



**Approved Final Summary  
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program  
Biology Committee Meeting  
20 August 2009**

**Attendees**

**Biology Committee Members:**

Bill Miller, Chair – Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
Paul Holden – Jicarilla Apache Nation  
Ron Bliesner – Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Jason Davis – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2  
Mark McKinstry – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Dale Ryden – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6  
Vince Lamarra – Navajo Nation  
Tom Nesler – State of Colorado  
Dave Propst – State of New Mexico  
Janelle Alleman – U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
Tom Wesche – Water Development Interests

**Program Office – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2:**

David Campbell  
Sharon Whitmore  
Scott Durst

**Interested Parties:**

Yvette Paroz – State of New Mexico  
W. Howard Brandenburg – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers  
Michael Farrington – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers  
Amy Kraft – Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Jim Brooks – USFWS/Coordination Committee Chair  
Jeff Peace – Arizona Public Service  
Ed Bulloch - SJWWII

**Introductions; Changes to agenda:**

- Discussion of Ridges Basin Reservoir was added to the agenda. Michael Francis (BOR – Durango) will attend this discussion and answer questions regarding the recent sleeve test.
- Given the full agenda, the group reiterated that the priority of today's meeting was the technical review of the 2010 SOWs.
- Davis offered to provide additional details on razorback sucker stocking.
- Discussion of the floating weir was removed from the agenda.

**Approve 20 July 2009 conference call summary:**

- Holden motioned to approve with changes discussed. Davis seconded.
- Group approved the revised conference call summary unanimously.

**IDIQ contract:**

- The Nature Conservancy will be doing the work specified in the RERI grant. This money is outside of Program funding and TNC will be using this grant as leverage to obtain other sources of funding.
- The Program needs to define what will be included in the habitat monitoring SOW and then the process for dealing with the contract can be sorted out. The permit issue from Navajo Nation to do this work remains an issue. Contracting options include RFP or sending money directly through BIA to have Bliesner do the work. There are overlapping BIA offices (Albuquerque and Navajo) that have rights in the San Juan Basin, so this would have to be sorted out if this option is pursued.
- There is on-going habitat work that is not yet completed. It needs to be sorted out how this will be handled.
- Campbell stated that he would contact BIA to determine the options available for direct contract.

**Peer review comments on 2009 monitoring workshops:**

- The overall impression of the peer review comments on the recent monitoring workshops was that they were brief and did not address broader programmatic issues and directions. Opinions were expressed that the peer reviewers want things on the table that they can review rather than direct input on the direction of the Program. Nesler interpreted the role of making recommendations on the direction of the Program should be in the hands of the Biology Committee; it's the role of the Biology committee to develop priorities on the technical aspects to recover species. Some questions were raised about what the role of the peer review panel should be and if there is a need for a broader recovery science group of peer reviewers.
- Some expressed the view that the current peer review panel is too involved with the Biology Committee, but that level of involvement was needed in order for the peer reviewers to be able to make comments and recommendations in an informed manner. Concern was also expressed about the perception that the peer reviewers are guiding the development of SOWs and then reviewing these same SOWs.

- Lamarra indicated that the peer reviewers should review the science produced by the Program not make decisions directing the science. Also some expressed concern that the questions the Program and the Biology Committee are asking of the peer reviewers are too broad and include both policy and science questions. These two factors make it difficult to obtain answers from peer reviewers.
- The group agreed that the Program needs to take action based on the recommendations that the peer review group made in their review of the monitoring workshop.
- The peer review SOW is under revision and different options are being considered as per Coordination Committee recommendations.

**Technical review of FY2010 annual workplan:**

**1. Data integration and analysis:**

- Annual data integration as proposed by this scope is more efficient than current intermittent integration efforts.
- Bringing a new person into this role might take a year for that person to get up to speed. There were also questions about the possibility of turnover in this position.
- There needs to be a process to prioritize the specific key questions that would be answered, this process would be directed by the Biology Committee.
- Both the Biology and Coordination Committees could be involved in hiring this position.
- The group supported this new SOW.

**2. Augmented stocking of age-0 and age-1+ Colorado pikeminnow:**

- This is the same SOW as last year. Age-0 fish are stocked at PNM and held for 24 hours.
- Some thought that fish should be stocked higher in the system and at different locations.
- We should evaluate the effect of hard versus soft releases? To do this efficiently we would need to add a new field in the PIT tag database to account for this.
- Any changes to this method will occur following the workshop evaluation in FY2011.

**3. Colorado pikeminnow fingerling production:**

- An augmentation plan needs to be developed beyond 2009.
- Details of temperature and transport time may be important to record.

**4. Rearing razorback sucker subadults:**

- Are there ways to condition fish prior to stocking? If this were to happen it would likely be a separate scope.
- The level of details in Colorado pikeminnow scope needs to be at the same level of details as this scope. Davis will deal with making these revisions by 1 September 2009.

**5. Rearing razorback sucker and bonytail at Uvalde:**

- Questions were raised about why bonytail is included on this scope. The capital costs to upgrade the facility were split between the San Juan Program and the Lower River Multispecies Conservation Program in order to save money. The exact details of how these costs will be shared by the two Programs are still being worked out.
- The health inspection has occurred at Uvalde and the results are expected within a few days. The razorbacks that were supposed to be stocked this year were lost due to

equipment malfunction. The razorbacks that were supposed to be stocked last year have been held until this year because of fish health issues.

- The current stocking plan for razorback from Uvalde is to stock approximately 12,000 fish in three seasons (fall, winter, spring) at two locations (Animas and Hogback).
6. **Razorback sucker augmentation at NAPI grow-out ponds:**
- Wording changes will be made in a revised scope to be discussed during 8 September conference call.
  - There will be no acclimation of fish at stocking in order to not add more stress on already stressed fish.
  - The issue of cost carry-over for a position that was never filled needs to be addressed.
7. **Operation of PNM fish passage structure:**
- The maintenance agreement for the fish passage is not yet in effect. These maintenance efforts are a small contract in the SOW for \$25,000/yr as minor maintenance. Any major maintenance on the facility would need a separate SOW and different contract.
8. **Non-native species monitoring and control in the Upper San Juan River:**
- The scope needs to include removing non-native species as a specific objective/goal. Objective 5 still occurs although it is much more limited than in the past due to logistical challenges. Objective 4 will be addressed at next year's non-native fish workshop.
  - The multiple pass effort is consistent with other work and many fish are captured in the second pass. There is low catch rate of non-native fish between PNM and Hogback early in the season. Would it be more effective to wait until runoff to capture more fish? At this time effort will continue as stated in order to remove large reproductive fish.
9. **Non-native species control in the Lower San Juan River:**
- Work will continue below the waterfall but the effort is not intensive. One pikeminnow captured below the water fall was relocated above the waterfall and later detected around RM 150.
  - Catfish numbers are relatively constant with current level of effort.
10. **Adult monitoring:**
- This is the same SOW as previous years.
  - It may be important to shift the timing of this SOW in the future in order to have all the work occur in the same FY.
  - It was assumed that this SOW and other biological scopes of work may change with the revisions to the monitoring protocols.
11. **Small-bodied monitoring:**
- The scope is a continuation of the same protocols.
12. **Larval Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker survey:**
- There is no change to this scope except that preservation will be in 95% EtOH (instead of formalin) in order to be able to age otoliths. Preservation in ethanol also allows genetic analysis of these specimens although genetic analysis is not part of this scope of work.
  - There has been discussion on shifting the dates of the September trip to July/August. To date this remains a point of discussion.

- Aging of otoliths is not going to be included in the SOW because it is an extra work-load that may or may not occur. This is primarily for the PIs to be able to confirm current aging calculations.
- Why are we detecting so few Colorado pikeminnow larvae? Do we need to change monitoring?

**13. Specimen curation:**

- This scope covers curation of small-bodied and larval fish specimens. GIS data should also be included with the specimens. The Program Office has the GIS data that have been submitted by NMGF and ASIR. Also field notebooks are scanned by UNM and ASIR has also submitted these to the Program Office.

**14. Habitat monitoring:**

- Temperature monitoring has added new locations at Mancos and McElmo.
- There were questions of the schedule on page 4. Has this schedule been approved? For FY2010 temperature and videography are planned but no field mapping or river-wide survey.
- Habitat association should be a separate SOW possibly as part of the integration effort.
- How habitat will be defined will change based on habitat mapping versus GIS (videography versus island count). For habitat use we need to use the habitat data that is closest temporally to the fish data. Maybe this could be done when on-the-ground habitat mapping happens?
- Work in FY2010 should include temperature, videography, photo-interpretation, and completing past fish habitat associations (that are part of past budgets). Bliesner will edit the scope to separate current work, future work, and relevant objectives.

**Prioritization of AWP projects:**

- Should actions that are required as part of terms and conditions of Biological Opinions be considered separately from other priorities?
- All aspects of the AWP are open for evaluation.
- In the future all monitoring efforts will need to be reduced in order to answer specific questions.
- The draft priorities are listed below:
  - 1) Operation and maintenance of existing facilities
  - 2) Augmentation
    - Production
    - Stocking
    - Evaluation in order to make this program better and more efficient. A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted for the stocking program that incorporates the cost and survival of fish reared in different facilities (Dexter, NAPI, Uvalde).
  - 3) NNF Removal
    - Developing measurable criteria
    - This scope provides many recaptures of endangered fish.
  - 4) Data Integration
  - 5) Fish Monitoring

- Adult
  - Larval – this scope addresses numerous questions getting at reproduction in the system.
  - YOY
- 6) Habitat Monitoring
- Temperature (Terms & Conditions of Biological Opinion)
  - Habitat Mapping
  - Developing long-term habitat monitoring plan
- 7) 2010 Peer Review – the comments and suggestions that have been made from the recent workshops need to be integrated into the priority process
- The next steps for the priority process will be that the Program Office will rework drafts and budgets by 4 September for review and discussion by the Biology Committee during the conference call on 8 September. The final workplan will be forwarded to the Coordination Committee by mid-September.

**Writing tasks to integrate input from monitoring workshops:**

- Three groups were assigned to address the integration of input from the monitoring workshops. Drafts from the three groups are due 23 October 2009. The three groups and their assignments are as follows:
  1. Incorporate peer review comments, research questions for different life stages, and workshop notes to come up with SOWs to address these outstanding questions – Brandenburg, Durst, Mckinstry, and Ryden.
  2. Develop integrated monitoring plan and monitoring protocols (larval, small-bodied, adult, and habitat) from workshop notes. This may include revising current monitoring protocols in order to shift funds to other targeted studies in the future – Bliesner, Propst, Ryden, and Whitmore.
  3. Review integration analysis from workshops to develop a list of questions and proposed approach to address these – Campbell and Miller.

**Comments of Colorado pikeminnow stocking plan:**

- Comments have been received and incorporated.

**Bestgen's comments on proposed razorback sucker stocking plan:**

- The current plan of stocking in three seasons and in two locations is moving forward.
- There are logistical issues of acclimating half of these fish with this proposed design at the two stocking locations. Acclimation could possibly be tested in the future.
- Davis provided an update on recent stocking efforts.

**Bliesner's sampling plan for contaminant metals:**

- This plan deviates from the Terms and Conditions established in concurrence letter. There needs to be an official means of making these changes, need to coordinate with BIA to see how this can best be worked out. Also there are some outstanding permitting issues that need to be

resolved. Other outstanding issues include addressing how scale and trophic levels will be addressed.

- The process of developing a new strategy to do this work is waiting on draft BO from the Desert Rock Energy Project that will be released on 1 October.

**Ridges Basin Reservoir:**

- Michael Francis from BoR–Durango presented results and answered question regarding the “bass-o-matic” preliminary tests.
- These preliminary test runs were conducted at elevations lower than the minimum operating elevation of the reservoir. A test run at an elevation of 6725 feet had high variance and resulted in 1% average survival of juvenile white sucker and rainbow trout eggs with no delayed mortality.
- A second test at reservoir elevation 6795 had an average survivorship of 0.5% and lower variance with no larger fish passing through the sleeve valve.
- The next test will be at the minimum operating elevation of 6801 feet at the end of October. The reservoir is expected to reach capacity by June 2010 and testing will continue through then.

**Coordination Committee issues – Jim Brooks:**

- Brooks discusses the potential conflict of interest issues and revision of Chapter 6 of the Program Document to address this.
- The role of the Biology Committee should strictly be review and recommend, the Coordination Committee is the only body in the Program that approves actions.
- The Biology Committee has lost objectivity and needs to be able to shift from looking at the project scale to the big picture keeping recovery in focus.
- The Peer Review Panel and Biology Committee may be too close and reevaluating the role of the Peer Review Panel may be in order. This could include a broader review of the Program and additional reviewers to deal with technical issues that the current panel is addressing.

**Upcoming meetings:**

- Conference call on 8 September 2009 to discuss the revised AWP.
- 4-5 November 2009 in Farmington to discuss LRP priorities and review outline from writing assignments incorporating comments from the monitoring workshops.
- 26-27 January 2010 Upper Program researchers meeting in Grand Junction.
- 13-14 January 2010 in Farmington to discuss monitoring protocols.
- 23-24 February 2010 in Farmington for Biology Committee annual meeting.

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG						
(Updated May 18, 2009)						
Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/Origination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Completed
1	Provide RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data		P.I.'s to the Program Office	Annually before Jan. 1		
2	Provide Preliminary Draft Report Presentations		Project Leads (authors)	Annually at Feb. meeting		
3	Review LRP		BC	Annually at fall meeting		
4	Review Peer Review Comments from the February and May meetings		BC	Annually at fall meeting		
5	Provide Draft Final Reports		Project Leads (authors) to Program Office	Annually by end of March		
6	Scopes of Work		Project Leads to Program Office	Annually by end of March		
7	Provide Final Reports		Project Leads (authors) to Program Office	Annually by end of June		
8	Annual Data Delivery		PIs to Program Office	Annually by June 30		
9	T&E Species Data		BC to Program Office	Annually by Dec. 31		

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10	Annually compile T&E data and Program progress into summary to address overall Program recovery goals/objectives for presentation at annual meeting		Program Office/BC	By Annual Meeting in May		
11	Distribute Consolidated Data and list of annual data collected and available in the Program's database		Program Office to BC	Annually by Jan. 31		
12	Coordinate CPM stocking closely with Reclamation to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases		Project Leads	Annually		
15	Waterfall Inundation Whitepaper – review past meeting summaries, determine what is needed, and provide report at the next meeting.	05/18/07	Program Office	12/07/07	Not a current priority	
16	Pursue NNF Stocking Procedures for SJR Basin	2/20-21/08	Ryden lead	11/5/08	11/4/09	
17	Revise CPM and RBS Augmentation Goals	5/7/08	FWS Fisheries/Program Office	11/30/08	Nov 2009	
18	Complete IDIQ contract and award	5/7/08	McKinstry	Nov. 2008	May 2009; ongoing	
19	Provide specifics of selenium sampling	1/26/09	Bliesner/Osmundson	2/18/2009	5/13/09	Ongoing activity

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	procedures and analysis					
20	Incorporate peer review comments and workshop notes to come up with SOWs to address these outstanding questions	8/20/2009	Brandenburg, Durst, Mckinstry, and Ryden	10/23/09		
21	Develop integrated monitoring plan and monitoring protocols from workshop notes	8/20/2009	Bliesner, Propst, Ryden, and Whitmore	10/23/09		
22	Review integration analysis from workshops to develop a list of questions and proposed approach to address these	8/20/2009	Campbell and Miller	10/23/09		
23	Develop a detailed outline for San Juan River Recovery Program case history manuscript	11-5-08	Propst/Miller			
24	Remote PIT tag reader white-paper	BC 13 may 2009	McKinstry			

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\* Items were re-numbered after changes were made