



**COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL
September 10, 2014**

Meeting Notes

COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Stewart Jacks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Michael Howe
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Absent
Ted Kowalski
Brent Uilenberg
Kevin Flanigan
Patrick McCarthy
Absent

REPRESENTING:

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

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:

Sharon Whitmore, Asst. Program Coordinator
Scott Durst

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Kristin Green, CC Alternate
Bill Miller – BC Chair
Susan Behery
Jason Davis
Tom Sinclair

State of New Mexico
SUIT
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2

INTRODUCTION – Chairperson Jacks welcomed the group and asked if there were any changes to the agenda. He reported Dave Campbell had a conflict and would not be attending the conference call. He introduced Tom Sinclair, the new Project Leader for the NM Fishery Resources Office in Albuquerque.

APPROVAL OF MAY 23, 2014 MEETING NOTES – Whitmore incorporated edits/comments from McCarthy and Pitts. Becker moved to approve, Ryden seconded, and the meeting summary was approved.

2015 ANNUAL WORK PLAN - Whitmore received verbal comments from the BC and CC during the May meetings and the 5 August BC conference call. She received written comments from Condon and Tom Wesche. She incorporated the edits/comments herself, asked individual principal investigators (P.I.'s) to modify their SOW's, or will address the comment(s) in future AWP's. For example, a comment said relevant LRP tasks and the project's link to recovery should to be included in each SOW. Whitmore will include this as a requirement in the annual guidance provided to P.I.'s each year on submitting SOW's. She did a response to comments if anyone wants to see how the comments received were handled. Condon asked for a copy. Other changes made since the last AWP version include moving some of the SOW's to different elements to align them with the LRP. Other modification included:

PNM Fish Passage O&M – Reclamation has a plan for dealing with the structural issues at the fish passage (described in Uilenberg's Capital Projects Update below). Capital or NFWF funding will be used to pay for

this work so the estimated costs in the AWP (\$100,000 for new trash racks) are in the Capital Funding column. In addition, Chris Cheek, NN, received a BIA tribal grant (\$53,000) for improvements at the passage that can be used to help off-set costs to the Program.

SOW 16 - Videography – Mark McKinstry had a difficult time trying to find another means of obtaining videography for the Program after Reclamation lost their helicopter. He finally made some progress and has found a way to obtain the videography; however, the full details are still being worked out so the SOW in the AWP is a placeholder and the costs (\$30,000) are an estimate.

SOW 29 - Population Model SOW – As requested, Miller submitted a SOW for additional population model runs not done during regular BC meetings. Miller said the SOW is a placeholder for costs and will be variable depending on how many runs are requested.

MOU between SUIT and the Program - Condon provided a draft MOU to the Program Office for operation and maintenance of the population model. She made changes to the 2011- 2013 MOU for population model development including removing the funding and changing the term to 2013 - 2019. McCarthy said the model needs to be technically reviewed and vetted. A one-day workshop could be held to do this. Miller agreed. He said model assumptions used for the 2006 version are on the website. Jacks said a workshop to vet the model is a good idea since there are new Program participants since 2006. Pitts asked if a one-day workshop would be adequate to review and comment on the model and the MOU. McCarthy said he wants to know how the model was put together and see some model runs. He thinks a one-day workshop would probably be sufficient to do this. Miller said the software functions differently than the first version and there will be additional documentation.

Ryden reiterated an earlier concern about others having expertise to run the model if Miller moves on. Miller said he is putting together a user manual that will include information about licensing. He anticipates the manual being done by the end of the month. Ryden would like a link on the website so others can access the tool. Pitts is in favor of going forward with both the model and the MOU but wants a provision in the MOU that model documentation will be maintained and updated and it will be accessible to the Program. **CC members are to provide comments on the MOU to Condon by September 24. The Program Office will work with Miller and the BC to schedule a one-day, in-person workshop in Durango in conjunction with the next BC meeting in November or in Albuquerque in December. Miller will modify his 2015 SOW to cover the additional work to prepare for the workshop. Kowalski asked that the CC, BC, and peer reviewers be included in the Doodle poll.**

Ryden mentioned the issue of CC proxy votes brought up by Stanley Pollack when he or his alternate could not attend the conference call. He said he recalled a past discussion that disallowed proxy voting but could not remember the specific details so he looked it up in the Program Document but could find no guidance. He said it may no longer be an issue but the CC may want to consider clarifying this in the Program Document so there are no questions in the future.

RFP - fish entrainment assessment RFP – McKinstry developed an RFP to identify sites where entrainment could occur. The assessment will also include identifying other factors like diversion structures, flows, and timing (season) that could increase the probability of entrainment. The expected cost for this project is \$50,000 - \$100,000 and will be funded with FY2015 base funds. McKinstry expects to award the proposal by January. Because the RFP has not yet been completed, a brief description with a cost placeholder is included in the 2015 AWP.

SOW 31 - Monitoring of Phase 2 habitat restoration sites – Dave Gori, TNC, with NMDGF, ASIR, and ERI put together the SOW for this project. It is currently being reviewed by the BC. Comments received to date

are favorable and provide some suggested modifications. Gori and Lamarra are incorporating editorial comments and additional detail. The peer reviewers suggested increasing sample size and sites which would increase costs if included. Miller said the BC has a scheduled conference call for September 15 and will discuss which changes should be included.

SOW 33 - Program Management SOW – Whitmore said the staff part of the SOW was modified to include the vacant recovery science biologist position that was approved by the CC in 2009 but not filled because of federal budget and funding authorization concerns. It does not increase the overall budget from the last version because the portion of Campbell's salary that was charged to base funds was zeroed out. Also, \$20,000 in carry-over was included. Condon voiced concern about Campbell decreasing his involvement in the Program. Campbell, who recently took on overseeing the Middle Rio Grande program, will still devote 50% of his time to the SJR Program (charged to the Service's contribution to the Program). Pitts said the Program needs a full-time director. He said the Program is accountable to Congress and asked if the Service can do anything to keep Campbell full-time on the SJR Program. Jacks said he cannot promise anything but will have internal discussion regarding the issue.

Miller asked about the new Program biologist position and emphasized that someone with more than a Bachelor's degree is needed. Ryden said federal hiring practices for this kind of position will have a minimum requirement of a Bachelor's degree. Jacks pointed out that the selecting official does not have to select someone with only the minimum qualifications.

2015 Workshop – The workshop is tied to the draft proposal to change the Navajo Dam operations flow recommendations decision tree process and is still in the planning stage so the costs in the AWP is an estimate. A planning team has been formed and as more details of the proposal and workshop unfold, a SOW will be developed.

Whitmore said, with the changes to the 2015 AWP, estimated available 2015 funds to expenditures shows a surplus of \$13,487.

Condon said the year for SOW 15-21 was corrected (from 13-21) only on the first page. She also voiced concern about the level of nonnative removal and asked if that level of effort was necessary or beneficial to the fish. Jacks said the BC moved the AWP forward and recommended the CC approve it so they agree with the level of effort. Green pointed out that footnotes numbered 6 on the budget estimate need to be changed to 5.

Ryden moved to approve the AWP with the modified Population Model SOW from Miller and the minor typographic edits mentioned; Kowalski seconded; and the 2015 AWP was approved.

SERVICE/RECLAMATION PROPOSAL TO MODIFY NAVAJO DAM ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW RELEASE PROCESS - Uilenberg provided an overview of the proposal. Reclamation is proposing two separate things: (1) revising the available water calculation in the current decision tree based on a target end-of-season reservoir elevation; and, (2) an adaptive management process to replace the decision tree to determine the timing and magnitude of spring peak releases. The first will ensure base flows are met while minimizing the risk of shortage and would result in a minimal change to the current process. Plans are to work out specifics of the target reservoir elevation in the BC workshop over this winter in time for a possible spring release. The adaptive management process is longer term and will require additional integration and analysis. He emphasized that the proposal does not change the flow recommendations; it just modifies how releases are made.

Behery provided a summary of additional analysis she has done related to the first proposal - determining the best end-of-season target volume. The proposal seeks to keep more water in the reservoir to ensure base flows are met and reduce the risk of shortage. The existing flow recommendations process only has a one-year buffer against shortage. Reservoir elevations of 6,050 to 6,065 feet offer multi-year protection against shortage in the face of long-term drought. A reservoir elevation of 6,018.8 feet only offers a single year of protection against shortage in a long-term drought. Reclamation favors an elevation of 6,065 feet because it also provides a buffer to account for model error. If the reservoir elevation is too high there is an increased risk of a spill. While higher reservoir elevations provide a longer buffer against shortage, there is little to no effect on the annual available water that will be calculated. The spring peak release is made up of any water in excess of the end-of-season target reservoir elevation.

The BC reviewed and commented on the last version of the proposal during their meeting in August but has not seen this version yet since it was just sent out this week. Jacks asked if the BC can review and discuss the proposal during their September 15 conference call. Miller said yes and Behery confirmed she is available on September 15 to describe her analyses. Jacks asked about time frames for completing the proposal and new process. Reclamation receives its first good estimate of run-off the first of March and gets their best estimate the first of May. Miller said this is the same time frame that was used during the 7-year research period when the BC was calling for experimental releases. McCarthy said it will involve determining volume for releases and timing, frequency, and magnitude of releases and the process will need to be reviewed and approved. Behery said it is possible to use the current decision tree for making releases but with a different volume. Whitmore pointed out the Program wants to move away from the rigid decision tree to a more flexible process. The workshop is the first step. With a deadline in March, the workshop needs to be held in early 2015. The CC will wait to comment on the proposal until the BC meets. **The BC will review the revised proposal and get comments to Reclamation and their CC members by Oct. 15.**

BC UPDATE - Miller reported the BC met via conference call on August 5. The primary agenda item was the 2015 AWP. He commended McKinstry for doing a great job finding an alternative for obtaining videography. The BC reaffirmed the need to identify potential sites that could be entraining fish through an RFP in 2015. After sites are identified, the magnitude of entrainment can be assessed through another RFP in subsequent years. As requested by the CC, they reviewed Amy Cutler's report on thermal modification of releases from the Navajo Dam. The question has changed from: can we expand range with warmer releases out of the dam; to, are the releases causing a temperature depression in low flow years that is negatively affecting the fish.

The BC discussed the draft proposal for modifying the process for making annual releases. The group agreed that the process should be more flexible to better benefit the fish and the proposal to base release decisions on available volume at the beginning of the season instead of using the current decision tree should be pursued. A workgroup of BC members was formed to plan a workshop to work out a process.

Miller said there have been a myriad of problems associated with installing and operating permanent remote PIT tag readers at Hogback and other sites. In contrast, when temporary PIT tag antennas were deployed at suspected spawning sites near Four Corners Bridge, 21 large Colorado pikeminnow were detected and a recent test of a floating PIT tag reader picked up 500 unique tags. This illustrates how useful these systems can be in detecting fish so they will continue to work through the problems related to installing them in permanent locations. Plans are to install remote readers at Phase II restoration sites as part of the monitoring plan. Durst said if all goes according to plan, the install is scheduled for Oct. 15-17.

The BC recommended that the 2015 AWP be submitted to the CC for approval. The BC's next scheduled meeting is December 3 and 4 to review data and results from the 2014 field season, identify questions for

annual data integration, discuss Program priorities, and review the LRP. The BC has a conference call on September 15 to discuss the population model workshop and the revised flow release proposal.

UCR RECOVERY DATABASE RFP – Pitts said the UCR and SJR Programs have a lot of data the needs to be well managed. Reclamation has hired a contractor to develop a data management system. He asked if the SJR Program was involved. Miller said the SJR Program has a fairly well-organized database whereas the UCR Program’s data is not as well organized but the BC is aware that a contractor was hired. Durst said Dave Speas has kept him in the loop and he was involved in developing the RFP and selecting a contractor. He is the point-of-contact for the SJR Program. Miller said Durst will provide an update at the December BC meeting and the contractor will present at the researcher’s meeting in Moab in January. Pitts emphasized the large amount of data that needs to be managed and modernized. Durst said it will help to have all the information in one place. The contractor is in the preliminary phase of developing the work plan and Durst will be involved in reviewing it. Ryden said a problem with truly integrating all the data is obtaining non-PIT tag and non-Program data and getting it into the database (e.g., 3-Species Program, KSU data, etc.). Durst agreed and emphasized that PIT tag information is only useful if you have the initial tag insertion information.

CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE – Uilenberg reported.

PNM fish passage O&M - Bob Norman, Reclamation, contracted with a former Reclamation employee, Brent Mefford, to conduct an evaluation of the problems that the Navajo Nation is having with sediment at the PNM Fish Passage facility. Mefford is considered an expert on this topic and provided a detailed report with cost estimates for various potential solutions. He identified a submerged vane and a self-cleaning trash rake as the best option. He thinks if you fix the racks that are causing the passage to get plugged; it may help keep the passage free sediment. If the new trash racks do not fix the sediment problem, then something else may need to be done. Uilenberg will keep everyone apprised of progress and come back with additional solutions, if necessary.

Hogback fish weir effectiveness testing – The PIT tag detector on Hogback fish weir was working great until irrigation pumps on the canal were turned on (May 9). It rendered the antennas unable to detect any signals. They tried several measures to deal with the noise with no luck. PNM and engineers at Shiprock are working on filters to dampen noise. McKinstry still plans to do a test of the structure using live fish after irrigation season ends and the pumps are turned off but before the canal is dewatered. Uilenberg said capital funds will be used to fix the system so no money is programmed for O&M of the project in 2015. Once everything is operating correctly, the Program will have to spend about \$100,000/year for O&M. Whitmore asked what the costs will cover. He said a number of things including electricity, SCADA system, etc.

Ridges Basin fish escapement monitoring – The Service is requiring Reclamation to monitor Ridges Basin Dam releases for fish escapement. They originally planned to monitor Drop Structure #13, the lower most drop pond on the outlet canal but based on Steve Platania’s reconnaissance of the outlet structures, they now plan to monitor Drop Structure #4. Reclamation is drafting a letter to the Service with their plans for monitoring and a contingency plan if fish escapement or an undesirable level of nonnative fish in the reservoir is detected. He expects the Service will approve their plan. Pitts asked about stocking in Lake Nighthorse. Uilenberg said the stocking plan includes only salmonids which is in-line with the BO. Pitts asked if the level of monitoring will be adequate to detect nonnative fish escapement. Ryden replied that he believes it will be adequate.

Pitts said the ceiling for capital funds authorization for the UCR Program is \$15.8 million (fully committed) and the SJR Program is \$10.8 million (partially committed). With \$200 million worth of capital projects on the ground, long-term O&M will be needed. Because the authorization ceilings have been reached or close,

the Program partners will be recommending that the authorization be increased to cover O&M. He alerted the group that to get the legislation reauthorized by 2019 when the current authorization expires, they have been advised the reauthorization process needs to start in 2016.

I&E UPDATE - “NATIVE FISH OF THE SAN JUAN RIVER” POSTERS/BROCHURES AVAILABLE – These posters and brochures are currently housed in the Program Office. The brochures can be mailed fairly easy but the posters because of their size would be best distributed by hand at future in-person meetings. Program partners should request the number of poster and brochures they want. The Program Office is keeping a database to track how many and where they are being distributed. Pitts reiterated that because of the lack of a dedicated public relations person, the SJR Program lacks adequate press releases and he would like to see more. Positive press will be especially important as they start the reauthorization process. Whitmore said the Program Office will try their best to get more press releases done on the Program.

MEETING FORMAT – Pitts said he still would like meetings conducted as webinars. Whitmore explained the difficulties of doing this with the low bandwidth in the Program Office. He said the UCR Program uses these and does it very well. Whitmore said they can get a non-government ISP with decent bandwidth because of the location of their office. She said the BC is exploring ways to get around this by having non-government partners initiate the webinar.

SCHEDULE NEXT CONFERENCE CALL/MEETING – The group discussed the need to schedule a conference call in November to deal with the population model MOU and flow recommendations proposal. **Whitmore will send out a Doodle poll to schedule a conference call in November with possible date of December 3, 4, 5 or 19, 20, 21.**