

January 14, 1010

Biology Committee Draft Meeting Summary
[Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites](#), 2571 Crossroads Blvd
Grand Junction, Colorado, October 6, 2009

Biology Committee: Dave Irving, John Reber for Melissa Trammell, Pete Cavalli, Krissy Wilson, Dave Speas, Shane Capron, Tom Pitts, and Tom Nesler. The environmental groups and CREDA were not represented at the meeting.

Other participants: Tom Chart, Michelle Shaughnessy, Sarra Jones, Angela Kantola, Travis Francis, Doug Osmundson, Terry Stroh, Paul Badame, Mike Montagne and John Hawkins (via phone). (Sherm Hebein and Dean Riggs also joined the group for the Butch Craig site visit.)

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

8:00 a. m. Convene in the lobby of the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites. Travel to Butch Craig floodplain site, then return to Holiday Inn.

10:30 a.m. Reconvene in meeting room at Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites.

1. Review/modify agenda – The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Butch Craig floodplain discussion – The Management Committee would like a technical recommendation from the Biology Committee as to the relative priority of rehabilitating the Butch Craig floodplain levee. The Committee toured the site in the morning, and then discussed what should be done. The Committee was inclined to let the river naturally recapture the site, but believes a geomorphologist review is advisable to provide guidance on what is most likely to happen at the site as well as upstream and downstream. Further armoring the bank likely would move the eroding forces elsewhere. Although not a biological issue, there may be liability issues to address related to surrounding landowners (e.g., need to reconfigure the outlet to prevent damage to the railroad on the other side of the river). The original intent for the site was to provide low-velocity habitat for razorback sucker larvae. The Committee believes the site will continue to provide some low-velocity habitat (albeit a smaller surface area) even when the river does recapture the area. We could consider doing some work that would actually *help* the river recapture the site. Doug Osmundson showed the group a graph of temporal connection of the site to the river over the past several years and the few years that has overlapped with time of larval drift (in years where larval sampling was done). This might be another reason for letting the river recapture the site. Do we have other options for floodplain habitats in the Gunnison? Primarily only upstream near Delta. In the Whitewater area, Butch Craig is really the only option. Ideally, we want a habitat that overwinters fish, but one that can be re-set (drained) to manage nonnative fishes (the only way to re-set Butch Craig would be with rotenone). Currently, the site is much deeper than a natural floodplain situation. The Committee recommended allowing the river to naturally recapture the site, assuming that geomorphology review doesn't indicate a reason to do otherwise. Tom Pitts suggested hiring a geomorphologist to review the site and prepare an opinion, then have that reviewed by the geomorphology panel. Then the Biology Committee will need to weigh the best biological options based on what the river is most likely to do. >Reclamation and the Service will work together to get a

qualified geomorphologist on the ground to quickly do this work (BLM also should be contacted). The Committee discussed how Butch Craig is currently functioning as growout for bonytail and razorback (“excess” fish have been stocked there), the fate of those fish is not known.

3. Approve Biology Committee July 13-14 meeting summary – The July 13-14 summary was posted to the fws-coloriver listserver by Dave Irving on July 17. Tom Nesler provided several comments on this draft on July 19; the Committee approved those changes. >Angela will post the revised summary to the listserver.
4. Review assignments – See assignments at the end of this meeting summary.
5. Nonnative fish management
 - a. Weir site visit report – Tom Chart previously sent out a trip report. Krissy Wilson summarized the field trip with Doug Demko from FishBio to view sites on the Yampa and Duchesne rivers. On the post-trip conference call the group discussed whether we know enough about fish movement to indicate that a weir would be effective (it may be best to wait for the smallmouth bass synthesis), the advantages of starting in a small river like the Duchesne, and the potential effectiveness of using a weir higher up in the Yampa or on Elkhead Creek. Tom said they formulated questions for Doug, expects to have a draft report in December, and suggests discussing this further at the nonnative fish workshop as the next step. Tom said Doug also had ideas about structures other than weirs that might be useful.
 - b. Synthesis report schedule – The NNFSC has recommended that PI’s continue to produce multi-year synthesis reports, but that the next round be postponed until after the 2010 field season (with draft synthesis reports due in March 2011) to get all researchers on the same schedule and to take advantage of preliminary recommendations from the programmatic synthesis. The NNFSC also recommended that PI’s team up on the next round of reporting to produce more comprehensive products. Tom Nesler said CDOW is looking at the best way to get these synthesis reports done in a timely fashion since this is beyond the level of report they usually require of their area biologists.
 - c. December 8-9 workshop agenda – Tom Chart said he envisions a similar approach to last year and will convene the NNFSC to further discuss the agenda (and then send a draft to the Biology Committee). We will want to include a discussion of weirs (and other structures) and an update on the smallmouth bass synthesis. Post-doc Andre Brenton will be working with CSU on the synthesis starting in November.
6. Final Review/approval of revised Yampa Pike Sources report (R. M. Fitzpatrick and D. L. Winkelman. 2009) – The Biology Committee reviewed this report and made recommended changes at their July meeting; Tom Chart sent a revised version to the Committee on September 9. The revisions address how and why the original goals and objectives (as identified in the Recovery Program 05-06 SOW) changed through the course of the study. Dave Speas asked that “recovery program” be capitalized and that MANOVA acronym be defined. The Committee approved the report with those revisions.

7. Review/approval of Maybell Ditch Final Report ("An evaluation of fish entrainment into the Maybell Ditch on the Yampa River, Colorado, 2007 and 2008." Hawkins) – The Committee discussed the report sent out on July 9, 2009. When the review process was discussed some time ago, the Committee agreed that the work was not extensive enough to warrant peer review. The Service has provided a memo regarding the relationship of this work to the Yampa PBO. The Committee discussed the report with John Hawkins (via phone). Tom Pitts asked what it would take to better determine whether Colorado pikeminnow could be present and John said he thinks that given the area that can be sampled, it would take a much more intensive effort (many more nets) from late June through early July. Alternatively, an automatic PIT-tag reader likely would work in the ditch. John also thought a picket-type (not floating) weir could work well for sampling (anything that provides something of a velocity refuge). Tom Chart said that it's difficult to get certainty here. We know large-bodied fish entered the canal. Would there be any availability to use capital dollars and see if there would be something we could do perhaps in the lower end of this system to minimize the loss of fish? John thought one option would be an oxbow for the fish to wash into (then they could be trapped and returned to the system). If we were to install a PIT tag antenna or other device to better determine whether endangered fish are being entrained, the Service should first indicate the criteria be for the number of fish detected as relates to take. >Tom Chart will discuss this quandary with Patty Gelatt. Since the report contains recommendations the Committee may or may not endorse, the Committee accepted the report as final (as opposed to "approving" the report recommendations). >The Program Director's office will write a cover memo explaining the issues and potential next-steps and transmit the report to the Service.
8. Bringing humpback chub from Desolation/Gray Canyons into captivity – The Committee discussed the scope of work sent out by Tom Czaplá on 9/21/09. >Paul Badame will need to discuss this proposal with Jay Groves of the Ute Tribe. The Committee discussed the logistics and risk of fish transport and agreed that the proposal as written is the best approach, unless we want to split the catch of fish into *both* a boat *and* a helicopter transfer. >Dave Speas will check with Reclamation's pilot and Paul Badame and Mike Montagne will check on private helicopter options. >Tom Chart said he believes the Service should cover this under existing Federal collecting permits, but will check to see if this needs to be specifically addressed in those permits. The text about moving fish across state lines can be removed now. The Committee approved the scope of work with the modifications and caveats outlined above. The Committee acknowledged that depending on the number of fish captured, additional trips could be required in future years.
9. Entraining small-bodied cyprinids in Baeser pump – The pump at Baeser Bend has entrained small-bodied cyprinids. Dave Irving asks if modifications can be made to the filter, or the existing filter placed inside some kind of secondary filter, or other solutions might be found. A possibility exists that endangered fish could be entrained at certain times of the year. Dave Irving said the options for filtering the inflow seem to be somewhat limited, but they will continue to explore this.

10. Review reports due list – >Angela Kantola will revise and post to the listserver. *Done.*
11. Schedule next meeting – 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 5 (note, this was later changed to January 14) at the Grand Junction Holiday Inn (the Program Director’s office will make the necessary reservations). A conference call or web conference may be needed in the interim (to be determined).

ADJOURN by 3:30 p.m.

Attachment 1

Assignments carried over or modified from previous meetings:

1. Tom Nesler will see if CDOW can provide a report on Billy Atkinson’s work on pike in Catamount and the river below. Update provided at nonnative fish workshop; workshop participants recommended CDOW provide some kind of management plan. *1/17: Billy will provide a Catamount pike removal document/strategy by the end of February. 4/15: Nesler will provide update at BC. 4/28: Tom has reminded Billy that this is overdue and will try to get it to the BC as soon as possible. 6/13: Nesler received the draft today and provide it to the BC by the end of July. 8/18: Nesler will provide Billy Atkinson’s upper Yampa “strategy” report to the Biology Committee by September 18 (Nesler’s and Chart’s birthday). 10/30: Tom Nesler and Sherm Hebein will revise Billy’s report and provide that to the Recovery Program (Biology Committee, NNFSC, PI’s, etc.) along with an outline of CDOW’s strategy for nonnative fish management in the Yampa River above the diversions for discussion as part of the nonnative fish workshop. Tom Chart said it would be very helpful to have that outline before the December. 9-10 workshop. Sherm noted that Billy removed >2,000 np from Catamount this year (>4,000 np total). 1/15: The upper Yampa strategy has been separated out and provided to the Committee; Billy’s report is still being revised. 2/20: outline strategy provided prior to last meeting; full strategy due May 1. Tom Nesler will check on the status of revision of the Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan. 4/14: Colorado’s new completion date is May 1, 2009. (In the interim, CDOW will need to produce an Upper Yampa River strategy to assist the Program in our prioritization of 2009 field activities. This strategy should ultimately be incorporated into the Aquatic Wildlife Management Plan for the Yampa River Basin. 4/28: Tom Nesler said they don’t plan to provide a formal strategy, but will describe what they [primarily Billy Atkinson] are doing down through Steamboat and with regard to isolating sloughs in Sam Finney’s reach. See #3, above.) 1/15: The Upper Yampa strategy will be directly incorporated into the Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan (which will be completed by May 1, 2009). Tom Nesler will remind Sherm Hebein about this due date. 4/20: Tom Nesler said CDOW expects to meet this due date. 7/8: In CDOW review/revision with commitment to MC to provide by early July. 7/13: Draft will be available for internal review by mid-July. CDOW will send the draft out the States and Service (NNFSP) prior to Greg Gerlich’s final approval. 9/21: The draft final will be distributed to the Recovery Program office and the NNFSP Agreement signatories as a courtesy copy for review and comment as desired. This should be distributed fairly soon. 10/6: The plan has been sent to the Program Director’s office and the signatories to the NNFSP for courtesy review (comments due by the end of October). Pending comments received and further revision, Greg Gerlich and Tom Nesler will approve*

the plan.

2. The Program Director's office will work with CDOW and Aaron Webber on the potential for designing a permeable, hydrologically-stable (gravel?) berm to prevent northern pike access to the oxbow slough at RM 151 on the Yampa, and then clean it out once and for all. 2/15, 4/15: Pending. 4/28: Chart has discussed with Nesler and with the Partners for Wildlife Program, also. Will focus on this summer/fall. 6/13: CDOW will be contacting the landowner regarding access, if they are amenable, then CDOW and Program will determine a feasible solution (before the end of spring runoff). 8/18: Tom Chart said Sherm will try to get someone from CDOW on this as soon as possible. The Biology Committee would like a date certain on this; >Sherm Hebein will accelerate this. 10/30 said CDOW has contacted the property owners of the RM 151 backwater, but hasn't been able to meet with them yet. Mark Wernke from Reclamation is willing to take a look at the property with CDOW. A fairly long berm would be required (>3,000') and we'll need to determine the best type of berm (more permanent configurations could be very expensive). The funding source would need to be determined, with Partners for Fish and Wildlife, lottery funds, grant funds, etc. as possible sources to be explored. 1/15: Tom Nesler said they plan to get engineers develop specs/estimates this spring for something like a 10-year berm structure; the next step will be to find funding (perhaps as a habitat project through GOCO). This would be the first of three or four such projects. Tom Pitts suggested that if the Program provides some matching funds (annual or capital), it might improve the probability of getting GOCO money. Tom also suggested that if we have a project in the hopper, we might be able to compete for end-of-year Reclamation funds. 2/10: The PD's office considers this a high priority and will contribute funds, if available (see revised FY09 budget). This project also was submitted in the Service's list of potential projects for the Economic Stimulus Package. 2/20: Recovery Program funds likely available; CDOW working to get engineers on the ground; Nesler considering different approaches (berm, fill the oxbow, etc.). Muth and Chart discussed with Uilenberg; Wernke available when landowner grants access. Bob Muth suggested Jeff Blakeslee of TNC may know the landowner. 2/20: The Program Director's office will contact Jeff Blakeslee, and then get back with CDOW and Reclamation on the Yampa habitat work. 4/14: CDOW is handling. 4/20: Tom Nesler said they've met with the landowner and Reclamation engineers will do an onsite survey as soon as the snow melts. 7/13: CDOW has not yet asked Reclamation engineers to come on site. Tom Nesler will coordinate with Sherman after other State priorities (e.g. 98a report) have been accomplished. BuRec and CDOW are expected to visit the site in October and discuss design parameters as the basis of a cost estimate.
3. Within the next month, >the Service and Program Director's office will provide the Committee a draft addendum to the White River report that will present the measured flow requirements in a historical hydrologic perspective. The Program Director's office also will research where we left Schmidt and Orchard's draft report on peak (channel maintenance) flows and recommend whether to have it reviewed by the geomorphology panel. The Program Director's office will use the information currently available to >develop a position paper on Price River flow recommendations for Committee review. 10/16 Pending; out by the end of ~~November~~ 1/5: February 2009. 2/20: Bob Muth said he's making good progress on this and he'll have a draft to the Committee by ~~early March~~ end of April. 7/8: Mohrman and Chart expect to provide drafts of this and Price River report by the end of August 2009. 7/13: Dave Speas said the goal for the Narrows EIS is to get it out for public review in the

fall, so the above schedule should work. The PD's office will keep the Service's SLC-ES Larry's shop in the loop on Price River. 9/21: Chart and Mohrman have made good progress on this, but other priorities have so far prevented completion.

4. *Melissa believes an Environmental Assessment of the impacts of the Humpback chub captivity management plan (also addresses how to deal with captured roundtail chub) will need to be written; Krissy will work with Melissa on the EA. 7/13: Melissa needs to coordinate with the NPS if this is the case and she intends to do that in the next few weeks. 10/6: John Reber reported that Melissa Trammell will do the EA for this.*
5. *Krissy Wilson will provide Utah's Health Condition Profile to Tom Czapla. 4/20: Krissy has asked for a formal write-up from their hatchery folks. 7/13: Krissy will condense relevant information gleaned from hatchery managers and consider organizing workshop(s) in the future. 10/6: Krissy provided this information to Tom Czapla and will work with Tom to determine if a workshop is in order for hatchery personnel.*
6. *Tom Chart will ask Brett to include more detailed progress in the annual report as it applies to proposed revision / expansion of the C-18/19 project (as discussed during the 6/30 conf call).*
7. *UDWR will consider modifying their existing Deso/Gray HBC population estimate SOW to bring chubs into captivity. *Done.* The PD's office will investigate the need for permits and NEPA compliance.*
8. *The PD's office will communicate with Gary White to determine how many and which of the questions from the HBC workshop to focus on.*
9. *Tom Chart will investigate potential cost savings should the Program purchase GPPs/generators in bulk. 10/6: Tom Chart spoke to Smith-Root; they will reduce the price for orders of two or more units.*
10. *The PD's office, Vernal CRFP and UDWR will coordinate with the Ute Tribe (Jay Groves) to see if there is interest in a greater level of sampling on the White River. *Pending.* 10/6: UDWR has been sampling in the White and the Tribe will be sampling there next week.*
11. *Derek Elverud will provide the database for Westwater for Gary White to combine with Black Rocks, which will require a separate SOW. 10/6: Travis said they plan to complete the reports, then revisit the SOW.*

New Assignments

1. *The Program Director's office will revise the final report format to indicate the need to include the agreement number on final reports.*
2. *Reclamation and the Service will work together to get a qualified geomorphologist on the ground to quickly review the Butch Craig site (BLM also should be contacted). Once the geomorphologist reviews the site and prepares an opinion to be reviewed by the geomorphology panel. Then the Biology Committee will need to weigh the best biological*

options based on what the river is most likely to do.

3. Tom Chart will discuss Maybell Ditch with Patty Gelatt and will write a cover memo explaining the issues and potential next-steps and transmit John Hawkins' report to the Service.
4. Paul Badame will discuss the Desolation humpback chub proposal with Jay Groves. Dave Speas will check with Reclamation's helicopter pilot and Paul Badame and Mike Montagne will check on private helicopter options for taking fish out of the canyon (*done; boat option selected*). >Tom Chart will check to see if this work is covered under existing Federal collecting permits.
5. Angela Kantola will revise the reports due list and post it to the listserver. *Done*.
6. The Program Director's office will make the necessary reservations for the next meeting, 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 5 at the Grand Junction Holiday Inn.