

DRAFT
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
December 4, 2009

1. Butch Craig Wetland Levee Repair – Authorization of Repairs

- a. Consideration of November 20th memo and photographs from Brent Uilenberg to MC – Brent said they had a geomorphologist and a hydraulic engineer from the Denver Technical Service Center review the site and they were quite alarmed by what could happen if the levee were allowed to breach. It's unknown if there is solid bedrock upstream; therefore, if the levee is breached and the river starts to headcut, it could undermine the levee for the upstream gravel mining operation and also threaten the Union Pacific Railway. The State highway bridge further upstream could be at risk, as well. Therefore, they strongly recommended repairing the levee, armoring a greater distance than originally thought (thus the increased cost). If the levee were breached, bed load and suspended load would build up in the gravel pit and starve the river below. The U.S. Government holds title to this land and would thus be liable if damage occurred to adjacent landowners. Brent said Reclamation did look at alternatives, but without knowing the composition of the river channel (without time available to do the costly geotechnical investigations), no viable alternatives are available. In response to comments John Reber submitted via email, Brent said that building a cutoff sill in the bottom of the river to arrest the headcutting would be far more expensive than fixing the levee. Melissa asked if the Recovery Program would be completely liable for the cost of these repairs to adjacent landowners if we let the river recapture the floodplain. Brent indicated that he could not be certain on this, but thought Recovery Program liability would be highly likely. John Shields asked if Reclamation could get the capital dollars in a timely manner to do the proposed repairs. The cost of the repairs would come out of the \$3M in capital funds available in FY 10 (the San Juan Program isn't going to be able to construct the Hogback fish weir barrier this year). To accomplish the work before spring runoff, Reclamation would contract for the riprap material and use qualified Reclamation operators for placement. They would begin the necessary NEPA and 404 permitting process immediately and hopefully start construction in February.
- b. Input from the Biology Committee – Dave Speas said the Biology Committee's perception of the problem was that given the current ~40' depth of the pond, a flow-through might be even more valuable for the fish; however, the Committee realized that if the river were allowed to recapture the site, this could pose some risk to the railroad across from the downstream breach, thus they asked for a geomorphological review.
- c. Recommendations from the Program Director's Office – Tom Chart supports this recommendation. Given the Program's C-6-hydro project to evaluate these

manipulated sites, Tom asked if we have other sites that could be facing similar issues. Brent said the only similar site is the 30 Road Hot Spot Complex, but he doesn't believe it's at risk of being compromised in any way. Tom Chart noted that sites capable of entraining larvae and overwintering them are fairly rare. Dave Speas suggested considering reconfiguring the breaches at a later date. Brent noted that widening breaches and lowering the sill elevation to increase flow-through also would increase nonnative fish access to the site.

- d. Action Item: Management Committee requested to authorize use of capital construction funds by Reclamation to proceed with repairs. Mike Roberts suggested we could be headed down a slippery slope of trying to hold a dynamic river channel in place. Armoring this portion of the river could simply move the problem downstream and result in a need for another fix in a few years. John Shields noted that Brent said that below the 650' of linear area to be rippedraped, the river direction changes, meaning further problems wouldn't be expected. Brent concurred, but agreed with Mike Robert's general observation and said any time a river channel is manipulated, there are potential consequences. Brent said the lesson here is we need to be very cautious before considering modifying any habitats in the future. For example, Reclamation has been asked to look at the potential for constructing an impervious dike at the mouth of a backwater on the Yampa River to discourage northern pike spawning. Based on the channel dynamics in that area he thinks that would be very unwise. Melissa asked if the Committee could approve the proposed solution, then give further consideration of manipulating the breaches. Brent said we could to that, but noted that any breach alteration would be very expensive. Brent is hopeful the cost of the proposed solution could come in under \$500K. The Committee concurred with authorization of up to \$500K for Reclamation to undertake the proposed repairs at Butch Craig.
2. Next meeting – The Committee's next meeting has been moved to Tuesday, February 9 in Denver near DIA (formerly February 17).

Participants
Colorado River Management Committee Conference Call
December 4, 2009

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg	Bureau of Reclamation
Dan McAuliffe	State of Colorado
Robert King	State of Utah
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
John Shields	State of Wyoming
Julie Lyke	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Leslie James	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
Melissa Trammell for John Reber	National Park Service
Mike Roberts	The Nature Conservancy
Clayton Palmer	Western Area Power Administration

Nonvoting Member:

Tom Chart	Recovery Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Recovery Program Staff:

Angela Kantola	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tom Czapl	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others:

Dave Speas	Bureau of Reclamation
Jana Mohrman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service