

Biology Committee Conference Call Summary
May 15, 2003

Committee members: Melissa Trammell, Gary Burton, Tom Pitts, Frank Pfeifer, Randy Seaholm for Tom Nesler, Dan Luecke for John Hawkins, Kevin Christopherson, Tom Chart, Paul Dey, Bill Davis.

Others: Bob Muth, Angela Kantola, Gerry Roehm, Mary Simbala, Tom Blickensderfer, George Smith, Clayton Palmer, Mark Wieringa, Heather Patno, Chuck McAda

Gunnison River Flow Recommendations – Tom Blickensderfer said he and others here in Vernal have had a series of discussions with Randy Seaholm about the response he posted to the listserver yesterday. Frank said there seem to be different interpretations of the instantaneous peak flow. He expects a target within the range would be met within each year (based on the appropriate hydrologic category); however Clayton apparently interprets it differently (that we could skip a wet year, for example, as long as the long-term averages are met).

Tom Pitts suggested we first attempt to come to agreement on the flow target duration portion, then discuss the instantaneous peaks. Randy said his concern is with flow target duration for wet years, noting the 100 day range is not possible. Randy would at least like the durations to be representative of something that has occurred historically, otherwise he needs clarifying language of “one possible way of achieving the long-term average for sediment transport.” Tom recommended just “This table represents one possible way of achieving the long-term weighted average.” Randy said he could agree with that. Dan Luecke said he believes this is too dismissive given the work that has gone into these recommendations, which he views as the Service’s recommendations in consultation with others, etc. The phrase would seem to erode the importance of the recommendations. Randy said the wet year recommendations are not achievable except in the absolute wettest of years. Frank clarified said it’s not the Service’s intent to cry foul if the 100 days is not achieved, this is the recommended *range*. Randy said he’d like recommendations that have a chance of being achieved under existing conditions, which he doesn’t believe these do. Frank said this seems to him to be a water availability issue that should be sorted out in the EIS process. Randy said he believes the science should do the best job possible of describing achievable conditions. Chuck said he was told the Pitlick recommendations were the best science and he has provided recommended flows based on that. Frank said he can approve the language “This table represents one possible way of achieving the long-term weighted average” and Chuck’s version of the footnotes. The title of the table remains “Peak flow recommendations for the Gunnison River...” Frank and Melissa said they don’t agree with Randy’s redline changes to the footnotes. Frank said the reservoir operations footnote would seem to negate the Program’s opportunity to change reservoir operations. Tom Chart agreed. After considerable discussion, the Committee agreed to:

“This table represents one possible way of achieving the long-term weighted average.”
(This is written right under the tables.)

And for footnote C:

“Instantaneous peak flows within this range have occurred in these hydrological categories since Blue Mesa Reservoir was closed. These observed instantaneous peaks are desired in the future in conjunction with meeting the flow targets. No specific peak flow is recommended to ensure continued variability among years.”

The rest of the footnotes will remain as written by Chuck. The sentence that talks about flooding at Delta will be moved to the physical uncertainties part of the report.

Bill Davis raised the issue of ramp rates and the Committee agreed to the following language: "Ramp rates currently in place following CDOW's recommendation are based on angler safety and trout use of Gunnison River downstream of the Aspinall Unit. No direct relationships between these ramp rates and endangered fish impacts or benefits have been established for the Gunnison River. Current ramp rates should be examined to determine if modifications could be made to benefit endangered fish."

Randy raised his recommended revisions to section 4-6 (implementation guidelines). Frank and others suggested going back to the original language. The Committee agreed to keeping the first paragraph in Section 4-6 as Chuck wrote it, deleting the second paragraph in Section 4-6, and keeping item #3 under Section 4-6 will remain as Chuck wrote it.

The Committee approved the report as revised. >Chuck will finalize the report.