

**FY 2022 SOW # 38**

**Remote Biologist for San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program**

Principal Investigators:

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And

Remote Biologist (TO BE FILLED)  
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**History**

The San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program's (SJRIP) mission is to recover the Colorado Pikeminnow and Razorback Sucker while allowing water development and management

activities to continue in the San Juan River Basin. In pursuit of this mission, the SJRIP funds projects under six major program elements: management and augmentation of populations and protection of genetic integrity; protection, management, and augmentation of habitat; management and control of nonnative aquatic species; monitoring and evaluation of fish and habitat in support of recovery actions; program coordination and assessment of progress toward recovery; and, information and outreach. Principal investigators representing various federal and state agencies, tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations are contracted to perform tasks associated with the SJRIP's mission. Most of these entities reside outside of the basin and, as a consequence, extensive travel costs are incurred to complete this work.

Beginning in 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NMFWCO) filled a remote biologist position that was stationed in the Farmington, New Mexico area. This position focused primarily on endangered fish monitoring, nonnative fish control, and rare fish augmentation. Additionally, assistance was provided to the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (NNDFW) with daily operations at a selective fish passage near Fruitland, New Mexico, and with daily operation/maintenance at the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI) Razorback Sucker grow-out ponds. Due to the proximity of the duty station to the Four Corners Area, the remote biologist was available to assist other SJRIP partners by collecting data from remote PIT tag arrays, shuttling support vehicles and providing reconnaissance prior to the initiation of sampling trips. In addition, the remote biologist provided urgent assistance to all SJRIP partners in cases of emergency (i.e. equipment issues/loss, injury, Gold King mine spill, etc.). In January 2016 this position became vacant and remained vacant until August 2018. We anticipate that the position will be filled in May 2021.

## **Background**

The following scope of work outlines the expected duties of the remote biologist for FY 2022. Proposed activities are similar to those described in the FY 2021 remote biologist scope of work. The remote biologist will have responsibilities on the following Scopes of Work. Scopes of Work a, b, c, d and g will be considered full time in that these will require the biologist to assist with all parts of the project. Scope of work b was funded for FY 2021, but at the time we are submitting this SOW, we are unsure when the work will begin. Scopes of Work e and f will be part time in that they will require support by the biologist, but are not primary or full time work.

*Scope of Work (a)* Seasonal non-native management (SOW 17). The remote biologist will work on all field trips and field trip preparation, as well as assisting with managing the data generated by the project.

*Scope of Work (b)* Secondary channel habitat maintenance project (SOW 42). The remote biologist will provide field support for this project.

*Scope of Work (c)* Native fish demographic monitoring and research led by USFWS Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation (GJFWCO), Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), and NMFWCO (SOW 19-b). The remote biologist will work all demographic trips, if other personnel are available then the remote biologist can be freed to do other work.

*Scope of Work (d)* The remote biologist will assist NNDFW with daily operation/maintenance at NAPI rearing ponds, and provide support with operation and maintenance of permanent and portable PIT antennas throughout the San Juan Basin (SOW 11).

*Scope of Work (e, and f)* The remote biologist will assist as needed with coordinating annual endangered fish stocking events with other SJRIP participants at the Horsethief ponds, and at Southwest Native ARRC rearing (SOW 8, 9 and 10).

The remote biologist will have the flexibility to assist, as needed, with other projects as directed by the Program Office and with the supervisor’s approval. We anticipate that the Remote Biologist will assist with larval and small-bodied fish assemblage monitoring, shuttling of vehicles and equipment, data analysis, etc, but the position may work other assignments. If other personnel are available to cover NMFWCO’s responsibilities on projects then the remote biologist can be freed for other work and will not be required to provide support for every field trip.

We are submitting a single budget that captures the complete cost of the Remote Biologist position to the Program. Included in the budget is the savings to the Program by individual scopes of work where the Remote Biologist provides labor. Nearly half of the cost of the Remote Biologist is covered by his/her labor on three current SOWs, and one new SOW.

**Schedule:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Nonnative fish management*	As scheduled September 2021 into 2022	50 days
Endangered fish augmentation	October 2021 to November 2021	12 days
Demographic monitoring	September 2021 to October 2021	38 days
NAPI pond assistance	April 2022 to October 2022	18 days
Secondary channel habitat maintenance**	April 2022 to August 2022	15 days
PIT antenna deployment and maintenance	Year-round	10 days
SJRIP meetings	November 2021, May 2022, February 2022, one workshop annually	9 days
Other program activities	Year-round	45 days
Training	Seasonally	10 days
Holiday	Seasonally	10 days
Sick leave	Seasonally	13 days
Paid time off	Seasonally	20 ays

*\*\*Funded in FY 2021, one year project. The project has not begun as we write this SOW revision*

**Budget Justification**

For the 2022, the Remote Biologist proposed Scope of Work we are providing the full cost of a GS-09/4 Fish Biologist with benefits in our budget. This will account fully for the salary and benefits of this position. Cost savings for the other New Mexico FWCO projects where the Remote Biologist will provide assistance is provided. Nearly half of the requested funds for this project are accounted for in other Program funded projects.

<b>FY 2022</b>						
<b>SJRIP - Remote Biologist</b>						
<b>Labor Cost</b>						
<b>Position</b>	<b>Grade/Step</b>	<b>Salary w/benefits</b>	<b>Hours/Day</b>	<b>Total Days</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	
Fish Biologist (1 FTE)	GS 9/4	\$81,744.00	N/A	N/A	\$81,744.00	
Supervisory Fish Biologist	GS 13/4	\$74.78	8	5	\$2,991.20	
Administrative Officer	GS 9/8	\$47.78	8	5	\$1,911.20	
					<b>Total Labor</b>	<b>\$86,646.40</b>
<b>Travel and Per Diem</b>						
	<b>Days</b>	<b>Rate</b>				<b>Sub-total</b>
Hotel Costs (4 two-day meetings)	8	\$102.00				\$816.00
Per Diem (Travel Day)	4	\$48.00				\$192.00
Per Diem (Full Day)	4	\$64.00				\$256.00
Per Diem (Camp Rate)	6	\$29.00				\$174.00
Travel voucher fee	4	\$14.75				\$59.00
Hotel Tax	8	\$12.00				\$96.00
					<b>Total Travel</b>	<b>\$1,593.00</b>
<b>Equipment</b>						
	<b>Miles/Qty</b>	<b>Total Miles</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>		
Vehicle Fuel						
1 truck used throughout year	50	13,000	\$0.54	\$7,020.00		
est. 50 miles/day 5 days/week						
52 weeks/year				<b>Equipment</b>	<b>\$7,020</b>	
					<b>Sub-total for Remote Biologist - NMFWCO only</b>	
						<b>\$95,259.40</b>
					Overhead 3%	\$2,857.78
						<b>\$98,117.18</b>
<b>Remote Biologist Savings</b>						
	17	\$16,278.40				
	19a	\$12,686.88				
	8	\$3,884.18				
		<b>\$32,849.46</b>				

**McKinstry BOR**

We agree that a the SJRIP would benefit from a Farmington office with full time staff dedicated to the San Juan. We have proposed how many personnel would be needed, and the cost estimate to the PO. We also acknowledge that it is not likely that this office will be created anytime soon. There are a number of logistic hurdles that make this a heavy lift.

**PO**

Hiring officials are not allowed to identify a person that we wish to hire prior to the announcement of a position. The hiring process allows us to select grade, duty location etc when we do a hiring request, then after the request

is approved, we can select KSAs etc in USA staffing. We cannot preselect an individual for a position, we can define the position and interview the people that Human Resources identifies as qualified and forwards to the hiring office.

*What is the SOWs contribution to recovery?*

### **McKinstry (BOR) and PO**

We provided a schedule, as requested in the past, to give a general idea how the biologist's time will be spent. There are nine projects that we identified in the activity schedule for this position **and all are related to recovery activities**. The remote biologist will remain available for other assistance requested by the PO, BOR etc. The list we provided in the schedule does not mean that the remote biologist cannot work on other projects. If asked to collect PIT tag antenna data and do data analysis we will assign these duties. There is a category in the schedule defined as "other program activities" that builds in this flexibility.

The Phase 3 wetlands O&M is a good example of the utility of a remote biologist placed in Farmington. This project runs for 5 months and requires weekly visits. The remote biologist reduces travel time to the wetlands from the duty station (Farmington vs Albuquerque) by thousands of miles every year. Assistance to both the PNM fish ladder and to NAPI Razorback Sucker grow out ponds are another example of decreased travel time from the duty station to work site. In the past the remote biologist has assisted Navajo Nation, the BOR, the PO and both New Mexico and Grand Junction FWCO. The original reason for the remote biologist position was to provide local support and support to all recovery activities, and it has been useful. There may be other ways that the remote biologist's duties could be covered, but it would require someone being in the Farmington area.

If the PO would like to identify other projects or tasks that they propose are suitable for the remote biologist, we could add these tasks to the activity schedule. If the

38	Remote Biologist	Davenport & Caswell, NMFWCO
<p><i>How can the technical aspects of this SOW be improved?</i></p> <p><b>McKinsry (BOR):</b> We DESPERATELY need at least one full-time permanent staff from FWS or contractor in the Farmington area. Honestly, the Program should have an office in Farmington where most staff are based. I realize this isn't possible due to folks living somewhere else. But maybe we can start to transition to this model with addl staff that are hired in the future. Get somebody that is good with data analysis so they can work on that when they aren't busy in the field. Covid has shown us that if you hire the right people they can effectively work remotely. Being based in Farmington is much better than having to drive 3 hours, or more, from some other office.</p> <p><b>PO:</b> This SOW requires that the individual hired possesses a range of technical and field-oriented skills. It would be very beneficial if an individual could be identified specifically in the SOW for Program review.</p> <p><i>What is this SOW's contribution to recovery?</i></p> <p><b>McKinsry (BOR):</b> This position(s) assists with all of the work and is locally based and can respond to immediate needs. They can also assist with activities on the NN associated with pond and habitat management or fish passage. Additionally, they can assist with PIT tag antenna management and data analysis</p> <p><b>PO:</b> Having a person close to the San Juan River to aid in recovery activities on a day to day basis would increase the efficiency of activities, especially because most offices are located some distances away. However, given this person's time allotment in this SOW is dedicated to other activities that don't necessarily require a "remote" individual, it doesn't seem like there is much flexibility for this individual to respond to unforeseen tasks that would benefit from this individual's help. It would be useful to know how often the SJRIP encounter issues where a biologist in Farmington is needed at a moment's notice. Perhaps the SJRIP needs to have a larger conversation about the role of this position and its contribution to overall activities in the San Juan River.</p>		