

**Management Committee Webinar Summary  
June 23, 2022 | 9 AM – 1 PM (MST)**

**CONVENE: June 23 – 9:00 AM**

**Introductions & requests to modify agenda** – Attendance (Attachment 1) was read by Paul Badame. Chris Keleher reviewed the agenda and asked if there were modifications to the agenda. Edalin Koziol asked if the MC was prepared to talk about the 2-4 million acre-feet reduction in consumptive use required by Commissioner Touton in 2023. The PDO will add that to future agendas for discussion.

**Approve April 19-20 MC meeting summary** – Paul Badame said that the summary was revised with edits and comments received from Dave Speas, Ryan Christianson, Shane Capron, Derek Fryer, Tom Pitts, and Leslie James and returned to the committee for an additional review. No further comments were received, and approval of the revised summary was requested. The committee approved the summary.

**WAPA analysis of LaGory et al. recommendations** – Derek Fryer provided some background information on the hydropower analysis. The goal was to use CRSS model runs to determine the effects of the LaGory et al. 2019 (GREAT) report recommendations relative to a baseline assumption scenario. Individual experiments (Larval Trigger Study Plan-LTSP, bass spike flows, and summer pikeminnow base flows) and combinations of experiments were compared to a baseline release scenario allowed under the ROD. Baseline conditions include a spring peak flow that matches the Yampa River. All three experiments were included in the model, individually and in combination. The stress-test hydrology was used (1988-2018); this period is now used as Reclamation's standard condition. Derek introduced Quentin Ploussard from Argonne National Lab. The analysis used 20 years of data, 31 traces, and six scenarios including base cases and various mixes of experiments. Quentin presented the details of all model runs and the preliminary results.

Overall conclusions:

- When considering all hydrologic conditions, the combination of all 3 experiments (LTSP, SMB, CPMBF) is the one with the highest additional hydropower value (\$1.59M/year); but this is partially due to the 3.3% additional yearly water release compared to the base case and the 51.6% probability of dry condition
- The requirement to maintain a certain level of summer release in the CPMBF experiment leads to a large positive hydropower value (on average) in dry conditions, and a large negative hydropower value (on average) in wet conditions
- Apart from hydrologic conditions, these economic results heavily depend on the monthly price profile (and that summer prices are much larger than in other months). *\*Based on the historical market price of August 2020 to July 2021*

Edalin asked if the presentation could be shared. >**WAPA and Argonne** will provide the analysis to the committee after an additional internal review. Derek noted that this was a preliminary look, and they will continue to work with Reclamation, Argonne, and the Program to refine this analysis. Quentin noted that the economic results heavily depend on the monthly price profile, which is higher in the summer than in other months. Tom Pitts asked what the effect would be of changing the proportion of Dry years. Quentin said that the increasing proportion of Dry years increases hydropower value of the three experiments. Shane added that Reclamation would have to remodel the CRSS models to really answer that question. Shane expressed concern about the dominance of Dry hydrology in the future and how that will affect Muth et al. He recommended looking at the goal posts in Muth et al. in relation to categorizing the distribution of hydrologic conditions. Leslie agreed that assessing the distribution curve would be valuable. Shane reiterated that we may not even realize what the effects of the changing hydrology are. Julie thanked everyone that has been involved in both the development of the GREAT report and this hydropower analysis.

**Final approval for LaGory et al. 2019** – Julie Stahlhli asked the committee for approval of the report. Tom Pitts motioned for approval. Edalin Koziol seconded the motion. Shane Capron and Rick Baxter requested to make comments. Rick noted that approving the report did not necessarily mean experiments would be implemented in any given year. Shane agreed that Reclamation is charged with figuring out how to implement the recommendations but was still interested in an environmental analysis that evaluated broad impacts in the future. The Committee approved the report.

**DC briefings update** – Tom Pitts updated the committee on the remainder of the annual DC briefings. Tom noted that they have been conducting annual DC Briefings since the formation of the Program to ensure. Tom reiterated the importance of talking to agency leadership and congressional representatives to keep the focus on the Program. In 2021, briefings did not occur with the agency leadership, so they are focusing on them this year. The group held 26 meetings in total. Tom thanked Harry Crockett and Bill Miller as biological representatives that help everyone understand that we are in the business of Recovery. Tom thanked the other members of the delegation that represent all Program partners. Tom noted the importance of having succinct and current information for the briefings and explained that four items are provided for every meeting: an agenda, a one-page summary, the 11-page briefing paper, and the funding requests. The team met with Gary Frazer and five division chiefs from the Service. The downlisting of humpback chub and the proposed downlisting of razorback sucker have made an impression on both agency leadership and Congress. They did also brief members on the status of the post-2023 efforts and the Report to Congress. Meetings with Reclamation's directorate will occur the last week of June. Office of Management & B meetings will occur next. Tom thanked everyone who has participated in those meetings. Chris appreciated all of Tom's effort in scheduling all those meetings and is looking forward to Tom's how-to guide for DC briefings. Edalin agreed.

**Post-2023 Updates** – Stahlhli

Report to Congress update – Stahlhli made all aware that the report to congress will be reviewed by Gary Frazer's office prior to the DC briefings with the Service later this month.

Funding Group update – Stahlhli said the state and federal directorates are now meeting and moving forward the discussion of cost sharing and have set the goal of coming to a conclusion

prior to the end of the fiscal year. Chris Keleher said there is a follow up meeting scheduled with Wayne Pullan of Reclamation next Monday and all are hopeful that they are nearing conclusion. Marj Nelson thanked the funding group and reminded everyone that tackling other significant issues like NEPA are dependent on tying up this subject.

## **BREAK**

### **Review Pikeminnow Recovery Plan cost & time estimates derived from post-2023**

Presentation – Tildon Jones began with a presentation to answer some common questions that arose from partner reviews of the draft plan. Tildon said a number of questions were asked about the 10 and 15-year time frames and the concept of consecutive years. He noted the timelines were based on species age at maturity (10 years) and generation time (15 years). Tildon said there is no requirement to go from current status to downlisted to delisted. Tildon reviewed that because of how we sample (3 years on, 2 years off), looking at 10 consecutive years gives us six point estimates to consider. Fifteen years for trajectory looks at about 9 estimates. He noted these time frames help us evaluate rational time periods based on what data can inform the current status of populations. In the downlisting criteria, he noted that both wild and stocked adults are included in the population trajectory. He reviewed the four demographic criteria and provided an example of how the combination of the four factors may be evaluated in a 5-year review. Kevin reviewed the recent downlisting decision for humpback chub and how it reflects the same considerations as is being proposed for Colorado pikeminnow. Tildon provided another example of an increasing population that mimics the decision that was made for razorback sucker. He noted that the criteria work together to assess the current population and look at where the populations are going. Tom Pitts thought that some of the clarifications that Tildon put in responses should be put into the Recovery Plan itself. Tildon said he is available to discuss that with any partner in the next few weeks. Tom asked about timing for the draft to be made public. Marj said it takes 1-2 months after the outreach package is complete and noted the process is much faster because recovery plans can be signed by the Regional Director rather than going to HQ.

Discussion and request for remaining estimates needed from partners – Jones lead a discussion of the remaining gaps and needs for the cost and time estimates to be included within the pikeminnow recovery plan. Tildon took all of the information from the Post-2023 discussions to develop estimates for recovery actions. He pulled out information on the 11 recovery actions and included all actions for Colorado pikeminnow (e.g. not razorback sucker stocking). If actions benefitted all species, it was included in the analysis at full cost and not prorated by species. Treating Colorado pikeminnow as a single listed species is required by guidance. Tildon used the MC selection tool which were inflated to 2024 dollars. They are not inflated in future years as inflation is not needed. Costs from both the San Juan and the Upper Colorado programs are included. Tildon reviewed how he developed the estimates thus far and presented a draft summary table. Tildon asked two questions to the committee members: whether a 15-year time frame is sufficient to carry out the recovery actions and whether there was value in documenting additional contributions from other parties. Tom Pitts asked for an addition in the Recovery Plan to clarify that many actions benefit all four species. Melissa Trammell asked about the 15-year window. She advocated for an acknowledgement that some of the actions would have to be continued in perpetuity regardless of status. Tom recommended proceeding with the 15-year estimates. Chris Keleher mentioned that a number of in-kind contributions from the states have

been identified as part of the post-2023 process. The states see value in documenting the contributions from a post-2023 process, but Chris expressed uncertainty in including those in the recovery plan. The Committee supported adding language to the beginning of the plan outlining the essential contributions of states, partners and other agencies that benefit the species, but are very difficult to assign specific monetary value to. The Committee was not interested in monetizing contributions outside of the Program projections.

### **Hydrology update and outlook – David Graf**

David reviewed hydrology and operations to date and then provided a forecast of upcoming conditions and operations. Upper basin snow water equivalents (SWE) never quite made it to normal for the year and Lake Powell water supply is currently at about 55% of average. David reviewed the Lake Powell end of month elevations projected into the future. Projections are likely to stay above 3490 thanks to DROA operations, but dropping below 3525 is likely in late summer or fall. He reviewed the water supply in the basin noting that we are in better shape than 2021, but still well below average. The Yampa was Moderately Dry based on the May 1 projection, but the Yampa runoff stayed higher than median flows for most of May and June because of a series of warming/cooling weather patterns. At Aspinall, the conditions were also Moderately-Dry with low levels. The targets were exceeded for peak flow, and baseflow is set at 900 cfs for June. David provided statistics looking at runoff by basin as a percent of average, with values between 40 and 80% of average. Coordinated river operations (CROS) operations will not occur this year on the 15-MR and David noted that meeting the minimum flow targets will be difficult, partially because the Recovery Program pools did not all fill this year. But there are leases and donations from partners that will help support flows. The historic users pool (HUP) calls kicked off on June 22 and weekly calls will begin about July 6<sup>th</sup>. Yampa calls will likely begin in late July because of the high flows this year. Colorado Water Trust and Colorado River District have both added to fish pools. David reviewed the status of the White River Management Plan which has an expected completion date of September 2022. David said we have some challenging hydrology ahead for listed fish. We have had some internal conversations within the PDO to frame the conversations using the WAC and RIPRAP processes with partners and water community to figure out next steps.

**Flaming Gorge operations updates – Tildon Jones** reviewed the LTSP flows and noted that the shape of the curve was great for pushing larvae into wetlands. He noted that temperatures warmed quickly, prompting smallmouth bass spawning. The flow-spike started on Tuesday, June 21, in an effort to reduce nest and larval success for that species. After the flow spike concludes, Reclamation will implement Colorado pikeminnow base flows as needed to offset declines in the Yampa. The current prediction is for pikeminnow larvae to show up late this month. Dave Speas asked how deep the Stirrup was and asked if pumping was expecting. Tildon said most wetlands have 5-5.5 feet in them but are not full. Chris Smith installed transducers at Old Charley to monitor water levels. Tildon is ready to pump at both of those sites when it becomes needed. UDWR did request deliveries of Stewart Lake supplemental water and expect to receive about 60% of the potential volume which will help them get through the summer.

**Capital funds update – Ryan Christianson** reviewed the capital projects being tracked by the Program. The Grand Valley Irrigation Company (GVIC) screen is the highest priority. Funding is available, either through capital projects or BIL funding. Ryan is working with the irrigation

company to really make this project work, which is taking a lot of time. Starvation screen may be built in 2023 or 2024. Catamount is expected in 2024 and BIL funding has been requested and a VE study is planned. Stirrup is complete and fish are entrained in the wetland. Ryan is ready to spend and obligate these funds; he encouraged completing the design phases as soon as possible to get this money out the door. Ryan said the water supply issues at Randlett will take more time and planning to get some funding out the door. Ryan said this is his last MC meeting as he has accepted another position with a new agency. Tom Pitts thanked Ryan for all his amazing work in supporting the Program. Committee members agreed and thanked Ryan for all his efforts.

### **Consent Agenda**

Audubon Society wetland improvements – Tildon Jones reviewed the Audubon conversations to date. The Audubon wetland is downstream from the confluence of the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers. The preserve is right along the Colorado River. The Program helped breach the wetland historically, but the breach has filled in and it is now disconnected. Audubon is improving the site for migratory birds with Ducks Unlimited, but they are interested in other species as well. The current plan is to reconnect the wetland with a breach and a gate downstream of the original breach. Water would be available from the Redland Canal tailrace and/or from the river. The site is a little smaller and is downstream of razorback sucker spawning. Audubon is phasing their approach. We have two options on the table, one looking at funding from our capital funds or another is to provide letters of support for the Audubon to seek outside funding. Edalin asked about a ballpark cost estimate. Tildon said Ducks Unlimited has an engineering team that can make the project shovel ready. For comparison, the Stirrup was \$700k and was likely bigger than this project. Edalin recommended providing funding to ensure a seat at the table. Melissa is a strong supporter of moving forward with this site. Our wetland is Phase 3 of the project, which is scheduled for after the completion of the migratory bird project that is currently underway. Tildon noted we may chip in for Phase 2 to extend supplemental water to the fish wetland. Edalin said Audubon has a \$46K gap in Phase 2 funding. Tildon asked if the MC is willing to support either through a letter or through direct funding and he will go back to get more details from Audubon. Leslie requested that when funding requests occur (though email) it is important that all parties respond one way or the other rather than assuming that no answer is consent. Tildon agreed.

NFWF funds approval for Desolation Canyon helicopter support – Kevin McAbee described the need to provide helicopter support to pull fish out of Desolation Canyon. The first step of developing a broodstock is collecting fish and establishing them at the Randlett Unit. Because of the remote nature of Desolation Canyon, the helicopter will prevent mortality in the fish we collect before reaching the hatchery. Kevin reviewed the NFWF account balance and the impact of these projects. Chris asked if we have a target number for broodstock. Kevin said we are working towards 500 fish and noted that we are not thinking that we will get that amount in the first year. The fish have to be taken without impacting the fish population in Desolation Canyon so limits have been set on how many fish can be taken at any one time or site. The Committee approved the expense. Chris thanked Kevin and expressed support for the project.

**August 30-31 Meeting in Grand Junction** – August 30-31 Meeting in Grand Junction at the Double Tree Inn in the Grand Parlor room. The meeting will run from 1 - 4 p.m. on the 30th and

from 9 -12 on the 31st. A block of 15 rooms is available for reservation until August 9th at \$96.00 per night. The event name is “US Fish & Wildlife”.

We ask that only MC members and the Program Director’s office attend in person. There will be a virtual option for all interested parties or members who are not able to travel. The PDO will keep the committee updated on COVID community transmission rates and any other factors that may affect attendance or travel.

Meeting location:

Doubletree Inn  
743 Horizon Dr.  
Grand Junction, CO, 81506  
(970) 241-8888

August 30<sup>th</sup> evening social – The committee would like to have a social gathering that evening and suggested either Canyon View Park or Riverside Park. Leslie said she rafted the Rio Grande as a group gathering at a recent meeting and suggested that would be a fun team building adventure. >**The PDO** will work on the logistics and planning for an evening gathering

**ADJOURNED at 1:00 PM MT**

## Attachment 1: Meeting Attendees

### Management Committee Members in Attendance:

Chris Keleher	MC Chair, State of Utah
Mike Robertson	State of Wyoming
Kara Scheel for Michelle Garrison	State of Colorado
Tom Pitts	Water Users
Edalin Koziol for Joseph Trungale	The Nature Conservancy
Leslie James	Colorado River Energy Distributors Assoc.
Shane Capron	Western Area Power Administration
Melissa Trammell	National Park Service
Ryan Christianson	Bureau of Reclamation
Marj Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Julie Stahli (non-voting)	Program Director

### Upper Colorado Program Office Staff:

Kevin McAbee	Nonnative Fish Coordinator
Tildon Jones	Habitat Coordinator
David Graf	Instream Flow Coordinator
Paul Badame	Program Deputy Director

### Interested Parties:

Dave Speas	Bureau of Reclamation
Kathy Callister	Bureau of Reclamation
Emily Halvorsen	Colorado Attorney's General Office
Lee Traynham	Bureau of Reclamation
Derek Fryer	Western Area Power
Erik Skeie	Colorado
Don Anderson	Volunteer
Christina Noftsker	NM OSE
Dale Ryden	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gene Seagle	NPS
Tom Chart	Grand River Consulting
Harry Crockett	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Jeff Cowley	State of Wyoming
Quentin Ploussard	Argonne National Lab
Amy Ostdiek	Colorado Attorney's General Office
Rick Baxter	Bureau of Reclamation
Clarence Fullard	Bureau of Reclamation
Andrew Schultz	Fish and Wildlife Service