



Final Summary
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program
Biology Committee Meeting
13 May 2009

Attendees

Biology Committee Members:

Bill Miller, Chair – Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Paul Holden – Jicarilla Apache Tribe
Ron Bliesner – Bureau of Indian Affairs
Jason Davis – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Mark McKinstry – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Dale Ryden – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
Vince Lamarra – Navajo Nation
Tom Nesler – State of Colorado
Yvette Paroz – State of New Mexico
Gregory Gustina – U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Tom Wesche – Water Development Interests

Peer Reviewers:

Steve Ross – University of New Mexico
Ron Ryel – Utah State University
Mel Warren – USDA Forest Service

Program Office – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2:

David Campbell
Sharon Whitmore
Scott Durst

Interested Parties:

D. Weston Furr – USFWS/NMFWCO
Amy Kraft – Southwestern Water Conservation District
Ernest Teller – USFWS/NMFWCO
Aron Chavez – San Juan Water Commission

Approved July 20, 2009

Doug Fruge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6

Michelle Morgan – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6

Steven Platania – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers

Darek Elverud – Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Brent Uilenberg – Bureau of Reclamation

Tom Pitts – Water Consult

Albert Lapahie – Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife

Introductions; Changes to agenda:

- There were no changes to the agenda but Ryden reminded the group of his email regarding the need for researchers to get trip dates and campsite requests to the BLM prior to the February 2010 lottery for river permits for the 2010 field season.

Action Item Log:

- Changed responsible party for Item #8 (Annual Data Delivery) from “BC to Program Office” to “P.I.s to Program Office.”
- Razorback sucker production and stocking plan portion of Item #14 is completed; Furr received some comments. Production and stocking plan for Colorado pikeminnow was distributed to the BC on 5/11/2009 for review by BC; a no timeline for completion was set.
- Item #16 (NNF stocking procedures) is on hold based on the information previously provided by McAda.
- Changed Item #17 (revise CPM and RBS augmentation plans) from Augmentation Plans to Augmentation Goals with a revised due date of November 2009 based on the outcome of the final workshop.
- IDIQ contract process (Item #18) is ongoing.
- Item #23 (selenium sampling) is an ongoing activity with a completed workplan but work has not started.
- Item #28 (Standardized Maps) was completed March 2009.
- Item #31 (update annual reports to website) is ongoing with many reports already updated and reorganized.

Annual Meeting Overview and Summary:

- Whitmore provided an overview of the Recovery Program, Program accomplishments, and upcoming Program activities. Durst provided an overview of the Program database and PIT tag database. The group suggested revisions prior to the presentations at the Annual Meeting on 14 May 2009.

Use of portable weir for non-native removal:

- Elverud presented an overview of a portable weir method for removing non-native species and detecting PIT-tagged fish.

- The presentation brought up numerous questions, specifically, what is the purpose of the structure, to stop upstream movement of channel catfish or to stop downstream movement of rare fish? Also, where would a suitable location be for such a structure on the San Juan River? How to deal with the trash load at the weir was also discussed.
- The committee discussed if a presentation on this method should be on the agenda for the Annual Meeting the next day. The Biology Committee has not yet determined if this is a management action the Program should undertake so it is premature to introduce it to the Coordination Committee at this time. McKinstry pointed out that he asked Elverud to give the presentation for informational purposes only. The decision was made to remove it from the Annual Meeting agenda. McKinstry will give the presentation to the Coordination Committee at their meeting on 15 May.

Remote methods to detect PIT tags:

- McKinstry detailed recent methods to explore remote detection of PIT tags including antenna mounted on rafts and a stationary antenna constructed near the waterfall. McKinstry does not recommend pursuing these methods at this point due to the logistical challenges and costs. However, if these were constructed “in-house” they would be cheaper.
- Other highlights of the discussion included the possibility of installing an antenna into areas where fish are constrained (i.e. Hogback Weir and Diversion or spawning areas), the importance of detecting directional movement (and needing both upstream and downstream readers), and addressing the question of how many or what proportion of fish are being lost over the waterfall.
- Methods such as radio and sonic telemetry were also discussed.
- McKinstry will prepare a white-paper on the remote PIT tag method. The white-paper will include questions that could be answered with this method, where it could be located, and the cost and feasibility of such a system.

Stocking plan for 12,000 – 14,000 razorback sucker from Uvalde:

- These fish should all be in the 300-400 mm range.
- Questions of when, where, and how to stock were discussed. Uvalde has the ability to haul 6000 fish at a time with two trucks. Based on information provided by Kevin Bestgen’s survival analysis of stocked razorback sucker, the consensus of the group was to evenly divide the number of fish available for stocking into two locations during three seasons, fall, winter, and spring. The two locations could be at an upstream site and a suspected spawning site, possibly the mouth of the Animas River and at Hogback, respectively. The expected high survival for fish of this size would allow for a robust test of survival by location and season.
- McKinstry will touch base with Kevin Bestgen about this proposed experimental design and distribute his feedback to the group.

Possible population of razorback sucker in Lake Powell:

- McKinstry and Holden attended a meeting for the Lake Mead razorback sucker population. Because this appears to be a self-sustaining population, is it possible that there is a population of razorback sucker in Lake Powell?
- Should this be investigated? Recovery actions are not restricted in Lake Powell although it is outside of critical habitat. If there is a razorback sucker population in Lake Powell, how would it be counted in terms of Recovery Goals? This would require discussion between the R2 and R6 FWS offices.
- A lot of effort would be required to adequately study this population. What kinds of question should be answered in such an investigation? The group decided to take no action on this matter at this time.

Program funds management and RERI update:

- McKinstry provided the report. There could be a flat or decreasing budget for 2010. Currently the RERI money (~\$400K) is tied up in legalistic limbo. The TNC effort under contract, which was approved in concept by the Biology Committee last year, was discussed during this presentation. No scope of work for the TNC project has been presented to the Biology or Coordination Committees at this time.

Fish and habitat monitoring workshops:

- Miller provided a reminder that the 3rd workshop will start at 1pm on Monday 29 June 2009. The workshop will be a full day on 30 June.
- Planning is underway for this 3rd workshop. The group acknowledged that there is a distinction between data gaps that could be addressed through further research versus the monitoring protocols. Additional workshops may be needed to finalize the monitoring protocol updates.

Program Coordinators Update:

- Campbell indicated that conducting the BC workshops have been consuming the Program Office's time. Planning is on-going for the third workshop.
- The Integration Report process is on-going and will be further discussed as part of the Annual Workplan development. The RFP is not yet completed.
- The committee discussed a range of what should be in the Integration Report. It can be designed to answer specific questions and does not need to follow past models. It could be as simple as focusing on where the Program is relative to recovery. The monitoring workshops could also be part of integration.
- The move from five-year to annual integration of data was discussed. This approach should provide more timely results for the Service to assess progress toward recovery compared with five-year data integration which should be more effective at accomplishing this task in a timely manner.

2010 Annual Workplan:

- The group began the process of reviewing the draft 2010 Annual Workplan. The Program Office introduced a proposal to hire a staff scientist to conduct the integration internally. There was a

discussion regarding whether the integration by the Program staff would meet the needs of the Service and the Biology Committee. The Biology Committee felt they could not review the proposal since there was no scope of work and the discussion ended without agreement. The process of generating workplans was discussed and there were questions and concerns about the BC's role in the process. These issues remain unresolved.

- The committee agreed that the workshop topic for 2010 should be on non-native species.
- Davis suggested that a summary of the PIT tag data be included as part of the SOW for database management.
- Campbell indicated that the cost of razorback sucker production at Uvalde should be lower because some of the costs need to be shifted to the LCRMSCP. He will be talking with Uvalde to resolve this.
- Element 5 - Habitat Monitoring was discussed in detail. Bliesner said the 2010 budget would need to be adjusted to include some monies for the detailed reach final analysis report which was not allocated in the 2009 budget. For 2010, data collection will focus on highlighting islands, backwaters, and total wetted area as substitutes for the river-wide habitat mapping. SOW-25, Long-Term Channel Monitoring, Habitat Mapping, with funding of \$96,000 was changed to River cross section survey with \$46,000 funding. Additional items were included (without SOW numbers) including Habitat photo interpretation at \$46,000, Videography frame capture at \$4,000, and the completion of the habitat-detailed reach final analysis report at \$46,000. Priorities are as follows: 1) habitat photo interpretation; 2) cross-section surveys; and, 3) Habitat-Fish relation (GPS locations).
- Changes to the current larval fish SOW may be needed based on the outcome of the monitoring workshops but with the same budget condition. The possible change would move a September sampling trip to July/August. No decision was made on the potential changes.
- The Biology Committee did not vote to approve the proposed workplan and did not make a recommendation to send the workplan to the Coordination Committee for their review and approval.

| BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| (Updated May 18, 2009) | | | | | | |
| Item No.* | Action Item | Meeting/Origination Date | Responsible Party(s) | Due Date | Revised Date | Date Completed |
| 1 | Provide RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data | | P.I.'s to the Program Office | Annually before Jan. 1 | | |
| 2 | Provide Preliminary Draft Report Presentations | | Project Leads (authors) | Annually at Feb. meeting | | |
| 3 | Review LRP | | BC | Annually at fall meeting | | |
| 4 | Review Peer Review Comments from the February and May meetings | | BC | Annually at fall meeting | | |
| 5 | Provide Draft Final Reports | | Project Leads (authors) to Program Office | Annually by end of March | | |
| 6 | Scopes of Work | | Project Leads to Program Office | Annually by end of March | | |
| 7 | Provide Final Reports | | Project Leads (authors) to Program Office | Annually by end of June | | |
| 8 | Annual Data Delivery | | PIs to Program Office | Annually by June 30 | | |
| 9 | T&E Species Data | | BC to Program Office | Annually by Dec. 31 | | |

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| 10 | Annually compile T&E data and Program progress into summary to address overall Program recovery goals/objectives for presentation at annual meeting | | Program Office/BC | By Annual Meeting in May | | |
| 11 | Distribute Consolidated Data and list of annual data collected and available in the Program's database | | Program Office to BC | Annually by Jan. 31 | | |
| 12 | Coordinate CPM stocking closely with Reclamation to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases | | Project Leads | Annually | | |
| 13 | Develop Colorado pikeminnow production and stocking Plan | 5-7-08 | Davis/Program Office | 11/30/08 | 2/15/2009 | 3/2/2009 |
| 14 | Review RBS production and stocking plan for NAPI ponds and CPM production and stocking plan | 1/26/2009 | BC | 2/18/2009 | RBS – 2/28/09; CPM – 4/3/29 | RBS completed; CPM received 5/11/2009 |
| 15 | Waterfall Inundation Whitepaper – review past meeting summaries, determine what is needed, and provide report at the next meeting. | 05/18/07 | Program Office | 12/07/07 | Not a current priority | |

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| 16 | Pursue NNF Stocking Procedures for SJR Basin | 2/20-21/08 | McAda lead | 11/5/08 | 2/18/09 | On hold |
| 17 | Revise CPM and RBS Augmentation Goals | 5/7/08 | FWS Fisheries/Program Office | 11/30/08 | Nov 2009 | |
| 18 | Complete IDIQ contract and award | 5/7/08 | McKinstry | Nov. 2008 | May 2009; ongoing | |
| 19 | Standardize habitat categories | 7/28/08 | Paroz/Habitat Mappers | 11/5/08 | Feb 2009 | 2/18/09 |
| 20 | Develop RFP for Data Integration and send to BC for review/input | 7/28/08 | Program Office/McKinstry | 11/5/08 | 5/13/09 | |
| 21 | Send objectives identified in San Juan River Monitoring Plan and Protocols to BC for review. BC identify important questions that need to be answered by the monitoring program | 7/28/08 | Program Office/BC | 11/5/08 | 2/18/09 | 2/18/09 |
| 22 | Develop preliminary fish/habitat monitoring workshop proposals | 7/28/08 | Program Office/McKinstry | 11/5/08 | 2/18/09 | 2/18/09 |
| 23 | Provide specifics of selenium sampling procedures and analysis | 1/26/09 | Bliesner/Osmundson | 2/18/2009 | 5/13/09 | Ongoing activity |

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| 24 | Produce list of questions based on LRP and monitoring plans to guide monitoring workshops | 1/26/09 | Program Office/Miller | 2/18/09 | | 2/18/09 |
| 25 | Provide report on Bestgen's results of population estimate study | 1/26/09 | Bestgen | 2/18/09 | 4/6/09 | |
| 26 | Update on investigations into floating/stationary PIT tag detectors | 11/5/08 | McKinstry | 2/18/09 | | 2/18/09 |
| 27 | Develop a detailed outline for San Juan River Recovery Program case history manuscript | 11-5-08 | Propst/Miller | | | |
| 28 | Coordinate with staff GIS specialist to produce updated field maps (20 sets) | 11-05-08 | Program Office | March 2009 | | March 2009 |
| 29 | Update on feasibility of a fish passage barrier in the lower portion of the river/floating weir. | 11-05-08 | McKinstry | | | 2/18/09 |
| 30 | Update on NMED RERI project | 11-05-08 | McKinstry | | 5/13/09 | |
| 31 | Update annual reports to San Juan website | 2-19-2009 | Program Office | 4/7/2009 | | Ongoing |

Approved July 20, 2009

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| 32 | Remote PIT tag reader white-paper | BC 13 may 2009 | McKinstry | | | |

* Items were re-numbered after changes were made