



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dated: 4/24/2018

Water Acquisition Committee (WAC) Summary

CONVENE: 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Attendees: Don Anderson, Kevin McAbee, Tom Chart; Mark Wondzell; Edalin Koziol; Michelle Garrison; Lain Leoniak; Tom Pitts; Bart Miller; Erik Knight, Ryan Christianson; Ray Tenney; Jared Hansen.

1. Introductions, review/modify agenda
2. Edits and approval of July 11, 2017 Meeting Notes - no comments; draft approved.
3. **RIPRAP** (Kevin McAbee and Don Anderson)

Kevin and Don solicited WAC input on the PDO's draft RIPRAP table with its 2017 revisions and progress assessments, and walked the committee through the relevant sections of those documents. WAC comments and proposed edits to the materials were recorded, including those below.

RIPRAP Table -- general WAC comments

- Tom Pitts noted that more RIPRAP cleanup is needed. E.g: the meaning of various status labels like “ongoing”, “in progress”, “dropped”, “pending”, and “on hold” is not entirely clear. Also, the X's in the FY boxes might be more specific as to what is being accomplished and by whom? A glossary/legend for some of these items would be helpful.
 - The PDO agreed to add a glossary tab with definitions for the terminology used and descriptions of other spreadsheet conventions. (*Done, glossary added*).
 - Pitts indicated that a comprehensive cleanup of this spreadsheet is not necessary during this review period, but as a long-term need the Program should pay attention to going forward. (*The PDO will look into the structure over the course of the 2018 review*).
- Tom Pitts also asked whether we might identify which of these RIPRAP activities have associated Scopes of Work, and are currently funded? This could provide more useful descriptions of the status of the activity, and associated project end-dates.
- Tom Pitts asked whether there should be a link to the issues that FWS has highlighted in its ‘sufficient progress’ report? Kevin noted that the descriptions tagged with bold X's and exclamation points in the RIPRAP table are intended to highlight those issues that are significant and important

for FWS to track with respect to Program progress.

General Tab comments:

- Consider breaking General item I.A.4.b.(2) into individual sub-basin actions. *(Done. Left the item as one row because this is a general description of activities and as specific river actions will be implemented, actions will be added on the basin specific tab.)*
- Under 1.B.3, we should specify why activities like this are now considered “dropped”. *(>Need input from CWCB.)*
- I.E flow protection -- this activity should be broken out to track progress by subbasin. *(Tracking current protections and potential protection deficiencies within the instream flow protection spreadsheet. This is a general description and subbasin specific actions are described within each subbasin tab.)*
- Revising recovery program goals and plans (VII.A.5(d)) needs to include X’s to indicate continued activity out to at least 2021. *(Done)*

Green River Tab comments:

- Tom Pitts asked whether 1.A.4.b(2) listing only Green River is the best way to characterize this activity. *(PDO will consider a possible reorganization of subactivities in this tab for next year’s RIPRAP updates).*
- I.A.4.a(3) -- It was suggested that ‘Adopt policy’ should be labeled as being complete vs. ‘Provide flow protection’ and ‘Implement and evaluate’ as activities that will continue into out years *(Done)* > PDO needs to ask James Greer how often they are evaluating the implementation of this policy. *(Done. Greer indicates that the policy remains in effect, but has yet to be seriously ‘tested’ in terms of any major new water right applications to which it would be applied).*
- Suggestion to separate ‘Develop work plan’ from ‘Provide annual progress report’ under I.A.4.b(2)(a). *(Done. Marked workplan as complete and added line for MC updates.)*
- There is a need to better characterize GRUWAT activities and the status of those activities under the corresponding Green River subactivities. >PDO will attempt to clean this up. *(Done.)*
- There is a need to more clearly organize and identify the relevant Green River basin locations under IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, and move/sequence these topics more logically (e.g., present the Green River activities first, then nest Price then San Rafael River activities underneath). >PDO will attempt to clean this up. *(PDO will consider this change after RIPRAP review period).*

Yampa Tab

- PDO updates are needed to 1.B.2.a(2) to establish more appropriate and logical Elkhead Reservoir subheadings *(Done.)*
- I.A.1.g -- NPS is monitoring sediment at Maybell. The WAC suggests adding this information to the table, even though this is not a Program-sponsored activity. *(Done. Don checked with NPS for more information. Mark Wondzell indicates that since 2012 the NPS has sponsored USGS to collect continuous suspended-sediment monitoring data at the Yampa River at Deerlodge and Maybell gage locations; and also on the Little Snake River near Lily.)*
- Should add an X in 1.B.3.e under the fiscal year corresponding to the next 5-

year review. *(Done)*

Duchesne Tab

- > PDO will talk to James Greer to see if he has any updates on the Duchesne River flow agreements. *(Done. Additional flow protections are not currently being proposed for the Duchesne River beyond the Lower Duchesne Workgroup's ongoing implementation of the current CCAA/SHA agreements).*

White River Tab

- No substantive comments.

Colorado Tab

- Need clarification in the table regarding the 1.B.5.a subactivities. This work was started in the 1990's with the BOR remote sensing group, so is it time to revisit their value and relevance, and possibly drop from this table? Some high flow and low flow aerial photography is already completed -- the question now is if and when would more airborne imagery be of value to the Program. Mark Wondzell noted that for years the NPS has been occasionally capturing aerial imagery along floodplains of the Colorado and Green Rivers in Utah -- these data are now more LiDAR-focused. These data are collected opportunistically, NPS has no regular schedule for this image collection. Ray Tenney noted that a very low baseflow year may offer a particularly good opportunity to gather additional imagery. The Program does not have a SOW specific to this effort. Tom Chart indicated we may need to go back and look at the original scopes and intent of this effort in order to characterize appropriately in the RIPRAP table. >PDO will work with NPS to capture better description of what they currently do. *(Done. Mark Wondzell confirmed that the State of Utah, with support from NPS and others, collected LiDAR and orthophotography of the Colorado River from Lake Powell to the state line in October 2015, a relatively low-flow year.)*

Gunnison Tab

- The "New start" status descriptions under I.D. are unclear and need attention. (Also under selenium toxicity) > PDO will revisit these status descriptions and recharacterize them as appropriate. *(Done. Changed to 'pending' to match new glossary).*
- 1.D.1 - Tom Pitts suggested we should separate out 'develop study plan' from 'evaluate selenium program'. The descriptions of the corresponding subactivities in general need to be better aligned with the most recent Program needs assessments, the current status of these activities, and most recent information.

● RIPRAP Text

- > PDO will check in with Nancy Smith re the TNC White River question. *(Done. TNC indicates that the "Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable has not yet addressed scientific uncertainties or mechanisms to protect environmental and recreational resources on the White below Kenney" Similarly, the status of the Colorado River below the Gunnison confluence remains valid, as the 'next phase' of identifying scientific uncertainties not yet implemented.)*
- McAbee: this Friday is the final deadline for redline/markups to the text

document, but the sooner WAC comments provided the better. Kevin will incorporate those comments, along with BC comments received next week, and fold them into the version shared with the MC.

4. Updates on Flow Recommendations

NOTE: The following updates on Items #4 through #7 were provided to the WAC with the annotated meeting agenda, but due to lack of time were not discussed in this conference call *except:*

Bart Miller asked for additional information about the status of the GREAT team's draft report (first bullet below). Tom Chart stated that the draft report is well along, but various delays -- particularly in completing additional Flaming Gorge modeling for the report -- have set back the availability of the draft for technical committee reviews. Kevin McAbee noted that Kirk LaGory and Kevin Bestgen will be providing the BC with an update on that report effort at the BC meeting next week; those interested are welcome to call-in on April 3 at 8:30 MT via phone.

- **Green River: Review of flow and temperature recommendations**

The GREAT team is conferencing regularly to review the status of team assignments, reach consensus on the GREAT report final contents, and complete the draft document. Principal authors are Kirk LaGory (lead), Kevin Bestgen (fish biology), Dave Speas (water temperatures), Heather Patno (Flaming Gorge operations modeling), and Jerry Wilhite (power impacts). Kirk hopes to have a draft of the document available for technical committee review by April. The report will recommend experimental flows that include larval-triggered Flaming Gorge spring operations, modified base flows, and occasional spike flows to disadvantage smallmouth bass. Report completion has been delayed by multiple factors, including extensive discussions of monitoring needs and the emergence of various modeling questions related to Flaming Gorge operations

- **White River: Development of flow recommendations**

The White River Planning Team is meeting regularly to develop lower White River flow recommendations and a future water development scenario which will serve as the basis for development of a Management Plan, an interagency agreement, and a Programmatic Biological Opinion. The Team hopes to have draft peak flow and base flow recommendations available for technical committee and peer reviews this summer. The effort includes updates to the draft Flow Recommendations Report (2012) with more recent hydrologic analyses and biologic information. The Workgroup is also developing an outline for the content of the White River Management Plan. CWCB needs to finalize and issue an RFP to contract the development and writing of that Plan.

- **Yampa River: Re-visit existing flow recommendations?**

The PDO proposes initiating a review of, and possible revisions to, the existing (1999-2008) flow recommendations for the Yampa River, in light of:

- Additional fisheries data and related Yampa River studies completed since 2008;
- Experience, since 2007, in augmenting flows using the Elkhead Reservoir fish pool;

- Completion of the Maybell Canal headworks improvements in 2017;
- Interest in clarifying appropriate target flows for wetter years; and
- Recent modeling and evaluation of future water development alternatives in the Yampa River basin by the Yampa-White-Green Roundtable, and initial efforts by that group to develop a long-term river management plan.

The PDO is drafting a possible Scope of Work for undertaking this review.

5. Green River Flow Request 2018

The technical committees and the MC have now had the opportunity to review and comment the Recovery Program's 2018 Green River flow request letter. Our 2018 request mimics those of the past several years: we request that Reclamation (a) continue larval-triggered spring operations at Flaming Gorge Dam; (b) continue to experiment with Reach 2 base flows shifted toward the higher end of the recommended range; (c) consider future experimentation (but not in 2018) with an early summer spike flow to disadvantage smallmouth bass.

6. Post-2023 flow protection

Discussions among stakeholders are underway to determine what will replace the Recovery Program upon expiration of the current Cooperative Agreement in 2023. Eventually (perhaps fall of this year?) those guiding this process will request support from a water technical workgroup to recommend strategies/mechanisms/actions to ensure long-term flow protections to support species recovery within the envisioned framework/structure of the post-2023 Program. Given the current mix of mechanisms and the varied status of flow protections in place for various rivers in the upper basin, we anticipate a lot of intense work ahead in a tight timeframe.

7. Other Topics. No other topics were raised in this meeting.

Scheduling the next meeting, webinar, or conference call -> Don will send a Doodle poll for the next meeting when agenda items necessitate a meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.