

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Feb. 8 - 9, 2000
Grand Junction, CO

Participants: Art Roybal, Tim Modde, John Hawkins, Tom Chart, Tom Pitts, Matthew Andersen, Tom Nesler, Paul Dey, Henry Maddux, Robert Muth, Angela Kantola, Tom Czapl, Pat Nelson, Quint Bradswisch, Tom Pruitt, Steve Petersburg, Kevin Christophersen, Mike Hudson, John Wolschlager, Frank Pfeifer, Kathy Holley, Doug Osmundson, Bob Burdick, and Pete Cavalli (via phone).

Convene: Tuesday (Feb. 8), 10am

1. Revisions/Additions to agenda - The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Approval of November 23, 1999, meeting summary - In item #11 recovery goals, in Colorado was deleted from the first sentence. Approval of December 17, 1999, conference call summary - The action item in #3 was modified to read >Tom Chart will check to see if Reclamation would fund the initial instrumentation costs of the gage (\$3-4K) out of capital funds. The cost of operating the gage would be covered under the Program s gage O&M project (#8) and paid for with Section 7 funds. With regard to item #4, land acquisition criteria; Tom Nesler asked >Pat Nelson to provide a summary depiction of razorback habitat and what protection it has (or doesn t have at this time). With regard to #5, Tom Nesler said that under the nonnative fish stocking procedures, Colorado is obliged to prevent escapement from any State pond that may overwinter nonnative fish, so he s been talking with personnel at Escalante about screening to keep pike out in the first place or screening to keep them from exiting when they enter. Tom Pitts asked >the Program Director s office to post a table of land acquisitions acquired to date and land acquisitions in progress be posted to the listserver by February 18.
3. Discussion/Approval of Draft RIPRAP Revisions - Henry Maddux noted that the biggest changes in the RIPRAP this year are related to the 15-Mile Reach PBO and the Yampa Management Plan.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Change</u>
20	IA3	Insert item Evaluate CDOW instream flow methodologies and flow recommendations for warmwater native fishes as they relate to flows needed for endangered fish recovery (FY 03, 04, 05).
20	ID, ID1	Add two items to: develop a tributary management plan for tributaries including the White, San Rafael, Price rivers and other tributaries as needed (02). Conduct appropriate Section 7 and NEPA compliance to implement the management plan (FY 03).
21	IIIA2d	Delete See specific river reaches. Show status as ongoing, as needed. Put X s through the out years.

- 22 IVA4c(1&2) Change status to on hold. Add note that broodstock is
IVA4d(1) represented by fish in the river.
- 23 IVB2 Change propagation operation plan to due in 3/00 (since it s not
yet complete).
- 23 IVE2a-c Ouray expansion to be completed by 2/00; Wahweap construction
to be completed in FY 01; Grand Valley expansion complete.
- (23 IVE2d After we have the facilities plan, the growout ponds item should be
broken out into subitems by
basin.
- 24 VF Delete parenthetical reference to a baseline assessment of the San
Rafael River. (Confusing.)
- 25 VIIA4c Should just say Develop specific recovery goals and make it a
heading.
- 25 VIIA4d Delete annually.
- 25 VIIA5 Delete second sentence (superfluous).
- 28 IIB2-4 Delete dates until this fish passage is taken off hold.
- 30 IA2a1 Insert and NEPA compliance after Section 7 of the ESA.
- 31 IIB Add parenthetical (See Green River Action Plan)
- 31 IIIA1 Insert x s through outyears (since CDOW s implementation of the
Yampa aquatic management plan is not dependent on the extension
of the Recovery Program).
- 31-2 IIA1&2c, >Bob Muth will talk with Gerry Roehm about the items to develop
IIIA1c3 guidelines for new diversion structures.
- (32, 42) Add item in Yampa (IIIA1e) and Colorado (IIB2) action plans to
Remove bag and possession limits on warmwater nonnative
sportfishes within critical habitat in Colorado and show as
ongoing. (This is acknowledged in the 15-Mile Reach PBO and so
needs to be reflected in the RIPRAP.)
- 33 IA2 Flow recommendations are being developed by the Service and
Utah.

- 33 ID1 Insert deadline of 12/00 under FY 01.
- 34 IIIA3a Mike Hudson expressed Utah's concerns with screening Bottle Hollow Reservoir, noting that: 1) smallmouth bass may already be reproducing in the Duchesne; 2) they are reproducing in Strawberry Reservoir, thus it may warrant screening also; and 3) we should consider screening larval fishes, not just juveniles and adults (others counted that this isn't feasible). The Committee agreed to add an item IIIA3b to evaluate escapement of nonnative fishes from Starvation Reservoir and the feasibility of screening (FY 02).
- 36 IIIB1a Add item to Assess management options to reduce escapement of black crappie from Kenney Reservoir. CDOW. FY 01.
- 37 IA4b&c Note that the East and West slope is a 10-year agreement, move up before IA4a2.
- 38 IA4h6 Delete parenthetical (item # no longer applicable, and task has already been completed).
- 40 IIA1d & 3d Extend x's into outyears.
- 41 IIB2a3 Delete footnote.
- 42 IIIA Should read Reduce negative interactions between nonnative and endangered fishes.
- 42 IIIA3 Extend x's through FY 05.
- 42 IIIA2 & 4 These belong under IIIB.
- 42 IIIA4a Extend x's through outyears. Change fish plan to Fisheries Management Plan.
- 42 IIIA5 Extend x's for nonnative cyprinid removal through 01.
- 42 IIIA6 Add item to remove nonnative centrarchids from backwaters and other low velocity habitats. FWS. X's in FY 99 - 01.
- 43 VB Add item to evaluate population response based on ISMP data per PBO. FWS. FY 05.
- 43 VC Add item to estimate incidental take of young razorback and pikeminnow in the 15-Mile Reach. FWS. X in outyear column.
- 43 VD Add item to develop plan to monitor the amount of take of endangered fishes by diversion structures. 9/01. FWS.

- 44 ID3a Ongoing through FY 01.
- 46 IIB2b Delete and implement. This item shouldn't be a blacked out heading. A report is due from BOR. >Pat Nelson to check on the status and a revised due date.
- 46 IIIA3 Cyprinid removal from Gunnison backwaters is on hold.
- 46 IIIA4&a Make consistent with Colorado River pond reclamation.
- 47 VA2 This is still underway. Will be completed in FY 01.
4. Options to Meet Facility Needs (the revised Facility Needs document) - Tom Czapla discussed revisions to this document. Tom Pitts expressed concern that we still don't have the information we need (e.g., cost estimates to raise razorback suckers, how long it would take to meet our production goals, etc.) to make a decision. The following information is still needed: for each of the three species (and for the different reaches for razorbacks), how many acres are needed each year to implement the stocking plan, how many acres do we have now and what are the deficiencies by year, how much will it cost to overcome these deficiencies. >Tom Czapla will add this information (and make other revisions discussed) to the document and provide Tom Pitts with a copy to review within 2 weeks, then provide a revised document to the Committee.
5. Bonytail Stocking in Yampa River - The Committee discussed timing, location, and logistics of bonytail stocking. Tim Modde questioned the wisdom of stocking small fish in March (just before spring runoff). The March time-frame was selected in order to free up space for the next batch of bonytails from Dexter NFH. Quint said he might need to hold the fish longer than through March this year (until his pump is up and running and he can get the fish into a pond for tagging). The ability to stock fish in Echo Park in the spring will depend on road conditions. The group agreed to stock half the fish in Lodore and the other half in the Yampa River either in Echo Park or upstream near Warm Springs, if possible. With regards to monitoring the stocked fish, Henry said he believes that monitoring the fish after they've been in the system for a year or so (through a basinwide monitoring activity) is more valuable than following the fish right after they're stocked.
6. GVIC screen update - Frank Pfeifer described the preferred alternative, to build an inclined fish screen (3/32 mesh) on the diagonal in the diversion canal. The screen would have an automatic brush on it to remove trash and debris. When the river exceeds ~13,000 cfs (probably 3-4 days in May and up to a week in June) the bypass tube would become nonfunctional and it may be difficult to remove trash from the screen. Frank has recommended pulling the screens during those short periods. Frank also recommended pulling the screen if ice problems develop in November when stock water deliveries are being made. The Committee agreed these were reasonable recommendations.

7. Price River Gage - The Water Acquisition Committee has recommended recommissioning this gage. The Biology Committee agreed.
8. Status of humpback chub recovery goals - Henry Maddux has asked Rich Valdez to make major changes to humpback criteria (placing more emphasis on demographics and habitat and less on genetics) and provide a revised version at next week's Recovery Team meeting. The Biology Committee may wish to discuss the recovery goals at their next meeting. (Ralph Morgenweck hopes to have as much agreement as possible on the recovery goals from both the Recovery Team and the Biology Committee simultaneously.)
9. Utah ISMP - The FY 2000 SOW for project 22c shows \$11K too much for tasks 3 & 4, so Utah recommends conducting larval razorback sampling with \$9.3K of those excess funds. However, they're unsure if the remaining \$1.7K would cover the larval fishes identification that would be needed as a result of this activity. Utah would need to work with Larval Fish Lab to determine how much larval sampling can be covered. Henry said he could support this work this year (but not necessarily an expanded study in FY 2001). Bob Muth suggested that looking for spawning adults in the lower Green/San Rafael would be a better method. >Utah will consider this and post a short SOW to the listserver for the Committee's consideration.

Convene: Wednesday, (Feb. 9), 8am

10. Discussion/Approval of Draft Final Report - An Evaluation of the Effects of Tusher Wash Diversion Dam on Movement and Survival of Juvenile and Subadult Native Fish (P. Cavalli via speaker phone) - The purpose of the study was to examine the need for fish passage at low flows, but low flows didn't occur during the year of the study. The Management Committee terminated the study a year early. Tom Chart recommended elaborating on catch rates versus habitat availability above and below the dam. Tom Nesler noted that twice the sampling effort was made below the diversion as above the diversion. Tim Modde asked about Pete's use of ANOVA given the number of 0's in Tables 3 and 7; Pete replied that he also ran chi-square analysis on the data presented in Table 3 and found significant difference in pikeminnow larval drift above and below the diversion. The conclusions state that flows often fall below this level, but need to indicate *how* often and what time of the year. The conclusions also say that the number of larval fishes caught in the drift was lower than previous years, but need to show the actual difference. The Committee approved the report as final with the foregoing changes. >Pete will revise the report based on these comments and finalize the document. The Biology Committee may reconsider the need for passage at Tusher when they see the flow exceedance information.
11. Discussion/Approval of Escalante State Wildlife Area floodability enhancement proposal - The Committee discussed the need to evaluate the success of restored sites (e.g., fish use, stranding, etc.). The Biology Committee approved the proposal. It will next be reviewed by the Escalante SWA steering committee. The Management Committee will determine if capital funds are available for this in FY 2000.

12. Discussion/Approval of Draft FY 2001 Program Guidance

Instream Flow Identification & Protection – The guidance for the proposed new sediment movement monitoring should specify an interim report after two years. Committee members recommended including a determination of the feasibility of warming water from the Aspinall Unit as part of the proposed Gunnison River temperature model project. Also under this guidance, delete the sentence that says Thus, restoring all historic habitat is critical for eventual downlisting or delisting of this species. The schedule should be 2001 - 2002. Price River - Questions were raised about use of the Critical Cross Section technique. John Hawkins expressed concern about embarking on additional tributary studies before we prioritize tributaries (no change to guidance, however).

Habitat restoration – Frank noted that the Redlands fish passage final report will be completed in 1/01 not 12/00. Levee removal evaluation - Tim Modde will submit an unsolicited scope of work that would expand the evaluation of breaching the upstream end of levees to include an examination of larval drift.

Nonnative fish control - Tom Pitts noted that Colorado will have \$325,000 from the Endangered Species Trust Fund for nonnative fish control. The Elkhead Reservoir screening guidance does not need to recommend removal of all life stages of nonnative fishes.

Propagation & genetics management - >The goal statement needs to be re-written (too narrow as currently stated). Take the goal statement from the Genetics Mgmt. Plan. Additional funds may be needed for growout pond construction, but we don't know yet. Tom Nesler suggested that construction and/or lease of growout ponds in the Grand Valley may be an appropriate use of GOCO funds.

Research, monitoring, & data management - Tom Pitts questioned the Program Director's office rejection of further evaluation of selenium effects on reproductively active razorback sucker. Henry said he believes it would be premature to develop a scope of work on this before the results from Hamilton's study are available (which, even if inconclusive, will reveal shortcomings on which to base a determination of the next phase of work necessary). ISMP will need to be revised to address population estimates and any other related monitoring called for in the 15-Mile Reach PBO. >The Biology Committee will discuss ISMP revisions at their next meeting. John Hawkins expressed concern that \$15,000 may not be adequate to develop an adequate plan to monitor stocked fish. Add to the monitoring stocked fish guidance an objective to identify key indices for monitoring stocked fish. The Committee recommended that the lower Green River population estimate could be done for \$40-60K. This guidance also should cite the Osmundson report. The habitat monitoring guidance is an old version. >The Program Director's office will post the corrected version to the listserver.

13. Middle Green River / Yampa River Colorado Pikeminnow population estimate scope of work - Henry said the funding has been found and the scope has been revised based on

the comments provided previously. The Committee approved the revised scope of work.

14. Report Discussion - Importance of the 15-mile Reach to Colorado River Populations of Endangered Colorado Pikeminnow and Razorback Sucker - Doug Osmundson discussed how he addressed Biology Committee members' comments. John Hawkins and Tom Nesler had a few additional comments for Doug's consideration. Tom Pitts had concerns about a statement in the report that "it is the position of the FWS that the prime adult habitat found in the Grand Valley, including the 15-mile reach, must be preserved and enhanced." This is the FWS position. The Committee approved the report; >Doug will make revisions based on John and Tom's comments, as appropriate.
15. Razorback sucker radio telemetry proposal by USGS - Tim Modde outlined the proposal. Utah asked several questions about methods (e.g., how many fish would be implanted and when, would they be wild or hatchery-reared fish, what is the battery life, how will the fish be monitored, etc.). Several questions were raised as to how the data would be interpreted and how the habitat measurements and telemetry results would be linked. Bob Muth noted that the sand deposition on the bar could come and go several times within the 2 weeks between the times eggs are deposited and the larvae swim up. More detail on methods and on how the physical habitat data would be linked is needed. The Committee recommended that the fish should be monitored much more intensively or the study would not be worthwhile. >Tim will post a revised version to the listserver by this Friday and the Committee will discuss it on a conference call, if necessary.
2. Next Meeting - March 22 -23 in Fort Collins from 10:00 a.m. on the 22nd through 2:00 p.m. on the 23rd. >John Hawkins will arrange for a meeting room and send out information on parking, etc. Agenda items: recovery goals; adult or larval razorback sampling (addendum to project #22C); need for passage at Tusher Wash (assuming Cavalli provides exceedance levels); ISMP (the Committee will ask Kevin Bestgen to present his analysis, and >the PD's office will re-submit their proposal for ISMP revision); Flaming Gorge synthesis report; final revisions to White River report based on Pitts' earlier comments and Utah's response; Hayse et.al ice study report; Bestgen's Lodore report.