



**SAN JUAN RIVER BASIN RECOVERY
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (SJRIP)
COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING
10 May 2023
MEETING SUMMARY**

Coordination Committee (CC) Members:

Jason Davis (Chair)
Jenny Dumas (Alternate)
Absent
Lisa Yellow Eagle
Michelle Garrison
Ali Effati
Todd Adams (Alternate)
Martha Cooper (Alternate)
Chris Kitcheyan (Alternate)
Lee Traynham
Dale Ryden
Absent
Peter Ortego
Tom Pitts

Representing

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Navajo Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
State of Colorado
State of New Mexico
State of Utah
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Water Development Interests

Program Office (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, Assistant Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator
Raphaela Ware, Program Biologist

Representing

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Other Interested Parties:

Kara Scheel (CC alternate)
Nathan Caswell (CC alternate)
Travis Francis (CC alternate)
Aaron Chavez (CC alternate)
Steve Wolf (CC alternate)
Peter Nylander (CC alternate)
Jacob Mazzone (BC member)
Bill Miller (BC member)
Benjamin Schleicher (BC member)
Steven Davenport (BC member)
Katie Creighton (BC member)
Mathew Zeigler (BC member)
Brian Westfall (BC member)
Vince Lamarra (BC member)
Tom Chart (BC member)

Representing:

State of Colorado
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Water Development Interests
Water Development Interests
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
State of Utah
State of New Mexico
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Navajo Nation
Water Development Interests

Other Interested Parties:

Harry Crockett (BC chair)
Sarah Seegert (BC member)
Bill Miller (BC member)
Daniel Lamarra (BC alternate)
Ben Zimmerman (BC alternate)
Jill Wick (BC alternate)
Mel Warren (Peer Review)
Adam Barkalow
Quinn Donnelly
Paul Badame
Christina Noftsker
Melissa Trammel
Nathan Franssen
Steven Platania
Michael Farrington
Stephani Clark Barkalow
Aran Johnson
Pamela Norris
Emily Halvorsen
Sophia Bonjour
MacArthur Stant II
Sanskriti Shrestha
Tara Ashby
Brian Hines
Shawn Sartorius

Representing:

State of Colorado
State of Utah
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Navajo Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
State of New Mexico
U.S. Forest Service
State of New Mexico
River Restoration Organization
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
State of New Mexico
National Park Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Arizona Public Service
State of Colorado
Kansas State University
Navajo Nation
Keller Bliesner Engineering
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
State of Colorado
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Introductions and Changes to Agenda

Davis announced that Nathan Caswell from the New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office would be the official alternate on the Coordination Committee for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2. Mata announced the Rolf Schmidt-Petersen of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission had retired and Ali Effati was appointed as the new Coordination Committee member for the State of New Mexico.

Meeting Summaries and review of action items

Mata received comments on the 12 December 2022 from Speas and Pitts. All comments were incorporated into the revised summary. No comments required incorporation into the 17 February 2023 meeting summary. Pitts moved to approve both meeting summaries and Ryden seconded. There was no discussion and the summaries were approved.

17 February 2023 Action Items:

1. The CC is in the process of voting to invite the NPS as a signatory participant.
The Program Office is waiting to hear from the states. Adams said Utah would support NPS program participation and Noftsker said New Mexico would also likely be supportive. Garrison said this was also likely true for Colorado but each state needed to make sure their full

leadership agreed. Mata said she would resend the request for NPS participation to CC members for a vote.

2. Garrison will share draft scope of work for Recovery Program economic review to CC.
Garrison said there were no updates on this action item and it should remain on the action item list.
3. Dumas will coordinate with Pueblos to verify depletions from the San Juan Chama Project.
Completed and Dumas said she would send the information to Mata.
4. Meeting summary for 12 December 2022 comments due to Mata by 24 February 2023.
Completed
5. Crockett will write a memo to CC on PNM fish passage change in scope of work.
Completed.
6. Gilbert will provide Structured Decision-Making Primer PowerPoint via email to the CC.
Completed.
7. CC members should send Gilbert an email of their concerns and if they have suggestion on any bounds the scope of work should consider.
Completed.

Post-2023 Planning Updates

Legislation Language

Garrison said Pitts had led a group of SJRIP and Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Programs) participants in drafting two versions of legislative language. One amended the original language and the other version new language. Garrison said Program participants will be seeking Congressional sponsors. Senator Hickenlooper has indicated he wanted to be the primary sponsor in the Senate, and it is possible one of the Utah senators will co-sponsor the legislation. Representative Curtis from Utah may be the primary sponsor in the House of Representatives with co-sponsorship from Colorado Representative Neguse. There is a minor outstanding question on how to describe the effects of inflation as it pertains to capital funds. A larger outstanding question with the Senate legislators committee is that it may be easier to have language that merges the ceiling for capital and annual funds since the hydropower funds will no longer be sought and most funding will be allocate to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) as appropriations. This could make it difficult for Reclamation to track spending but the Senate legislators and Reclamation are going to discuss the potential up and downsides of this idea. The decision will be incorporated into the final legislative language which may be available for Program participant review by the week of 15 May. Garrison said a big hurdle might be that the federal government will go into a continuing resolution and then pass an omnibus bill in December, which would take the Programs past their current end date of their Cooperative Agreements. The Cooperative Agreements need to be extended by September 30 of this year.

D.C. Briefings

Pitts said that when the legislative language was submitted to Hickenlooper's office it was suggested that the 2023 congressional and administrative briefings be paused until the legislation was introduced. However, Utah the Utah delegation briefing was already scheduled and took place. Adams said they were able to brief all of Utah's Congressional representatives which was important because there had been staff turnover and it was useful since they were trying to obtain co-sponsorship in the House of Representatives. Adams said Seegert led that discussion and he said participation by Central Utah Water Conservancy District helped obtain the positive response they received. Pitts said the annual

briefings are important not just to obtain support from Congressional representatives but also from the administration, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Reclamation leadership. The briefings need to be conducted each year given the high turnover in Congressional members and committee staffs. Davis asked when briefings might resume and Pitts said it would be dependent on when the legislation was introduced, hopefully in June or July. Adams thought the legislation might be passed in the late fall.

Extension of Cooperative Agreement

Mata said she and Julie Stahlh were identifying how this could be done. Agreements for both Programs expire September 30, 2023, and previous extensions consisted of a one-page document. Mata thought she and Stahlh would be able to have this routed to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior soon. Garrison said the states were assessing whether they could also sign a one-page document. Pitts reminded the CC that the presidents of four tribes also needed to agree to extend the San Juan Cooperative Agreement.

Economic Benefit Analysis

This was discussed in the action items above.

Environmental Assessment

Mata said the extension of the Programs for another 15 years by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior is the action described in the Environmental Assessment. Mata said there will be an opportunity for Program participants and the public to provide comments.

Program Document

Scheel is taking lead on revising the Program Document. She said most of the revisions will be centered around the changes to funding. Mata said the revised document would go to CC members for review once the legislation and cooperative agreements were completed, which might be late fall to early winter.

BC meeting review

Crockett started by announcing Sage Dunn was unanimously approved as the new representative to the BC for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. He said the Traynham provided the BC with a funding update and if the U.S. President's FY 24 budget was passed the SJRIP would receive a little less than \$3.5 million which is not the full \$4.2 million that was recommend for the SJRIP post 2023. Susan Behery provided an update on Navajo Reservoir operations and said there was enough water for a spring peak release of the full 21-days at 5,000 cfs. The release may begin around May 15th with 5,000 cfs released around May 25th and there would be a 10-day ramp down. Based on Animas River hydrology the San Juan at Farmington may be flowing at 10,000 cfs in late May. Trungale from The Nature Conservancy spoke to the BC about helping to develop applications for one of two Reclamation grants through the Water Smart program. Each grant could cover planning or construction and the difference is that one grant opportunity is focused on single location while the other grant is better for a selection of a suite of habitat projects. Lamarra provided the BC with an update on 2022 habitat monitoring. Crockett said the monitoring indicated several years of low hydrology and low sedimentation the San Juan River resulted in loss of high-quality habitat and this habitat, which is key to both Razorback Sucker and Colorado pikeminnow larval fish survival, is a small percent of the system. Mata provided an update on the use of the Four Corner Power Plant fund. Crockett said most of the rest of the BC meeting was spent discussing the scopes of work submitted

for fiscal year 2024 funding.

Fiscal year 2024 draft annual work plan and budget

Technical comments on scopes of work

Crockett said the SJRIP received eight new scopes of work submitted and the BC, Peer Reviewer, and Program Office provided extensive comments on them. He said comments were also submitted for some ongoing scopes of work. Crockett indicated there was not enough funding to support all ongoing and new scopes of work but there was ~\$400,000 available to fund new projects if all ongoing scopes of work were funded. Overall, the BC thought the new scopes of work had merit. Three of them focused on sampling fish below the waterfall where the SJRIP does not have much information. The BC recommended the proponents of these scopes of work figure out whether they could share logistical support. Of the eight scopes of work there was substantive agreement on five projects with some difference of opinion on three other proposed projects (i.e., implementation of structured decision making to develop adaptive management frameworks, feminization of male Channel Catfish, and habitat mapping to determine persistence of low velocity habitat).

Next steps in process

Crockett said that because of the overall support of the new scopes of work the PO was going to ask BC members to rank them and suggest any ongoing scopes of work that could be removed from fiscal year 2024 funding to provide for new work to be done. The deadline for this ranking by the BC will be 19 May and it will also inform project proponents who must submit revised scopes of work by 2 June. The PO will provide the CC with a recommended annual work plan within budget by their 1 August meeting.

Freshwater Illustrated SJRIP Film Development

Mata had proposed a short film in 2020 and at that time the CC asked what story would be told. Since that time the USFWS paid for Freshwater Illustrated to obtain some imagery and help design a storyboard, which is what explains what story what the story is and how it will be told. During this time, the USFWS contracted with Freshwater Illustrated to produce other films for other conservation issues. Mata was able to join the contract and use unspent Fish and Wildlife Service in-kind salary to produce a SJRIP film. This means no separate funds to support this film will be requested from SJRIP. However, as the film is produced there will be full coordination with BC and CC. The plan is to focus on tribal coordination and benefits of the SJRIP. The result will be one long file (~ 45-minute) and a few (as many as 3) short films (~1-2 minutes). The short films would be specifically constructed for social media and public outreach events.

Capital projects general update (APS, SNARRC, Fruitland)

Traynham shared the excel budget sheet that explains what has been expended, what is projected, and any request for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL) funding. Traynham said she could share the file if anyone wanted a copy.

Both the BC and CC supported construction of a middle of the river passage at the Arizona Public Service (APS) weir. The next step was to obtain support from APS. Reclamation and the USFWS met with APS and they agreed to support moving forward with 30% design of this fish passage concept. They did request additional hydrologic modeling, especially as it related to sediment deposition. Although BIL funding is not guaranteed, Reclamation thinks it is well positioned to receive those funds and this will provide ~\$10 million in total (a combination of BIL funds and appropriated capital

project dollars) for APS fish passage construction. The current cost estimate is ~\$8.4 million but once the 30% designs are complete, Reclamation will have a better cost estimate.

Traynham reported that Reclamation did enter an interagency agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and transferred the ~\$1 million to support construction of a weir wall at Fruitland to reduce entrainment. The overall project which also includes a new diversion dam and rehabilitation of the inlet infrastructure has not begun. Construction costs have increased and additional SJRIP funds will likely be requested. The Navajo Nation plans to request project bids to rehabilitate the diversion system this summer and this should inform any requests for additional funds. The current plan is to have construction done in 2024. Reclamation awarded \$3 million to improve hatchery infrastructure at the Service's Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery unit. Engineering designs are currently being developed and surveys conducted to support this project. Mata reported the BC asked for 30% designs of passage options provided by Reclamation's Technical Service Center. She said the BC also asked for options to increase fish passage efficiency at PNM.

Pitts complemented Traynham on implementing capital projects. He said Reclamation's Grand Junction construction office has done a great job, and this is communicated in the briefings to U.S. Congressional representatives and federal government administration.

USFWS Fish Passage Hogback Project

Caswell reported the Navajo Nation had submitted a request USFWS National Fish Passage Program to replace the sluiceway at the Hogback diversion. The USFWS approved the request and these funds will be moved to Jeff Cole through a grant agreement and it may take a few years for the gate to be replaced. Caswell said the BIL funds used to increase the funds available through the USFWS National Fish Passage Program will be available for another 3 years and are ~\$38 million.

Bluff Wetland Proposal

Mata said the proposal was recommended to the CC by the BC and she sent it to the CC over email. The purpose of this agenda item was to introduce the concept and respond to any questions. The proposal was developed by Dr. Mark McKinstry prior to his retirement from Reclamation. The purpose is to support larval Razorback Sucker recruitment. Development of the proposal included information sharing with the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program Habitat Coordinator and review by Reclamation's Grand Junction construction office. The request in the proposal is to develop conceptual design and fund any engineering that needs to be conducted to support implementation of the conceptual designs. The request is for ~\$125,000 of capital funds. Davis commented that it was a potentially good concept that could increase larval rearing habitat and may be a good opportunity for outreach and education because it would be in Bluff, UT. Mata said she would request an online vote.

Dr. Bill Miller

Davis said the longtime Southern Ute Indian Tribe BC representative Dr. Bill Miller would be retiring this September. Dr. Miller served 32 years as a contributor to the SJRIP. Ben Zimmerman will be replacing Dr. Miller as primary BC member for Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Next CC meetings and meeting venues

The next CC meeting will be 1 August. This will be held virtually with the goal of approving the fiscal year 2024 annual work plan. Mata asked whether the CC would consider holding SJRIP meetings outside of the San Juan River Basin. Meeting participants thought it was a possibility especially for the

BC's February meeting, to avoid accidents on snowy roads, but thought meeting outside the basin should be limited especially since some participants do not have travel funds.

ACTIONS ITEMS FROM 10 May 2023 COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

1. The CC is in the process of voting to invite the NPS as a signatory participant. Mata will resend the request to CC members.
2. Garrison will share draft scope of work for Recovery Program economic review to CC.
3. Mata will request online vote for Bluff wetland proposal funding.
4. Dumas will send Mata tribal water depletion data.
5. The PO will post the December and February meeting summaries to the website.
6. Mata will send the Environmental Assessment to the CC.