

March 10, 2015, Water Acquisition Committee Webinar Summary

Participants: Michelle Garrison, James Greer, Tom Pitts, Jana Mohrman, Tom Chart, Melissa Trammell, Robert Wigington, Ray Tenney, Bart Miller, and Angela Kantola

Assignments are indicated in the document in bold, preceded by a “>”.

CONVENE 1:00 p.m.

1. Introductions, review/modify agenda – The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Review 9/8/14 meeting summary – Jana will finalize the summary (removing the reference to graphs since she sent those as a separate powerpoint).
3. Powerpoint presentation of Program highlights including:
 - a. Updated Section 7 consultation table can be found at <http://www.coloradoriverrecovery.org/documents-publications/section-7-consultation/consultation-list.html>
 - b. 2015 snowpack conditions are average and below average at this point. Consequences of lower flows are: less floodplain connection, esp. important for young razorback sucker; Green River base flows <2,000 do not favor age-0 Colorado pikeminnow; and nonnative smallmouth bass will spawn successfully.
 - c. Reproduction, abundance, and recruitment dynamics of young Colorado pikeminnow in the Green River Basin, Utah and Colorado, 1979-2012 Bestgen’s FR BW Synthesis report
 - d. Geomorphology Peak Flow Study Plan, etc. – Group likely will recommend the Program consider evaluating peak flow targets using long term embeddedness with basic invertebrate productivity studies in the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers, and a sediment budget in the Green River. A first step may be asking Doug Osmundson to write up results of the last ten years of embeddedness data he’s collected on the 15-mile reach of the Colorado river.
 - e. Consider additional instream flow designations? (E.g., Yampa River in Colorado, and perhaps the Gunnison might also benefit.) Tom Pitts said he thinks we need to review what we have. The RODs are one mechanism for protecting flows, but we need to determine if those are adequate. The municipal-recreation contracts are another protection mechanism, as is the contract that protects Elkhead releases. We need to identify what we have and what the gaps are in terms of meeting downlisting and delisting criteria. Tom Pitts suggested we also need to look at what happens when we reach the depletion amounts identified in the PBOs. Jana Mohrman agreed, noting others (basin roundtables) have been asking about that, as well. Tom Pitts said his opinion is that the Service issued PBOs saying that if the activities in the PBO are undertaken, that will cover existing depletions plus a certain additional amount. If there are going to be additional depletions, Tom Pitts said he thinks the Service likely will have to revisit the PBOs. The amounts in the PBOs are not “caps,” but “checkpoints.” **>Jana will prepare a table of what flow protections we have and share that with the Committee.**
 - f. 15-Mile Reach PBO calls for an evaluation in 2015 (may need a subcommittee). Jana said Colorado’s depletion accounting may drive the timing of this. Tom Chart said Ron Thomason’s HUP report summarizes how we’ve reached flow targets, good biological

reporting on Colorado pikeminnow population estimates and further downstream humpback chub population estimates, also ISMP monitoring. Tom Chart said this will involve compiling a fair bit of good information we have available, but starting with the PBO to see what the Service wanted to see tracked. Tom Pitts agreed a subcommittee would be a good way to identify issues and frame the exercise. Tom Pitts said the water users see this as very important in remaining in compliance with the PBO. Tom Pitts, Michelle Garrison, and Bart Miller all were willing to serve on the subcommittee. Jana Mohrman suggested perhaps Ron Thomason, and someone from the Service's Grand Junction CRFP office. **>Jana will kick this off shortly after the PDO reviews the PBO to frame the information needs. >Tom Pitts will e-mail Tom Chart and Jana the language from the PBO relative to the 2015 review (with a copy to Melissa Trammell).** Jana said Colorado's depletion accounting may drive the timing of this.

- g. Jana Mohrman is working to provide additional GIS layer of critical habitat and other key endangered fish habitat features for the oil and gas industry.

4. Updates

- a. White River SOW for Management Plan – Michelle said she'll be working through questions with their contracting division on this next week so they can issue a request for proposals or qualifications to develop a White River Management Plan. Funding for this remains secure.
- b. Depletion accounting – Michelle said CWCB is still working on updating the model that will address both the Colorado and Yampa depletion accounting. She's meeting with the contractors next week and will then have a better sense of when the models will be fully operational. This is still a couple of months out before they start the depletion accounting. It could look very different this time in light of the change in the way they're modeling. They will go back in time to show how the current model estimates both past and future depletions. Michelle said they believe the current models are more accurate. **>The PDO will check the Gunnison PBO to see what/if depletion accounting it requires.**
- c. Potential CWCB lease of water for 15-Mile Reach – Michelle said their instream flow section is considering leasing water for 3-5 years from Ute Water for from Ruedi Reservoir. The primary purpose would be to augment flows in the 15-Mile Reach in the late summer and potentially for an "April Hole." Ute Water has 12,000 af. Their board will consider this next week, and if they support it, the Instream Flow Section and Ute Water will continue discussions. Public outreach also would need to occur. The water could be available as early as this August or December. CWCB has a 581 cfs instream flow right in the 15-Mile Reach, as well, that can play a role in very dry years. In dry years, the releases would be made to that instream flow right. Tom Pitts recommended early consultation with Reclamation to be sure all this will fit within their NEPA compliance for Ruedi. Michelle said Ute checked their contract and it includes releases for these purposes. Michelle will double-check the process. CWCB's Instream Flow Section has funding available for this purpose.
- d. GRUWAT – James Greer said they've analyzed model results and are summarizing them into a document they'll be sharing soon, hopefully by the end of April. James said the GRUWAT may meet one more time to review the draft. The next step will be attaining additional authority to protect flows in Utah. Robert King will be leading the effort to look at the next steps to get that authority and likely will be providing the future updates to this committee. James said they've had some internal meetings as well as meetings with Reclamation to look at possible contracts Utah could make with Reclamation on Flaming Gorge water rights. Robert

Wigington mentioned early white papers on this topic and **>James will share those with Robert King and copy Robert Wigington to cross-check (James also will cc Jana).**

- e. CFOPs – Tom Pitts said this is a 15-Mile Reach PBO item, but he’s not going to be able to find the time to finish the report. Tom Pitts has suggested to Tom Chart that we contract for this using Section 7 funds. Tom Chart and Jana support this. **>Tom Pitts will help formulate the scope of work.** The Committee approved this approach.

5. Review RIPRAP and 2016-2017 Program Guidance

a. Draft revised RIPRAP tables and draft RIPRAP assessment (Excel spreadsheet)

- Robert asked how the peak flow technical supplement will mesh with the other study plans. Jana said that they’ve reviewed basins where it’s important to re-assess peak flows and prioritized actions in the technical supplement; the actions will become part of the Green River and Gunnison River study plans. Kirk LaGory will be instrumental in finalizing the supplement; as he’s been very busy we don’t yet know when the supplement will be finalized. Fit into the existing flow recommendations review schedule.
- Robert asked about new starts for Green River flow evaluation; Tom Chart said they plan to have a kick-off meeting with Kirk LaGory and Kevin Bestgen in April. Patno, Speas, Trammell, Mohrman, and others also will have a role. **>The PDO will add info to item I.D. in the Green River Study Plan to reference the Green River flow recommendations evaluation.**
- Backwater synthesis study – Tom Chart said he received a draft report from Argonne about ten days ago. Anticipate to the BC/WAC around the end of April. (See also the assessment column of Green River, item I.D.1.h.)
- Robert suggested that the Yampa and Colorado depletion accounting items should consider the State Water Plan and Basin Implementation Plans. Can we use the acreage in those Basin Implementation Plans? If those are done, why do we need an update on depletion accounting or acreage? Michelle said not every basin updated demands in a way that would be helpful for the depletion accounting. The Yampa information will be available and will be used. The current lag in getting the depletion accounting completed isn’t for lack of updated irrigated acreage information. One of the tasks in the related water avail study was as the BIPs get finalized, CWCB would provide some resources to review if there are discrepancies between what they’ve modeled and what’s in the BIPs.
- Robert asked if we’ll be able to use the basin plan from the White in the Management Plan; Michelle said yes.
- **>The PDO will make sure the 2015 checkpoint for the 15-Mile Reach PBO appears in the RIPRAP.**
- Robert Wigington asked about the suite of studies in the Aspinall Study Plan and the 5-year checkpoint. Tom Chart said we need a range of flows, we’ve had two dry years and one barely moderately wet, so we haven’t yet had a broad range of flows to evaluate. The 2016 checkpoint is indicated at I.D.2 in the Gunnison RIPRAP table.

- Robert Wigington asked about the flooding concern (at the Skipper’s Island Bridge) in the Grand Valley; Tom Chart suggested perhaps we need to review potential long-term solutions with DOT. Michelle Garrison thought that would be a good idea. This bridge has always flooded in the 10% exceedance years, so CDOT may want to do something about it, anyway. **>Jana Mohrman will check with CDOT.**
 - Robert Wigington asked about the hydrophone study; **>Jana will check with USGS on a report write-up.** Jana said the peak flow study group is looking at a depth-to-embeddedness study first.
 - Robert Wigington asked about Dolores River flow management and suggested including this in the review of Gunnison River PBO items for flow management. **>The PDO will incorporate this into the Gunnison PBO review this year** (odd-year sufficient progress reviews include review of the 15-Mile Reach and Gunnison River PBOs).
- b. Draft revised RIPRAP text (Word document) - The Committee had no questions or comments on the RIPRAP text.
 - c. Draft FY 16-17 Program Guidance (brief Word document and an Excel spreadsheet)
 - Tom Pitts asked about the Price River flow protection work plan. Nothing is moving forward definitively at this point (other than the discussions about Desert Lake). A number of possible initiatives have been/are being considered. Tom Chart suggested we keep in mind the continued use of tributaries by the endangered species and look for opportunities to cooperate with partners where possible.
6. Schedule next meeting, webinar, or conference call – Jana suggested another call/webinar in ~ 3 months when we have news on the White River contract, GRUWAT, CFOPs, and hydrophones. Jana will send out a Doodle poll at the appropriate time.

ADJOURN 3:25 p.m.