San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program
Coordination Committee Meeting
March 2, 2010
Durango, CO

Meeting Summary

Coordination Committee Members:	**Representing:**
Jim Brooks, Chair	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Herb Becker	Jicarilla Apache Nation
Steve Lynch	Bureau of Indian Affairs
Michelle Saughnessy (Alternate)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 6
Stanley Pollack	Navajo Nation
Catherine Condon	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Ted Kowalski	State of Colorado
Brent Uilenberg	Bureau of Reclamation
John Whipple (via phone)	State of New Mexico
Adrian Oglesby	The Nature Conservancy
Dan Israel	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Joel Farrell	Bureau of Land Management
Absent	Water Development Interests

Program Management:	
David Campbell, Program Coordinator	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
Sharon Whitmore, Asst. Program Coordinator	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

Other Interested Parties:	
Bill Miller, BC Chair	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Darryl Vigil, CC Alternate	Jicarilla Apache Nation
Michael Howe, CC Alternate	Bureau of Indian Affairs
Steve Harris, BC Alternate	Southwestern Water Conservation District
Warren Vigil	Jicarilla Apache Nation
Paul Harms (via phone)	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Randy Kirkpatrick	San Juan Water Commission

Jim Brooks, CC Chair, opened the meeting. Introductions were made. Two items, TNC Conservation Action Plan/NMED RERI Grant Update and Grand Junction Grow-out Ponds Facility, were added to the agenda.

Sept. 10-11, 2009 Meeting Summary Approval – Becker moved; Lynch second; approved with minor edits

Nov. 10, 2009 Conference Call Summary Approval – Oglesby moved; Becker second; approved

Approval of Program Document Revisions – Brooks reported that he and Campbell met with the Program's Tribal representatives that morning on this topic. The Tribal representatives indicated the verbiage regarding the annual hydrology meeting and feedback loop was not yet clear enough and asked that approval of the Program Document revisions be deferred until the May meeting. Israel said the Program cannot take an arbitrary stance on this issue considering the importance of hydrology-related Program actions in progressing toward recovery. Condon said there is not enough detail on how the Program will move forward with hydrology-related actions. Becker added the conflict of interest issue has not yet been completely resloved. Uilenberg reminded the group that the Program Document revisions were made to solve the problem of the HC being ineffective as a standing committee. Brooks said #6 under Reclamation's responsibilities (page 5) related to conducting an annual hydrology meeting could be further fleshed out. Uilenberg agreed and said he could try to add some additional detail.

Campbell said the Service and Reclamation formed the hydrology baseline workgroup, in lieu of a standing HC, to move development of Gen3 of the San Juan River Basin Hydrology Model (SJRBHM) forward. Campbell said there is a core membership on that workgroup but any CC member or representative can attend and participate. Whitmore said the workgroup was intended to remain relatively small to be effective. Campbell emphasized that the primary purposes of the model are for sec. 7 consultations and for guiding Navajo Dam operations and that CC member's hydrologists will provide input. Whipple reminded the group that the hydrology baseline workgroup was formed because the technical members on the HC could not resolve policy issues. He said the group has been working through identifying and removing StateMod inputs; identifying and agreeing on what is in the baseline at present, under full development, and at other time steps; insuring Service needs are included; and figuring out how to account for global warming. Whitmore said she thinks the workgroup has been effective and that the process will result in a model that is more transparent and streamlined.

Pollack asked if reinitiation of sec. 7 consultations will be required after Gen3 is done and new flow recommendations are developed. Campbell said there is flexibility in the biological opinions that allow for changes to the flow recommendations. Uilenberg said the current flow recommendations are not necessarily doing what they are supposed to do. Pollack agreed that better flow recommendations will come out of the process. Uilenberg said as long as releases stay within the 250 cfs to 5,000 cfs range, no reinitiation is needed. He emphasized this activity is a three-year process with Gen 3 to be completed in the second year and the flow recommendations revised in year three.

Condon said #4 under Reclamation's responsibilities (page 5) states model runs can be requested by action agencies or the CC but does not list the BC. Campbell said the BC can request model runs but all requests must go through the CC. Bullet #4 in Ch. 6 and the second paragraph of the new hydrology model section needs to be revised to make this clear.

Uilenberg will flesh out the annual meeting process further and get revised verbiage to the CC within 30 days (April 2). Comments on the revised verbiage and any other comments on the Program Document revisions are due to the Program Office within three weeks (April 23). The Program Office will send a revised Program Document to the CC within one week prior to their May 13 meeting.

Recovery Science Biologist – Campbell reported that because of the problems with the Program's funding authorization, he put filling this position on hold until the funding issues are worked out. The Program will no doubt get authorized but funds could be limited. Scott Durst, in the Program Office, will handle data integration activities, on a more limited basis, until the position can be filled.

Annual Funding Legislation Update and Planning – Pitts was not in attendance so a comprehensive update was not given. Uilenberg alerted the group that if funds are limited to monitoring and operations and maintenance after 2011, there could be a delay in getting new funding in place for the recovery programs because Reclamation has already submitted their budget for 2012. It may take awhile to get new funding appropriations in their budget cycle. For the SJRRIP, $829,600 would need to be made-up with appropriations. He emphasized Reclamation is committed to fully funding the recovery programs. Kowalski asked if anyone was looking into funding offsets.

Uilenberg said the Report to Congress was recently updated and is again being reviewed by OMB. The report was supposed to be submitted to Congress in 2008 but it got held up at OMB and the process was never completed. House members have said they will not move on the authorizing legislation until the have the report in hand. He said Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, who is very familiar with the recovery programs, is personally working with Reclamation to get the report through OMB. He said non-federal members of the CC could help by making inquiries about the status of Report the Congress.

Conservation Planning Update – Oglesby reported the SJRB Conservation Action Plan process is underway and is being funded by the Packard Foundation. The first of three workshops was held and included representatives from everyone but the Jicarillas. The second workshop will be held at Ignacio May 30-31. He also reported TNC recently received good news that the $400,000 New Mexico Environment Department "unfroze" funding for the RERI project so endangered fish habitat restoration in the SJR can proceed. The project will be on the fast track since it is already half way through the three-year project period. He will try to get two field seasons in. He said the original scope of work had to be modified to reflect TNC as the project lead instead of Reclamation who originally developed the proposal almost two years ago. Given the time that has elapsed and the continually evolving understanding of endangered fish recovery needs, Oglesby asked that members of both Program committees take a moment to review the project description. Whitmore will distribute the project proposal to CC and BC for input.

Desert Rock Update/Contaminant Concerns –Campbell gave a truncated version of a power point presentation given to the BC at their last meeting by Joel Lusk, Contaminants Biologist, NM Ecological Services Office, titled, *Mercury (Hg) and Selenium (Se) in Colorado Pikeminnow and in Razorback Sucker from the San Juan River*. It provides the results of muscle plugs analyzed for Hg and Se taken from fish from the Upper Colorado River including the SJR. There are widespread concerns in the basin about contamination in fish and the effects of coal-fired power plant emissions on the environment and human health. There are fish consumption advisories on the SJR and elevated levels of Se and Hg in fish that can cause injury and could slow recovery. Mercury in the SJRB comes from natural sources (~31%), main-made burning activities and gold mining (~30%), and Asian sources (~21%) and a 30% increase in Hg is predicted in the next 20 years from a variety of sources. Mercury has been found to bio accumulate in fish especially in long-lived, piscivorous fish like the Colorado pikeminnow. Results shows concentrations are higher in the upper portions of the Colorado River Basin but the fish sampled in the SJR were much smaller. When modeled with all fish, the smaller SJR

fish show the same bioaccumulation trend, i.e., levels in the body will increase with age. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin and endrocrine disruptor in fish that will affect survival, growth, reproduction, and behavior.

Contributions of Selenium in invertebrates, algae, and fish in the SJR have increased with expansion of agriculture and energy development. Adult fish with elevated levels of Selenium may appear healthy but the population often declines over time. Deformities of larvae are in response to maternal exposure and subsequent deposition of excess Selenium into their eggs. Yolk absorption by embryo/larvae during development leads to oxidation of enzymes and tissues and deformities occur. Deformed larvae have reduced survival and growth. The larvae that remain may also have reduced survival if Selenium body burden plus Selenium in their diet exceeds safe dose. There is enough evidence for the Service to be concerned that current levels of Mercury and Selenium in the SJR could be negatively affecting survival, growth, reproduction, and behavior of the Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker and that recovery of the fish could be impaired. More data is needed. Long term monitoring of these contaminants in fish, water, air, and sources should conducted and remedial actions taken to reduce Mercury and Selenium not only locally but nationally and globally.

Israel asked if the decline in reproduction is hopeless. Campbell said he does not believe it is hopeless but the females are impaired so the Program needs to account for this and take offsetting measures. He said it will be challenging to find solutions but there are ongoing activities that will attempt to address this issue. He said BIA was asked to resubmit the Desert Rock biological assessment. No change in the project description is expected so it will be a jeopardy opinion based on the effects of Mercury not Selenium. The project removes as much emissions as it can but even with Desert Rock's's state of the aret controls, the plant will still put as much as 171 lbs. of mercury into the atmosphere per year. The Service will work with BIA to structure a reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA) to address contaminants and responsibilities. Provisions could include retiring other sources to make emissions net zero and funding for SJRRIP activities such as comprehensive, long-term monitoring. He said BIA recognizes the problems with Selenium from diversions and is working with the Service to find ways to reduce it. He said EPA is also trying to get Mercury under control on a nationwide basis. Pollack asked about the implications for existing consultations. Campbell said the Service is working with the BIA to put into place appropriate levels of protection.

Campbell thinks we can succeed. He reiterated that main thing is that the Program needs to be aware of the problem especially as it relates to the apparent decrease in reproduction and factor this into the Program's actions. He said he wants to work toward a basin-wide solution that includes the Upper, Lower, and SJR programs, USGS, EPA, BR, and Service Regions R2 and R6 to pool resources.

BC Report – Miller reported the BC met in November and December. They have been working on reviewing and updating monitoring protocols. Some minor changes to the protocols have been proposed such as changing the sampling area, modifying the sampling period, and adding integration but no major changes for 2010. The monitoring plan is being revised and updated and everything will be tied to the LRP. The BC has changed how the Program's peer reviewers are use. Will send them specific documents for them to review. The BC will hold a workshop on May 26 and 27 in Albuquerque to review the Program's non-native fish management program. It will include the Program's peer reviewers as well as outside experts/peer reviewers. Have also discussed stopping current activities to integrate. The next BC meeting will be March 23 and 24 in Farmington.

Hatchery in Grand Junction/Grow-out Ponds – Shaughnessy/Uilenberg – Shaughnessy reported that the Upper Colorado River Program is pursuing plans to build new rearing ponds for the 24 road hatchery. Prior, they were leasing ponds for this purposes and the leases are expiringAlso, some of these leased ponds were not very successful. The location that will be used is a mitigation area near Grand Junction that is federally-owned and has a long-term agreement with Colorado to maintain site-security. The can construct 20 1/4 (or ½?)–acre ponds without compromising the mitigation. Their primary need for this facility is related to replacing the gravel pit ponds they are currently using for growing-out the razorback suckers they currently stocking. There have also been discussions about holding brood stock to back up Dexter or potentially having the facility rear other species such as humpback chub at this new facility. This project provides a real opportunity to build some essential ponds with capital funds that fits into the goals for the program. She said this project could benefit the SJR Program as well. The possibility of partnering with the SJRRIP has been discussed. If both programs contribute funding, some of the ponds could be set aside for the SJRRIP. She asked if the SJRRIP wanted to participate and how many ponds would the program want.

Uilenberg reported that there is $2.3 million in appropriated funds for both programs (see SJR and Upper CO Program Cost Ceiling Summary). The Hogback fish weir was in-line for using these funds but there have been a couple setbacks and a contract has not been cut. This money could be redistributed to the Grand Junction ponds. The money could be lost if it is not used. The amount SJRRIP used would be accounted for on a percentage basis. The estimated cost for the entire project is approximately $4.5 million. Next spring half that ponds could be operational (4 ponds; 75-100,000 RBS). The Upper Program will be moving forward with the project regardless.

Campbell said the BC is talking about not stocking Age 1 CPM anymore and possibly increasing the number of Age 0 CPM stocked. Depending on that number, don't have enough capacity to produce many more CPM. He is concerned that Program won't have enough capacity in the future and supports paying for ponds at Grand Junction. Miller said the BC has not been consulted. Campbell said it was just proposed to him. To determine how much space the SJRRIP will need in the future, the BC needs to decide about stocking big fish and how many more small fish to stock. Miller explained they did a cost estimate on stocking smaller fish and larger fish and survival/recruitment. It showed stocking larger fish cost a lot more and did not increase survival so need to determine how many additional smaller fish should be stocked. Brooks said an updated augmentation plan done by Weston Furr of his office addressees this and the BC will be discussing at their next meeting.

CC wants the BC opinion. Uilenberg said we need to move fairly quickly on getting these funds approved so that we could use FY10 fund. A CC decision is needed prior to the May meeting. Need to get it on the BC agenda. Miller will put on Mar. 23-24 BC meeting agenda; Michelle, Dale, and Brent will provide necessary info. to BC; CC will make decision via conf. call March 25 @ 3:30 p.m. (decision needed prior to May meeting)

Annual Meeting Preparation – Whitmore said the BC discussed having a brief CC report at the Annual Meeting that would highlight significant Program decisions/activities that had occurred during 2009. The CC agreed. The Service will take the lead on doing a ~15 minute report.

Next Meeting – Conf. call March 25 @ 3:30 p.m. to make a decision on partnering with the Upper Colorado River Program on the grow-out pond facility at Grand Junction including how many ponds to set aside for the SJRRIP.

SAN JUAN AND UPPER COLORADO COST CEILING SUMMARY

		SJRIP		UCRIP		TOTAL
Remaining Cost Ceiling End of FY 2008 [1/]	$	15,400,000	$	28,332,000	$	43,732,000
P.L. 111-11 Cost Ceiling Increase	$	12,000,000	$	15,000,000	$	27,000,000
FY 2009 Expenditures	$	285,000	$	5,999,000	$	6,284,000
Remaining Cost Ceiling End of FY 2009	$	27,115,000	$	37,333,000	$	64,448,000
Projected Expenditures FY 2010 - 2023 [2/]						
Farmers Mutual Ditch Repair	$	9,000,000			$	9,000,000
APS Fish Passage	$	1,500,000			$	1,500,000
Fruitland Fish Passage	$	1,500,000			$	1,500,000
Hogback Fish Barrier	$	2,500,000			$	2,500,000
Butch Craig Levee Repair			$	500,000	$	500,000
GVIC Fish Screen Retrofit			$	400,000	$	400,000
OMID Canal Automation			$	16,500,000	$	16,500,000
Price-Stubb Fish Passage Pit Tag Reader			$	120,000	$	120,000
Tusher Wash Fish Screen/Barrier			$	8,000,000	$	8,000,000
Projected Expenditure Total	$	14,500,000	$	25,520,000	$	40,020,000
					$	
Unallocated Remaining Ceiling FY 2010-2023	$	12,615,000	$	11,813,000	$	24,428,000

Notes:

[1/] Indexed to 2008 price level

[2/] Projected costs are based on estimates of varying detail and should be used as approximations only.