



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Draft Summary Dated: September 27, 2018

CR/FY-17 UCRRIC
Mail Stop 65115

Memorandum

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

From: Acting Deputy Director, Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery
Program

Subject: Final April 5, 2018, Recovery Implementation Committee Meeting Summary

Attached are the final action and assignment summary and the general summary from the April 5, 2018, Implementation Committee meeting.

Attachment

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY
April 5, 2018
Webinar and Conference Call

ACTIONS:

1. Approved September 26, 2017, draft Implementation Committee meeting summary as final.
2. Delegated authority of RIPRAP approval to the Management Committee.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. The Program Office will schedule the September 27th, 2018 meeting near DIA. >Done.
2. Melanie Fischer will create a proposal for a Recovery Program “Friends Group”. She will share the proposal with the IC in August and the IC will consider it at the September meeting. >Postponed. *Melanie created the proposal, but was unable to attend the September meeting, so this action was postponed until the spring 2019 meeting.*
3. The Program office will send a survey to IC members to determine if the meetings are providing each agency/stakeholder/participant the process and information it needs. >Done. *Julie Stahli shared the results of the survey at the September 2018 meeting.*

PARTICIPANTS: See Attachment 1

MEETING SUMMARY:

CONVENE: 1:00 p.m.

1. Introductions, modify/review agenda, Chair’s updates – Noreen Walsh
 - a. Carlee Brown introduced Jojo La as the new CWCB lead for the UCREFRP and Platte River Program. The committee welcomed Jojo.
 - b. Noreen Walsh thanked the non-federal partners for their trip to Washington, D.C. and for their work on the funding legislation. She praised the Program Director’s Office recent work on the humpback chub species status assessment (SSA) and the subsequent 5-year review. She has put a high priority on the proposed downlisting rule, which follows the 5-year review. Julie Stahli will be working on the razorback sucker SSA this summer. Eliza Gilbert, USFWS – Region 2, will be detailing into the UCREFRP office to work on the Colorado pikeminnow SSA. A bonytail 5-year review will also be completed.
2. Approve draft September 26, 2017, meeting summary – Kevin McAbee
 - a. The draft meeting summary was included as an attachment in the March 21 email. No comments were received since October 9, 2017. The meeting summary was approved by the committee. (*Meeting summary finalized, posted to website, and sent to listserv*).

3. March 2018 D.C. trip update, including authorizing legislation – Steve Wolff & Tom Pitts
 - a. Program partners visited D. C. the week of March 19. Seventeen non-federal partners participated in the trip, one of the largest groups ever. The group was happy to spread the recommendation to downlist the humpback chub from the recently released 5-year review. Despite the snow on March 21, resulting in closure of Executive Branch offices and some congressional offices, most of the meetings took place. In general, congressional and executive branch staff were aware of and supported the Program. Gary Frazer, USFWS Assistant Director for Endangered Species, specifically cited the value of the programs and expressed his appreciation for the work being done by all participants. Melanie Fischer created great materials for use on the trip. These trips are essential to maintain support for these Programs. Tom Pitts extended a special thanks to Steve Wolff for organizing this trip and for the on-the-ground schedule changes due to the weather.
 - b. Funding legislation for the Upper Colorado and San Juan Recovery Programs was passed by the House of Representatives. Rep. John Curtis (Utah) introduced the bill in the House. He is supportive of the Program and enjoyed his meetings with UDWR biologists. A full committee hearing in the Senate was postponed because of the March snowstorm, but will be rescheduled. The bill has been bundled with other western water bills. Senate mark-up of these bills will be in April or May, which will be followed by a vote.
 - OMB’s pass back on WAPA’s proposed FY19 budget directed WAPA to return \$23 million in Upper Colorado River Basin Fund revenues to the treasury in 2019 in lieu of providing it to Reclamation for environmental programs, including annual funding for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program. This pass back occurred just prior to the DC trip. Non-federal partners alerted congressional staff to the situation and were told uniformly that it would be fixed.
 - c. Landowners and other stakeholders (the Green River Stakeholders) have expressed concerns (e.g. flooding / stream bank erosion, fish-ability of the Flaming Gorge tailrace trout fishery) about spring operations at Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Responses to these concerns are being developed by the Program Directors office, Reclamation, and others. One or more meetings are anticipated to discuss concerns with local interests. Senator Gardner’s staff is aware of the concerns and was assured that the concerns would be addressed locally.
4. Program Director’s report on the Recovery Program and status of the fish – [on website here](#).
 - a. Introduction & Status of endangered fish populations – Tom Chart
 - The Northern Ute Tribe has expressed interest in becoming more involved in the Recovery Program and possibly joining our partnership.

- Tom Chart described the status of the species status assessments (SSAs) and recovery planning process for each species.
 - Humpback chub – SSA finalized with lots of help from our partners and USFWS Regions 2 and 6. The 5-year review is complete and was released on March 22. A proposed downlisting rule for the species is a regional priority to maintain the momentum on this important achievement. The proposed rule is expected to be drafted later this year and published in the Federal Register in FY19.
 - Razorback sucker – An interagency team of razorback sucker experts is being led by Julie Stahl to complete the SSA this summer. A 5-year review is expected by September 30th.
 - Colorado pikeminnow – Eliza Gilbert (San Juan Recovery Program) is detailing into the UCREFRP to complete the SSA this summer, with 5-year review expected by September 30th. A population viability analysis (PVA), which is a key part of the SSA, is being reviewed by the Biology Committee (along with San Juan Program BC); comments are due April 20th.
 - Bonytail – 5-year review expected this summer. No SSA planned.
- b. Information & education – Melanie Fischer
 - Melanie conducts a diverse and targeted outreach campaign that focuses on community outreach, kids events, and water user events. She plans to translate some materials to Spanish to increase outreach to additional communities.
 - Tom Pitts praised CPW for conducting the fishing tournaments at Ridgway and Elkhead Reservoirs in 2017. The tournaments are very labor intensive for CPW and appear effective in reducing non-native fish populations in the reservoirs, as well as being popular with anglers. Colorado Water Conservation Board provides cash prizes from the Native Species Trust Fund.
 - Noreen Walsh asked about support for Melanie’s idea for a friends group for the Recovery Program. Reclamation, NPS, and CWCB supported the idea.
- c. Instream flows & habitat restoration– Don Anderson
 - Don praised the partners’ cooperation and coordination of water management by Reclamation and water users in the basin over the life of the Program.
 - Dry conditions in 2018 will require careful management of existing fish pools in Ruedi, Wolford Mountain, Granby, Green Mountain, and Elkhead reservoirs. Don thanked all those involved in pursuing additional, temporary sources of water to augment summer flows in the 15-Mile Reach and elsewhere.
- d. Nonnative fish management – Kevin McAbee
 - Kevin described in-river and in-reservoir actions for nonnative control. In-river control focuses on disrupting spawning and removal of problematic species, while in-reservoir focuses on preventing escapement and providing replacement fisheries for anglers.

- Noreen Walsh asked what novel techniques are currently being considered for nonnative fish management. Kevin indicated that a smallmouth bass spike flows in certain locations are the first landscape-scale physical disruption that we are considering. Other techniques such as genetic or chemical tools are farther from being implemented, if feasible. Kevin described our goal to implement a smallmouth bass spike flow in the White River this year. CPW and Reclamation implemented this concept in the Dolores River in 2017.
- e. Propagation & data management – Julie Stahli
- Julie described the revised integrated stocking plan that moved some effort from razorback sucker to bonytail. Bonytail are surviving at lower rates than razorback sucker.
 - Antenna data demonstrates that our active sampling methods are not successfully detecting bonytail, and that more bonytail are in the system than we are capturing. However, antennas still demonstrate very low long-term bonytail survival.
 - Health Condition Protocol will be completed for a subset of stocked fish for each stocking event to look for patterns in survival of stocked fish.
 - Tom Pitts asked about using antennas in population estimates. Julie said it is an important consideration and antenna data was used by FWS in Black Rocks for humpback chub (Travis Francis’s work).
5. Summary of Post-2023 Program Planning – Tom Chart
- a. A joint meeting of the San Juan Recovery Program’s Coordination Committee and the Upper Basin Recovery Program’s Management Committee was held on February 7, 2018. The committees discussed scoping topics for the development of a Post-2023 planning process. A sub-committee was chartered and is currently discussing options, to be presented at the next meeting of both the San Juan and Upper Basin Recovery Programs on April 26th (Fairfield Inn near DIA from 1-5 pm).
 - b. The cooperative agreements and authorizing legislation establishing the two programs, capital funding, and annual funding expire in 2023. The annual funding legislation currently before Congress requires the Secretary of the Interior to submit a report to Congress in FY 21 identifying funding needs and cost sharing arrangements beyond FY 23. The report will also address recommended institutional arrangements. The two programs have set a target for having this report completed in the fall of 2020 for submittal to the Secretary of the Interior for review.
6. Capital projects update – Ryan Christianson and Ed Warner
- a. Ed Warner described that Ryan Christianson has replaced Brent Uilenberg, and Kathy Callister is now the alternate for the MC and the IC for Reclamation.
 - b. Major expenses in 2017 were \$1.1 million for re-regulating reservoir construction as part of the OMID Canal Automation that will provide approximately 17,000 AF/year in

water savings, \$1.5 million for Grand Valley power plant rehabilitation, and \$869,000 for Elkhead Reservoir net. Expected expenditures in 2018 include ~\$2 million for Green River Irrigation Canal fish exclusion (construction slated for fall 2018) and ~\$1 million for various reservoir screens/nets. However, reservoir screening projects (Starvation Reservoir) are not meeting timelines and this funding may not be spent in 2018. Funding designated for nets may be rescheduled for 2020 in the budget. Ridgway Reservoir net construction is scheduled for 2019, which is estimated at >\$2 million. Stirrup Bottom floodplain modification to support razorback sucker recovery could be constructed sooner rather than later.

- c. Bart Miller asked about the replacement cost and timing of nets, such as the net at Elkhead Reservoir. Kevin McAbee described that the estimate is the net can last 10+ years, but only time will tell, and that replacement cost of the net is approximately 33% or so of the total project (~\$400,000), not the full \$1.3M project cost.
 - d. Tom Pitts indicated that woody debris management is an important component of the Ridgway Reservoir net. Ed Warner described that this will be a design build project and woody debris will be a major consideration.
 - e. Tom Pitts commended Reclamation's Grand Junction office for its major accomplishments in implementing the Upper Colorado and San Juan Recovery Program's capital construction program.
7. Delegating review/approval of RIPRAP revisions and assessment to Management Committee
- a. Draft RIPRAP sent to technical committees in early February, with review in late March/early April. IC typically delegates this authority to MC (on April 27th).
 - b. Tom Chart described the structure of the RIPRAP (specific actions by basin and recovery elements) and the process (first reviewed by the technical committees and then sent to the MC).
 - c. The IC approved a motion to delegate approval authority to the MC.
8. The next IC meeting is September 27th, 2018 in-person, near DIA.
- a. >The Program Office will schedule a location.
 - b. >Noreen asked Melanie to create a proposal for a friends group and to share it with the IC around August, so that the IC can consider it at the September meeting.
 - c. >Noreen asked the Program office to send out a survey to determine if the IC meetings are providing each agency/stakeholder/participants the process/information it needs at the meetings, and how we could improve the meeting structure.

ADJOURN: 4:00 p.m.

Attachment 1 - Participants

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Noreen Walsh, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Chair)
Ed Warner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Rob Billerbeck, National Park Service
Bart Miller, Environmental Groups (Western Resource Advocates)
Amy Moyer, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Tom Pitts, Upper Basin Water Users
Brian Sadler for Steve Johnson, Western Area Power Administration
Mike Styler, Utah Department of Natural Resources
Leslie James, Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
Steve Wolff, State of Wyoming
Tom Chart, Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (nonvoting)

OTHERS:

Michelle Logan, Colorado Department of Law
Carlee Brown, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Jojo La, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Michelle Garrison, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Harry Crockett, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Kathy Callister, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ryan Christianson, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Dave Speas, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Marj Nelson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Darin Bird, State of Utah
Melissa Trammell, National Park Service
Melanie Fischer, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program
Julie Stahli, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program
Kevin McAbee, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Recovery Program
Don Anderson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service