



**SAN JUAN RIVER BASIN
RECOVERY
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (Program)
FINAL SUMMARY
1 September 2023**

Coordination Committee Meeting

Coordination Committee (CC) Members:

Jason Davis (Chair)
Jenny Dumas
Crystal Tulley-Cordova
Lisa Yellow Eagle
Peter Ortego
Michelle Garrison
Ali Effati
Todd Adams
Joseph Trungale
Absent
Lee Traynham
Dale Ryden
Absent
Joseph Trungale
Tom Pitts

Representing

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Navajo Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Ute Mountain Ute 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 (Reclamation)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
The Nature Conservancy
Water Development Interests

Program Office (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, Assistant Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator

Representing

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)
Colleen Cunningham (CC Alternate)
Letisha Yazzie (CC Alternate)
Cathy Callister (CC alternate)
Steve Wolf (CC alternate)
Nate Caswell (CC alternate)
Peter Nylander (CC Alternate)
Kerri Pedersen (BC member)
Tom Chart (BC member)
Brian Westfall (BC member)
Sarah Seegert (BC member)
Harry Crockett (BC member)
Carrie Padgett (BC alternate)
Ben Zimmerman

Representing:

State of Colorado
State of New Mexico
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Water Development Interests
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Water Development Interests
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
State of Utah
State of Colorado
Water Development Interests
Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Other Interested Parties:

Cathy Callister
Emily Zmak
Shawn Sartorius

Representing:

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
State of Colorado
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

1. Introductions and changes to agenda

There were no changes to the agenda, but Pitts asked for a summary of why the meeting was being held. Davis said it derived from the structured decision making (SDM) scope of work (SOW) discussion held on 1 August 2023 during approval of the fiscal year 2024 annual work plan. Davis said there was a range of support voiced for that SOW during the meeting but not enough to approve funding it. However, there was interest in discussing implementing other options such as a SDM SOW that was paired down to the first task or other decision-making frameworks. At that meeting, Michelle Garrison indicated Emily Zmak from the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) had a background in conflict resolution, use of decision-making frameworks, and might be able to provide the CC with additional information. Gilbert said the SDM SOW arose because a BC small group was unable to develop metrics to decide whether nonnative fish removal should be reinstated after the 3–5-year hiatus that is currently underway. The BC small group recommended to the larger BC that SDM be used to decide on these metrics and the larger BC recommended SDM be consider as a tool to address other higher priorities such as habitat management. Davis reminded the CC that the PO convened a meeting with the CC where this was explained, and a presentation was given on what SDM is and how it has been used in other natural resource management situations. At that time the PO asked the CC whether a SDM SOW should be produced.

2. Review of action items and approval of August 1 and 16 meeting summaries

August 1, 2023

1. Ute Mountain Ute Tribe will name a CC alternate – Letisha Yazzie was named as an alternate.
2. PO will send Doodle poll for Program Document revision – Completed.
3. PO will send Doodle poll for follow up CC meeting – Completed.
4. PO will send email request for vote to approve funding for replacement of Fruitland gage – The CC unanimously approved this funding request and the Reclamation, and the PO are working to get funding to the appropriate people.

August 16, 2023

1. Coordination Committee will provide comments on the revised Program Document by 15 September – This is ongoing, and the PO has received comments from four Program participants.
2. Coordination Committee will provide comments on the Programs’ Environmental Assessment by 25 August – Completed
3. Mata will consult with Reclamation about a press release for public comment on the Programs’ Environmental Assessment – Mata conferred with Reclamation and because the Environmental Assessment is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service document the press release will only be published by them.

Ryden motioned to approve both meeting summaries, Dumas seconded, and there were no objections to approving the meeting summaries.

3. Presentation on decision-making frameworks

Emily Zmak introduced herself as the Deputy Chief of the Interstate, Federal, and Water Information Section for the Colorado Water Conservation Board. She explained that she previously worked for a company called Collaborative Decision Resources where she provided services such as facilitation, stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, and decision-making analysis especially for water related issues. Zmak began her presentation by letting the CC know she was not advocating for any outcome, did not consider herself as a neutral third party, acknowledged she was not an expert in regard to the Program, and she was not representing CWCB's interest or preferences.

Zmak framed her talk as pertaining to the components of collaboration that can be used for decision-making. She began by defining collaboration as a three-pronged concept of: 1) "procedures" that incorporate people's desire to participate, their preferences for a given process, and preferred pace of thinking through issues and making decisions, 2) "psychology" that incorporates how we want to be treated and how we want to feel about ourselves and others, and 3) "substance" that incorporates tangible, measurable outcomes that are used to solve a problem. Zmak indicated there are four basic steps that are needed for true collaboration: 1) identification of the problem by one, some, or all, 2) a willingness to address the problem by all, 3) commitment to a shared process by all, and 4) consensus around the solution, or with a minority willing to stand aside.

Zmak explained that she was going to focus on six decision-making procedures the CC might consider. These were:

- 1) "Leveling" is the least prescriptive and costly. It consists of recognizing the problem, discussing different options, but requires good communication and a commitment to slow progress over individual visions. This works best for highly effective small groups or low-stake decisions.
- 2) "Assessment" is minimally prescriptive and costly. It consists of a third-party conducting interviews with all group members and usually results in a written report of key themes and issues. In this process everyone should see themselves reflected in the report. This is a good process when people think they are not being heard, when there are a few louder voices, or a group that is dominated by people who prefer to listen. It is most useful when people are willing to consider other perspectives than their own.
- 3) "Operating Protocols" is somewhat prescriptive and costly. This consists of the group co-creating rules, which can include things like how to talk to the media, agenda setting, and how agreements are recorded. The chair or facilitator is then authorized to hold people to those rules. It requires a chair or facilitator who is comfortable managing group dynamics, and this can make implementation difficult if that person is not trained or comfortable being assertive.
- 4) "Operations/Strategic Plan" is somewhat prescriptive and costly. This is a roadmap that is co-developed with or by the group for an agreed upon timeframe that is often a 1–10-year period. It can be informal like an excel spreadsheet or a formal report. It requires a commitment from the group not to diverge from the plan or place the plan "on the shelf".
- 5) "Formal Facilitated Process" can be prescriptive and costly. This approach includes options like SDM or something like an interest-based problem-solving process. There is usually a predefined process by which decisions are reached. It requires complete buy-in but can be highly effective if the group supports the process.
- 6) "Requesting a Decision" is the most prescriptive and low cost. Here a decision is requested by the final decision-makers because collaboration is not possible due to group dynamics, time, etc. This takes a problem statement to the decision-makers and requests a solution.

Zmak suggested that “leveling” is what the procedure the Program might apply most of the time and “Requesting a Decision” might be one the Program would prefer not to resort to.

4. Does the CC have interest in pursuing any of the options provided by Zmak?

If yes, what information does CC need to choose between the options?

If no, what are the next steps the CC wants to take to make progress on this topic?

Cunningham asked Zmak what the best procedure was for groups that struggle on almost any topic. Zmak said it was often what the group was most comfortable with and can depend on what level of consensus the group requires. Zmak said it can sometimes help to break a decision down into smaller pieces. Pitts said he was having a difficult time figuring out what the problem was these procedures were trying to deal with. Mata said the Program needed to make decisions that implemented recovery actions in a timelier manner. She said that during the post-2023 planning, the Program was asked what it was going to do to increase progress towards recovery. Mata said using a decision-making procedure would help the Program get past some barriers that keep the Program from focusing its resources on implementing recovery actions. Ryden said he thought the Program had made progress by reintroducing the species to the San Juan River where they had been extirpated and the 2/3 voting procedure used by the Program was adequate for making decisions. He said he did not understand how a procedure to improve decisions would lead to on-the-ground actions that would benefit the fish. Garrison asked Zmak whether a group needed to conduct an “Assessment” prior to any “Formal Facilitated Process”. Zmak said an “Assessment” was not necessary, but she had seen this be successful because an “Assessment” tended to identify the next steps that the group could agree to conduct. Zmak said it sounded like there were some people saying there was a problem, others saying there was not a problem, and the group might be at the 2nd step of basic collaboration where there was not complete willingness to address the problem.

Davis said it sounded like the perceived challenge was a technical matter associated with a BC small group and asked BC members what works and what needs improvement. Davenport suggested trained facilitation may be helpful. Crockett thought the issue pertained to entrenched positions but that in general the BC did not have a difficult time making decisions. Pitts asked why the BC small group could not decide on metrics that would be used to decide whether to reinstate nonnative fish removal. Crockett said there might have been some issues with the confidence people had in the conclusions of the many studies that were conducted. Durst reminded the CC that the metrics the BC small group was trying to decide on included not just a potential response by Channel Catfish but also a response by Colorado Pikeminnow.

Cunningham said that she attends as many BC meetings as she can and thought there was more of an issue than just a decision on what metrics to use to determine whether or not to reinstitute nonnative fish removal and that decision-making issues did not just exist at the BC level. Cunningham said strategic decision making was attractive because it is a holistic approach. She thought the Program needed to work towards more active actions as opposed to just monitoring. Cunningham said working through a decision-making process with both the BC and CC would help the Program move towards implementing more active recovery actions. Pitts said his reluctance was that he was not sure what the problem was that SDM was trying to solve. He said he was not prepared to begin an expensive time-consuming process when he was not sure it would produce results. Dumas thought the Program should work through its problems on its own and outside of SDM because it is an expensive process. Ryden said he did not support an expensive multi-year commitment. Trungale said the PO had submitted the revised SDM SOW to the CC prior to the meeting and it was for a single year at a cost of ~\$70,000. Trungale said he thought implementing the revised SDM SOW would help the Program identify the

highest priority problem that could be addressed by SDM. Cunningham said she was perplexed at the focus on cost because anything but “Leveling” or “Requesting a Decision” was costly. Cunningham also said the Program approved \$100,000 on a literature search pertaining to Channel Catfish for fiscal year 2024, spends the majority of its budget on monitoring that does not get the Program closer to recovery, and this needs to be considered into this conversation about funding a process to increase the Program’s decision-making capacity. Ryden asked how any decision-making process would be paid for and Mata said that since fiscal year 2024 budgeting had already been approved, the funds would come from outside the Program.

Pitts said it would be helpful to get a list of problems the Program is grappling with. Cunningham suggested this information could be elicited from the BC and CC. Ortego thought the list might not be sufficient, the Program might need an “Assessment”, but that could be decided once there was a list of problems. The CC directed the PO to develop the list in the next 6-8 weeks with input from the CC and BC.

5. Cooperative Agreement renewal

The agreement will be for a 15-month period and Program partners appear to be comfortable obtaining signatures for this. The final document for signatures is likely to be sent out next week.

6. Decide next meeting time frame and scheduling May meeting three years in advance

Mata wanted to schedule meetings three years in advance. For the CC this mostly means the May meeting. Gilbert asked whether there were any concerns, and no one voiced any objections.

7. Next CC meeting –

The next CC meeting will be scheduled once the list of Program problems is compiled.

Action Items from Meeting

1. Program Office will develop a list of problems the Program is dealing with in the next 6 – 8 weeks with input from the CC and BC and then schedule another CC meeting.

Ongoing Action Items

2. The CC is in the process of voting to invite NPS as a Program participant.
3. Garrison will share a draft SOW for both the Program and Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program economic review.
4. Dumas and Mata tribal water depletion data development.
5. CC will submit comments to PO on revised Program Document by 15 September