

July 9, 2008

**Biology Committee Conference Call
June 25, 2008, 8:30 a.m.**

Participants: Krissy Wilson, Dave Irving, Dave Speas, Melissa Trammell, Shane Capron, Bill Davis, Pete Cavalli, Tom Iseman, Tom Pitts, Tom Nesler, Mike Montagne, Bob Muth, Tom Chart, Tom Czaplá, Kirk LaGory and Angela Kantola.

Assignments indicated by a “>” and at the end of the document.

1. Flaming Gorge 2008 base flow operations – Tom Chart introduced this flow request from the Recovery Program to Reclamation to be approved by the Biology Committee then the Management Committee. The Committee discussed Kirk LaGory’s comments which weren’t included in the draft:

Change title to “Flaming Gorge 2008 Base Flow Operations – a Research-Based Recommendation” Show if and how this research ties into the study plan.

The recommendation calls for an average daily Flaming Gorge release in the range of 1,500 to 1,700 cfs; to be maintained through September 30, 2008. What about considering the higher flow for a shorter period of time? Is there a critical period for smallmouth bass when they are most vulnerable (e.g., spawning)?

Consideration #2 speaks to the ability to meet temperature recommendations in upper Lodore Canyon and at the confluence with the Yampa River. Would releasing 13°C water with Heather’s original flow be perhaps more effective in disadvantaging smallmouth bass in Lodore while not compromising the temperature recommendation at the confluence? Also, I’m not sure these tradeoffs were discussed in the EIS. There was a discussion of how meeting the temperature recommendations would be more difficult in wetter years, but there was not really a discussion of the possible benefit of the higher colder flow. This was treated as a negative impact.

Expected benefit #1 is an “objective” not a “benefit” of the recommendation. The memo is couched as a “biologically based recommendation” implying that this is the recommended flow to provide the most benefit to fish in this year. Item 1 doesn’t really fit in that category.

Expected benefit #2 also is more of a research objective rather than a biologically based recommendation. Heather’s original recommendation results in flows that are relatively higher, within the range of this year’s hydrological condition, and scaled to the peak flows.

Tom Chart suggested the title be “Recovery Program Recommendation” rather than “Research-Based Recommendation.” Kirk said we need to better define expected benefits; Melissa Trammell agreed. Shane Capron thought it was important that we clarify how we expected the recommended base flow pattern would benefit the ongoing smallmouth bass otolith work; and other agreed. Bill Davis asked about temperatures; Chart said Kevin Bestgen has collected smallmouth bass with baseflows at ~800 cfs and wants to gather fish community information (especially smallmouth bass) under a different flow scenario (higher baseflows, which should translate into cooler temps in Reach 1 and the upper portion of Reach 2). Hopefully this will disadvantage smallmouth by delaying time of spawning and reducing growth rates. Melissa noted that Utah’s native fish studies also will look at effects

in Reach 2; others agreed Kirk suggested that benefit #2 needs to be more explicit, also (e.g., provide more backwater habitat availability). What is the effect of not meeting temperature targets at these higher base flows? Should the proposal say that Reclamation will not meet the temperature targets 100% of the time? The 1,225 cfs flow recommendation from Reclamation probably could meet both the flow and temperature targets. Speas thinks based on an analogous 2005 flow year that at 1,500 cfs both targets would be met. Proposal should provide a higher base flow needs to be strengthened for why the temperature targets may not be met. A drastic rewrite isn't necessary, just a clear statement of the benefits and temperature. Bill Davis expressed concern about impacts to power (positive or negative). Reclamation will consider this along other requests, such as power needs, as determined through the process under the Record of Decision. . >Chart will revise the language to more specifically state benefits and research objectives.

2. Stirrup Floodplain – Currently, Ouray NFH has 80,000 razorback larvae in the ponds (which will be 4” in the fall). 2,500 PIT tagged 2-year old fish (>300 mm) are ready to go out, and there are 13,000 1-year old fish. (8-10” fish). >Trina will revise the SOW with more detail on the antenna and other technical equipment. The Committee agreed 1,000 fish from each year class should be put in the Stirrup: 2 year old (1,000 to Stirrup; 1,500 to river); 1 year old (1,000 to Stirrup), and 1,000 larvae to go into the Stirrup in the fall at 4” with PIT tags.

ADJOURN: 9:40 a.m.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Tom Chart will strengthen the base flow proposal by providing greater detail of: a) the expected benefits to native fish by increasing nursery habitat in Reach 2; b) how the recommended base flow pattern should disadvantage nonnative fish; c) the tradeoffs of higher flows, but cooler temperatures. Comments and concurrence from Biology and Management committees are needed by the middle of next week (perhaps respond as an agency). The proposal will then go back to the Flaming Gorge Technical Work Group. *Done.*
2. Trina will revise the Stirrup SOW for more detail on the antenna and provide additional antennas to detect movement. BC needs to decide on excess razorback sucker larvae by the fall.