

**Management Committee Summary
February 13, 2023
9:00 AM – 10:30 am (MST)**

See Attachment 1 for meeting attendance

CONVENE: 9:00 AM (MST)

Introductions & requests to modify agenda – The attendance of committee members was noted, and introductions were skipped for sake of time.

Consent Agenda – Badame

Review Assignments and Tasks from December 9 MC meeting:

- a. **Michelle Garrison** will send an email and doodle poll to regarding the development of a scope of work to write a Program Benefit Analysis in early January. Michelle has the names of those who agreed to serve on that sub-committee. Her goal is to have the completed analysis before the spring D.C. briefings. *Michelle will be sending a Doodle poll this week to convene the steering committee which will guide the development of a scope of work. Completion of the Benefit Analysis is to be determined at this point.*
- b. **Michelle Garrison** will distribute a final funding agreement to the UCRRP MC and SJRIP CC to be approved by email prior to the January 4th Implementation Committee meeting. *Meetings to discuss revisions have been ongoing and a final draft is expected this week (2/13/23).*
- c. **Paul Badame** will provide the draft 2021-2022 Sufficient Progress memo and supporting documents to the MC by COB December 9, 2022 so they can begin their review and comment process. *The draft was provided 12/9/22, the MC provided comments by 1/13/23, and ES completed their review (1/19/23) and revisions (1/31) and then forwarded the memo to the FWS R6 Director for signature. The Memo was signed by the RD on 2/13 and will be posted on the Program website by the end of February.*

Approve December 9 Meeting Summary – The summary was approved and will be posted to the Program website.

The Yampa PBO depletion accounting reports for 2016-2020 for the Yampa River (Colorado) and Little Snake River (Wyoming) were completed by Wyoming and Colorado and reviewed and accepted by the Water Acquisition Committee (WAC) at their February 6 meeting. These reports will now be forwarded to the FWS Region 6 Ecological Services. Paul described this as a ‘point of information’ for the MC.

Flaming Gorge flow request letter

Discussion: Tildon Jones reviewed the priority tables for experiment implementation at Flaming Gorge. Tildon shortened the letter, based on a request from Reclamation. In that shortening, his goal was to include more references and less detail on implementation, not to change the intent or scope of the letter. Tildon noted the priority matrix has three columns that combine hydrologic categories with similar experimental flow priorities. The three categories focus on where the changes in priorities would occur, with the smallmouth bass flow spike being the priority in drier years, and LTSP in wetter categories. In very wet years, the priority would shift to channel maintenance and matching the Yampa peak to achieve that.

Tildon then reviewed comments and proposed changes from committee members. There were a couple of questions regarding references to the Muth and LaGory flow recommendations. Tildon attempted to clarify the intent and explained that LaGory and Muth are very similar for peak flow targets but differ in the timing of peak flow releases.

Derek Fryer provided asked if the declines in pikeminnow numbers might need to be further considered regarding the priority of baseflows over spike flows in dry hydrologic conditions. Mellissa Trammell said that she felt that smallmouth bass control is meant to specifically support pikeminnow recruitment and therefore should remain as priority 1 in dry hydrologic conditions. Derek said that he appreciates the thought and consideration that has gone into these priorities and is satisfied with the current order.

Melissa commented on the wording under “moderately wet” Priority 2, that including just the word “timing” might lead to ignoring the “targets” part of the priority relating to magnitude and duration of flows. Tildon will clarify the wording by removing timing and emphasizing both timing and targets in the footnotes.

Tildon walked through the remaining individual comments provided by committee members and made additional edits as needed. He expressed that the letter needs to be finalized and submitted to Reclamation by the end of February. The group concurred with the edits Tildon made during the meeting.

Table 1. Proposed prioritization of flow experiments in 2023.

Experiment Priority	Reach 2 – May 1 st Hydrologic Forecast		
	Average (below median) or Drier (>50% exceedance)	Average (above median) (30-50% exceedance)	Moderately Wet or Wet (<30% exceedance)
Priority 1	Smallmouth bass flow spike	Spring releases consistent with LTSP ¹ timing	Spring releases to achieve channel maintenance targets
Priority 2	Experimental base flows	Experimental base flows ²	Spring releases consistent with LTSP ² timing
Priority 3	Spring releases consistent with LTSP ³	Smallmouth bass flow spike	Experimental base flows ³

MC MOTION: Chris Keleher motioned to accept the letter as revised and to submit the request to Reclamation. Further discussion: none. Melissa Trammell seconded the motion. The Committee accepted the 2023 Flow Request Letter as revised and the PDO will forward it to Reclamation. A courtesy copy of the finalized letter will be provided to the committee.

2022 RIPRAP assessment process and schedule – Paul described the process for 2022, and the change from a 2/1 - 1/31 calendar to an actual calendar year (i.e., 1/1 - 12/31).

Tom Pitts asked why the RIPRAP schedule does not follow the fiscal year. Julie explained that the fiscal year does not align with the biological sampling year, so reporting for a single year of work would often be split between two RIPRAP periods, depending on the activity. Tom also asked for clarification that technical committee review would precede MC review; Julie clarified that those reviews were scheduled for late March.

FY 24-25 Work planning process and schedule – Julie recapped that the intent of work planning changes is to reduce some of the complexity and adopt reporting practices that are biologically relevant. She explained that the PDO requested offices begin drafting SOWs using current levels of effort from the 2022-2023 workplan. New work outside of the current workplan will be proposed as a “new start” for consideration. The two primary reasons for starting with FY22-23 work levels are 1) we would like to provide the opportunity to calculate more accurate cost estimates for current work levels to create a realistic baseline (2% incremental increases have been on hold for four years) and 2) FY24 funding levels are still uncertain, and the Program may need the ability to adjust back to FY22-23 levels. Scopes will largely be the same as past years, except for the six field offices with whom the PDO is working to combine multiple project SOWs into single scopes for each office. Based on the proposed Program funding agreement, we anticipate more funding in future years, so we will be working to identify where that funding will be applied. The PDO would also like to consider shorter-term, defined duration projects that

¹ Effort should be made to achieve peak flow targets to aid in channel maintenance, if possible, in conjunction with larval triggered releases to inundate floodplains.

² In wetter hydrologies, experimental base flows largely overlap with non-experimental base flow recommendations, but operations should attempt to reach appropriate Reach 2 flows in anticipation of larval Colorado pikeminnow drift.

³ If hydrologic conditions in conjunction with implementing other experiments limit water availability, spring releases should revert to coincide with the Yampa River peak.

would answer questions without being added to the workplan indefinitely. Julie asked the committee for input on these proposed changes/additions. We hope to have Program Guidance distributed by the end of this week or early next week, with SOWs coming back to the PDO by the end of April. The proposed workplan will then go to technical committees for review in June and approval in July, and then the MC will review and approve it at their August 2-3 meeting.

Timeline and process for Program document revisions

- a. NEPA – Julie Stahl and Melissa Mata completed a draft of the NEPA document and routed it through NEPA specialists within FWS and Reclamation. Julie and Melissa are working on initial comments received from Kara and Colleen and as a new revised version is completed it will be provided to the MC for review.
- b. Program Document (Blue Book) Revisions – Julie said that Kara and Colorado have offered to draft sections 3.0 and 5.0 based on the current funding agreement. The PDO will work on the remaining parts of the text and plan to distribute it back to the Management Committee in coming months.
- c. Cooperative Agreement – Tom Pitts said that a new agreement will be dependent on the passing of a new authorizing bill. The timeframe and funding levels will be spelled out in the bill and the cooperative agreement will need to align with that language.

Status of Authorizing Legislation – Tom Pitts updated the committee that there have been significant changes to the language of the original legislation resulting in a clean draft. Tom commented that working with a clean draft avoids the confusion of tracking multiple amendments, however a decision has not been reached on which of these approaches will be taken for the proposed legislation. There are still two outstanding issues, 1) regarding the inclusion of State contributions in the bill and 2) if there should be language regarding the use of hydropower funds if they are available. The states are providing comments regarding concern number one. Reclamation provided technical assistance in writing the bill language to convey the concept of using hydropower funds if available, and that they would be considered ‘non-reimbursable’ funds for budget purposes. WAPA and Reclamation are both reviewing that language and feel that it is very close to being done. Leslie James noted that CREDA’s board will need to see the entire bill text before deciding to support it. Tom Pitts has crafted a draft bill to reflect the recommendations from Reclamation and WAPA which he will be sharing.

2023 Washington Briefings on Recovery Program – Tom Pitts explained the briefing process and offices involved. He anticipates the briefings will occur in the latter half of March. Briefings will be provided to Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico delegation staffers, House and Senate committees, and federal agency directorates on the proposed legislation. They will try to schedule the briefings to occur within a one-week period. The non-federal partners and delegations agree that virtual meetings have been working well, and plan to continue with the virtual format. Tom reiterated the importance of these briefings in conveying the benefits of the programs and maintaining funding. The annual briefing book is being updated and Julie asked whether the committee supports inclusion of a one-page Program summary created by Tom that can be used for future internal or partner briefings. Leslie James supported a “one-pager.”

Administrative Tasks

1. The MC RIPRAP review meeting was scheduled as an in-person meeting (with Teams option) in Grand Junction spanning 2 days (afternoon/morning). **April 27-28.**
2. The MC Workplan review meeting was scheduled as an in-person meeting (with Teams option) in Grand Junction spanning 2 days **August 2** (full day) and **August 3** (1/2 day).

ADJOURNED: 10:41 AM MST

Assignments and Tasks

1. **Assigned 2/12/23 – PDO** will complete a draft “Briefing Document” and provide it for review and comment by the end of February and provide a clean digital version prior to the start of DC briefings in the last half of March.

Attachment 1: Meeting Attendees

Management Committee Members in Attendance:

Chris Keleher	MC Chair, State of Utah
Jed Rockweiler	State of Wyoming
Michelle Garrison	State of Colorado
Tom Pitts	Water Users
Joseph Trungale	The Nature Conservancy
Leslie James	Colorado River Energy Distributors Assoc.
Shane Capron	Western Area Power Administration
Melissa Trammell	National Park Service
Lee Traynham	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
Koreen Zelasko	Propagation Coordinator
Chris Michaud	Data Coordinator
Shannon Nelson	Outreach Coordinator

Interested Parties:

Dave Speas	Bureau of Reclamation
Kathy Callister	Bureau of Reclamation
Emily Halvorsen	Colorado Attorney's General Office
Kara Scheel	State of Colorado
Andrew Schultz	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Derek Fryer	Western Area Power Administration
Chris Breidenbach	Colorado Attorney's General Office