

April 25, 2007

Biology Committee Meeting Revised Summary
March 7-8, 2007
Grand Junction, Colorado ([Holiday Inn](#), 755 Horizon Drive)

Biology Committee: Tom Chart, Tom Pitts, Misti Schriener (WAPA), Melissa Trammell, Kevin Gelwicks, Krissy Wilson, and Dave Speas. Colorado, CREDA, and the environmental groups were not represented (although John Hawkins joined by phone for a portion of the meeting).

Other participants: Dave Irving, Pat Nelson, Tom Czapla, Chuck McAda, Angela Kantola, Bob Muth, Trina Hedrick, and Craig Walker. Kevin Bestgen and John Hawkins joined via phone for a portion of the meeting.

Assignments are indicated by “>” and at the end of the document. (Note: under the review of the RIPRAP assessment, the “>” character before a RIPRAP item number indicates items likely to result in a measurable population response, a measurable improvement in habitat for the fishes, legal protection of flows needed for recovery, or a reduction in the threat of immediate extinction).

Wednesday, March 7

CONVENE 9:00 a.m.

1. Review/modify agenda – The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Approve January 18 meeting and February 1 conference call summaries – Change “removal” to “marking” in the 4th line under 98a on page 6 of the January 18 summary. >Angela Kantola will post the revised summary to the listserver. The Feb. call summary was approved as written.
3. Review assignments from January 18 meeting - The Committee reviewed assignments from previous meetings (as were listed in the meeting agenda). Assignment updates, those still pending, and new assignments can be found in the assignment list in Attachment 1. Tom Czapla checked on the progress of optimizing the electrofishing boats: Larry Kolz is completing the land-based work this week, then hopes to get out to Grand Junction next week and on the Yampa River in early April.
4. Yampa pikeminnow entrainment study – John Hawkins described the ditches of concern (primarily Maybell). He said ditch owners have been reluctant to grant access for sampling, and only ¼ to ½ mile of the ditch is on public land. The Maybell ditch is very narrow with no refugia areas, so any entrained fish likely become trapped and eventually die (although John thinks entrainment is probably very minimal). We could consider using automatic tag readers (antenna array) to monitor fish moving into the ditch, but this would cost ~\$50,000. Kevin Gelwicks cautioned against assuming that entrained fish do not move out as the canal is dropping; John Hawkins said he thinks that the canal is configured such that fish could not get out, but the antenna would detect movement in both directions. >Tom Pitts will contact

the Maybell ditch manager about access. John Hawkins suggested that it may help to have Patty Gelatt join in meeting with the ditch manager and owners to help reduce fears regarding take of endangered fish. John also would be willing to join in this meeting to explain what sort of work they would be doing (sampling in late July or August or September). John said we may also want to sample at the 555 ditch, since it forms something of a backwater. >Pat will send the annual report to the Biology Committee. The Committee may revisit this on a conference call to discuss options and provide guidance on a scope of work after Tom Pitts has talked with the Maybell Ditch board, possibly in April.

5. Review draft RIPRAP and Program Guidance materials:

RIPRAP assessment

22, IIB1-3: Tom Chart said the Service actively responds to spills and requires emergency shutoff valves on new pipelines. Probably not much has been done on existing pipelines. >The Program Director's office will send a memo to the Service's Ecological Services offices asking for annual reports on all contaminants-related RIPRAP actions. Change "progress ... unknown" to "progress ... not being reported."

>*23, IIIA2c: "to identify ways to disrupt smallmouth bass spawning and nesting" needs to explicitly identify the possibility of using flows to disadvantage smallmouth bass, so add "e.g., physical, flow, temperature." Misti said Western is willing to consider this as recommendations are made, but also will have to consider their other obligations.

Tom Pitts noted that the carets and asterisks in the RIPRAP don't carry their original meaning now that we have PBO's. Bob Muth agreed.

23, IIIB6: Change language to indicate that the Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedures will be renewed in '07.

24, IVB&C: Add note to also eliminate predation at the onsite ponds.

>George Smith will send Melissa a copy of Utah's 2006 memo assessing legal and physical availability of flows.

>*27, IA3d: Reference the annual Flaming Gorge operations report.

Add an item regarding completion of the Flaming Gorge Study Plan.

27, IC2: Dave Speas expressed concern that the Biology Committee hasn't discussed the Price River flow recommendations report or the consequences of abandoning these recommendations. Craig Walker agreed and suggested that analyses being conducted on surrogate data by BioWest on the Provo River could be applicable. Craig said he believes these flow recommendations should not be dropped because there is evidence of adult Colorado pikeminnow using the Price; it contains valuable 3-species habitat from which the roundtail chub has been extirpated; and 3) the Narrows project may become a reality.

>The Program Director's office will forward their comments and the report to Utah and the Committee. Bob Muth suggested that the approach for making flow recommendations for the Price River presented by George Smith should be considered. Delete "Although Colorado pikeminnow occasionally use the Price River in high flow years, this reach is not deemed vital to recovering the endangered fish. The Program Director's office recommends expending no further time or effort to determine flow recommendations for the Price River." (Make appropriate changes to RIPRAP table & text, also.) >Tom Chart will forward a copy of the Price River BO to the Committee.

27, E1: Craig Walker said that Utah is working on the San Rafael River and has secured significant funds for restoration (presentation to Biology Committee pending).

28, IIB2b: Add note that Reclamation will be working on the EA for Tusher Wash screening.

>*28, IIIA4a: Clarify that #109 will be discontinued in 2007 (future years TBD)

30, IB2a2aiii: Add note that high flows will be screened in 2007.

31 IIIA: Tom Chart said the Service and the Program Director's office are working with Colorado to get the Elkhead Lake Management Plan completed before any fish are moved into Elkhead this year.

>*32, IIIA1d: Add "in the middle Yampa study area" after "Smallmouth bass abundance continues to decline."

32, VA: Dave Speas questioned whether meaningful humpback estimate/trend information can be obtained through nonnative fish removal passes. Dave clarified that he's not suggesting reinstating population estimates, however. Change to "CPUE information will be obtained..."

34, III.B.1.a: Add esocids to the list of fish which will be removed if encountered.

>The Program Director's office will provide the Biology Committee with a summary of what the White River flow recommendations report said and what the shortcomings were.

43, VA2&3: Add note that two trips will be reallocated to nonnative fish removal on the Colorado River in 2007.

44, VA: Change to indicate that UDWR did a fish community survey on the Dolores River in June 2006. >Craig Walker will provide the report to the Program Director's office.

RIPRAP revisions (text and tables) – >Melissa Trammell and Tom Chart will review references to the Price and San Rafael rivers in both the RIPRAP text and tables and may suggest additional text.

Green River

ID1f (table): Add “entire fish community with emphasis on” before “nonnative” in to “Determine influence of flow and temperature recommendations on nonnative fish life history in lower Reach 1 and upper Reach 2.”

IIIA1 (table and text): Add Bestgen 2006 citation.

See 27, IC2 and make appropriate changes to Price River section of text and tables.
(Change “dropped” to pending.)

Yampa River

IIIA1a is the draft Elkhead Mgmt. plan; change to “pending in 2007.”

Tom Pitts asked about “Draft flow recommendations for the Little Snake River were developed in 2004 and will be reviewed by the Program Director, then the Water Acquisition Committee,” noting that he doesn’t recall anything about this in the Yampa PBO. >Bob Muth will check on this and get back to Tom.

White River

IB2 – No formal demand study, but SWSI addresses demand. So perhaps should say “Program will revisit.”

Gunnison River

Add note to text and table explaining delay on Aspinall (on both page 5 and page 21 of the text).

FY 08-09 Program guidance

Instream Flow

Tributary management plans subsumed under projects #19 and #3. Add note to description of projects #19 and #3.

Melissa suggested leaving the door open to other methodologies besides MS-SWMS. Add note that this work needs to look at alternatives to the MS-SWMS model. Tom Pitts said he’d like this scope of work reviewed by the Geomorphology Panel; Bob Muth agreed.

Habitat Restoration

Floodplain habitat new start - Change “The results of this study should be evaluated to determine if additional studies are needed” to “The results of this study should be evaluated to identify what management actions are needed ...” The new floodplain scope

of work also should be reviewed by the Geomorphology Panel; Bob Muth agreed.

Razorback recruitment – needs to address using a pit-tag array.

Nonnative Fish

115 – The Program Director's office will review the outyear budget to be sure the otolith work is properly accounted for.

Research & Monitoring

149 - >Bob Muth will talk to Dave Campbell about funding from the SJRIP.

6. Green River floodplain management: FY 07 Stirrup plans, floodplain habitat monitoring and management, etc. – Pat Nelson gave a short presentation on the various Green River floodplain sites, past recruitment studies, and the configuration of the Stirrup floodplain. Pat recommended going ahead and putting the available fish into the floodplain (without rotenone treatment to eliminate nonnatives, even though that will put the small fish at risk). The Committee discussed this and decided to try to hold these fish until post-runoff, stock the ~1500 2-year-olds in the Stirrup in June 2007, then stock the 1-year-olds in the fall (assuming they are large enough to pit tag). >Tom Czapla and Craig Walker will determine what kind of tags to use. Craig cautioned that shedding PIT tags is apparently more prevalent than we thought previously. >Pat will look into measures for overwintering fish, including pumping water. The recruitment study in '08 guidance will address using a pit-tag array. >Biology Committee members are asked to submit comments on Tim's umbrella floodplain plan by March 23 so Tim can revise it based on those comments and these discussions.
7. Recommendations for potential modifications to the bonytail stocking plan – Tom Czapla distributed recommendations from the bonytail ad hoc group. These recommendations modify stocking locations and methods, but not numbers. In the middle Green River, stocking would be moved from canyon-bound to more alluvial reaches, and possibly into floodplains. Excess fish produced in ponds at Wahweap would be put into floodplain ponds (untagged). For the Colorado River, the Mumma hatchery will flow-train fish for ~1 week prior to stocking. The Committee approved these recommendations. Tom Czapla said recapture techniques also were considered. The ad hoc group believes trammel netting is better than electrofishing, but had no recommendations at this time. Craig Walker suggested that modifying electrofishing techniques also might be helpful.
8. Report on whether Green River Colorado pikeminnow are appropriately represented in Dexter broodstock – Tom Czapla said Dexter would like to get as many as 500 young Colorado pikeminnow (perhaps 100 fish/year), from as far up in the system as possible. We may not be able to collect this many fish, but we do need to determine how and when we can collect fish. Chuck McAda suggested that when we have indications that we're in a good year for YOY pikeminnow captures, that we take some of those fish to Dexter. Dexter would hold the fish until they are big enough to pit-tag, then run the genetics studies on

them. (Chuck suggested that we'd want to incorporate any fish captured into the broodstock.) >Tom Czapla will develop a no-cost FY 07 scope of work to track this work.

9. Update on Yampa River *Gila* removal and rearing – Tom Czapla said this work won't begin until fall, but all the permits, inspections, etc. are falling into place. We will seine young-of-year *Gila* (mid-September to mid-November) and transport them to Mumma and Ouray to determine survivability from capture, transfer, treatment, and holding for up to one year. There's \$10,000 shown in FY 08 program guidance for this. Then we will need to determine what to do with any of the fish that may be humpback chub. Fish that are not humpback chub will be returned to Yampa Canyon.
10. Recovery goal revision update – Tom Czapla said the 3 regions (Region 6, Region 2, and CNO office) have held a number of conference calls; Bob Williams will be the coordinator/contact for CNO, and Sam Spiller will be the coordinator/contact for Region 2, lower Colorado River. The tentative plan is for a letter to go out from Mike Stempel to all interested parties in Region 6 requesting any new information that would lead to revision of the recovery goals. Mike's counterparts in Region 2 and CNO will send out similar letters. There will be some overlap in how people are contacted, and that's intentional.

ADJOURN 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 8

CONVENE 9:00 a.m.

11. Discussion of Western's proposals re: FY 07 Flaming Gorge research – Misti referred to elements of a 2007 peak flow study plan that Western provided (sent to the Biology Committee by Bob Muth on February 13) and said they are interested in opportunities to gather additional data this year, especially as there may be opportunity to gather data during lower flows. They aren't proposing anything formal (or requesting any specific flows), but if there are opportunities to gather data, they would be interested in 1) physical measurements of floodplain inlets; 2) if resources are available, measurement of bead entrainment (Tom Czapla said no larvae will be available); and 3) water quality measurements (e.g., dissolved oxygen, pH, water clarity, temperature). The Committee said one or more Hydrolabs would be useful for the water quality measurements. Tom Chart suggested focusing on the Stirrup for water quality this year. Trina said she thinks they can do the physical measurements (we especially need this data at flows above 19,000 cfs); but believes they've measured entrainment at pretty low flows already. Misti said that if crews need people to help with this work, to let her and Clayton know. Misti said she believes Western would also be willing to fund aerial photography this year. Pat Nelson said he would be interested to see what the river and floodplain looks like at bankfull discharge. Melissa said she thinks we still need to determine the amount of scour and fill occurring at the breaches. Pat agreed that photos before runoff (just after ice-off) also would be good (help answer the question of whether these areas dry up each year). The Committee discussed the need to ground-truth aerial photos. Pat noted that installing staff gages might be useful at certain sites, also. The Committee agreed some sort of study plan is needed, at

least outlining in more detail the data to be collected. >Misti will talk to Clayton about the Committee's recommendations, including the desire for late-season data, and then will e-mail a proposal to the Biology Committee.

12. Nonnative criteria and update on Yampa nonnative fish strategy – Tom Chart sent the Biology Committee a revised draft of the interim nonnative fish removal criteria for northern pike and smallmouth bass in the Yampa River on February 23. This latest draft reflects the presentations made at the nonnative fish workshop. Smallmouth bass component has changed to focus on RM 124-100 and to include response of small bodied native species in low velocity habitats. Tom said he received some comments from John Hawkins, which he will incorporate. Dave Speas suggested that if we're going to use Haines and Modde's stock assessment as guidance, it should somehow be peer reviewed (the difficulty would be in determining what, exactly, they would review). Committee members saw some utility in this (since these kinds of models have the potential to have serious errors), but noted that it's not likely to affect our current management actions and we don't want to dilute our efforts. >Dave Irving will run this by Bruce and he and Dave Speas will discuss this with Tim Modde, also. Kevin recommended referencing specific years (as opposed to saying "10 years ago," etc). Melissa suggested citing Tim and Bruce's presentation at the nonnative fish workshop. The Committee approved the revised criteria (for at least one year). >Tom Chart will finalize and e-mail it to the Biology Committee with a note that it was approved by the Biology Committee.
13. Follow-up discussion on FY 07 nonnative fish SOW's – Pat said most of the revised scopes have been submitted and he's reviewing those. Pat described the revisions, which reflect the discussions at the Biology Committee and nonnative fish workshop and by the ad hoc group. >Angela Kantola will send the revised FY 2007 budget worksheet out to the appropriate offices.
14. Discuss plans for review and approval of nonnative synthesis reports – Pat said as of Monday he'd received drafts from Finney, Leisa Monroe, and Bob Burdick (and has sent the first two to the Biology Committee). Peer reviewers are Pat Martinez, Tom Nesler, Rich Valdez, and Kevin Bestgen (with the latter two giving more cursory reviews). Bob Muth suggested getting review from San Juan River folks who have been involved in nonnative fish removal. (Melissa noted that Steve Ross, Mel Warren, John Pitlick, and Ron Ryel do paid peer reviews for the San Juan Program.) With regard to review related to smallmouth bass life history, Dave Speas suggested Jim Peterson, and also the folks Pat has contacted in Australia, etc. Pat has asked for comments by the end of March for the reports he's sent out so far. Pat said John Hawkins was unwilling to say when he'd submit his synthesis report. The Green River bass report should be in within a couple of weeks. Mark Fuller's report is expected within the next week.
15. Review reports due list – Tom Czapla asked >Craig Walker to provide him a copy of UDWR's agency review of the Westwater humpback chub report. >Bob Muth will contact John Hawkins about his nonnative synthesis report.
16. Schedule next meeting (perhaps include a short joint meeting w/ I&E Committee to discuss

nonnative strategies & public meetings) – April 23-24 in Denver at Western. Starting at 1 p.m. on the 23rd, beginning at 8:30 a.m. on the 24th and running through 3 p.m. on the 24th. Agenda items will include: Draft floodplain management plan, upcoming nonnative fish management activities and related public meetings, etc, Black Rocks humpback chub report, and the Yampa entrainment work (discussing options and providing guidance on a scope of work after Tom Pitts has talked with their Maybell Ditch board, [hopefully in April]). >Pat Nelson will find out if John Hawkins can be at the April meeting.

ADJOURN 10:50 a.m.

Attachment
Assignments from March 7-8, 2007, meeting (Grand Junction)

Update on assignments completed or underway:

1. The Service will discuss Program activities with BLM and other agencies (e.g. NPS, BOR) to develop guidelines for the type of activities (e.g., major construction versus operational) requiring NEPA compliance. *1/18: Pat Nelson and Bob Muth spoke with Dan Alonso who's agreed to talk with BLM; Dan doesn't believe NEPA will be required. Pat will know more next week. 3/1: Dave Irving and Pat Nelson have been in contact with BLM. At present it appears that BLM is supportive of Recovery Program actions to assist in recovery of the endangered fishes. They requested that we submit proposals to them (in NEPA format; for their files) prior to proceeding with certain types of recovery activities (such as rotenoning, pumping, etc.). The need to develop such proposals would be determined on a case-by-case basis after making contact with BLM. 3/7: Pat said a programmatic NEPA will require more effort and he will begin to work on that as soon as he can.*
2. Dave Irving will talk to the Ute Tribe about considering one nonnative fish removal pass in the Duchesne River in 2008 to check on things. *The Ute Tribe would prefer to see removal in 2007, but will accept 2008.*

Assignments carried over or modified from previous meetings:

1. Tom Pitts will ask the WAC to adopt a report review procedure similar to the Biology Committee's. Tom Pitts will recommend changes to the Program Director's office for discussion at the next Biology Committee meeting. *Pending.*
2. Utah will work with Pat Nelson to submit/revise scopes of work to address white sucker removal. *The white sucker scope of work was forwarded to the BC on 1/23/07; no comments/concerns have been received. A pre-season training session on hybrid identification has yet to be scheduled.*
3. John Pitlick will revise the channel monitoring report, add Tom Pitts' comments and his responses to the appendix, and post the report to the Biology Committee by early January, then the Committee will then have 2 weeks to respond. *3/7: Pending.*
4. Tom Nesler will check on the status of the Elkhead Reservoir and Yampa River aquatic management plans.
5. John Hawkins and Tom Czaplá will develop a handbook clearly outlining operating procedures for fish handling and provide that to field researchers by mid March. After the draft handbook comes out, Tom Czaplá will talk with PI's about their training procedures, etc., and determine if a workshop is needed. *3/7: Pending; Hawkins will revise the draft and get it to the Biology Committee by the end of March.*

6. Krissy Wilson will get a proposal from Quent to repair the outlet structures on the endangered fish ponds at Wahweap and submit that to the Program. *3/7: Krissy said NRCS has re-committed to funding the stream restoration; once they see those plans (in ~2 weeks), Quent will be able to make an estimate on the cost to repair the outlet structures.*
7. CDOW will discuss whether they can do fyke netting for 98a (if not, perhaps FWS could work with Lori on this, CDOW will discuss). CDOW will work with Pat and John and Sam to determine how to accomplish 4 additional passes under 98a. There's another concentration area near Maybell (RM 90-80) where additional removal was recommended by the workshop participants (again, 8 passes would be needed), but there might be public relations considerations. Sherm said CDOW will have to discuss the potential expansion of bass removal in RM 90-80; he will get a decision on this as quickly as possible. *3/7: Pat said CDOW will allow fyke netting. CDOW will do an additional 4 passes within the South Beach reach; no permission to remove smallmouth bass from RM 80-90. The Biology Committee would like CDOW to work on making this possible in 2008. All bass not removed from Craig to Dinosaur will be marked. Pat Nelson will ask CDOW for a detailed response to each of the Biology Committee's requests.*

New Assignments:

1. Angela Kantola will post the revised summary to the listserver. *Done.*
2. Tom Pitts will contact the Maybell ditch manager about access for John Hawkins' entrainment study. Pat will send the annual report for this project to the Biology Committee.
3. The Program Director's office will send a memo to the Service's Ecological Services offices asking for annual reports on all contaminants-related RIPRAP actions.
4. George Smith will send Melissa Trammell a copy of Utah's 2006 memo assessing legal and physical availability of flows.
5. The Program Director's office will forward their comments and the report to Utah and the Committee. Tom Chart will forward a copy of the Price River BO to the Committee.
6. The Program Director's office will provide the Biology Committee with a summary of what the White River flow recommendations report said and what the shortcomings were.
7. Craig Walker will provide a copy of the report on UDWR's June 2006 Dolores River fish community survey to the Program Director's office.
8. Melissa Trammell and Tom Chart will review references to the Price and San Rafael rivers in both the RIPRAP text and tables and may suggest additional text.
9. Bob Muth will check on the Little Snake draft flow recommendations and get back to Tom Pitts.

10. Bob Muth will talk to Dave Campbell about funding from the SJRIP for the cyprinid key.
11. Tom Czapla and Craig Walker will determine what kind of tags to use in the fish to be stocked in the Stirrup wetland. Pat Nelson will look into measures for overwintering fish, including pumping water.
12. Biology Committee members are asked to submit comments on Tim's umbrella floodplain plan by March 23.
13. Tom Czapla will develop a no-cost FY 07 scope of work to track getting YOY Colorado pikeminnow from the Green River for Dexter NFH.
14. Misti Schriener will talk to Clayton about the Committee's recommendations, including the desire for late-season data, and then will e-mail a proposal to the Biology Committee.
15. Dave Irving will run Dave Speas peer review request of the stock assessment.
16. Tom Chart will finalize and e-mail the interim nonnative fish removal criteria to the Biology Committee with a note that it was approved by the Biology Committee.
17. Angela Kantola will send the revised FY 2007 budget worksheet out to the appropriate offices.
18. Craig Walker will provide Tom Czapla a copy of UDWR's agency review of the Westwater humpback chub report.
19. Pat Nelson will find out if John Hawkins can be at the April Biology Committee meeting.