

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting: Colorado River Management Committee, Craig, Colorado

Date: June 7, 2000

Attendees: See Attachment 1

>Assignments are highlighted in the text.

CONVENE - 10:20 a.m.

1. Review/modify agenda and time allocations and appoint a time-keeper - The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. The Nature Conservancy's continued participation in the Recovery Program - Over the years, conservation groups have questioned the on-the-ground conservation benefits of their involvement in the Recovery Program. Last year, a senior manager recommended that TNC withdraw from the Program, but after a year of discussion, they have agreed to participate an additional 2 years (after which they will evaluate progress and determine whether they should continue). However, sometime this summer Robert Wigington will step back from the Management Committee and be replaced by another TNC representative. Program participants were pleased that TNC will continue to participate in the Program.
3. Approve February 23-24 and April 7 meeting summaries - The summaries were approved as written.
4. Update on long-term funding legislation - Tom Pitts reported that the Senate bill was marked up, passed out of full Committee, and referred to the floor this morning. Language was added to assure that the Reclamation Reform Act does not apply to this bill and a related sentence was removed from Section 4. At the last minute, Reclamation informed them that the language wouldn't accomplish what they wanted. However, any problems will be resolved on the floor. On the House side, as of ~3 weeks ago, Bob Faber still wanted to shift the funding source to USFWS. Tom Pitts asked delegation members to send letters to Doolittle asking for the bill to be marked up and passed out of committee without modification. Those letters have been sent. Allen Freemyer will talk with Faber about getting the bill moved through House, since it has gone through the Senate. John Shields distributed a letter Senator Enzi sent to the Wyoming Water Association explaining that he won't support the legislation because he thinks recovery should be wholly Federally funded.
5. Discussion of policy issues related to recovery goals, and the upper basin criteria

Susan Baker said she believes that issues between Regions 6 and 2 have been worked out, or at least put on the back burner. Region 2 will not disagree with what Region 6 wants to publish in the Federal Register. Ralph Morgenweck wants to make sure what we publish in the Federal Register is biologically and legally defensible, and is supported by the Recovery Program stakeholders.

Henry Maddux said Program staff and Rich Valdez met with the Biology Committee and got general agreement on the recovery goals as written at that time. Based on input received from a variety of sources, the Program Office decided the best approach would be three distinct population segments (DPS): upper, lower and San Juan River basins (with recovery goals for the lower basin and San Juan deferred). The Recovery Team met and voted that the recovery goals should not be deferred in the lower basin and in the San Juan. They discussed different genetic criteria and higher fish numbers for recovery, and passed those higher numbers with a split vote. The Team did not vote on DPS. (>Henry will send to the Management Committee a copy of the letter that the Recovery Team sends to Ralph summarizing their review of the recovery goals.) Rich will meet with San Juan committees next week.

Henry outlined 3 options for the Committee's discussion:

- a. Three "DPS" (but won't be called that until there's a legal action): 1) Upper Basin; 2) San Juan; and 3) Lower Basin. The DPS could be separately down and delisted.
- b. Species-wide (supported by the Lower Basin): Recovery in the Upper Basin would be linked to recovery in the Lower Basin, etc.
- c. Two "DPS": 1) the Upper Basin and the San Juan (together); and 2) the Lower Basin. Henry said he thinks this is the most biologically and legally defensible option. The driving capacity would be the number of fish needed to meet recommended demographic parameters and carrying capacity. Henry outlined justification for linking the Upper Basin and the San Juan. If the goals for Colorado pikeminnow were 7,000 - 8,000 in the Green, 1,200 in the Colorado, and 400 in the San Juan, and we achieved only 300 fish in the San Juan River, we could still downlist if they are all linked. However, if the San Juan were a separate DPS, it couldn't be downlisted with 300-400 fish. The San Juan can't stand on its own (biologically, it can't support 2,200 - 10,000 fish) and we don't think the San Juan will hinder achieving recovery in the Upper Basin. More importantly, we can't biologically justify that the San Juan and Upper Basin populations are separate. Rich said that if roughly one fish per generation (or 3-5 fish per 30-40 years) move between the two systems, then that fulfills the linkage requirement. The geneticists say there's a strong possibility that is occurring.

The Committee discussed these options, and how we would proceed under the third option if the numbers couldn't be achieved in the San Juan River (that would need to be clearly stated in the documents). Rich noted that three criteria are required for DPS: discreteness, significance, and conservation status. On the basis of those criteria, the case can be made for 2 DPS, but it would be a real stretch to try to separate the San Juan and define 3 DPS. The 2 DPS idea (linking the Upper Basin and the San Juan River) is similar to what is in the draft Colorado recovery goals. The Committee thought they could support the third option with the "escape hatch" that if the San Juan numbers can't be reached, then the Upper Basin can meet recovery with numbers at the higher end of the recommended range. >Henry's office will write up this "escape hatch" and send it to the

Management Committee members for review. Bruce McCloskey recommended >getting Biology Committee input on the 2 DPS option, and the Committee agreed. Henry said they will provide 4 reviewable documents and the draft Federal Register notice before the July 17th Implementation Committee meeting.

Rich outlined the factors and assumptions that create the broad range in the target population numbers (effective populations size, sex ratios, number of fish actually contributing their genes to future generations, etc.) Rich also explained why the numbers for razorback sucker and bonytail were doubled. Due to the founder effect, they used an N_e of 1000 instead of 500. When you basically establish populations “from scratch,” you need larger numbers to achieve genetic and demographic viability. The genetics protocol of 25 x 25 results in an N_e of 50. From an N_e of 50 you need more individuals to assure the genetic variability and demographic structure required to assure long-term population viability.

Target numbers: Bruce McCloskey expressed concern about the 2,200 - 10,000 range, wondering, for example, if 8,000 will be considered enough. Henry said it won't be driving criteria, but a range acknowledges the variable targets depending on assumptions.

Time required for delisting: Tom Pitts noted that Nesler recommended 9 years, not 12 years for pikeminnow. He also questioned why razorback and bonytail require 15 years (2 generations). Rich said he thought they used the same criteria as Nesler to arrive at the generation time, so >he will check the calculations. Rich said they used 2 generations for bonytail and razorback because we don't know how long it will take to establish populations from scratch. Henry said that it seems to him that once the target numbers and demographics are reached for bonytail and razorback, it will indicate that we have achieved a stable population. >Rich agreed this is a valid argument and will discuss it with Ron Ryel. Tom Pitts also expressed concern about using the lower 95th percentile (confidence interval) as a success marker.

Can we afford to monitor each populations every year for the first 5 years? Rich recommends doing so at least for the core populations. Henry said he has concerns about this, and also about the effect of sampling on the fish. Tom asked if we will have to “restart the clock” if we have one year where the target falls below the minimum. >Robert recommended that Tom's question be addressed and also that Rich assess our ability to determine if we're meeting the criteria if we don't sample every year. >Rich will assess the kinds of risks that we'd run with different sampling frequencies.

Site-specific recovery actions: Tom expressed concern about minimizing entrainment of all life stages in canals, noting that he thought we had already agreed not to address all life stages (i.e., eggs and larvae). >Rich will change this. Instead of the nebulous “Control nonnative fish releases and escapement,” Tom suggested “Regulate nonnative fish releases and escapement.” Rich said the Biology Committee changed the language to “control.” Henry said “regulate” implies regulations, and not all our nonnative fish control activities are regulatory. “Take reasonable actions to reduce negative effects of selenium” also is nebulous, but Tom said he's not sure how that can be improved. Robert noted that the Atlas Mill tailings are discussed as a significant threat, but the description

is not quite accurate (there is no court decision that requires their removal). Further, the groundwater contamination problem will persist even if the tailings pile is moved. This threat needs to be more accurately described, and as for selenium and spills, we need a categorical management action for populations exposed to this threat (remediate the groundwater contamination). Robert submitted language for Rich's consideration. >If anyone has comments on that recommended language, they should get those to the Service in the next week. Fish passage - by definition, fish passage is unimpeded, so "unimpeded fish passage" is redundant. The tributaries that are named on page 35 and elsewhere should be deleted (or only be named as examples). The core population concept needs to be clearly explained.

>The Service will e-mail the four documents to the Management Committee by June 30, written comments on those will be due back to the Service by close of business on July 10, then the Service will respond at the Implementation Committee meeting how they addressed those comments.

6. Program Updates

- Duchesne coordinated reservoir operations - Jared Hansen said the model is completed and calibration and review are upcoming. Hopefully they will have run two scenarios by the end of this fiscal year. Henry asked how they will get biological and stakeholder input on the scenarios, and recommended that they get the technical committee back together for that.
- Ouray water quality problems - The plant is operating using only the filter and UV system. The ozone system which is supposed to remove the iron has been shut off since they're getting such variable iron levels. More system testing will be done now that the fish have been removed from the hatchery. Brent noted that the well field maintenance costs are going to be pretty high. Bruce McCloskey asked >Reclamation and the Service to prepare a summary of what's been accomplished and spent at Ouray to date, what are the remaining problems, and what are the options and recommended solution for the August meeting so the Committee can consider this before they approve the FY 2001 work plan. The Committee agreed.
- Floodplain acquisition status - Dave Soker said an updated acquisition chart will be prepared in July. Growout ponds have been the top land acquisition priority. Since the last meeting, 7 offers have been made. Of those, one landowner has refused, but 3 landowners (with a total of 6 ponds) seem close to accepting. Four additional properties will be turned over for appraisals. Four others are in title research. Five new properties are ready for survey and testing. Frank said they now have 18 growout ponds operating in the Grand Junction area, with about 50,000 razorback stocked in those now. Anita Martinez and the Division have been very helpful. Frank will need all the volunteers he can get to harvest these fish out of the ponds in September and October.
- Modification of Leota and Johnson Bottom floodplain sites - This is on hold until

the river level drops and we can see what needs to be done to improve drainage.

- Use of ponds east of Debeque, Colorado for growout - Henry said that Kent Holsinger called a meeting the Service and CDOT and CDOT have now agreed to allow us to use those ponds. Reclamation just bought 500 acres outside of Debeque for salinity control mitigation, the Service met with them to see if they could construct growout ponds there. Provo will construct 8 ponds for a total of 11 acres (beginning in August and completing them in October).
 - Section 7 consultation table - Angela distributed the consultation list and noted that the consultations to which the 15-Mile Reach PBO applies now are shown separately. The Committee suggested that perhaps this portion shouldn't be totaled because it makes it appear that a large part of the increment is already gone (either that or include an explanatory note). Henry said that his office is still determining how to report depletions under the PBO.
 - Process for incorporating non-Federal funds into the Recovery Program - Henry distributed draft recommendations. John Shields noted that this is a start, but considerable additional work is yet to be done. The ad-hoc committee on this would like to have >input from Management Committee members by July 14 so that the group can have a revised and expanded proposal for the Committee by their August meeting. >John also will provide an update on our progress on this to the Implementation Committee on July 17.
6. Next meeting: August 21-22 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. on Monday, August 21 and conclude by 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 22. Review and approval of the draft FY 2001 work plan will be a primary agenda item.

ADJOURN: 4:00 p.m.

Attachment 1
Colorado River Management Committee, Craig, Colorado
June 7, 2000

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg	Bureau of Reclamation
Bruce McCloskey	State of Colorado
Robert King	Utah Department Of Water Resources
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
Robert Wigington	The Nature Conservancy
John Shields	State of Wyoming
Shane Collins	Western Area Power Administration
Susan Baker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Nonvoting Members:

<u>Henry Maddux</u>	Recovery Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dave Mazour	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association

Recovery Program Staff:

Angela Kantola	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bob Muth	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dave Soker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others:

Tim Modde	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gerry Roehm	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gene Shawcroft	Central Utah Water Conservancy District
Jared Hansen	Bureau of Reclamation
Ray Tenney	Colorado River Water Conservation District
Rich Valdez	SWCA, Inc.
Frank Pfeifer	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service