



COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

November 9, 2012

Durango, CO

Draft Meeting Notes

Coordination Committee Members:

Jim Brooks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Michael Howe
Patty Gelatt (via phone)
Tom Pitts
Ray Alvarado
Brent Uilenberg
Kristin Green
Patrick McCarthy
Absent
Absent

Representing:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 6
Water Development Interests
State of Colorado
Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico
The Nature Conservancy
Bureau of Land Management
Navajo Nation

Program Management:

David Campbell, Program Coordinator
Sharon Whitmore, Asst. Program Coordinator
Scott Durst

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
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Other Interested Parties:

Bill Miller, BC Chair
Mark McKinstry, BC Rep.
Marian Wimsatt
Cindy Murray
Ryan Christianson
Susan Behery

Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Bureau of Reclamation
BHP Billiton
PNM
Reclamation
Reclamation

Approval of August 21, 2012 conference call notes – Whitmore incorporated comments received from Pitts and Uilenberg. She also received comments from Condon but did not have time to incorporate them into the meeting summary prior to the meeting. She described Condon's minor edits. Pitts moved to approve the meeting notes with the changes, Becker seconded, and the motion was approved.

Lake Powell Survey Update – Program Office staff met with Service and Reclamation representatives from both Upper Colorado River Recovery Programs via conference call on Sept. 4 to discuss the possibility of doing more Lake Powell survey work in 2013. After much discussion, the group agreed with the BC's original recommendation to not do additional field work in Lake Powell in 2013 but to compile the sampling information from 2011 and 2012 and await the results from the natal origin scale analysis being conducted by Platantia. This information will be used to decide what additional work should be done in the reservoir in the future. Questions arose regarding the role of Lake Powell for overall razorback sucker recovery. A meeting

of Service representatives from the San Juan and Upper and Lower Colorado Rivers will be held sometime in late November to discuss this subject.

Status of Legislation – Pitts reported the House passed H.R. 6060, “*The Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Extension Act of 2012*,” under suspension of rules by unanimous consent on Sept. 19. This was made possible by grass roots and bipartisan support for the bill in the House Water and Power Subcommittee (13 of 14 members of the four upper basin states’ delegations were sponsors or co-sponsors), and a finding by the Congressional Budget Office that the bill would have no impact on the federal budget. The finding resulted from Reclamation’s assertion that the Colorado River Storage Project Act (CRSP) already provides the underlying authority to provide funding from power revenues. Reclamation’s assertion has caused some consternation with Basin power users especially in how it relates to the Lower Basin and potential recovery programs.

Pitts said he is hopeful the bill will go to the Senate during the lame duck session and be bundled with other bills into an omnibus bill for passage. They have been told no bills will pass by themselves but it is too early to say if any omnibus bills will go forward. With all the issues in Washington (e.g., fiscal cliff), there is slim chance that this legislation will be passed and signed into law during this session of Congress and it will probably go into 2013. Pitts said they were asked specifically not to launch a letter-writing effort so he is encouraging partners to make informal contacts with their senators and voice support for passage of the annual funding legislation.

Pitts mentioned provisions in the legislation that disallow federal partners from participating in the DC trip and that authorizes the legislation through 2019 to adhere to a House protocol limiting authorizations to 7 years. Some do not like these provisions but the non-federal partners will continue to support the legislation to get it passed.

2013 DC Trip – Pitts reported the trip will be March 18-22 and will not go over a weekend. Monday will be a travel day with Tuesday through Friday meetings. The Congressional staff appreciation luncheon will be on Friday the 22nd and be sponsored by San Juan River Commission and UCR Basin water users. Pitts indicated they are looking for a non-federal biologist, possibly Bill Miller, to give a presentation at the luncheon and to answer technical questions regarding the status of the fish.

Non-Federal Cost Share – Pitts reported that the Programs and Program partners have not been documenting all of the non-federal contributions to cost share in the Program Highlights briefing book. Efforts are being made to include those historic contributions and to ensure that future contributions are included. This would include the contributions of the Southern Ute Tribe re: the population model, the State of New Mexico on RERI, and others. Costs for partner participation in the recovery program activities such as serving on committees and attending meetings is not included.

Funding Update – Uilenberg reported Reclamation reprogrammed \$400,000 of appropriated funds for the Service Region 2 and 6 to keep the recovery programs’ offices running until the legislation is passed. In the event the legislation does not pass, he reiterated that Reclamation determined it has the authority under the CRSP to fund all activities of the recovery programs. Uilenberg emphasized that Reclamation would prefer the legislation pass which would provide clear authorization for full funding of the recovery programs with hydropower revenues.

Capital Projects – Uilenberg reported that capital funds are frozen at 2012 levels until March 27, the end of the Continuing Resolution (CR). The FY12 capital appropriation for the Upper Colorado and San Juan programs was ~\$5.7 million and Reclamation’s request for 2013 was \$7.73 million. They may not get the full amount but they will also have \$1.7 million of carry-over from 2012 which will help.

Navajo Engineering Construction Authority (NECA) is in the field today working on the Hogback fish weir. Uilenberg expects it to be done by the end of the non-irrigation season. The \$3,158,000 contract for the project is under the estimated \$3.5 million. He said the Navajo-Gallup Project is looking at three diversion points, APS, PNM, and Hogback, for the Shiprock to Gallup lateral. The evaluation study is being done by the City of Gallup, Jicarillas, Navajo Nation, and Reclamation. Hogback is the closest and probably best site. Siting it at PNM could affect the Recovery Program's fish passage. He is advocating for the APS site because a fish passage could be integrated into the sediment basin. A sewage treatment plant will also be located at the site as part of the lateral.

Uilenberg mentioned the Lake Nighthorse escapement study. Internal comments are due on November 16. He will distribute the report when that process is done.

Annual Funding Update – McKinstry reported they are moving forward with all funding agreements for 2013 and are not having to do it in increments like under last year's CR. There have been some issues with Navajo Nation's contracting but the PNM fish passage contract is now in place and they are working on NAPI grow-out ponds. There are new requirements as a result of a recent audit. The only problems found were in Reclamation's record-keeping so Reclamation is now requiring 5-year budgets and annual reports for all non-federal contracts. The new requirements are not retroactive. The CPI for 2013 is 2% and will not be distributed across the board as in the past. Campbell said the budgets in the SOW's reflect actual costs for doing the work so an increase from CPI is not needed.

McKinstry warned that there may be some contracting glitches in 2013 as Reclamation will be converting to the new federal government accounting system called FBMS. The Service converted in 2012 and there were some contracting problems. Reclamation will lose a month with the switch which could delay some acquisitions. McKinstry explained Reclamation grouped activities under one agreement in the past but is now doing one agreement with multiple tasks. He said it could be done differently if people prefer. Regardless, nothing should be decided until after the FBMS switch is done. Brooks said he would prefer to wait until a contract expires then redo it in whatever new format is required. Brooks commented the new way will be good for real time tracking.

2012 Draft Sufficient Progress Report – Campbell reported a draft Sufficient Progress Report was sent to CC members on Nov. 1. He would like CC comments on the draft report back by December 7. This will give the Service adequate time to make revisions and work it through the Service R2 process by means of Mike Oetker, Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries. Campbell's plan is to get it completed by the March 18 DC trip.

Alvarado mentioned the need for water quality/contaminants work identified in the Sufficient Progress Report and voiced concerns about the implications for expansion of Colorado River PBO requirements. Campbell said the UCR Recovery Program omits contaminants but SJR Program does not. He said the Service recognizes the SJR Program cannot afford to do the work by itself and that it is a much bigger issue than just the SJR. Funding will need to come from outside the Program but expertise will come from inside the Program. Campbell said the SJR Program will not have a seat at the table in determining the extent of contaminants work to be done (it will be the Service and project proponents involved in consultations), but he wants to insure the SJR biologists are on board with what is decided.

Pitts emphasized that the Service determines what needs to be done for recovery so when the Service identifies activities in the Sufficient Progress Report that need to be included in the LRP, those activities need to be carried out. Service recommendations in the Sufficient Progress Report should be high priority for the Program to ensure continued ESA compliance for water projects. He pointed out that even though tasks

based on the Sufficient Progress Report are in the LRP, they are not necessarily getting prioritized or reflected in the budget. Campbell said his perspective is that if a task is included in the LRP, it is prioritized but he agreed the budget does not always reflect the tasks.

Uilenberg asked about the activities identified in the draft report related to fish passage on the Animas and mechanical habitat manipulation. He does not believe the \$8.5 million left for SJR capital projects will be adequate to address these issues. Campbell disagreed. Fish passage needs on the Animas and potential solutions are not yet known to make that call. It is also very clear that habitat manipulation is required but there are many options for making it happen. The RERI pilot project is a great example of an alternative way of getting it done.

Long Range Plan Update – Miller reported the BC went through the LRP on the first day of their Nov. 8-9 meeting and considered comments received from Tom Wesche and Tom Pitts. Based on input received, *Table A. Tasks, priorities, responsibilities, dates, and descriptions for elements of the Long-Range Plan*, will be reorganized. The fiscal years will be collapsed into a start date and end date and for each task, the previous year's status will be included in the description section instead of a task description. The BC will set up a process whereby the principal investigators provide updated information each year and most of the task description information will be moved to the narrative sections of the LRP. These changes will make it more of a progress report and more useful in tracking Program progress for the Sufficient Progress Report. Whitmore will make these revisions and have it back to the BC by the end of January for discussion at the next BC meeting in February. The intent is that the draft LRP and AWP that the CC sees at the May meeting will be ready for CC approval.

Whitmore will get the 2013 draft LRP to CC by March 1. She emphasized that the CC can provide comments on the LRP at any time during revision process.

Biology Committee Meeting Report – Miller reported that the BC has a new member, Dave Gori, TNC. He is replacing Patrick McCarthy who is now TNC's representative on the CC. Gori's area of expertise will be a good addition to the BC. He reiterated the BC will spend 2013 assessing Lake Powell data collected in 2011-2012 and the results of Platania's natal origin scale analysis to determine what additional work should be done in the future. Nate Franssen, a postdoc who will be doing data integration for the Program, was at the meeting and the BC identified research questions for him to address related to Lake Powell and nonnative fish management. The BC discussed contaminants from power plants, mercury levels in fish species, and implications for recovery. The BC will serve as a technical sounding board for contaminants work that will be funded outside the Program. McCarthy asked about technical review of contaminants work. Miller said there is not yet enough information about what work will be done.

Miller said the SJR Recovery Program will be sponsoring the Researchers Meeting for the first time, January 15-16, 2013, in Moab, UT. The next BC meeting was scheduled for February 20-21 in Durango. The BC identified the weeks of May 6 and 13 for the annual meeting.

Habitat Restoration Activities – McCarthy reported on three items: 1) RERI sites – TNC is committed to physical and biological monitoring of the RERI sites in synch with the Program's habitat and larval monitoring. TNC is looking at using NFWF funds to do nonnative vegetation re-treatment to deal with the "wall of Russian olive" at the sites. They will also be experimenting to find other less expensive more effective methods for dealing with nonnative vegetation (e.g., prescribed burns); 2) What they are doing – TNC is on verge of signing an agreement with BHP over distribution of funds related an environmental damages mitigation settlement. These will be used to pursue a second phase of channel and floodplain restoration at 2-4 additional sites along the San Juan River, following up on the RERI project. The project has a 3-year timeline (FY2013-2015) and Dave Gori and Brian Bledsoe are currently involved with site

design; and, 3) New sources of funding – TNC is partnering with San Juan River Dineh Water Users to do irrigation infrastructure work from Cudei Chapter House to Shiprock. They will use funds from NRCS and Reclamation for riparian area and channel restoration work. The work does not have to be part of the mitigation funds associated with the Salinity Control Project but can address whether irrigation improvements improve water quality and quantity, such as lining of ditches, placement of ditches, and/or making them more environmentally friendly. Campbell commented that he considers channel restoration a priority for the SJR Program so fewer fish do not end up in Lake Powell. McCarthy said the big questions are how much is enough when it comes to retention of fish in the system, how much backwater habitat is needed, and how much will it cost.

Hydrology Baseline Workgroup (HBWG) Update –Whitmore reported on the last HBWG meeting held on Sept. 25 in Albuquerque. There have been some changes to Reclamation staff working on the SJR model. The model will be kept and maintained by the Reclamation's WCAO office in Durango. Ryan Christianson will be involved in the policy-level decision-making process. Annual model maintenance will transfer from Katrina Grantz to Susan Behery. Kristine Blickenstaff will continue as the technical model developer through at least FY 2013.

At the meeting, the HBWG was updated on SJRB model development and the new irrigation depletion method where the States provide the evapotranspiration (ET) rates and irrigated acres for input into the model and irrigated depletions are calculated in Riverware. This method was implemented above Navajo on the three major tributaries and it very closely matched historic depletions modeled by Colorado's StateMod. The baseline inflow modeled in Riverware for Navajo also very closely matched the baseline inflow modeled in StateMod. The HBWG agreed to continue forward using maximum acre years for both Colorado and New Mexico in the baseline model. The states will provide their own ET rates and acres and modified Blaney-Criddle will be used to determine the data. The next steps will be to implement this irrigation depletions method basin-wide. Model development is expected to be completed by Oct. 2013.

Whitmore said last year's Annual Hydrology Meeting was held in Denver in October in conjunction with the HBWG meeting. Because the two meetings have different objectives (HBWG discusses and directs policy-level decisions and the Annual Hydrology Meeting provides a forum for technical questions regarding model development and implementation), it was agreed the meetings should not be combined in the future to avoid the blurring of issues. The HBWG decided to have the next Annual Hydrology Meeting in the SJR Basin but not until Feb. 2013 which will allow for important model development steps to be completed prior to the technical meeting. Due to this timing, the group acknowledged that no Annual Hydrology Meeting will have occurred in 2012.

Whitmore will send out a Doodle poll to the CC to schedule the next Annual Hydrology Meeting for Feb. 19 or 22 (on either side of the BC meeting Feb. 20-21).

34th Annual Researcher's Meeting - 15-16 January 2013; Moab, UT – Campbell said the Program will be hosting this meeting for the first time. He would like to have a good turnout from SJR Program partners and encouraged CC members to have their representatives attend and/or give presentations at the meeting.

Action Items:

- Comments to Program Office on draft Sufficient Progress Report by December 7 - CC
- Send out Doodle poll for Annual Hydrology Meeting (Feb 19 or 22 in Durango) – Whitmore

Next Meetings:

- Annual Researcher's Meeting (hosted by SJRRIP) – Jan 15-16, 2013 in Moab, UT
- BC Meeting - February 20-21, 2013 in Durango

- CC Meeting – March 5, 2013; conference call/webinar; 1-3 p.m.
- 2013 DC Trip – March 18-22, 2013
- SJRRIP Annual Meeting(s) – May 7-9, 2013 in Durango
 - BC Meeting - May 7, full day
 - Annual Meeting – May 8, full day
 - CC Meeting - May 9, half day