Range Plan. Comments were received and incorporated into a final draft for the Coordination Committee's consideration.

FWS Legacy R2 nomination of Tracy Diver as BC alternate (vote) – PO

Barkalow informed the BC that they all should have received Tracy Diver's CV and nomination letter. Diver briefly introduced herself to the BC. Many BC members gave positive accolades of Diver becoming part of the BC. Mazzone motioned to approve Diver as a BC member. It was second by Westfall and with no objections was approved by the BC. The PO will update the roster to include Diver as FWS Legacy Region 2 BC Alternate.

What to do about Phase III? – PO and BC discussion

Mata provided an overview of Phase III, recalling that Phase III was constructed in November of 2020 and it became operational for the month of May by keeping the inlet structure open to capture larval Razorback Sucker. In early June, the remote biologist Diego Araujo noticed structural damage at the outlet and continued to inspect the Phase III site to learn that the inlet structure was also damaged. Araujo contacted Davenport who then informed the Program Office of the situation. On June 7, 2021, Araujo, Durst, Collins, and Bowman visited the site to assess the damage and determine potential remediation options.

Cassidy and Collins from ACI explained what they believed happened at Phase III. The secondary channel rose about 4ft at the outlet, and the sugary sand began to give way and once the outlet blew out the inlet structure began to fail due to headcutting. This was caused due to the dam not being high enough and we should have considered at what level of flow this structure should sustain. ACI built the site as described in the conceptual design and for the approved amount of funds for the project. In addition, based on their experience they made a design change by switching out preformed concrete slabs based on onsite conditions being heavily saturated making it impossible to transport preformed slabs to the site in one piece. So, with the approval by Navajo Nation, ACI used interlocking concrete blocks. Some BC members expressed their disappointment of the Phase III, many biology members agreed that this project required more funding above and beyond the original budget. In the future, any structure built should be to a specific design to handle a specific flow. Lamarra suggested that we should fix Phase III to continue monitoring and learn how Phase III functions. The proof of concept was proven as it was capturing larval, however, we would have preferred to evaluate for multiple years. Farrington reported during their first trip at Phase III which was functioning properly, five Razorback Sucker, six Bluehead Sucker, 29 Flannelmouth Sucker, and six Catostomidae. Farrington said that Catostomidae collections were concerning because they were developmentally more similar to Razorback Sucker, but pigment patterns of Flannelmouth Sucker.

The conversation transitioned to what are the next steps for Phase III by presenting several options for discussion.

Phase 3 path forward options:

1. Do nothing – let the river take care of it. (However, this isn't an option for Navajo Nation)

2. Clean up and remove existing inlet and outlet structures
3. Clean up and remove existing inlet and outlet structure, however, armor the inlet with cobble
4. Clean up and remove existing inlet and outlet structure, however, armor the inlet with cobble and add additional low velocity habitat in wetland and outlet channel.
5. Rebuild facility to withstand normal range of flows in the San Juan River.

However, Option 1 is not preferred by Navajo Nation. Navajo Nation's preference is that construction material be removed if Phase III is not fixed or reconfigured. Many BC members agreed that cleanup should be our priority. Option 3 was discussed briefly, and some felt it would be a fool's errand to try to rebuild and armor given that we don't know when and where the structure will fail. Mata mentioned that Option 4 could potentially salvage Phase III by enhancing the wetland to create more backwater habitat for threatened and endangered species. Gilbert questioned whether we should be concerned with the outlet berming off and excavate the area further. Miller mentioned that is a natural process with the San Juan River where most secondaries get bermed off. Schleicher suggested that we take a step back and that we can't make a decision right now and the BC should consider all of the options. Barkalow suggested that Mata summarize the options discussed today for the BC consideration and have a follow-up meeting in two weeks to determine the best path forward.

Discuss/recommend draft FY2022 Annual Work Plan – BC and PO

Mata provided an overview of the changes in the final draft of the FY2022 Annual Work Plan. All submitted SOWs for FY2022 were included except for one, SOW 19b, "Documenting the occurrence, spatial distribution, and incidence of introgression in wild age-1 Razorback Sucker in the San Juan River 2022". However, SOW 19b will be open to discussion today. The inclusion of all the SOWs in the proposed AWP would not be possible, if it were not for a number of PIs finding savings within their SOWs. Unfortunately, that was still not enough to include SOW 19b. Another major change to the AWP included an increase in capital funds for SOW 12 SJRIP PIT tags and equipment for the purchase of wagon wheels and antenna equipment. Note that the PIT tag antenna equipment being proposed for Slickhorn was approved in the FY2021 AWP, however, funds were not available at the time.

Mata opened the floor to the BC for further discussion on the changes made or any other concerns for the FY2022 AWP. Schleicher asked if he could hear more about why SOW 19b was not included. Mata responded funds were not available to fund SOW 19b and there were other higher priority SOWs that would help answer questions related to recruitment bottlenecks. In addition, based on the BC comments on this SOW it seemed reasonable that some of the objectives for SOW 19b could be captured in SOW 19a "Demographic Monitoring of Colorado Pikeminnow and Razorback Sucker". Miller stated he was in support of the original proposal in May but changed his mind during the May meeting based on some the reason Mata just mentioned. Schleicher stated that the Spring Razorback Sucker effort is capturing more Razorback Sucker than demographic monitoring in the Fall and that survival estimates calculated after winter are confounded by other summer influences such as predation. However, Durst reminded the committee, the main purposes of SOW 19a is to capture all size classes and develop age-specific survival rates. In addition, Gilbert stated that the SOW 19b questions have been answered. Schleicher mentioned that is correct, but now we have another reason to continue this effort, which is to determine why we are not seeing pure Razorback Sucker. Some BC were in support of this SOW 19b if funds were available, however they did not want to ask other PIs to scrub and sacrifice the quality of other higher priority SOWs. Both Miller and Barkalow moved the conversation and stated that the original intent of 19b SOW has been fulfilled and this should be considered in the future with other objectives.

Next Mata asked the BC how we should proceed with SOW 44 “Physical and Biological Monitoring and Evaluation of Phase III Habitat Restoration: A Constructed Floodplain Wetland Refugium” given the current events. Do we continue monitoring Phase III? Barkalow stated small-bodied monitoring would work in this area, no extra effort would be needed other than time and effort. Farrington also stated that larval sampling could sample this habitat within the current budget as well. Miller suggested that we continue to take physical measurements to evaluate the longevity of Phase III. Davenport stated the remote biologist would be able to provide physical measurements. Lamara suggested that water level (pressure) sensors be installed. The sensors should be installed in an L-shape distilling well and the time-interval for data should be set at 15 minutes and we would only need to download twice a year. Based on the conversation from the BC, the PO will remove the SOW 44 from the FY22 AWP. However, the PO will coordinate with all PIs involved with SOW 44 in FY21 to produce a final report which will include September sampling effort at Phase III.

Miller provided one last recommendation to distinguish SOW 9 and 10 “Colorado Pikeminnow Production and Razorback Sucker Rearing at Southwestern ARRC”, since they have the same title to highlight which SOW is for Colorado Pikeminnow or Razorback Sucker.

The PO will update the FY2022 AWP to remove SOW 44 and highlight SOW 9 and 10 for each species. Crockett motion to recommend FY2022 AWP and Miller second, no objections.

Discuss diversion prioritization document and BC recommendation to send to CC – Durst, Franssen, Gilbert, Mazzone, Miller, and Zeigler

Gilbert stated the purpose of the diversion prioritization as this was an outstanding assignment tasked by the Coordination Committee as well as stemming from post-2023 planning efforts in identifying capital projects. This document was building upon TNC and ASIR diversion study report, which did not prioritize any diversion structure as the CC recommended that prioritization should come from the BC. The prioritization document explains the purpose, approach to prioritizing and implementing fish passage and entrainment projects. There was a tiered approach of evaluating 37 structures identified that used an evaluation criterion that focused on spatial and suitable habitat components and second a structural component of each structure to assess the magnitude of threat pertaining to fish passage and entrainment. Based on this tiered approach the number of diversion structure for further consideration changed from 37 to 26 structures. Based on feedback received from Tom Wesche prior to his retirement, the BC also included a recommended path forward to implement evaluation and potential construction of projects in the future. The prioritization document and in particular Table 3 of the document, we are seeking the BC recommendation to seek CC approval of this guidance document. In addition, Miller added clarification that the PO should consider other projects as they come up as it may be advantageous. Padgett mentioned, while the task was to prioritize diversions for potential modification, there may be opportunities for the Program to partner with the diversion owners regardless of their prioritization. These opportunities will allow the Program to take advantage of planned work and incorporate fish passage or entrainment protection. Mazzone stated the BC subgroup spent significant time on this document, and we should be able to piggyback on some project with willing partners when applicable

Westfall wanted to be on the record that we need to be aware that this document does not include cost and we should consider keeping cost and O&M in mind when developing future projects. Miller stated that this document gives us an approach to follow and if there is a need the scoping efforts will identify associated cost. But we will need to start thinking about what projects we need to focus on in

the future. Miller believes that this document provides the groundwork. Westfall stated that it was not clear that this was a guidance document versus a document that states that we will implement these projects as prioritized. Miller stated that it will need be clear to the CC that this is guidance. McKinstry recommended that we are either data poor or rich for some of these sites and we may need revisit this prioritization once we have more data.

Pagett asked how will this be put in place (data first or see if there are interested parties)? Gilbert stated that this will be dependent on if we know the owners and if we have a lot of data, and if it is high on the priority list. Miller mentioned that some of this may occur simultaneously. Zimmerman is in the process of conducting entrainment studies on SUIT and his experience working with ditch owners have been quite open to place in wagon wheels. However, he does hear ditch owners asking about funding for projects and O&M.

McKinstry applauded the BC subgroup and PO in developing a prioritization document. The BC recommended finalizing the diversion prioritization document by updating with the suggested language provided by Padgett “While the task was to prioritize diversions for potential modification, there may be opportunities for the Program to partner with the diversion owners regardless of their prioritization” and share with CC.

City of Aztec Animas Park Bank Stabilization and Habitat Improvement on the Animas at Riverside and Rio de Animas Park – Richmond and Blackburn

Jeff Blackburn representing the City of Aztec and Alyssa Richmond from San Juan Watershed Group provided a presentation on the Animas River habitat enhancement and bank stabilization project. There are two areas along the Animas River that need some attention. The first area is at Riverside Park, where a concrete foot path along the river is imperiled in several locations by the rapidly eroding river-right bank, part of which is composed of failing stacked rock and rock gabions. A mid-channel bar opposite this bank continues to enlarge due to an overly wide and shallow channel. This ongoing problem is causing the channel to migrate northward. The metal, concrete, and debris in this bank is also a river user hazard. Mature cottonwoods along this project component are also at risk due to the ongoing erosion. Riparian vegetation is almost completely absent along this bank. The goal is to protect frequently used park infrastructure by replacing failing and hazardous bank materials with geomorphically-appropriate flow redirecting rock structures, bank benching (for river-edge accessibility, safety, and vegetation establishment), enhance in-stream fish habitat, improve water quality, and remove unwanted invasive trees.

The second site is at Rio de Animas Park the majority of the downstream-most 200 feet of the river-left bank is composed of concrete and metal, which is failing and contributing debris to the river. The metal, concrete, and debris in this bank is also a river user hazard. Vegetation along this bank is sparse and is composed of a mixture of mature cottonwood and Russian olive. The goal is to provide a safe and stable put-in site for floaters, rafters, kayakers, and fishermen by removing hazardous debris while establishing more native vegetation along the river-left bank and installing J-hook structure to add riverine habitat and further allowing successful river access, all of which improves accessibility. The City of Aztec wants to create safe habitat for all both the park users and the critters. McKinstry asked if Kello-Blancett diversion structure is going to be modified as part of this project. Blackburn said at this time no, however, we hope that in the future that could be one of our next projects. However, currently the water user for the diversion structure is concerned about how any improvements could impact the amount of water they receive. McKinstry stated that if and when Kello- Blancett is proposed to be renovated that maybe the SJRIP could provide some input as it

relates to passage, especially, since this location is next in line from Ranchman's Terrell. Blackburn and Richmond that could potentially be a project 5 years from now. Gilbert asked of the City of Aztec had any overall plans for work along the Animas River that could be shared with the SJRIP. Blackburn mentioned that a mission/vision is in the works now and as soon as that documentation is available, it will be shared with us.

Status of FY2021 funding

McKinstry stated that all FY2021 funds should be allocated. McKinstry then wanted to re-iterate that FY2021 capital funds will be used to purchase PIT tag antenna equipment to be placed at Slickhorn and this install was approved in FY2021, but at that time these funds were not available. In addition, Slickhorn site was selected based on data collections from Hines. McKinstry and Hines believe that there may be a spawning bar for Razorback Sucker at this location. Hines informed the BC that their office was tasked to assist Kansas State University with their Razorback Sucker work in 2020-2021. One of our tasks was to place submersible antennas throughout the Sand Island to Clay Hills section of the San Juan River. Two antennas were placed down near Slickhorn Canyon with approximately 1360 total detection with over 1300 detections from Razorback sucker with 137 and 159 unique detections of Razorback sucker at either antenna. The proposed PIT tag antenna will be installed in the Fall.

Razorback sucker source-site stocking design – Durst

Durst reported on the results of the Razorback Sucker source-site stocking design. About 32,000 total fish were evenly split among the two sources (Horsethief and NAPI) and four stocking locations (Bloomfield, Animas River, PNM and Montezuma Creek) over 2014-2019. Reencounters of stocked fish were mostly downstream of stocking locations and included in-hand captures and remote detections from 2015-2020. Cormack-Jolly-Seber models in Program MARK were used to evaluate apparent survival and detection probability.

Variation in survival for the first overwinter after stocking was driven by year, stocking site, and size of fish at stocking. Fish stocked at the Animas River and Bloomfield sites had 15-20% lower first overwinter survival across all years compared to fish stocked at PNM and Montezuma Creek. If fish stocked at the upstream sites are not resampled because they move from the study area or because of limited sampling effort, those survival estimates could be biased low. First overwinter survival also increased for fish stocked at larger sizes. Fish stocked at 400-450 mm TL had 10-15% higher first overwinter survival across all stocking sites compared to fish stocked at the average size (355 mm TL). For post-first overwinter after stocking variation in survival was driven by year and stocking source. Fish stocked from Horsethief had about 20% higher post-first overwinter survival across all years compared to fish stocked from NAPI. Variation in detection probability for the first overwinter after stocking was driven by year, stocking site, and size at stocking; for post-first overwinter periods detection probability only varied by year.

Durst suggested shifting the Animas River and Bloomfield stocking sites downstream to Hogback and Shiprock but upstream passage would need to be improved to give these fish at least seasonal access to upstream habitats. However, given the limited sampling that occurs in those upstream reaches, the BC wasn't confident that the lower first overwinter survival wasn't biased. Additionally, Razorback Sucker recaptured upstream of PNM are the result of stockings in those upstream locations so continued stocking at these sites could be important to maintain fish year-round in those reaches. The group recommended maintaining Razorback Sucker stocking locations at the Animas River and Bloomfield sites but conducting additional monitoring in those upstream reaches to assess

if the lower apparent survival could be related to the limited sampling that has occurred there in the past. Also, first overwinter survival after stocking can be maximized by stocking larger fish but growing larger fish in hatcheries and grow-out facilities would increase costs. It's unclear what other management actions could result in stocking larger fish. The group discussed the higher apparent post-first overwinter survival for fish stocked from Horsethief compared to NAPI. These fish are from different broodstocks so there could be a genetic component. While fish from these two sources are stocked at similar sizes, fish from Horsethief are typically age-1 but NAPI fish are age-2.

Colorado Pikeminnow stocking in McElmo Creek – Franssen

Franssen provided an update on Colorado Pikeminnow stocking efforts in McElmo Creek. McElmo Creek was chosen as a stocking location given that there are antennas located 20 miles downstream of the stocking location. There have been three separate stockings event occurring in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Both 2019 and 2020 were Colorado Pikeminnow that were pellet and prey-trained and in 2021 these Colorado Pikeminnow were excess fish. The November 26, 2019 stocking effort, 1,229 Colorado Pikeminnow were stocked, a big flow event occurred within the first few weeks of stocking. Only 16 individuals were detected from pit tag antenna, where the first detection occurred 3-days post stocking and all detections occurred within 41 days of stocking. The October 21, 2020 stocking effort, 2,621 Colorado Pikeminnow were stocked, and 92 individuals have been detected, first detection occurred 5 days after post stocking and all detections occurred within 206 days. In addition, 2 individuals have been detected in two separate events below Piute waterfall. On March 30, 2021, 631 excess Colorado Pikeminnow were stocked and the first detection occurred the first day of stocking and there were 65 days of detection post stocking. A total of 308 individuals have been detected. The take home message is that most stocked fish in McElmo Creek left relatively soon after stocking, some fish retained and left much later over 200 days.

Franssen opened the floor to see if the BC had any other ideas for stocking excess age-1 Colorado Pikeminnow in the future as this was a question brought up in BC emails. McKinstry stated that he believes that McElmo is still a good stocking location and doesn't have any concern and we need more time to evaluate these stocked fish in McElmo Creek. Mazzone also agreed that McElmo Creek is a good location for a soft release. No suggestions were provided.

There was one outstanding discussion point of where to stock Colorado Pikeminnow in the Fall. Barkalow suggested that the PO work with SNARRC, NMFWCO and Navajo Nation to determine the best location and provide an update to the BC.

Post-2023 update – Garrison

The post-2023 group has been meeting regularly to figure out next steps with post-2023 such as re-authorization duration, program efficiencies, and levels for annual and capital funding. The post-2023 funding have agreed upon a 15-year re-authorization. Several folks have provided some efficiency examples for consideration and are requesting the BC to help identify field level efficiencies. For example, how could the UCRIP and SJRIP coordinate better and how to proceed further? We are currently drafting efficiency language that the Program will continue to discuss at the appropriate level. Program office staffing for example will be a decision at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's discretion.

Wrap up Mata/all participants

Mata reviewed the action items (listed below).

Mata asked if there was interest for in-person meeting for the Nov/Dec Biology Committee meeting. A few BC mentioned depending on the status of Covid-19 that they could be faced with travel restrictions. In addition, Platania remind the BC that ASIR will be assisting with broodstock collections in the Fall.

Action Item list:

1. Finalize 4 May 2021 BC Meeting Summary and post to the website.
2. Update the BC roster to include Tracy Diver as the Biology Committee alternate for USFWS Legacy Region 2.
3. Mata will summarize and email the Phase III options for a path forward.
4. PO will send out a doodle poll to have a dedicated conversation on Phase III, Post-2023 and stocking location.
5. PO will finalize the diversion prioritization document and seek CC approval.
6. PO will work with SNARRC, NMFWCO and Navajo Nation to determine the best stocking location and provide an update to the BC.
7. PO will send out a doodle poll to schedule the Nov/Dec Biology Committee Meeting



BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
26 July 2021 – Virtual Meeting
Summary

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE (BC) MEMBERS:

Harry Crockett
Stephen Davenport
AJ Keith
Vince Lamarra
Colin Larrick
Jacob Mazzone
Mark McKinstry
William Miller
Carrie Padgett
Benjamin Schleicher
Ronald Bliesner, alternate
Matthew Zeigler (Chair)

REPRESENTING:

State of Colorado
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Conservation Interests
Navajo Nation
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Water Development Interests
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
State of New Mexico

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Ryan Christianson U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Eliza Gilbert, Asst. Program Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
James Sykes, Administrator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Colleen Cunningham, CC alternate State of New Mexico
Debra Hill, CC alternate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dan Lamarra, BC alternate Navajo Nation
Adam Barkalow, BC alternate New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Jill Wick, BC alternate New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Ben Zimmerman, BC alternate Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Tracy Diver, BC alternate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Susan Behery U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Nathan Franssen U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Diego Araujo U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Weston Furr U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steven Mussmann U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Melody Saltzgeber U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Manual Ulibarri U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Keith Gido Kansas State University
Jeff Cole Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife

Introductions and changes to agenda

No one requested changes to agenda.

Discuss paths forward with Phase III – BC and PO

At the last BC meeting, discussion centered on how and why the inlet and outlet structures failed after increased river flows. This agenda item was organized to decide on what should be done and the BC developed and discussed the six options listed below:

1. Do nothing and let the river take care of the debris but this was not an option for the Navajo Nation.
2. Clean up and remove existing inlet/outlet structures.
3. Clean up and remove existing inlet/outlet structure and armor the inlet with cobble.
4. In the short-term, clean up and remove existing inlet/ outlet structure, armor the inlet with cobble, and add additional low velocity habitat in wetland and outlet channel. Armoring would include re-use of existing concrete blocks, additional riprap, and some calculations would be required to determine if the inlet opening should be twice its current size.

For the long-term, continue to have monitoring of this site to document its functionality and make those decisions at the next BC meeting in December.

4. Rebuild facility to withstand normal range of flows in the San Juan River.
6. Berm it off at the top, remove existing infrastructure and open the bottom to preserve the area for future re-evaluation. Develop several options for this site?

Many BC participants agreed that the need for larval Razorback Sucker habitat continued to exist in the San Juan River, they did not want to walk away from a project that had taken so much effort to implement, and initial larval entrainment suggested the concept could be successful. BC members voiced concern that more thought and decision points should have been applied to the engineering aspect of the project and in the future wanted experts in river restoration to participate in developing the path forward. Cole indicated that the Navajo Nation still had \$150,000 to expended on this project. Ultimately, BC members voiced support for option #4 and Cole said he would work with the contractors to implement the option.

Discuss stocking location options for Colorado Pikeminnow and Razorback Sucker – PO and BC

To facilitate discussion on Colorado Pikeminnow stocking, Durst provided the PO's recommendation, which was to stock a third of the fish at each of three sites: McElmo Creek, San Juan River at Mosquito Point, and San Juan River at Hogback. These locations were suggested because fish can be stocked without placing them directly into the river's current, they are below areas that risk entrainment, and of sufficient distance from the Piute Farm waterfall. Schleicher suggested the eddy at Stump Camp, which is a few hundred meters above Phase II. Ulibarri said they could stock the fish wherever the SJRIP wanted if scouting was done to make sure the stocking trucks could access the area and there was a place to temper fish. Araujo was asked to scout the different

locations and report back to Davenport and Durst. McKinstry was asked to speak to Marlin Sagboy who operates Hogback to see about stocking in the inlet canal over a three-year period. There was concern about stocking the Hogback inlet canal because of entrainment into the irrigation canal and there was a preference to stock some fish above Phase II. Otherwise, there was no opposition to the suggested stocking locations. Durst will report back to the BC via email after some investigations to make the final decision.

To facilitate the discussion on stocking Razorback Sucker, Durst provided the PO's recommendation, which was to shift stocking to either Hogback or Shiprock because the source-site analysis suggested fish stocked at the Animas and Bloomfield had low apparent survival compared to PNM and Montezuma Creek. To assess whether the source-site results could be an artifact of low fish sampling in the upper areas of the San Juan and the Animas rivers, Durst recommended installing passive integrated tag wagon wheel antenna near these upper stocking sites. Other suggestions included splitting fish between PNM and Montezuma Creek or keeping one upstream site and splitting the stocking into thirds. After discussion, the BC decided not to abandon stocking the upstream sites because there has been a lot of effort expended to increase range, it was thought to be risky given the potential data issues, and if there were issues with data or survival then these should be investigated.

Post-2023 update and efficiencies – Mata

Mata sent the “field efficiencies” section of the post-2023 Recovery Program Efficiencies table to the BC. Mata said that SJRIP partners asked the BC to find field level efficiencies and for a subset of the BC to do this by analyzing the scopes of work in the most current annual work plan. The post-2023 group did not define “efficiencies” because they wanted the concept to stay broad. However, there were questions as to why so much of the budget goes to monitoring and research, how to save funds, could systematic redundancies be removed to save time, could reporting be reduced, were there better processes, etc.? The request from the post-2023 group is to have the analysis done in the next six months. Mata will organize volunteers from the offices with current scopes of work (i.e., the two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Field Offices, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Utah Department of Natural Resources and possible American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers) and Mazzone to work on this request.

Drought Response Operations Agreement – Mata

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) Lake Powell 24-month study concluded that the Drought Response Operations Agreement will need to be implemented this year. This means 20 kaf will be released from Navajo Reservoir in addition to those already scheduled. The 20 kaf release is scheduled to occur after the irrigation season, between November and December, and is currently designed to increase flows by about 100 cfs per day over the two-month period. However, BOR asked the SJRIP if there was a different way the 20 kaf release could occur that would benefit the endangered fish. Lamarra suggested the releases be increased to 1,000-1,500 cfs over a shorter period to flush sediment from secondary channels. Concern was voiced that this would also flush fish but after discussion and email input, the BC recommend increased flows over shorter duration.

Action Items

1. Cole will work with the contractors to implement option #4 for Phase II and the December BC meeting will include discussion on further project action.
2. For stocking Colorado Pikeminnow, McKinstry will contact Sagboy, Araujo will scope out the sites and Durst report back to the BC.
3. Mata will organize a group to identify “field efficiencies”.
4. Mata will communicate the BC’s recommendation on release of the additional 20 kaf to BOR.