



# Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Summary Dated: March 29, 2016

CR/FY-14 UCRRIC  
Mail Stop 65115

Memorandum

To: Implementation Committee  
Management Committee, Consultants, and Interested Parties  
Meeting Attendees

From: Director, Upper Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program

Subject: Final October 1, 2015, Recovery Implementation Committee Webinar Summary

Attached are the final action and assignment summary and the general summary from the October 1, 2015, Implementation Committee webinar.

Attachment

Summary  
Recovery Implementation Committee Webinar – October 1, 2015  
*(The Committee's typical annual in-person meeting was changed to webinar due to a risk of  
Federal government shutdown.)*

**ACTIONS:**

1. Approved March 5, 2015 conference call summary with minor revisions.
2. Ratified the 2016-2017 Work Plan.
3. Scheduled next Implementation Committee webinar for March 29, 2016, from 1 to 4 p.m. and the next meeting on September 19, 2016, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in Denver near DIA.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Michelle Garrison will ask if communication from Utah's Governor to Colorado's Governor might be helpful in requesting Colorado participation in the 2015 DC briefing trip.
2. Tom Pitts will submit his comments on the Colorado pikeminnow draft recovery plan.
3. Leslie James will see what the MSCP might have in terms of a methodical outlining of steps, timeline, and costs.
4. Tom Chart will discuss ES staffing for Colorado River consultation and related work with ES project leaders this coming November and report back to the program.
5. Tom Chart will convene a conference call of Tom Pitts, Henry Maddux, Bart Miller, Steve Wolff, Seth Willey, Lynn Jeka or Shane Capron, and Melanie Fischer to draw the draw necessary information out of the draft recovery plans in advance of their completion and augment that as needed to outline a clear path to recovery.

**PARTICIPANTS:** See Attachment 1

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

**CONVENE: 10:30 a.m.**

1. Introductions, modify/review agenda – Noreen Walsh welcomed everyone and expressed her regrets that the Committee couldn't meet in person this time. Noreen thanked the Colorado Water Conservation Board for using the Species Conservation Trust Fund both to lease Ruedi Reservoir water from the Ute Water District and to fund a portion of the spillway net to be installed at Elkhead to help control nonnative fish. Noreen also thanked the States for their continued efforts to control nonnative fish, communicate this important message to the public, and continue to develop compatible sportfisheries. The agenda was revised (as shown here) to incorporate further discussion of Tom Pitts' 'Road Map to Recovery' memo, dated March 3, 2015, and the e-mail he sent to the Implementation Committee on this topic on September 28.
2. Approve March 5, 2015 meeting summary – The draft summary was posted to the fws-coloriver listserver on March 10, 2015. Angela Kantola said Tom Pitts asked to have language added to item

#12 to define “LTEMP” (the Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan). Brent provided a correction to agenda item #8. The Committee approved the revised March 5, 2015 meeting summary. The Program Director’s Office (PDO) will post this to the listserver and Program website (*done*).

3. Program Director’s report – Tom Chart gave an overview of Program accomplishments, issues, and future direction by recovery element (see PDF of PowerPoint presentation included in email with the draft meeting summary).

Tom reviewed recovery activities and the species and life stages they target. As mentioned in the Service’s pending sufficient progress review, Tom noted that the Program still needs to develop a White River Management Plan to finalize a flow recommendation and to identify what additional water development can rely on the Recovery Program for ESA compliance. Tom discussed the very important recent increases in captures of young-of-year Colorado pikeminnow. Philip Stuckert asked about influence of heavy metals and mercury on Colorado pikeminnow. Tom Chart said this has been a focus in the San Juan Basin and of the recent Colo/Wyo coal consultation. In the upper basin, we’ve focused more on selenium until recently. It’s difficult to accurately determine the effect of mercury and how to remediate elevated levels of mercury in light of the global causes; therefore, we’re focusing on anything that can be done locally and on other threats we can affect more directly.

- a. Personnel updates: Status of on the administrative position and database manager in PD’s office – Tom Chart said we’ve just hired a new administrative officer, Sandi Spivey, who will start on Monday, October 5. We also will be hiring a database manager in the near future. Hiring the database manager now will allow for overlap with Colorado Natural Heritage Program’s development of the database. Tom Pitts asked when we will have a usable database. Kevin McAbee said the interactive STReAMS database will be released in stages. At this point, 95% of the capture data from the old database has been uploaded in STReAMS and antenna data are being added. The database will be functional within the next month and completed/fully functional within 18 months. End-user training will occur March 2016 and after the 2016 field season, field personnel will be entering their data into STReAMS directly. The project is going extremely well. Greg Gerlich noted it may have direct applicability to pallid sturgeon work in the Missouri River.
- b. Service ES staffing for Colorado River consultation and related work – Tom Chart said many of the Service’s Ecological Services (ES) offices have reduced staff sizes and have been able to provide less input to discussions of sufficient progress, coordination of reservoir operation as called for in biological opinions, etc. One proposed concept has been to have one Colorado River fish biologist for all upper basin states. Tom Chart will discuss this with ES project leaders this coming November and report back to the program. Mike Thabault said ES staffing is down ~25% over his time in Region 6 and therefore the ES program has had to make difficult funding decisions for staff positions. Mike said ES may experience an additional 5% cut in the coming year, and will be discussing regional priorities and staffing at the November project leaders meeting.

4. Sufficient progress and nonnative fish action items update and related issues – Tom Chart discussed

the focus on nonnative fish management in the most recent sufficient progress memos. Tom said he believes we're responding well to this very serious threat; Greg Gerlich, Kevin McAbee, and Tom Pitts echoed this, noting the important progress being made, especially with the CPW Working Group. Tom Pitts noted that the work group is not finished and will be meeting again in early 2016 to plan activities for the coming year.

- a. Review of the draft shortcomings and accomplishments included in the Service's 2015 Sufficient Progress memo – Tom Chart said the draft memo is on the surname route. As drafted, the memo points out the need to get a contractor in place prior to the next Sufficient Progress memo to begin the hydrologic modeling that will serve as a cornerstone for the White River Management Plan. Noreen Walsh asked if we can provide any support to this contracting and if that timeframe is reasonable. Michelle Garrison said they might require some assistance as they currently struggle with the somewhat open-ended nature of a potential contract. Michelle thought the timeframe was reasonable. Another item is completion of the Elkhead net installation; Ray Tenney indicated yesterday the reservoir is being drawn down and things look good for installation of a net prior to 2016 runoff. Lastly, rehabilitation of the Tusher diversion is progressing and this will be our last project addressing entrainment (at large irrigation diversions). Tom noted the successful razorback sucker recruitment at Stewart Lake and Johnson Bottom floodplain sites indicates that the Program would really like to have access to the Old Charley Wash wetland again, and said the Service is trying to work with the Northern Ute Tribe to reinstate the lease of the Old Charlie floodplain. Sonja Jahrsdoerfer recently met with the Tribe, so perhaps this may move forward soon. Mike Thabault added that Larry Crist of the Utah ES office also met recently with the Tribe and there has been some progress on listed cactus and yellow-billed cuckoo issues. Tom Chart said the Bureau of Reclamation suggested we might also want to reach out to the [Ten Tribes Partnership](#). Brent Uilenberg noted that the OMID project won't be fully implemented until 2017 due to the contract delays (the PDO will make sure this is correct in the final version of the sufficient progress memo).
- b. Review a PDO proposal to conduct a typical full sufficient progress memo in even years and an abbreviated, or "sufficient progress light" memo in odd-numbered years – The PDO proposes to better focus efforts of Program committees and staff through a streamlining of the sufficient progress memo in odd-numbered years, beginning in 2017. The streamlined sufficient progress memo would not contain the lengthy species status section (though any significant highlights would be noted, e.g., a short section could be included describes significant findings (if any) for each of the four species collected during the previous 12 months in question with a commitment to further analyze those findings the following year), since the status of these long-lived species does not change much from year-to-year. It also would not contain PBO reviews (all of those would be done in even-numbered years going forward). Tom Chart sent the Committee an outline of what an abbreviated sufficient progress memo would look like on September 16. Angela said the abbreviated version would be done in odd years because that's when we staff and committees are busy developing the 2-year work plan; thus, this would even out the workload a bit. Tom Pitts said water users support the concept, they just want to be sure the abbreviated version includes the sufficient progress finding regarding the depletion threshold and currently

covered projects; Angela said it would. Bart Miller said the environmental groups also are supportive and asked how the timing of population estimates would fit in this process. Angela said all population estimates would remain on current schedules, data reported in the briefing book, and any significant developments noted in the abbreviated sufficient progress memo, just not discussed with the level of detail in the even-numbered-year full sufficient progress memo. Noreen said she supports this proposal and how it helps use staff and Committee time more efficiently.

5. April 2015 D.C. trip report and related topics including annual funding legislation (timing, etc.) and characterizing progress toward recovery - Henry Maddux said we had great participation from the non-Federal partners again this year. (Although Colorado has not been able to attend in recent years, Henry said it's important to continue to request this important participation. Perhaps Colorado will be more willing to send someone in light of the pending reauthorization request.) Henry asked if a governor-to-governor request might be helpful; >Michelle will look into this and let Henry know. Questions as to how the fish are responding and whether we're reaching recovery goals were very common this year. The group discussed the need for reauthorizing legislation and some Committee staff discussed the difficulties that will be faced in that process. They emphasized the importance of showing progress toward recovery to Service folks (e.g. Gary Frazer). Tom Pitts recognized the vital participation of all four Tribes from the San Juan Program and also the important participation of The Nature Conservancy. With regards to next year's briefing, some of the Committee's staff suggested the trip should take place a little earlier. Congress typically breaks the week before and after Easter. This year, Easter falls toward the end of March, so the trip would need to be the week of March 14 or April 4. Tom Pitts agreed the briefing was late in the appropriations process this year and said he favors a March trip in 2016. Tom Pitts and Henry said Congressional members apparently are willing to once again submit support letters (or phone calls) to the Committees and an earlier meeting will help get this accomplished. Tom Pitts noted that these letters are important to non-Federal Program stakeholders, too to show bipartisan congressional support for the programs. Henry noted we also need to determine what Congressional members may be willing to sponsor reauthorizing legislation. Henry said the funding is authorized through 2019; therefore we need to get it drafted in 2016 and submitted in 2017. Tom Pitts said the legislation itself will be simple to draft, but the rationale will be critical, as will members of Congress who will sponsor it. Tom Pitts and Henry Maddux said that Congressional members, their staffs, Committee staff, and the administration repeatedly tell them how important this briefing trip is and how much credibility it builds. Everyone expressed support and appreciation for the technical experts' participation (Pete Cavalli on behalf of Wyoming and Bill Miller on behalf of the Southern Ute Tribe). Tomorrow, Tom Pitts will confirm with the San Juan Coordinating Committee the week of March 4 or 14 for the briefing trip and then we'll lock in hotel reservations.
6. Recovery plans update – Tom Czaplá said a draft revised Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Plan developed with advice from a Recovery Team was shared with recovery program stakeholders in December 2014. Webinars to discuss the draft Plan with the Management Committee and the San Juan Coordination Committee occurred in April and May 2015. Stakeholders have since submitted written comments. Program stakeholders and the Service determined that a Population Viability Analysis should be completed prior to finalization of the Plan. Tom Czaplá said the scope of work

has been circulated and comments from PIs received and will go to the Management and Biology committees for approval no later than early next week. Lynn Jeka offered resource support from Shane Capron for developing the PVA. Tom Chart thanked Lynn and agreed Shane will be helpful. The plan is to contract with Phil Miller to lead the modeling, but he maintains that he will not be available until February. In a phone conversation Phil Miller strongly encouraged the PDO and others to prep materials prior to February 2016. The PDO (with a lot of help from Rich Valdez) will be compiling life history metrics in advance and the Program can work on this and other groundwork before February. We'll want to have Shane in the room with them working on the PVA itself. Tom Pitts asked about involving Bill Miller and Tom Chart said he would support representatives from any interested stakeholder at the PVA the workshops. Meanwhile, the recovery plan writing team is incorporating comments received (>Tom Pitts will submit his comments). Humpback chub – Tom Czaplá described the writing, technical, and implementation subgroups. All three will meet together for a kickoff meeting on November 18 near DIA (draft agenda to team members pending). Key agenda items will be the terms of reference document outlining roles and responsibilities, review of the difference between threatened and endangered designations, and review of the Enhanced Recovery (REV) recovery planning process. Razorback sucker – Comments on the draft scope of work for the species status assessment are due today, and then it will go to the Biology Committee for approval on October 13 and the Management Committee for approval on November 2. Completion is planned 12 months out. Tom Czaplá mentioned the Service's recently-completed reporting on endangered species under ECOS, noting the Service changed the recovery priority number for razorback sucker and humpback chub based on changing the threat level to moderate (in line with the Colorado pikeminnow).

7. Focusing the Program on Recovery – Tom Pitts referenced the discussion from the March 5 Implementation Committee meeting and said this was discussed further at the March 24 and August 17-18 Management Committee meetings. Tom is concerned that we're not doing anything to identify this path to recovery. Tom believes the two greatest threats to recovery of the species and the Upper Colorado and San Juan recovery programs are: 1) program participants' belief that these recovery programs won't end; and 2) failure to define the path to recovery. We do a great job identifying threats and developing annual work plans, but we need to put more emphasis on something more definitive as to getting where we need to go and we need to do that before we go back to Congress and ask for reauthorizing legislation. Leslie James echoed this, noting she's hearing the same push from her Board and from Congressional staff. >Leslie will see if the MSCP has something along the lines of what she's talking about in terms of a methodical outlining of steps, timeline, and costs. Bart Miller asked if the PVA and SSA aren't going to provide the very science needed to answer the kind of questions Tom Pitts and Congress are asking. Tom Pitts said the PVA and SSA will be interim steps, but there's a whole chain of steps that will be needed to get to delisting and we need to identify those and the timeframes and costs. Leslie asked if Seth or someone could develop a chart that starts with delisting and works backwards identifying all the steps needed and their timeframes and costs. Noreen asked if they're requesting an outline of procedural steps or recovery actions. Leslie and Tom responded that we need both. Lynn said she understands that recovery plans identify the recovery actions, then once those are accomplished, the delisting process can begin and that we'll also need a post-delisting monitoring plan (once we're ready to begin the delisting process). Seth Willey agreed that the recovery plan is the tool to provide that roadmap. Time required for the downlisting and delisting processes will vary. With strong staff

and leadership support, the rulemaking process can happen very quickly. All of this might be laid out in a recovery plan and it's also possible that a downlisting rulemaking could precede the plan. Lynn agrees this is needed, but it's the same resources needed to do the recovery plans. Tom Pitts emphasized the need for outlining the steps to be implemented. Seth said we can do that in a recovery plan (which we then step down into the RIPRAP). Tom Chart said the threat removal criteria are now more detailed and site-specific. The RIPRAP is then the document that says how we're going to remove those threats. Seth Willey suggested a table (which may already be in the draft Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan) that crosswalks site-specific management actions with threat criteria, etc. Melanie emphasized the importance of communicating this information visually to help folks grasp it easily. Tom Pitts proposed having a conference call with Tom Chart and Seth and others to discuss how to do this. Seth agreed. Seth noted that the change in the recovery priority number that Tom Czapl mentioned shows progress toward recovery. Tom Chart said that he wants to make sure we economize the time we spend on this and related documents. >Tom Chart will convene a conference call of Tom Pitts, Henry Maddux, Bart Miller, Steve Wolff, Seth Willey, Lynn Jeka or Shane Capron, and Melanie Fischer. Noreen summarized that Service folks believe an action plan will come as part of the recovery plan, but those plans won't be completed in time to share with partners and folks on the Hill in advance of the reauthorization request. Therefore, this group will work to draw this information out of the recovery plans in advance of their completion and write it up so it clearly tells the story of what's needed.

## 8. Capital projects update

- a. Tusher Wash Diversion Rebuild / Fish Passage O&M (Brent Uilenberg and Kevin McAbee) – Brent recalled when we first looked at entrainment at Tusher Wash, we contemplated screening the entire diversion inflow, but it would have been very expensive and likely would operate only about 75% of the time. We're now considering the concept of a weir wall like that at the Hogback Diversion on the San Juan River. Under brief, initial tests of the weir wall at Hogback, only ~11% of adult and sub-adult pikeminnow and razorback were entrained into the canal system. Caveats are: 1) we need more data from Hogback (though it couldn't be tested in 2015 due to the mine spill); and 2) we'll need to develop ~6" of additional head which will be expensive. Hopefully whole project still around \$2.5-3M. NRCS in cooperation with water users is moving ahead with rehabilitation of the existing dam, and building an integrated fish passage structure and east bank diversion screen as part of that. Kevin McAbee said the rebuilt dam will have both fish and boat passage components. PIT antennas are included as part of the design so we can track fish as they use the passages and construction likely will occur next fall.
- b. OMID regulating reservoir – Brent said the contract couldn't be awarded in FY2015. The bid should be re-advertised in mid to late October. This is the last major large capital project. If it comes in at cost, with all the other smaller projects, we'll have ~\$13M of unallocated capital projects ceiling through 2023 (not a lot in light of all the small repairs and improvements we're starting to need to fund [e.g. Wahweap repairs]). With >\$150M of capital projects on the ground Tom Pitts agreed \$13M isn't much and wondered if we need to ask Congress for an increase in the ceiling, and provide the rationale for that. There might be a way to get it approved if we specify it won't be used unless needed and

appropriated. Brent agreed we should discuss this further.

- c. Stewart Lake gate retrofit – Brent said the existing gate structure is being replaced (was underway last week and may already be done).
9. Ratify the 2016 – 2017 Work Plan (Angela Kantola and Tom Chart, 15 min) (1:45 – 2:00) – Following review and approval by the technical committees, the Management Committee approved the 2016 – 2017 work plan on August 17. Scopes of work are posted at <http://www.coloradoriverrecovery.org/documents-publications/work-plan-documents/project-scopes-of-work.html>. Significant budget shortfalls were predicted for FY 16 and 17; however, the Program Director’s office has identified carry-over funds within the Service that will cover these shortfalls. About a quarter of the Program’s \$10M FY16 budget (capital and annual funds) is dedicated to nonnative fish management. Another quarter is dedicated to instream flow protection (the bulk of which is directed at completing the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District efficiency project which will increase the irrigation efficiency of the District, redirect the conserved water to increase hydroelectric power generation, and indirectly enhance instream flows by approximately 17,000 acre-feet annually). Program management costs are under 10% of the budget. Tom Chart assured the Implementation Committee that the work plan has been subjected to extensive and thoughtful review by all stakeholders and that he feels very comfortable with the work plan and its direction. The Implementation Committee ratified the work plan.
10. Regional Director’s 2015 and 2016 Program priorities – Regional Director, Noreen Walsh reviewed the Region’s FY15 priorities as they relate to the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Noreen said these priorities don’t change a great deal from year t -year since most are long-term goals, but they make an affirmative statement about the conservation we’re working to achieve in the region. Noreen observed that most of these priorities have already been discussed today and the Program is making good progress.

***Colorado River Basin Fiscal Year 2015 Actions:***

- Continue working with state partners to implement the Upper Colorado River Basin nonnative and Invasive Aquatic Species Prevention and Control Strategy.
- Publish a draft Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Plan (see discussion above regarding deferral until PVA completed).
- Convene a recovery team to begin revision of the Humpback Chub Recovery Plan.
- Increase recruitment of razorback sucker at Johnson Bottom on Ouray National Wildlife Refuge.
- Monitor endangered fishes in order to assess effectiveness of and focus conservation delivery efforts for recovery.

FY16 priorities are being developed; support of this Program and recovery of the Colorado River fishes will remain a priority for the Region until it’s accomplished.

11. Update on Upper Basin Drought Contingency Planning – Steve Wolff said the component of most interest to this group is reservoir reoperation. It hasn’t been discussed further since April (a very wet May bought some time). An MOA will formalize components of the plan and identify a schedule; but completion of that MOA is likely several months out yet. Lynn Jeka said there’s been extensive analysis of impacts to hydropower and reoperation is very beneficial to hydropower. Western is in the process of finalizing a white paper documenting support for that plan.

12. Southern Rockies LCC update (including the Green River Landscape Design Project) – Tom Chart said the Management Committee received an update on early stages of this project in August. The Program heard that the LCD might focus on energy development as a stressor and sensitive fish habitats as an important resource, which would provide value to us. The Program will work with the LCC to more clearly articulate our concerns to better focus the LCD going forward. Tom Chart is on the oversight team representing the Program and would like to invite Henry's participation, also; Henry agreed.
13. Wrap-up and schedule discuss agenda items for next Implementation Committee webinar – The next webinar will be March 29 from 1 to 4 pm and the next meeting will be Monday, September 19 from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Denver near DIA. Agenda items will include work planning, update on recovery plans, 2016 Congressional briefing trip, and more. The non-Federal Program participants' Washington, D.C. briefing trip will be the week of March 14, though some participants may go the Friday before to meet with people in the Service Headquarters (who will be involved in the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference ??? the week of March 14).

Noreen congratulated Program participants on the highest young-of-year Colorado pikeminnow count in 30 years on the Colorado River, the increasing numbers of razorback sucker in the system, completion of the Johnson Bottom wetland site, and CWCB's support and funding for the Ute Water lease and the Elkhead net. Noreen thanked Program participants for their continued strong engagement with and commitment to recovery of these fish.

**ADJOURN: 2:30 p.m.**

Attachment 1 - Participants

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Noreen Walsh, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Chair)  
Brent Uilenberg for Ed Warner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Mark Sturm, National Park Service  
Bart Miller, Environmental Groups (Western Resource Advocates)  
Philip Stuckert, Wyoming State Engineer's Office  
Lauren Ris for Ted Kowalski, Colorado Water Conservation Board  
Lynn Jeka, Western Area Power Administration  
Tom Pitts, Upper Basin Water Users  
Mike Styler, Utah Department of Natural Resources  
Leslie James, Colorado River Energy Distributors Association  
Program Director Tom Chart, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (nonvoting)

OTHERS:

Darin Bird, Utah Department of Natural Resources  
Henry Maddux, Utah Department of Natural Resources  
Steve Wolff, Wyoming State Engineers Office  
Brent Uilenberg, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Michelle Garrison, Colorado Water Conservation Board  
Clayton Palmer, Western Area Power Administration  
David Speas, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Mike Thabault, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Greg Gerlich, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Seth Willey, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Kevin McAbee, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program  
Tom Czapl, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program  
Jana Mohrman, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Melanie Fischer, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program  
Angela Kantola, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program  
Brian Sadler, Western Area Power Administration