

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE WEB CONFERENCE SUMMARY

April 2, 2009

CONVENE: 9:00 a.m.

1. Introductions, review/modify agenda and time allocations, and appoint a timekeeper – The agenda was revised as it appears below.
2. Approve [December 11 meeting summary](#) – The summary was approved as written.
3. Review of 2009 Congressional briefing trip – John Shields sent the trip summary on 4/1/09. John thought the trip went very well and good briefings were provided, especially to the eight freshmen members of the House. John thanked the water users for hosting the well-attended Congressional appreciation luncheon on March 6 and to Mike Montagne for his excellent presentation on propagation at that luncheon. Tom Pitts agreed that the trip went well and the new House members were quick studies who quickly understood and appreciated our partnership. We certainly would be quickly forgotten if not for these annual briefings. Tom noted the luncheon was very well attended this year; >John Shields will add a list of luncheon participants to the trip report. John noted that this was the first year wherein the trip occurred prior to the President's budget having been released; so the funding support letters still need to be circulated. John Shields said they had two meetings with OMB (with the budget analyst for FWS and then Reclamation's budget examiner). Tom Pitts commended John for his efforts to arrange all the briefings and also producing the trip report.
4. Proposed amendments to the [Recovery Programs' legislation](#) – President Obama signed Sec. Omnibus Public Lands Mgmt. Act (P.L. 111-11) on 3/30/09. Section 9107 of the Act authorizes an additional \$15 million in federal funds for the Upper Basin to repair/replace capital construction projects and construct the Tusher Wash fish screen (plus \$12 million for the San Juan) and extends the construction period through 2023. With regard to legislation to extend the period of annual funding at current levels from FY11 to FY23, Tom Pitts said that Sen. Bingaman is ready to introduce this bill; Tom has asked the States to request that their Senators cosponsor. Representative Salazar has offered to introduce the bill on the House side, likely after the recess (April 6-April 17). If this is passed and the cooperative agreement extended, that should take care of our needs for some time. John Shields noted that the lead staffer on this legislation, Mike Connor, has been nominated by the Secretary to be the Commissioner for Reclamation.
5. Extending the Program's cooperative agreement through 2023 – The Implementation Committee concurred with extending the [Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program cooperative agreement](#) and has asked the Management Committee to determine the signatories' willingness to sign before June 1, 2009 (if possible) and determine logistics for getting the signatures. Angela Kantola forwarded materials from Tom Pitts to the Management and Implementation committees on 3/2/09. Bryan Arroyo has indicated that Secretary Salazar *may* be interested in a signing ceremony in Denver. John Shields has contacted Tom Blickensderfer to see if Governor Freudenthal would be willing to

participate. Dan McAuliffe will check with Governor Ritter's office and we'll ask Robert King to check with Governor Huntsman's office. The Administrator of Western Area Power Administration, Timothy J. Meeks, is in Lakewood; >Bob Muth will contact Dan, Robert and Darin, and Clayton and ask for their assistance on this. Likely the ceremony itself won't be held by June 1. Information about the signing will be circulated among all Program partners, as others may want to participate, as well.

6. 2009 work plan update – Angela Kantola and Bob Muth provided an update on implementation of the [FY 09 work plan](#):

- With the approval of the WAC, a new Doppler gage is being installed on the Ouray bridge this year (the stage recorder will be installed before peak flow and a ling for real-time data will follow; the receiver itself likely will be installed after peak flow). This gage will provide a basis for refining the flow recommendations for critical habitat on the Green River near Ouray.
- A scope of work and costs are still being prepared for Elkhead releases O&M.
- Depending on developing hydrology, the Program *may* consider exercising its right to lease flows from Elkhead this year (potentially to reach the 300 cfs target again to help the native fishes and disadvantage nonnative fishes). If so, the Service must reserve at least 500 af by May 1; if more water is desired, the Service must reserve an additional 500 af by June 1, and if still more water is desired, must reserve the remaining 1,000 af. by July 1. Payment would be made in 2010.
- Confirmation is needed from Western regarding commitment of \$32,600 for the USGS Scientific Investigations Report on sediment funding (project #85f). Clayton said Western has agreed to provide this funding through their contract with Argonne. >Angela will call Clayton to get the necessary confirmations.
- BioMark will conduct a site visit later this year to determine the feasibility of a remote PIT-tag antenna array at the Price-Stubbs fish passage.
- Funding was considered to assist CDOW in modifying upper Yampa River habitat to reduce northern pike, but is premature (too late in the fiscal year to obligate funds), so this has been deferred to FY 2010 Program Guidance.
- Most nonnative fish management scopes of work have now been revised. A feasibility study for using floating weirs to manage nonnative fish will be conducted in 2009 (looking at the Duchesne and Yampa rivers). Weirs form a barrier to funnel fish through a portion of the channel and into a trap net. On the Duchesne, we might use a trap both upstream and downstream of a weir. Weirs could be especially helpful during low flows when we can no longer electrofish. Weir traps would be operated similar to fish ladders; any captured endangered fish would be released (although they are less likely to be moving during these lower flows). >Tom Chart will post the site visit dates to the fws-coloriver listserver so interested folks can participate. Wyoming is putting an aluminum picket (not floating) weir in the Big Sandy River this year.
- The Biology Committee plans to review scopes of work on Colorado River fish community response (CDOW) and genetic analysis of the *Gila* in captivity at Ouray NFH and Mumma NASRF (Dexter NFH) on April 20.
- An RFP has been issued for a programmatic synthesis of our nonnative fish management efforts (the RFP closes April 15).

- Analysis of stocked razorback sucker will be extended and a razorback sucker monitoring plan begun. A pilot study to monitor juvenile and larval razorback will be conducted in the lower Green River.
 - Major renovations will be made to the Grand Valley hatchery facility this year to repair insulation and install a new dehumidification system (funded partly with O&M and partly with capital funds). Brent said there's a good field of contractors and good bids on the hatchery repairs.
 - Courtesy of CWCB, the Recovery Program's scientific library is being scanned and will be made available on CWCB's public [Laserfiche web link](#). Dan said by the end of their fiscal year, that site will also link to university websites with water-related reports.
 - Brent said payment for both the Elkhead screen and enlargement was \$5,585,833, which was lower than expected (however, there were carry-over engineering costs which still need to be addressed).
 - Brent said that \$41.2K Grand Valley Project fish screen and passage O&M will not be adequate to operate the screen full time. >Brent will provide a more accurate budget estimate (Tom Czaplak also will work with Brent on this).
 - For capital projects management, \$100K will not likely be adequate this year, but they will keep it as low as possible.
7. Review of draft revised [RIPRAP](#) and assessment – The RIPRAP, or "Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan" is the Recovery Program's long-range plan, the meat of which is a set of Excel worksheets (RIPRAP tables). The Program Director's Office recommends revisions to and assesses progress under the RIPRAP each year, then these recommendations are reviewed by Program participants. Angela said the Implementation Committee has again given the Management Committee their proxy to approve these documents. Draft documents from the Program Director's office were posted to the fws-colorriver listserver on 2/7/09; revised draft documents incorporating technical committee comments were posted on 3/19/09. For ease of use, this year recommended revisions to the RIPRAP tables were combined with the draft assessment of progress. Italics and strikethrough indicate changes to the RIPRAP tables, but a Delta (triangle) symbol in the left column was used to indicate where a change is suggested instead of an arrow in the right column. The Committee expressed appreciation for this change. The RIPRAP text has been revised to reflect changes in the RIPRAP tables. The assessment of progress is found in the right column of each RIPRAP worksheet. It includes five worksheets named "Assmt -*" to provide further information on progress (numbers of fish stocked and flow augmentation). The Committee agreed the Report to Congress should be shown as complete. Brent asked about the need for additional hatchery ponds (lease or otherwise) and Bob Muth said they're looking into this. Brent asked about Utah and the Green River Canal Company's discussions about raising the Tusher diversion, noting that construction in 2010 is highly unlikely. On the White River, the Service has discussed developing a programmatic biological opinion for the White River when the Gunnison PBO nears completion; >Bob Muth will discuss this further with the Service. Regarding the assessment comment for additional peak flow augmentation on the Colorado River, Tom Pitts said he's okay with the language, but objected to the X on this since there wasn't a schedule in the Colorado River PBO. >Bob Muth will discuss this with the Service, but said the Service does feel strongly about this. Where specifics about fish status were deleted from the RIPRAP text (e.g.,

Gunnison River), Angela will make sure this is in the RIPRAP assessment (or in previous assessments). The Committee approved the RIPRAP assessment and revisions with minor changes; >Angela Kantola will finalize it and post it to the listserver and web.

8. Review/approval of draft FY 2010-2011 Program guidance – Angela said the Implementation Committee has again given the Management Committee their proxy to approve this document. Draft documents from the Program Director’s office were posted to the fws-coloriver listserver on 2/7/09; revised draft documents incorporating technical committee comments were posted on 3/19/09. Once approved by the Management Committee and finalized, Program Guidance will lead to development of scopes of work for a recommended work plan which will come to the Committee for review in August. Two worksheets in an Excel spreadsheet and a now-abbreviated Word document make up the draft Program Guidance. A third worksheet in the Excel spreadsheet contains the 2009 budget for reference. In the Word document, text related to all ongoing, ongoing-revised, and discontinued projects has been moved to the FY 2010 budget table in column M. This was done to reduce duplication between the text document and the budget tables, thus simplifying review and revision. Angela clarified that the language in the draft guidance regarding flat budgets in 2010 and 2011 relates to *inflationary* increases (as opposed to other salary increases that are part of agency policies) and suggested including that clarification in the final guidance; the Committee agreed. Brent noted that 2010 is not realistic for Tusher Wash fish screen construction. Bob Muth asked if the Tusher Wash canal might a potential site for a weir; >Tom Chart will discuss this with UDWR. The Committee approved the draft Program guidance with minor changes; >Angela Kantola will finalize it and post it to the listserver.
9. Updates
 - a. Sufficient progress items (see attachment).
 - b. [10,825 Alternatives](#) – Tom Pitts said the water users reached a conclusion on the 10,825 Ruedi replacement water that involves 1) drying up irrigation water near Granby and releasing about half of the 10,825 from Granby (which also improves conditions in the upper Colorado River in Grand County) at a cost of ~\$15-\$16M; and 2) a new contract with Reclamation for the remaining half of the water from Ruedi Reservoir. Water users are working on beginning NEPA compliance (a request letter was submitted to Reclamation by Northern yesterday). Water users are working out financing for the NEPA process. A municipal recreation contract will be needed to get the water from Granby to the 15-Mile Reach. The goal is to have the NEPA process completed and contracts in place by 2012. The PBO requires permanent agreements in place by December 2009; water users expect to complete those agreements on time (they will identify temporary sources prior to 2012 and permanent sources from 2012 forward). Bob Muth commended Tom Pitts for his hard work on this.
 - c. Environmental groups Biology Committee representative – Bob Muth noted that Betsy Blakeslee (of The Nature Conservancy) just informed us of her resignation from the Information and Education Committee (due to budget cuts), and now the environmental

groups have no representation on that Committee, either. >The Program Director's office will request a report on this from Tom Iseman, who had to leave the web conference early.

- d. Reports status – Angela Kantola posted an updated list to the fws-coloriver listserver on April 1. The list now shows reports to be reviewed by the Water Acquisition Committee, as well. The Biology Committee asked for additional status categories to help track late reports, so those have been added. Angela noted that some reports that are in review/revision are behind schedule, also.
 - e. Updated list of Section 7 consultations – The [list through 12/31/08](#) is available on the web; a list updated through 3/31/09 should be available by the end of April.
10. Upcoming Management Committee tasks, schedule next meeting – Brent suggested a face-to-face meeting in late May or early June to discuss capital cost ceiling issues. The meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday June 4 in Salt Lake City), probably at WAPA. >The Program Director's office will send out a confirmation notice (done: meeting will be 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.); >Clayton Palmer will arrange the meeting room. >The Program Director's office also will suggest dates for a meeting in August. Dave Mazour said Tri-State's has a conference room (which can easily accommodate 20-25) reserved for the September 24 Implementation Committee meeting.

ADJOURN 11:04 a.m.

Assignments

Carry-over from previous meetings:

1. The **Service** will meet to consider if it would be acceptable to screen the irrigation water and not the low-head hydropower water at Tusher Wash or if there are other ways (e.g., a weir wall) to achieve our objectives for screening Tusher Wash. *Discussions underway; but pending decisions on dam rehabilitation.*
2. The **Program Director's office** will provide a more specific recommendation regarding establishing a basinwide recovery/conservation oversight team for the endangered fishes.
3. **Brent Uilenberg** will provide revised RIPRAP budget table ASAP. *Pending outcome of capital funds indexing discussions.*
4. **Tom Pitts** will arrange a meeting of Program participants with assistant Colorado DNR Director [Doug Robotham](#) (to include John Shields, Tom Iseman, Bob Muth, and perhaps others), focusing on nonnative fish issues and the status of the legislation.
5. The **Service** will provide (informal) clarification to the Management Committee on how they interpret the Section 7 Agreement to apply in the case of the potential >4,500 af Green River Pumping Project depletion.
6. **John Reber** will notify Steve Guertin (and cc: the rest of the Implementation Committee and the PD's office) that he is now the Park Service's representative on the Implementation Committee.
7. **Tom Iseman** will prepare a scope of work for potential candidates to represent the environmental groups on the Biology Committee.
8. **The Service** will keep the Management Committee informed of their progress in converting from jeopardy to non-jeopardy biological opinions.

New Assignments

1. **John Shields** will add a list of luncheon participants to the D.C. trip report.
2. **Bob Muth** will e-mail **John Shields, Dan McAuliffe, Robert King** and **Clayton Palmer** about determining willingness and availability of the Governors and the Administrator of Western Area Power Administration (Timothy J. Meeks, in Lakewood) for a signing ceremony to extend the Program's cooperative agreement through 2023. *Done; seeking to set a date for the signing in July or August.*
3. **Angela Kantola** will call **Clayton Palmer** to get the necessary confirmations of Western's commitment of \$32,600 for the USGS Scientific Investigations Report on

sediment funding (project #85f). *Done; Clayton and Kirk LaGory making arrangements to provide funds to USGS.*

4. **Tom Chart** will post the weir site visit dates to the fws-listserver so those interested can participate.
5. **Brent Uilenberg** will provide a more accurate budget estimate Grand Valley Project fish screen and passage O&M (**Tom Czapla** will also be working with Brent on this).
6. **Bob Muth** will further discuss with the Service developing a programmatic biological opinion for the White River when the Gunnison PBO nears completion.
7. **Bob Muth** will discuss the “X” on the assessment comment for additional peak flow augmentation on the Colorado River with the **Service**.
8. **Angela Kantola** will finalize the RIPRAP and assessment and post it to the listserver and web.
9. **Tom Chart** will discuss with **UDWR** whether the Tusher Wash canal might be a potential site for a weir.
10. **Angela Kantola** will finalize the draft Program guidance and post it to the listserver (*done*).
11. The **Program Director’s office** will request a report on environmental group representation on the Biology and Information & Education committees from **Tom Iseman** (*report requested*).
12. The **Program Director’s office** will send out an e-mail to confirm availability for the next meeting, June 4, in Salt Lake City (*done; meeting set for June 4, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.*). **Clayton Palmer** will arrange the meeting room. The **Program Director’s office** also will suggest dates for a meeting in August.

Attachment 1
Participants
Colorado River Management Committee Web Conference
April 2, 2009

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg and Tom Ryan	Bureau of Reclamation
Dan McAuliffe	State of Colorado
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
John Shields	State of Wyoming
Bob Muth for Julie Lyke	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dave Mazour	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
John Reber	National Park Service
Tom Iseman	The Nature Conservancy
Clayton Palmer	Western Area Power Administration was not represented

(Robert King from Utah was not available)

Nonvoting Member:

Bob Muth	Recovery Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
----------	---

Recovery Program Staff:

Angela Kantola	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tom Chart	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others:

Leslie James	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
Melissa Trammell	National Park Service (Acting Biology Committee Chair)
Krissy Wilson	Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Dave Speas	Bureau of Reclamation
Jana Mohrman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Action Items from 2008 Sufficient Progress Memo

General (Upper Colorado River and Green River Subbasins)

ACTION ITEM (1): The Service will continue to closely follow the effectiveness of nonnative fish management actions and the responses of the endangered and other native fishes. Data should continue to be reported annually, and necessary changes to nonnative fish management actions should be made in a timely fashion. The Program needs to initiate second-level synthesis of nonnative fish removal data beginning in 2008. *The Nonnative Fish Subcommittee has been working on this and the Program Director's Office expects to recommend issuing an RFP (released 2/20/09; proposals due 4/15/09).*

ACTION ITEM (2): The Program Director's office will coordinate with the Wahweap hatchery to ensure that the middle Green River bonytail are stocked near Jensen (in the alluvial reach) rather than at Island Park. The Mumma hatchery will continue to expose bonytail to flows for as long as two weeks prior to stocking. *Being done.*

ACTION ITEM (3): Principal investigators and the Program Director's Office should meet to further scrutinize initial population estimates, techniques, and environmental influences (at least for humpback chub in 2008). A [research framework project](#) (building on results and recommendations of previous population estimates and information developed as a result of previous population estimate workshops) is conducting additional data analyses to further understand environmental variables and life-history traits influencing the dynamics of Colorado pikeminnow and humpback chub populations. The draft research framework report is expected in August 2008. Results will be used to refine hypotheses and direct management actions. *Draft research framework report may be late (pending Rich Valdez work). 8/12: John Shields asked if we've considered starting this with a subbasin approach (e.g., Green River) first, then developing the larger report. 12/8: The work completed to date on the research framework project has been an Access database of the literature, and two draft reports dated December 2006 and October 5, 2007 to the Program Office. The draft reports contain conceptual life history models for each endangered fish species that identify and describe principal environmental stressors to various life stages and an initial spreadsheet identifying principal Recovery Action Plan management actions and monitoring programs. A final draft report will be submitted to the Program Director's Office by April 1 and to the Biology Committee by May 1, 2009. This report will link RIPRAP activities with hypotheses for each species by life stage, analyze how well we're addressing those hypotheses, and make recommendations for future management, research, and monitoring. 4/2/09: Tom Czaplá meeting with Rich Valdez this week.*

Green River Subbasin – Green River

ACTION ITEM (4): The Flaming Gorge Technical Work Group (Reclamation, the Service, and Western) needs to continue to provide brief updates on current and projected Flaming Gorge operations at each Biology Committee meeting. In 2008, the Program will initiate a Request for Proposal to synthesize the physical and biological information

on backwater nursery habitats. *RFP pending. 11/26/08: PD's office reconsidering need for RFP; may pursue a collaborative proposal by recognized experts, instead. 2/23/09: Will be conducted by Argonne and Larval Fish Laboratory; 4/2/09: BC reviewed and approved scope of work 3/24/09.*

ACTION ITEM (5): The Recovery Program and the Utah's State Engineer's office will work on mechanisms (extending the existing subordination) to protect year-round flows in the Green River below the Duchesne River to the Colorado River confluence. *In progress since this summer; anticipated to take about one year. 11/26/08: On track down to Duchesne/White confluence, the next step will be to pursue protection down to Green/Colorado confluence. (2/23/09: The 1994 subordination was only for summer-fall flows to the Jensen gage.)*

Green River Subbasin – Yampa River

ACTION ITEM (6): The Program's Yampa nonnative fish management program needs to be modified in 2009 to match the [Yampa River Nonnative Fish Management Strategy](#). In particular, northern pike removal efforts need to focus on reproduction/recruitment sources and the Program needs to take advantage of every opportunity to remove smallmouth bass (e.g., remove smallmouth bass wherever northern pike removal occurs). *Pending. John Shields noted Colorado also needs to complete their Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan by May 2009, as promised. 11/21/08: On track; based on recent data, CDOW expanding smallmouth bass removal throughout critical habitat in the Yampa River). CDOW will provide an outline of a conceptual framework for upper Yampa River northern pike strategy for December 2008 nonnative fish workshop. CDOW will complete Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan and upper Yampa northern pike strategy by May 2009. 2/23/09: Conceptual framework of strategy was provided prior to January 2009 researchers meeting; 4/2 expecting full strategy by May 2009.*

Green River Subbasin – Duchesne River

ACTION ITEM (7): Following completion of the Myton Diversion rehabilitation, the Program, Service, and Duchesne Work Group will work together to determine changes in ongoing monitoring efforts necessary to further evaluate the flow recommendations. *Construction begins this fall and will be completed before irrigation season next spring. 11/25/08: Construction work on the Myton Diversion Dam Rehabilitation is proceeding on schedule. Concrete placements will be completed fall 2008. Gates and associated controls will be installed in February 2009 and the entire project completed in March 2009 prior to the 2009 irrigation season. 4/2: Myton Diversion rehabilitation completed.*

Green River Subbasin – White River

ACTION ITEM (8): The Service and the Program Director's Office will revise and finalize [flow recommendations for the White River](#). The program should emphasize timely completion of the flow recommendations and work with Colorado to protect the recommended flows. *The Program Director's office will bring recommendations on*

finalizing the White River flow recommendations report to the Biology Committee next week. John Shields emphasized the importance of this report in light of the scrutiny it will receive from the energy industry. Dan McAuliffe asked if the Program contemplates acquiring water rights, noting that CWCB has \$500,000/year available to acquire instream flows to protect endangered species (an acquisition plan is required). 11/26/08: 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 by the end of January 2009 (also will recommendations for the Price River). 2/23/09: Behind schedule, but will be sent to the Biology Committee for review by 4/2: ~~3/31/09~~ 4/30/09.

Upper Colorado River Subbasin – Colorado River

ACTION ITEM (9): Closer coordination will be maintained by meeting twice a year with Grand Valley water users and conducting conference calls as needed to discuss river conditions prior to the weekly Historic User Pool calls. The focus should be on taking full advantage of water savings brought about by operation of the Grand Valley Water Management project for late summer flow augmentation. *Brent said HUP calls began last week. Tom Pitts asked about the meaning of the last sentence; Brent Uilenberg said at issue is arriving at a consensus on Green Mountain Reservoir surplus early enough in the process to do the most good for fish habitat. Eric Kuhn has suggested an arrangement with FWS in which if too much water is released early on, FWS would back-stop that with water from the "fish pools" in Ruedi, Wolford and/or Williams Fork; another approach would be to get better predictions (based on snow pack) of expected base flows at Cameo.*

11/25/08: An HUP Managing Entities and Water Managers Meeting was conducted on 6/25/08 to begin coordination for the 2008 irrigation season. The first HUP weekly conference call was conducted on 8/5/08, and calls continued through 10/29/08. Green Mountain Reservoir releases to augment flows in the 15-Mile Reach were initiated on 8/27/08, and concluded 10/29/08. A total of 73,024 acre-feet of water was released from Green Mountain Reservoir. Additionally, 20,423 acre-feet, 10,431 acre-feet and 10,377 acre-feet were released from Ruedi, Wolford Mountain and Williams Fork reservoirs respectively. These releases were the result of the cooperative efforts of participating reservoir operators and Grand Valley irrigation entities, 9,586 af of which were to address the unique circumstances caused by operational issues at the Shoshone Power Plant. Diversion records for the 2008 irrigation season have not yet been compiled for the Grand Valley Water Users Association; however, based upon preliminary information irrigation diversions were reduced by a substantial amount as a result of the operations of the Grand Valley Water Management Facilities. A report on actual results will be provided when irrigation diversion records are available from the Colorado Division 5 Office of the State Engineer. The Service's 15-Mile Reach flow targets were met or exceeded for the majority of the irrigation season. (This data is based upon early provisional data provided by the Colorado Division 5 Office of the State Engineer.) 4/2: Michelle Garrison at CWCB will put together a proposal for using State-MOD for these projections; no work yet on insurance pool.

ACTION ITEM (10): The goal of the [10,825 Project](#) is to have agreements signed with the Service prior to December 2009 committing east slope and west slope water users to permanent sources of Ruedi replacement water, as required by the Colorado River programmatic biological opinion. *Alternative selected and this is on track.*

Upper Colorado River Subbasin – Gunnison River

ACTION ITEM (11): Pending completion of the [Aspinall EIS](#) (and while continuing to emphasize timely completion of the EIS), Reclamation, the Service, and Western Area Power Administration and other cooperators need to determine how they can better manage Aspinall spring flows to meet endangered fish needs within existing operational procedures. *Draft EIS may go out to the cooperators this week, to the public by late October or early November. The last formal schedule from BOR contemplated a final EIS and ROD by the end of 2008; however, given the required review timeframes it is more likely that these will be in place before spring 2009. Clayton Palmer said that based on their review of the alternatives, Western is likely to have substantive comments on the draft released to the cooperating agencies.*

11/25/08: Cooperating agencies have completed reviews of the preliminary draft EIS on Aspinall Unit operations. Reclamation has tentatively identified a preferred alternative in informal consultation with the Service. Many issues have been resolved with the cooperating agencies and an operation plan including peak flow targets, duration targets, and base flows is generally agreed upon. A programmatic biological assessment is being prepared concurrently with the draft EIS. The assessment would address public and private water uses in the Gunnison Basin. The selenium issue is the major factor in delaying completion of the BA, and consequently the EIS. The issue includes the significance of selenium levels in fish recovery and the significant costs associated with accelerating selenium reduction programs. Draft EIS is scheduled for release in January 2009 with a final EIS and Record of Decision in June and July of 2009 respectively.

12/11: Brent said there will be an internal review draft of the draft EIS and biological assessment next week, then it will go to the printer with possible release to the public in January 2009. Reclamation will have a pre-consultation meeting with the Service on the biological assessment, particularly related to the selenium issue. 2/23/09: The [draft EIS](#) was released 2/13/09. 3/25/09: Comments on the draft EIS are due by April 24th. The EIS includes 4 action alternatives to assist in meeting flow recommendations. Public hearings will be held in Gunnison and Delta on April 7 and 8, respectively. The FWS is preparing a draft PBO to address the reoperation of the Aspinall Unit and existing water uses in the Basin. A minor amount of future water use will be included in the evaluation. The PBO will also serve to complete consultations on the Dolores and Dallas Projects. To date the only comments received are from Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer, Dolores Water Conservancy District, and Dave Miller. Significant issues/concerns that may come up during the review include how to address selenium in the basin and how to coordinate the Black Canyon reserved right with the endangered fish flows.