



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dated: 7/31/2019

Water Acquisition Committee Webinar Summary Notes

CONVENED: 9:00 a.m. Thursday, March 28, 2019

888.842.7194 passcode 209309#

Webinar Instructions at the end of this document

Participants: Jojo La, Mark Wondzell, Edalin Koziol, Michelle Garrison, Melissa Trammel, Ryan Christianson, Laura Belanger, Ray Tenney, Rachel Musil (Central Utah WCD), James Greer, KyleWhitaker, Tom Chart, Kevin McAbee, Tom Pitts (joined late)

► These arrows denote remaining follow-up task items.

1. Introductions, review/modify agenda -- No changes made to agenda.
2. The March 27, 2018 Meeting Notes were approved and will be posted to the Program's website.
3. **RIPRAP** (Kevin McAbee and Don Anderson, 2 hrs)

The Program Director's Office solicited WAC input on:

- Summary of 2019 Report Recommendations (distributed by Kevin McAbee in his 2/4/19 email)
- Draft updates to the RIPRAP table and text (also in McAbee's 2/4/19 email)
- Program Guidance text review (McAbee distributed in 2/28/19 email)

Report Recommendations

Kevin McAbee asked if there were any questions on the Report Recommendations document. Jojo La noted that the draft Yampa new depletions report was provided just a few weeks ago, so that Recommendation is out of date. The PDO updated the Report accordingly.

Hydrology Summary

This is now provided as a standalone pdf document along with the other RIPRAP materials. Kevin and Don described its purpose. No WAC comments on this summary were provided.

RIPRAP Table (with particular focus on instream flow elements)

Jojo asked about cell color-coding. Light blue = complete; neon green = indicates PDO or a committee made a change; italics indicate added text; strikeout dropped text. Except for Column M which changes every year, yellow = more PDO attention needed. Mark Wondzell suggested adding this information to the table Glossary. PDO has done so.

Kevin explained that, generally, this table updates the status of these activities only through January 2019, although some post-January developments of particular import may be included.

General Tab

- Jojo asked whether we should note that S47 passed (P.L. 116-9), even though passage occurred after Jan 2019. > This has been added to the table at VII.B.2.
- Row IIB – Melissa Trammel pointed out the important information that mercury concentrations described in the Osmundsun and Lusk report are of concern for fish health, especially for the White and Green rivers. The exclamation point for the report was removed, and column M now notes the concern that mercury concentrations are higher than recommended. This also raised the question of whether the PDO tracks this concern in the individual river basin tabs. (PDO note: no, this is not separately tracked under the White or Green river tabs). We did not track recommendations from this peer reviewed article in our Report Recommendations doc as their work was not funded by the Program. We track these water quality issues in the general tab.

Stocking Tab

- No WAC comments.

Green River Tab

- Row I.A.4.a discussion: Edalin Kozial asked about the status of “protection of summer/fall flows” in the Green River, and whether the description in column M was still accurate given the complaint filed against the FONSI that Reclamation signed for the Green River Block exchange contract. James Greer noted that the Green River Block exchange contract has been signed, now it’s a matter of waiting to see what may happen with legal challenges. James noted that GRUWAT modeling hinged on certain assumptions that might be impacted by the two contract agreements (i.e., Green River Block and Lake Powell Pipeline), and he expressed interest in re-analyzing Reach 3 now, taking those contract effects into account. James indicated Utah anticipates doing such an updated analysis within the next year if possible. James noted that the Lake Powell Pipeline draft EIS has also been completed and will be addressed in a public meeting. With respect to row I.A.4.b.(2)(f) (“analyze model results”), this suggests that past GRUWAT assumptions may now be incorrect. Edalin asked what does “legal protection” mean, and how should that be modeled? James indicated its important to first re-visit the Green River modeling of future depletions, and Utah plans to do that. Chart asked whether James could provide an update by our planned July WAC meeting, and James guessed there would be enough movement forward by then to give a useful update. James expressed interest in reinitiating discussions with the FWS Utah Ecological Services field office to address the need identified in Column M for “better understanding ... FWS’s perspectives on legal protection for flows in Utah”.
▶ This topic will be put on the July WAC agenda.

- I.D.2. -- Jojo asked about the Green River study and monitoring plans, for example relating to WAPA's interest in evaluating the power impacts of the proposed experimental flows. Tom Chart indicated that this and other Green River monitoring needs are probably best addressed by the Management Committee in the context of reviewing and discussing the draft GREAT Report when that's provided.
- Row I.D.2.f -- Melissa clarified this monitoring study plan is being put together, but there's more follow-up work to come, therefore we should put X's on the out-years. Also NPS won't be the sole group, should add the PDO. These changes were made.

Yampa River

- Row I.B.4 – Column M was updated to note that the draft Yampa Depletions Accounting was provided by CWCB on March 5th. Tom Chart noted this accounting report will be coming to WAC for review after PDO reviews it. Michelle clarified that CWCB intentionally at this time is not providing a “back-casted baseline” with this report. This clarification was added in Column M of the RIPRAP table; this possible highlights a technical discussion needed with a broader group. Tom Chart suggested we have that discussion next year after we know what the final report looks like.
- I.B.2.a.(1)(c) Revisiting transit losses on the Yampa River – Jojo indicated that this work will be completed in 2019 and a technical memo will be forthcoming describing the basis for the revised Yampa transit losses. This row was modified to identify Colorado Division of Water Resources as a key cooperater in this effort.

White River

- I.B.3 Develop and Implement a White River management plan – this row was updated to clarify that CWCB is waiting on the Wolf Creek Reservoir feasibility study before launching the RFP for White River Management Plan.
- Edalin asked whether the next White River modeling runs should be identified in the RIPRAP table (e.g., at I.B.3). The group thought this was too much detail for the RIPRAP, but Don provided an update on where that process currently stands and what's expected next.
- Edalin asked about “flow protection” mechanisms for the White River and whether the Program should be proceeding more aggressively with identifying what those might be and should look like. Don and Tom described the process for getting to a White River Management Plan and their thinking that the appropriate associated flow protection strategies are probably most effectively addressed at that step in the process.
- Kevin cited appreciation to Rio Blanco for implementing the White River flow spike last year. Even though that exercise in 2018 wasn't targeted at smallmouth bass suppression (instead, the primary intent and timing was to knock back *Cladophora*

algae), it did represent a successful pulse release experiment and demonstrates opportunities to potentially replicate such pulses in the future for various reasons, including non-native suppression.

Duchesne River

- 1.C. Legally protect and deliver identified flows. The table was updated to clarify that the referenced “spill of fish water” from Starvation Reservoir occurred in 2018. McAbee noted that fish flow augmentation water is the first to be spilled from this reservoir’s storage, thus the value of including this information in this table.

Colorado River

- Kevin let the WAC know the BC had a couple of RIPRAP table questions that merit potential WAC attention: for example, the BC wondered whether among the many grey boxes, typically used as headers for the information below, there were problems with not capturing appropriate details. McAbee invited the WAC to weigh-in if they saw problems with the greyed boxes, however the WAC identified no such concerns.
- 1.A.3.c. Colorado River depletions accounting reporting. Tom Pitts and Tom Chart noted that it’s beneficial and important for the WAC to see the full report and consider the data therein. Wording in Column M was modified to reflect the fact that preliminary summary results shared by CWCB at the Implementation Committee meeting September 2018 have been further updated since then. Michelle indicated that ► if the PDO likes the format of the draft Yampa Report as currently submitted, let CWCB know, so that the Colorado River report can be framed similarly. She indicated that the updated summary graphs could be provided shortly, but more discussions with the PDO would be appropriate to determine what information might be shared/used now for the 15-Mile Reach PBO review or other purposes.
- 1.B.5.a.(1) and (2). Regarding NPS aerial imagery of the river system: Mark Wondzell confirmed there is no NPS plan or program to collect these data on a regular basis, however they are collected opportunistically. He suggested replicating this information in the RIPRAP table for Canyonlands as well as Dinosaur (the table has been updated accordingly, see item I.D.2.b.(3) on the Green River tab). The primary purpose of this imagery is to help track vegetation encroachment and channel changes.
- Tom Pitts suggested the PDO distribute a copy of the March 11 thank-you letter FWS Regional Director Noreen Walsh sent to the Colorado River District (recognizing their extraordinary efforts to help support instream flows for endangered fish in 2018). Don distributed to those on the Program listserve on March 29.

Gunnison River

- 1.C. Kevin shared BC’s question as to whether it is accurate to say that 1.C items are “on hold”? Michelle said that what’s been “put on hold” are filings for instream flows in the Gunnison River system. Item 1.C.1.a has slowed-down, but is ongoing and should be labeled as such. 1.C.2.a is best characterized as “pending”. Remaining 1.C.2 items “on hold”. PDO updated the table accordingly.

Dolores River

- The PDO has recognized the important development of the decreed CWCB instream flow right for the Dolores River by adding a new line-item to the Dolores tab to highlight this development (Item I.). The WAC is supportive.
- Kevin noted that MC will review this updated RIPRAP table and text at their April 25/26 meeting. Thus everybody’s comments and suggested changes to this are needed by COB today.

RIPRAP Text Review

The tracked changes version was shared with the WAC.

- Pages 10 and 12 were updated at Edalin’s suggestion to reflect that the authorizing legislation has been passed (hooray!)
- Page 17 -- language referencing the Green River Exchange Contract was updated to better reflect the current status of that contract.
- Page 41 -- After some WAC discussion, Don Anderson was asked to research the ‘reevaluation of instream flow rights every 5 years’ reference – i.e., what exactly is required and what is the current status of this? We need to go back and review when this was last discussed. Michelle noted this also addressed in the depletion reports, and she guessed it’s been at least 4 or 5 years. She said some of the opposition to ISF filings may not be as strong now as it used to be, but in the past the focus intentionally was shifted to relying more on contracted water to meet 15-Mile Reach flow needs. Tom Pitts said we need be specific about when the next review due. Is this called out in the PBO review as a requirement? If so, PDO needs to address. ► The PDO will follow-up on this item. (We were unable to get a definitive answer in time to update the RIPRAP text for distribution to the MC.)
- Page 40 – The last sentence in the paragraph addressing ‘reevaluation of how flows will be legally protected in Colorado’ was updated to clarify that this would be pursued in conjunction with completion of the White River management plan.

Draft Program Guidance Text

Kevin described this document as essentially eliciting Scopes of Work (SOWs) from the PI’s for program projects. The request is to provide these to the corresponding Program Office coordinators by Monday April 29. These then will be reviewed by the PDO. Then put into final draft form and submitted to WAC and other committees for review & approval. This year we are asking for use of USBR’s budget template. In some cases this will require a significant effort, but in the long-run this is expected to streamline and

simplify the contracting and funding process. A conference call was held earlier this week to orient interested folks on how to convert their project information into these new budget spreadsheet formats, so hopefully this won't be too problematic for our PI's.

The other item is a list of projects expected to have significant changes. This will also go out to MC "soon". The WAC did not have any additional questions or suggestions on this document, nor did they identify any specific missing projects.

4. River Basin Updates

- Green River (Don and Tom)
 - Status of GREAT review of flow and temperature recommendations
 - A draft GREAT report is expected to be shared with technical committees in a month or two.
 - Green River Flow Request 2019
 - Finalized flow request was submitted to USBR on March 22, 2019.
 - Green River monitoring plans
 - GREAT recommendations include experimental flow regimes, which will be paired with monitoring programs to evaluate the results and impacts on various resources. For example, monitoring potential channel narrowing as a result of elevated base flows to benefit young Colorado pikeminnow.
 - Larval drift study
 - Studies investigations into razorback sucker entrainment into off-channel floodplains. USFWS (using extra-Program funds) and USGS are working to provide funds to CSU to field verify some USGS modeling results along a portion of the Green River.
- White River (Don)
 - Status of flow recommendations and basin Management Plan development
 - See RIPRAP. Expected a feasibility study for the Wolf Creek Reservoir to be completed in 2019 (size, funding, operations, etc.).
- Colorado River 15-Mile Reach (Don)
 - Likely hydrologic conditions and operations in 2019
 - Snowpack is above median in most locations across the basin. Yay!
 - Notable water acquisition efforts
 - Colorado Water Trust has been working to secure water to benefit the 15-MR via OMID hydropower. Up to 1000 AF to off-set the April hole and/or other water for use later in the irrigation season may be leased for this purpose.
- Yampa River (Don)
 - Proposal to upgrade the Maybell diversion
 - TNC and Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable (YWGBRT) are putting together a proposal for funding to improve the headgate system at Maybell for better control over the rate of diversions from the Yampa into the canal. This work could also improve recreational and fish passage. TNC

indicates the Program will be invited to participate in the design discussions when and if this moves forward.

- Yampa Integrated Basin Management Plan
 - The PDO will track the YWGBRT's efforts for common actions to benefit the Yampa River. CWCB has provided the YBRD a watershed planning grant for this purpose.
- Yampa Draft Depletion report – Jojo
 - Draft depletion evaluation covers 2006-2015, and shows no net increase in depletions. It shows decreases in average depletions compared to the historical uses, potentially from reduced crop consumptive use.

5. Post-2023 flow protection (Don)

Work continues to determine what will replace the Recovery Program upon expiration of the current Cooperative Agreement in 2023. In February 2019 the Program Director's Office (PDO) convened technical workgroups to recommend post-2023 mechanisms/actions to ensure long-term instream flow protection in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming sufficient to support continued species recovery. Additional technical workgroups were convened March 4 through 8 to develop similar post-2023 recommendations the other five Program elements (habitat restoration and protection; non-native fish control; propagation and genetic integrity; research and monitoring; and information and education). The PDO now needs to clean up and align the "menus" of options for each program element, assign estimated costs, and work with Program stakeholders to determine a preferred package of actions to be continued post-2023.

6. Schedule next meeting, webinar, or conference call

The WAC needs to meet to review SOWs in July. Don will send a poll to schedule that webinar.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned just after noon.