

San Juan River Basin Recovery
Implementation Program Biology Committee

December 14-15, 1998, Meeting Summary

December 15, 1998

Revised January 5, 1999

Approved January 26, 1999

A meeting of the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program Biology Committee was held on December 14-15, 1998, in Farmington, New Mexico. The following Biology Committee members were present:

Larry Crist

Jim Brooks

Bill Miller

Tom Wesche

Paul Holden

David Propst

Vince Lamarra

Ron Bliesner

Frank Pfeifer

Absent: Stephanie Odell, Tom Nesler, and Joe Dowhan (Program Coordinator).

A list of all attendees is attached.

The meeting summary for the November 9, 1998, meeting was distributed and reviewed on December 14, 1998, and approved on December 15, 1998.

Flow Recommendation Report:

The latest draft of the Flow Recommendation Report dated December 4, 1998, has been mailed out and will be discussed with the Coordination Committee on December 15, 1998. The changes in the document were briefly discussed. Paul Holden distributed comments from the peer review panel that were received after the completion of this draft. Committee members reviewed the comments overnight and discussed the impact on the morning of December 15, 1998. The comments were generally complimentary. Ellen Wohl had suggestions

for future research in sediment transport. Both David Galat and Ron Ryel had submitted suggestions for improvement in the report that the Committee recognizes as important. The comments reflect an in-depth review of the report, and the work is much appreciated. Incorporation of these comments will require one additional edit of the report, possibly in combination with responses from the Coordination Committee. Paul and Ron will review comments and incorporate as needed, with input from committee members where needed.

On December 15, 1998, Paul Holden will present the peer review comments to the Coordination Committee. Ron Bliesner will discuss the present report and the changes that are incorporated and indicate that we expect one additional edit.

1999 Work Plan:

The 1999 Work Plan was sent by overnight mail to the Coordination and Biology Committees last week. It was reviewed briefly. Ron noted that some reformatting was completed on the work plans to provide a common format, reorganize to aid National Park Service permitting, and include a "products" section. It was noted that the Program Coordination Work Plan from the Fish and Wildlife Service does not include any deliverables nor any detailed discussion of what will be included for the listed budget. In the presentation to the Coordination Committee, this will be discussed. That work plan is not under the control of the Biology Committee, so we will request that the Coordination Committee require that the plan be modified.

Tom Wesche questioned the need of the Red Shiner Research Plan in terms of moving towards recovery. Can monitoring answer the questions being asked? Dave Propst responded that without the study an understanding of the mechanism of suppression of Red Shiner populations in response to spike flows could not be determined. Monitoring would not answer these process questions. The plan will stay in.

Several members questioned just what would be in the bridge document or synthesis report, and whether the scope of work was adequate. Paul Holden noted that the Work Plan was very open and that the Biology Committee needs to decide just what the document will look like. The group decided to discuss the report at their next meeting. The Work Plan will remain as is.

Ron will present a brief overview of the Work Plan and budget at the Coordination Committee and seek approval of all but the Fish and Wildlife Service proposal for program coordination.

Long-Term Monitoring Plan:

The subgroup for development of a long-term monitoring plan met in Salt Lake City on December 2, and worked on the draft. The introductory section was developed in some detail at that meeting; the protocol sections were discussed extensively. Dave Propst incorporated comments from that meeting and distributed the revised draft to the committee by e-mail on December 4. A brief discussion of the plan indicated that most

comments were editorial in nature and should be submitted in writing to Dave.

Detailed description of methods was discussed. It was felt that to be repeatable, either the methods need to be described in detail, or if they are published standard procedures, the citation to the method should be listed. Each contributor is to review their methods and either include full descriptions or citations. Further, each contributor is to supply field data forms where applicable. In addition, in the description of each method there should be a tie back to the monitoring objective. Field forms and comments are due to Dave no later than December 24, 1998. In the revision, Dave will look at the formatting of the goals and objectives to see if it could be simplified. Dave will have a revised draft out around January 1, 1999. Paul will distribute copies to the peer review panel.

Tom Chart expressed Utah's concern about the monitoring protocol for the YOY small bodied fish. They believe the protocol method listed may not be effective in characterizing YOY suckers and that the sampling should be limited to low velocity habitat, but include two sampling periods with one earlier in the year. Several members noted that the goals of the monitoring plan are primarily related to the two endangered fish rather than the abundant native suckers. Hence, the methods are not designed to capture young suckers. In addition, main channel seining was not accomplished in the 7-year research program and the lack of that data was obvious during data integration. The monitoring plan is trying to fill that void in the future. Tom noted that we have no knowledge of the effectiveness of sampling other main channel habitats by seining and that the methods are somewhat experimental. Further, there is no way to validate how well the sampling represents trends in the population. Vince and Bill will attempt to correlate population estimates from their work with the main channel seining data as an attempt at validation. It was agreed that there may need to be some change in the protocol if it is found to be ineffective. This would fit in with the adaptive management concept. Dave will review the document and add a discussion concerning review of effectiveness and revise as necessary per adaptive management. The decision of the Biology Committee was to maintain the general protocols as outlined since they were developed with the endangered species as the primary focus.

Ron suggested that Utah, and anyone else having a dissenting view concerning the plan, submit comments by January 1 that would be forwarded to the peer review panel and discussed at the next meeting. The objective is to have the best monitoring plan possible, rather than protect any particular protocol.

Outside Input at Biology Committee Meetings:

Some concern has been expressed about input from others at the meetings. Some non-committee members feel like they would like to add comments but did not feel that our process was receptive to outside comments. While we have not intentionally stifled outside comment, we have not encouraged it. Our agendas tend to be very full and we may leave the impression that we do not appreciate outside comment. While these are not public meetings in the sense that they are a forum for public input and comment, they are open to the public and we could be more sensitive to comments that may be pertinent to our discussions. It was decided that the

opportunity will be given non-committee members and non-researchers opportunity to provide comment, but it may be limited if it is not pertinent or becomes too lengthy to the point of disruption. At the close of discussion on each topic, the committee chairman will ask the audience if they have comments or questions and accept input, reserving the right to limit the time and scope of the comment to the time available and the topic at hand.

Several commented that there needed to be better public notice of the meetings and public availability of the documents being discussed. A web site was suggested, along with posting copies of the documents being discussed at the local public library or other location. A better information and education process needs to be established. It will be the recommendation of the Biology Committee, that the Coordination Committee should oversee this effort. It may be most appropriately handled through FWS program coordination. This will be recommended to the Coordination Committee tomorrow.

ALP Ultra-light:

Errol Jensen of the BOR briefly discussed the latest DOI proposal for ALP, referred to as ALP Ultra-light. The water developed under this version would be restricted to M&I use, a fund would be established for the tribes to buy additional land and water, the reservoir capacity is set at 90,000 ac ft and the pumping capacity would be increased to 240 cfs. The BOR is looking at this alternative now and may complete additional NEPA reports on this alternative in the future. It was noted that the increased pumping capacity will negatively impact flows in the river during critical flow periods, the effect of which would need to be addressed.

Final Reports/ Synthesis Report:

It was decided that Final Reports would be due by March 1, 1999. Utah indicated that they should have 4 chapters finished by the first of 1999 and could meet this deadline with the remainder. All agreed that this was a realistic deadline. It is important to get these reports in so we can move forward with assessment of program direction.

Since we have yet to decide the format of the integration/synthesis/bridging report, or what ever we are going to call it, some process needs to be developed to do so. Paul will resurrect last year's proposed outline for the synthesis report, which is organized along the lines of the long range plan, and circulate it. We will discuss this format with the peer review committee at the next meeting, along with monitoring.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held to discuss the nature of the synthesis report and review the monitoring plan with the peer review panel. Since we do not have their schedules, two periods in February were held open (February 3-5 and February 17-19). A one day meeting from 8:00 am to 3:00 p.m. is planned. Paul will work

with the panelists and get back to us on a date. (Note: as a result of the Coordination Committee meeting, we will also discuss the need for selective fish passage at the PNM weir and other dams).

Schedule/Assignments:

1. Revisions/edits to monitoring plan due to Dave Propst by December 24, 1998.
2. Dave to have revised monitoring plan out to committee around January 1, 1998.
3. Next Meeting will be held with Peer review panel in February. Paul will finalize date.
4. Final reports due March 1, 1999.

Meeting adjourned about 4:10 p.m. and resumed at 8:45 a.m. on December 15 for a 30 minute discussion peer review comments and approval of meeting notes from the November 9 meeting.

Biology Committee Meeting, December 14, 1998:

Name	Organization	Phone
* Larry Crist	US Bureau of Reclamation	(801) 524-3639
* Jim Brooks	US FWS	(505) 346-2538
* Paul Holden	Bio/West	(435) 752-4202
* David Propst	NM Game & Fish	(505) 827-9906
* Tom Wesche	HabiTech	(307) 742-4902
* Bill Miller	Miller Ecological Consultants	(970) 224-4505
* Vince Lamarra	Ecosystems Research Institute	(435) 752-2580
* Ron Bliesner	Keller-Bliesner Engineering (BIA)	(435) 753-5651
* Frank Pfeifer	US FWS	(970) 245-9319
Ernie Teller	BIA - NIIP	(505) 325-1864
Steve Platania	UNM	(505) 277-6005
Rob Waldman	US Bureau of Reclamation	(970) 385-6567
Bill Leibfried	SWCA	(520) 774-5500

Dave Barr		(505) 325-8080
Elroy Alek	Property Owner	(505) 632-4558
W.J. Miller	W.J. Miller Engineers, Inc.	(505) 983-7694
Patricia Oldham	City of Farmington	(505) 599-1287
Stephen Austin	Navajo Nation EPA	(505) 368-1040
Tom Chart	Utah Division of Wildlife	(435) 259-3781
Bob Krakow	BIA - NIIP	(505) 325-1864
Errol Jensen	Bureau of Reclamation	(970) 385-6589
Mike Johnson	Navajo Nation Dept. of Water Resource	(520) 729-4004
Gary Horner	Interested Party	(505) 326-2378
John Leeper	Navajo Nation DWR	(520) 729-4004
Vickey Austin	Interested Party	(505) 326-7719
Lewis Boobar	GLCA - NPS	(520) 608-6266
C. Marc Wethington	NMDGF	(505) 632-8818
Joe Delling	Duranglers	(505) 632-5952
Tom Knopick	Duranglers	(970) 385-4081
Tom Pitts	Water Development Interests	(970) 667-8650
Steve Harris	SW Colorado Water Con. District	(970) 259-5322
Randy Seaholm	Colorado Water Conservation Board	(303) 866-3441
John Whipple	NM ISC	(505) 827-6160
Rob Ashman	SJGS - PNM	(505) 598-7533

* indicates member of Biology Committee