



# Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

## Water Acquisition Committee Meeting Notes March 2, 2017

**CONVENE:** 9:00 a.m.

Participants: .Don Anderson, .Tom Chart, .Mark Wondzell, .Ryan Christianson, .Ray Tenney, .Bart Miller, .Brent Uilenberg, .Erik Knight, .Michelle Garrison, .James Greer, .Tom Pitts, .Kevin McAbee, .Julie Stahli, and .Angela Kantola.

> Denotes a needed action item

### 1. **RIPRAP and FY 18-19 Program Guidance** (Angela)

An overview and opportunity for the WAC to weigh-in on the Program Director Office's draft RIPRAP table revisions, progress assessments, and FY 2018-19 Program Guidance. In particular the Section 1 items pertaining to "Providing and Protecting Instream Flows."

Using the draft text in column P of IA4a on the General tab as an example, Tom Pitts recommended taking out any assumptions about how post-Program activities will be funded, focusing on needed activities and justifications for them. Bart recommended that some general statement be made indicating post-2023 funding sources have yet to be identified. Tom Chart suggested including a paragraph in the RIPRAP text, e.g., as Tom Pitts suggested: "Activities that have led to recovery of the species will need to be continued after the species are delisted." >The PDO will draft that paragraph. Tom Chart said he's discussed with Bart Miller items and actions that will need to be included in cooperative agreements with the states prior to delisting; Tom asked if we should identify those actions as ones upon which delisting will be contingent. Pitts: flow augmentation, fish screen and passage operation, potentially nonnative fish management etc. all will need to be continued post-Program. Angela suggested the post-2023 column contain *all* activities anticipated to be required for the species post-2023; Tom Chart added that he recommends we indicate there (at least parenthetically) items which will be required for de-listing. >Tom Chart will review the RIPRAP tables and annotate along the lines we've just discussed prior to the Management Committee's review on March 27.

#### RIPRAP Tables

##### General

>Don will follow up on Toby's references for hydrophone work.

I.E. Bart notes that the efforts of the flow protection working group should be referenced.

##### Green

IA3d. P - Tom Pitts asked what Utah's responsibility is anticipated to be post-program.

Tom Chart noted a responsibility to legally protect flows. Tom Pitts recommends striking

“in perpetuity” to avoid judgemental words. James Greer asks that all States be included in the responsibility to provide conservation flows.

IA4b(2)(g) - James Greer recommends adding legal flow protection responsibilities in FY18. Angela recommends adding FY18 in IA4b(3) as well. >PDO will add to RIPRAP text.

IB3b - Tom notes this activity is pending but no years are identified for action. Bart notes this occurs in conjunction with above activity (IA4b(2)(g)).

IC3 and IC4 - no status is listed. James asked if these are necessary for recovery. Tom Chart notes that BO for the Narrows project identified actions needed to be taken by Program, which is how the Price (which is not critical habitat) appeared in the RIPRAP. The Nature Conservancy is working with UT and BLM to evaluate opportunities to establish water pools in Olsen Reservoir to supplement summer flows in the lower Price River (IC3 switched to Pending).

ID1b4b and ID1c are also blank for status, both currently in progress through GREAT efforts and should be occurring in FY17 and 18.

#### Yampa

IB3e - Bart recommends adding one more x in FY18 as recommendations from other efforts are developed.

#### Duschene

IC1a - Kevin McAbee notes a question mark in Status. >PDO will email Mike Mills at CUWCD and Henry Maddox. Also needed for IB2.

#### White

Tom Chart praised Michelle Garrison for contracting to fund the White River basin modeling through the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District.

#### Colorado

IA3c >CWCB (Brenda) will work on depletion accounting to fulfill requirements of 15-Mile Reach PBO. Bart asked if this needs more x's in out years. Michelle noted this work will be complete in FY17. Tom Chart asked if Michelle could provide a revised due date for this depletion accounting report during the MC's March 27, 2017 mtg; > Michelle said she could.

#### RIPRAP Text

Page 31 - Angela recommends additions to match the table to reflect schedule changes. Tom Chart mentioned that the PDO has tried to incorporate revised floodplain management concepts, described in the recent Speas et al. paper, throughout the RIPRAP and text.

## 2. **GREAT review of flow and temp recommendations for Green River** (Don)

The GREAT team held face-to-face meetings in Lakewood the week of February 6. These were very productive for reaching consensus on proposed updates to the flow recommendation tables based on Muth et al., now taking into account research findings relating to floodplain wetland management, competition from nonnatives, etc. *Experimental*

flow recommendations have been incorporated into the tables, including: timing peak flows based on the larval trigger, adding a spring spike flow to disadvantage bass, and elevating base flows in drier years. The team is working on a draft report it hopes to make available for review by a wider audience, including the Biology and Water Acquisition committees, by July. Heather Patno, Kirk LaGory, and Kevin Bestgen are currently doing the heaviest lifting on this.

Mark Wondzell asked to be included in the GREAT efforts; Tom Chart said he was welcome to join and Don Anderson will add him to the list for biweekly conference calls.

### 3. **GRUWAT** (James Greer)

This technical group continues to consider appropriate modeling scenarios for “Full” and “Modified/Likely” future water development along the Green River System in Utah in the context of Utah’s remaining unused Colorado River allocation. On that basis, assessments will be made of the potential impacts of future water development on recommended Green River flows, and possible strategies to address those impacts. James said the model is complete and they have been running different scenarios and confirming results. Had been running “current” and “future” depletion scenarios, but in Utah, they used scenarios based on water rights allocations, looking at how much actual water could be developed. Utah’s allocation 1.369MAF, current use ~1MAF, leaving ~360KAF. Knowing of future projects that won’t be on the Green River, how much remaining allocation which is about 194KAF, so they ran a new scenario on that number. Cooperators are reviewing that scenario run and identifying discrepancies. That is all complete and they have a white paper in internal review. (Meanwhile, the results have been shared and are available on request.) Utah is using those results and working with the Service on how flow recommendations can be protected under the identified development scenarios.

### 4. **Long-Term Flow Protection** (Don)

Increased attention is being paid to long-term flow protection needs for the Program fishes in light of the 2023 Program horizon and the potential for de-listing or down-listing of species. As a starting point, Jana Mohrman, Robert Wigington and others have compiled a matrix summarizing, river-by-river and reach-by-reach, flow recommendations and the mechanisms for flow protection currently in place. This will serve as a tool to help identify and prioritize flow protection needs, and begin formulating corresponding conservation agreements or other appropriate flow-protection mechanisms. Don noted that much of the protection currently in place is in the form of PBOs and RODs, which potentially could lose some of their force post-Program, thus mechanisms for longer-term protection need to be considered. The draft matrix should be sent to the Water Acquisition Committee next week, then Don would like to form a workgroup to focus on this. The 15-Mile Reach may be a good pilot project for identifying long-term protection mechanisms. Brent thought that would be a very good test case. We’re currently heavily reliant on the municipal-recreation contract option. Bart and Michelle supported this, also.

### 5. **15-Mile Reach PBO Review** (Tom Chart)

The Director's Office is undertaking the required 2015 review of the 15-Mile Reach PBO, to determine whether the Program remains in compliance (as it relates to 60,000 af threshold and fish status). While PDO has some concerns about flow target achievement and the population status of fish, the draft report, which should be available for committee review this summer, does not at this time identify a need to re-open the PBO. Fish population response has remained fairly neutral, so we're still looking at that first 60,000 af of actual depletions as our next Section 7 checkpoint. Assume we can identify that we completed this checkpoint either through a sufficient progress letter or through a letter from the Service to their files.

**6. White River SOW & Flow Recommendations (Don)**

The Wilson Water Group, with assistance from Tom Econopouly (FWS), has developed a preliminary analysis of possible White River flow targets through an analysis of historic White River flows and published flow recommendations. Possible future demand scenarios for the river now need to be formulated in consultation with the Yampa/White/Green Rivers roundtable, for an assessment of potential impacts on flow targets. Don added that Toby Minear (now with CU) has done some hydrophone work on the Gunnison, is eager to do more work, and may do this on the White River this year to help us understand what kind of peak flows help mobilize bedload in various reaches of the White River (perhaps by mobile use of hydrophones pulled behind a raft). Don mentioned that Tom E. and WWG have been looking at historic flows as basis for possible White River late irrigation season baseflow targets. WWG will be working with the Yampa/White River roundtable.

**7. Other Group Updates or Questions (Anybody)**

(None)

Schedule next meeting, webinar, or conference call - Don will schedule via Doodle poll as needed; at the very latest in early or mid-July for FY18-19 Work Plan.

ADJOURN: 11:10 am