



DRAFT SUMMARY
August 2, 2007
Biology Committee Meeting
Farmington Civic Center

Members Present:

Paul Holden
Chuck McAda
David Propst
Jason Davis
Ron Bliesner
Mark McKinstry
Bill Miller
Tom Wesche
Vince Lamarra

Members not in attendance:

Gregory Gustina
Tom Nesler

Program Management:

David Campbell

Sharon Whitmore

Anne Davis

Interested Parties:

Marilyn Myers

Steve Harris
Viola Willetto
Steven Platania

Jim Brooks

Representing:

Jicarilla Apache Nation
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 6
New Mexico Department of Game & Fish
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Reclamation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Water Development Interests
Ecosystems Research Institute

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
State of Colorado

Program Coordinator

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2, NM Ecological
Services Field Office

Assistant Program Coordinator

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2, NM Ecological
Services Field Office

Fish and Wildlife Biologist

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2, NM Ecological
Services Field Office

Representing:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2, NM Ecological
Services Field Office

Soil and Water Conservation District

Navajo Fish and Wildlife

University of New Mexico - American Southwest

Ichthyological Research Foundation

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2

Introductions; Changes to Agenda

- Dave Campbell introduced Sharon Whitmore, the new Assistant Program Coordinator for the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (Program).

Approval of June 25, 2007 Meeting Summary

- Approved with edits and attached a copy of the revisions made to the Long Range Plan.

Review and Discuss Comments on Long Range Plan (LRP)

- **Timeline:** Final draft of LRP due from SWCA by August 6. The Biology Committee (BC) will review and provide final comments by August 24. The Program Coordinator will collate comments by August 31. Final version to go to Coordination Committee (CC) Sept 7. Document will come from the BC as a working document with caveats.
- **Comments:** The LRP will be revised every year, and every year it will have to be approved by the CC. The Program will need to make sure the LRP document does not remain behind the progress of the Program, i.e., it cannot hold up the work plan process.
- **Concerns:** Are the LRP elements specific enough? Do they provide enough information? The Program and the Program document have changed since the LRP has originated. The current format needs to incorporate timelines and charts. Furthermore, there is a lack of detail in the Recovery Goals, making it difficult to incorporate detail in the LRP.

2008 Work plan; New Scope of Work (SOW); Prioritize other SOWs

Data Mining SOW: draft submitted by Bill Miller. The BC felt this SOW was too broad and encompassed too large a data integration effort. Therefore the BC suggested using existing rare fish capture data to aid in answering preliminary questions regarding the feasibility of population estimates and the suitability of the current monitoring protocols. (i.e. do we have enough fish in the system to conduct population estimates, level of effort needed, size class, etc.)

- **Questions:**

- Can the Program's current data answer specific questions:

- What are the current population numbers?
- Are current stocking rates correct?
- Is there a bottleneck?
- What are our capture probabilities?
- What are the survival rates by size/age class?
- Can data identify impacts specific to non-native removal efforts?

- **Concerns:**

- Flow Recommendations need to be evaluated; the present hydrology model does not support the current Flow Recommendations.

- Data integration at the level of specificity identified in the Data Mining SOW may be premature. The monitoring protocols first need to be evaluated to ensure the data being collected is useful (for answering Program specific questions).

- A smaller-scale (focused) data mining should occur in 2008 (fish capture data) then the larger integration of data could occur later (2009).

- **Discussion:**

How does the Program know if the current monitoring efforts are effective if we don't evaluate current data? If changes are required to make monitoring more effective, what would those changes be? Can this be answered by the current data? The BC concurred that they don't need to integrate all data every time data integration is required. There will be a workshop planned to evaluate the current monitoring protocols.

- **What's next:**

The BC will provide all program data to Anne Davis by August 31. Then, the rare fish capture data (from large-bodied, small-bodied, non-native removal, pikeminnow monitoring) will be compiled. The Program Coordinator's Office will work with a qualified biologist/statistician (Kevin Bestgen) to look at the compiled data. This effort will include project biologists who collected the data (Dale Ryden, Jason Davis, and Darek Elverud, etc.). A workshop will follow to discuss results.

2008 Annual Plan; Prioritization; Budget

Workplan modifications:

- Channel-wide habitat project will be processing the data this year, requiring an additional \$65,000 to be added to the Workplan for that project that was not included in FY2007's budget. Also, \$13,000 is required for a Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) fly-over. The BC discussed removing the habitat mapping portion for 2008, reducing project funding needs by \$40 – 50,000.
- Workplan includes an increased budget for the expansion of non-native removal efforts.
- NAPI ponds management will be combined under the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Regions 2 and 6 and Navajo Nation.
- The Workplan will require the addition of funding (~\$25,000) for the analysis of fish capture.
- Amount of funding provided for the purchase of PIT tags could be reduced by ordering fewer tags this year.

Capital Projects Update

- Mark McKinstry sent out the Value Engineering (VE) report on Hogback Diversion for review prior to this meeting so that comments and suggestions can be addressed. The Service needs to approve the weir design in order to move ahead with construction. If approved, construction is slated for 2008-2009, in the budget for FY 2009.
- Fruitland: the "low-tech approach" will be complete/end in 2010, unless there is an extension.
- APS fish passage: field work for VE report will be performed in 2008; construction and/or operational change in 2010.
- Rehabilitation of East Avocet was approved for \$75,000 and includes purchasing storage buildings. Concern that the process will cost more.
- Current budget ceiling on capital projects is \$21 million.

Discuss Hogback Design (Discussion lead by Jim Brooks based on the VE report)

The BC supported design Option 2: The use of a weir in lieu of fish screens, as described in the VE Report (refer to the VE report for full description):

- Brief summary of the Proposal (option 2) Description: This proposal consists of a weir wall constructed in the canal in lieu of the proposed fish screen. The weir would skim the top 3-inches of flow and would be approximately 550 feet long to provide a canal flow of 230 cfs. The sluice gates, upstream and downstream, will be provided to allow sluicing of sediment from behind the wall. The existing sluice gate would be automated from the existing gauging station. This is required because it is critical to maintain a consistent water level in order to sustain the canal flow. To enhance maintenance capabilities, a 10:1 access ramp will be provided. Use of a weir concept would allow only the upper portion (<4%) of the water column to spill over into the afterbay for canal diversion. This will effectively minimize fish entrainment and also minimize potential downtime of screening due to cleaning and other required maintenance activities. In addition to minimizing fish entrainment into the canal, the weir concept that includes an afterbay may support an additional function as a fish acclimation area for pre-release of hatchery-reared fish.
- Concerns: Ron Bliesner thought it was unnecessary to remove bars from the trash rack at the headworks, it may result in more debris trapped on the rack. Also, the exit velocity into the sluice return channel might be too high, perhaps 20 fps. Will the proposed weirs that are located downstream which still the water also slow the exit velocity from the canal? Last suggestion is to have the fish acclimation area upstream of the weir rather than downstream. Jim Brooks believes the downstream local will provide a more manageable area from which to move fish. The upstream portion could be used for larger (300 mm TL) razorback sucker conditioning.

Finalize Ron Bliesner memos on procedures for changing Flow Recommendations

Memo for modifying Flow Recommendations:

- The BC discussed whether to operate the dam under the proposed changes to the Flow Recommendations (deleting 2500 and 5000 cfs requirements) in the interim until Flow Recommendations are formally changed.

- Concerns:
 - The Gen3 model cannot be operated until the Flow Recommendations are updated.
 - Any changes to recommendations should occur after the data integration report.
 - There is evidence that the habitat is responding to the flows but no species response has been documented.
 - The current operating scenario keeps the reservoir at a higher elevation in the winter and spring and BOR is hesitant to delay or reduce releases in the spring to save water for larger releases since the higher water elevation increases the risk of uncontrolled spills.
 - Smaller releases are not as productive, better to 'save up' small releases for a larger one with a longer duration.
- Motion to vote to forward memo as is (no effect on consultation or re-initiation of consultation) to change operation in interim:
 - Motion: Chuck McAda
 - 2nd: Dave Propst
 - Votes: Nay = 1; Yea = 6 Abstain = 1; Absent = 2
 - Did not pass

6/15/07 memo detailing the process for changing operations for Flow Recommendations:

- Operational changes would require an analysis of current data before changes to Flow Recommendations can be considered.
- Is the current available data sufficient for evaluating Flow Recommendations?
- Is there flexibility to tweak with the flows within the current Flow Recommendations?
- PIT tag analysis should answer questions related to relationship of flows with fish abundance.
- Memo could be used as a working draft until data integration can occur.

Peer Reviewers

Question: Can/should changes be made to the Peer Review Panel based on attendance/participation?

Suggestion: Alternates be added for additional expertise and availability.

Schedule next meeting

February 20 – 21, 2008 in Farmington, NM

Adjourn

Action Items

Item	Initiation Date	Due Date	Responsible person(s)	Completion Date
TCD memo	05/18/07		Paul Holden	
2006 Final Reports		06/30/07	Project leads (authors) to BC	
LRP Draft	05/08/07	07/09/07	SWCA to Program Coordinator's Office	
Comments on Draft LRP	06/25/07	07/23/07	BC to Program Coordinator's Office	
2006 report comment responses		07/31/07	Project leads (authors) to BC	
Final LRP (draft)	07/23/07	08/06/07	SWCA to Program Coordinator's Office	
Program data exchange	08/02/07	08/31/07	BC to Anne Davis	
Pit tag data exchange	06/25/07	08/31/07	BC to Anne Davis	
Develop Razorback production and stocking plan for NAPI ponds	06/25/07	09/15/07	Program Coordinator's Office with FRO and Navajo Nation	
Waterfall inundation whitepaper	05/18/07	12/07/07	Program Coordinator's Office	
Develop work plan for upgrades to East Avocet Pond	06/25/07		Ron Bliesner to USBR	
Develop 1-year RFP for Geomorphology, habitat mapping, temperature monitoring, and fish-habitat use project.	09/07/07	10/1/07	Mark McKinstry and Sharon Whitmore	
Develop SOW and contract with Kevin Bestgen at CSU for analysis of PIT Tag data	9/07/07	10/30/07	Mark McKinstry, Anne Davis, and Sharon Whitmore	

Completed Action Items

Item	Initiation Date	Due Date	Responsible person(s)	Completion Date
Comments on Constructed Backwaters report	05/18/07	06/11/07	BC to Ron Bliesner	June 11, 2007
Flow recommendation procedures memo	05/18/07		Ron Bliesner	June 15, 2007
Final Constructed Backwaters Report	05/18/07	06/30/07	Ron Bliesner	June 18, 2007
Send 2000 integrated data CD to FWS	06/25/07	07/15/07	Ron Bliesner	June 26, 2007