



Outreach Committee Summary

April 8, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm (MST)



Attendance

OC Members: Justyn Liff (Chair, BOR), Michael Gross (FWS GV Hatchery), Tonya Kieffer-Selby (UDWR), Rich Belt (Water Users), Courtney Harris (WAPA), Rachael Gonzales (CPW), Adriana Zorrilla (FWS R6)

Program Office (PO): Julie Stahli (UC PO), Paul Badame (UC PO)

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began with a round of introductions, during which members shared their favorite endangered fish species. The icebreaker sparked light-hearted discussion and highlighted personal connections to the Program's mission. Adriana Zorrilla and Michael Gross both described being "kissed" by razorback suckers during field work, while Rich Belt selected the humpback chub in recognition of its successful downlisting and significance as a recovery model.

Julie and Justyn acknowledged staffing changes in the Program Office, including the recent departure of Shannon Nelson, who accepted a public affairs role in Reclamation's Albuquerque office. The Outreach Coordinator position remains vacant, and due to federal hiring constraints, the Program has prioritized filling the Nonnative Fish Coordinator position first.

Review of Assignments from January 30, 2025

Paul Badame reviewed the assignment list and noted that several items remain in progress or on hold due to the Outreach Coordinator vacancy. Key updates included:

- **Success Stories Planner and Distribution List:** Committee members are encouraged to continue adding content and contacts. The shared location remains unchanged ([Success Stories Shared Distribution List](#)).
- **Tribal Partner Engagement:** Melissa Mata planned to schedule a meeting with Tribal partners but had not yet sent a Doodle poll or convened the group. Adriana Zorrilla emphasized the need for additional support and capacity to advance tribal engagement efforts.
- **High School Hatchery Concept:** Melissa had preliminary discussions in the San Juan Basin and remains interested. The Committee agreed that this idea merits further exploration.
- **Educational Fish Props:** Michael Gross reported a significant reduction in estimated cost, with a local sign company quoting \$125 per set (down from ~\$900). One test set will be purchased through GJ FWCO to evaluate quality and demand.
- **NCTC Panels and Training:** Michael noted a lull in upcoming NCTC engagements but committed to sharing new opportunities as they arise.
- **Success Stories:** Rachael Gonzales highlighted several upcoming events, including the Elkhead Reservoir Tournament and potential stocking features. She noted time constraints may limit coverage of the Rifle Gap project.

- **Zebra Mussel Update:** Rachael shared that CPW is refilling Highline Lake and will begin water sampling at the end of April. She is drafting a news release to announce the next phase of monitoring.
- **Colorado River Festival:** Mike, Rachael, and David Graf from the PO will discuss if anyone has time available to attend the <https://grandvalleyriverfest.com/> on May 17.

Outreach Planning and Coordination

Julie Stahli shared that while outreach remains a Program priority, staffing and funding constraints have forced the Program Office to reassess its approach. For now, the committee will continue meeting 2–3 times annually, and the Program Office will focus on supporting partner-led efforts through materials, logistics, and coordination. Julie will follow up individually with Committee members to better understand what’s working, what’s not, and where support is most needed.

Julie and others expressed appreciation for the creativity and energy that partners bring to outreach—especially given the reduced staffing—and emphasized the Program’s desire to support and elevate these efforts wherever possible.

Introduction to Recovery Action Plan (RAP) Structure

Reference: [RAP Presentation](#)

Julie provided an overview of the revised RAP structure, noting its dual purpose as a planning tool and implementation tracker. The RAP now includes:

- **Elements:** Broad categories of work (e.g., Outreach, Habitat, Propagation)
- **Focus Areas:** Thematic sub-categories under each Element
- **Objectives:** Measurable goals within each Focus Area
- **Activities:** Discrete tasks linked to each Objective
- **Metrics:** Quantitative or qualitative indicators of progress

The RAP is now managed in a database format, allowing for flexible queries and better integration with the annual work plan. The Outreach Element includes three Focus Areas: **Awareness**, **Engagement**, and **Stakeholders**. Each contains Objectives that reflect both current Program activities and future goals.

The committee reviewed a dashboard-style summary showing each Outreach Objective with color-coded progress indicators. Most were marked as accomplished, with only one activity (supporting nonnative fish removal outreach) flagged for further discussion.

Discussion of Outreach Objectives and Metrics

Reference: [Outreach RAP Tables](#)

The group discussed how best to define and measure success across Outreach activities. Key themes included:

- **Media Engagement:** Adriana noted that FWS follows administration guidance in media engagement. Rachael and Tonya suggested that partners can play a leading role in developing and distributing stories. Rachael referenced recent coordination with the Grand Junction Jackalopes, who will promote native fish through an alternate team identity: the “Humpback Chubs.”

- **Social Media & Analytics:** Adriana and Tonya emphasized the value of measuring reach, sentiment, and engagement rather than focusing on quantity alone. CPW and UDWR both use tools like Sprout Social and Critical Mention to track impact and can share relevant data with the Program Office to support RAP assessments.
- **Event Metrics:** Tonya described Utah's use of Eventbrite and post-event surveys to gather feedback and calculate Net Promoter Scores. This system helps evaluate the quality and effectiveness of outreach events.
- **Clarifying Objectives:** Rich Belt asked whether the Program is clear about what it wants the public to do beyond simply raising awareness. Julie agreed this is an important topic for future discussion and encouraged the committee to reflect on whether objectives are tied to meaningful outcomes.
- **Partner Contributions:** The committee recognized that many Outreach activities are already embedded in partner agency work plans. Tonya shared that UDWR's outreach efforts to sixth-grade classrooms are tracked internally but also serve Recovery Program goals.

Julie reiterated that the RAP structure is flexible and can accommodate different partner approaches. She encouraged feedback on how activities are categorized, how success is defined, and what metrics are most meaningful.

Partner Updates

- **Rachael Gonzales (CPW)** provided updates on a variety of local events and outreach opportunities. She noted that while a feature on the Rifle Gap project is still possible, her current focus is on upcoming activities in the Elkhead and Grand Valley areas. She is planning coverage for the **Elkhead Reservoir fishing tournament** in July and ongoing stocking efforts. Rachael also shared that CPW has begun refilling **Highline Lake**, and zebra mussel monitoring and water sampling will begin at the end of April. A news release will be issued to inform the public.
- Rachael also offered to help coordinate the Program's involvement in **Heritage Days**, now rebranded as **CPW's "Cast, Blast, and Glass event,"** taking place later this month at Palisade Park. CPW will bring out educational displays, including a fish tank, and is exploring additional opportunities for Program visibility.
- **Michael Gross** confirmed that the [Colorado River Festival](#) is scheduled for **May 17**, although he will be out of town during the event. Rachael will follow up with local CPW contacts to confirm details and explore opportunities for partner engagement.
- A discussion emerged around the **Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District's annual fishing derby at Kenney Reservoir** ([2025 Derby Flyer](#)). Paul noted that this was the only outreach activity marked as "discussion needed" in the RAP table, due to lack of clarity about an in-river fishing portion of the derby and potential overlap with Program smallmouth bass removal efforts. Rachael confirmed that CPW is supporting the event, which is scheduled for **June 7-8**. Rich will reach out to Alden with Rio Blanco to gather more information, following that the PO and Vernal FWCO will coordinate removal efforts as appropriate.
- **Rachael Gonzales** also shared that the **Grand Junction Jackalopes** (<https://gjjackalopes.com/landing/index>) will be playing several home games under a new alternate identity as the **Grand Junction Chubs**, in honor of the Humpback Chub. The announcement was scheduled for release later that day. Partners see this as a creative

opportunity to engage local audiences in native fish conservation, and plans are in motion to bring a fish tank to one of the games to support education and outreach efforts. Some **new Chub merchandise** just came online following the meeting (<https://5db4d9-4e.myshopify.com/>)

- **Tonya Kieffer-Selby (UDWR)** highlighted ongoing outreach efforts in Utah, including **sixth-grade classroom visits** that reached approximately 500 students this year. She shared examples of how UDWR tracks outreach outcomes through event registration platforms (like Eventbrite), follow-up surveys, and internal performance reports. Tonya also offered to share templates and analytics reports with the Program Office.
- **Adriana Zorrilla (FWS)** emphasized the importance of measuring **sentiment and visibility** in outreach efforts. She committed to working with her agency's social media specialist to identify ways FWS can help **amplify Program-related stories**. Adriana also advocated for stronger coordination on news story planning so that partners can better support dissemination and promotion efforts across platforms.

Next Meeting Date

The committee will reconvene in July 2025. A Doodle poll will be sent to identify the best date.

Action Items

1. **All committee members are asked to review the Outreach portion of the RAP** ([Outreach RAP Tables](#)) and provide comments by May 31. In particular, feedback on metrics, focus areas, and how success should be defined is encouraged.
2. **Julie will schedule individual follow-ups** with committee members to discuss feedback and ensure their efforts are accurately reflected in the RAP.
3. **Rich will reach out to Alden with Rio Blanco** to gather more information about the June 7-8, 2025 Kenney Reservoir fishing derby to determine if there are plans to include fishing below the dam for smallmouth bass, following that the PO and Vernal FWCO will coordinate removal efforts as appropriate.
4. **Michael Gross will purchase one set of educational fish props** from a local sign company quoting \$125 per set (down from ~\$900). Once the quality is assured, Michael will send out an email to assess demand. Following that the PO will complete the purchase of the requested sets.