

**Approved Summary
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program
Biology Committee Meeting
25 August 2011**

Attendees:

Biology Committee Members:

Bill Miller, Chair – Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Paul Holden – Jicarilla Apache Nation
Brian Westfall – 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
Vincent Lamarra – Navajo Nation
Harry Crockett – State of Colorado
Eliza Gilbert – State of New Mexico
U.S. Bureau of Land Management – Absent
Carie Lile – Water Development Interests

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

David Campbell
Sharon Whitmore

Interested Parties:

Andrew Monié– New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Steven Platania – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Darek Elverud – Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Changes to agenda:

- McKinstry added a discussion on PIT tags and associated equipment needs.

Approve draft summary for 27 July 2011 BC conference call and review Action Item list:

- Durst incorporated all edits received into the summary. Holden motioned to accept the summary and Ryden seconded. Unanimous approval of summary.
- The group briefly went through the Action Item list.
 - Date for Platania working with Durst on the prioritized integration analysis for the monitoring plan was revised to September 30.
 - Furr sent out a draft report “Investigations of Stocking Sites in the San Juan and Animas Rivers Upstream of RM 166.6” on July 29, 2011.
 - Miller reported everything is in place for the Population Model and work will begin with the new fiscal year. The CC is working on a MOU between the Program and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe that will describe how the model will be used, accessed, and roles and responsibilities. The MOU process will not affect work on the model.
 - Davis sent out an evaluation of the feasibility of revitalizing the 6-Pack Ponds on July 28, 2011.

- Action items from the last meeting are all completed so should be removed to the completed list.

Discuss small-bodied monitoring protocol and develop response to address CC concerns and questions:

- The group discussed each question posed by the CC. For Question 1, the general consensus was that the small-bodied monitoring protocol was thoroughly discussed during the workshops. The Peer Reviewer's recommendation and the BC decision were to keep the protocol the same recognizing that there was some disagreement on methods.
- For Question 2, the current methods are intended to collect information on the entire fish community and the targeted habitats are being adequately sampled. The assumptions recognize that juvenile razorback suckers may not be found because of their low numbers in the river. Sampling is designed to detect a 20% change in the fish community. The protocol could be amended to include additional habitat types (deeper swifter habitats like near shore runs) that cannot be sampled with a 15 ft. seine and may require a change in seining methods.
- For Question 3, the group agreed that the small-bodied monitoring data provides important information and it has been analyzed and integrated appropriately with the other data sets available. What is seen in small-bodied monitoring may not be seen in large-bodied monitoring. There may not be enough information yet or fish in the river to determine relationships.
- If the protocol is modified, data continuity needs to be considered. The group determined adding a 30 ft. block seine technique on an experimental basis for sampling deeper swifter habitats like near shore runs has merit and would not affect data continuity. NMDGF agrees to do some block seining with 30 ft., ¼ inch mesh seines, during September 2011 sampling.
- For Question 4, current methods adequately sample habitats for Age 0 but all habitats are not being sampled. The Upper Colorado River Program is looking primarily in backwaters not diverse habitats. Juvenile razorback sucker are not caught frequently anywhere. One would not expect there to be a lot of razorback sucker present. McKinstry asked if an analysis could be done that would say how many fish we should be seeing. LaMarra said if we believe the data, we should not be having this discussion. Elverud said they do not see small flannelmouths in the Green. Holden mentioned the untagged fish captured that are not used in analyses.
- Is the small-bodied monitoring meeting the objectives? The data cannot be used to evaluate rare fish response to management actions, i.e., flow management, but can be used to track trends riverwide. However response of common native and non-native fish species to management actions has been documented. Small-bodied monitoring will be the only sampling done on RERI habitats. Is there enough precision in methods? Ryden pointed out juvenile numbers are flashy whereas adult numbers are flat. LaMarra asked why we are monitoring if it cannot tell us if our management actions are affecting fish. Ryden said the data is showing trends but it cannot tell which factor is having the effect.
- The group discussed tweaks that could be made to improve the data collected, e.g., moving sampling to August. Gilbert pointed out the protocol is fish community-based sampling so doing it in the fall lets us see what the community is like going into winter. Holden thinks small-bodied monitoring is on the low end of the priority scale.
- Gilbert gave a brief presentation on the small-bodied monitoring protocol. They have a simple and well-designed sampling method that collects strong data. Fish data is collected from habitats that are not collected by any the other monitoring programs and habitat characteristics from each of the habitats and mesohabitats within them are recorded. The methods are effective, valid, and provide informative and robust data. Their results can show changes to the fish community from flow regimes as described in published reports by Propst et al. It appears the main concern with the methods and data has been a lack of razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow capture. They

intensely sample smaller, near shore habitats that likely contain Age 0 and Age 1 large and small bodied fishes. Their data provides a clear representation of what is present in the habitats they sample, i.e., secondary channels and backwaters in fall. Thus, the razorback suckers are not in these habitats. NMDGF does not support changing small-bodied monitoring but is more than willing to try block seining on an experimental basis.

- Holden gave a brief presentation on sampling done back in the early 2000s. They caught more fish with less effort. They used methods to fit the habitat including 15 ft. and 30 ft. seines. Miller said using a 30 ft. seine would sample another habitat type not currently being sampled (deeper swifter habitats like near shore runs). He suggested staying with fall sampling.
- The group agreed that the current methods achieve the stated objectives. The question is should the Program do something else to increase the likelihood of catching more endangered fish? Are habitats being missed? Is the level of effort appropriate? These are unknowns.
- To summarize the BC discussion and recommendation regarding small-bodied monitoring (Question 5), the activity should continue as is; however, NMDGF will add experimental block seining during routine fall sampling in September 2011. Data from this experimental block seining will be evaluated to determine if this technique would be incorporated as a full time sampling methodology in outyears. No specific effort to emphasize capture of either Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker is recommended; however, the addition of block seining may result in more catch of these species. No changes to small-bodied monitoring are proposed that will compromise compatibility of new data collected with existing data sets as no methods will be dropped at this time. Adding an additional sampling method will not affect compatibility.
- The Program Office will draft a summary of the small-bodied monitoring discussion for BC review by September 12. BC comments go back to the Program Office by the morning of September 19.

Update on annual budget and 2012 funding

- McKinstry reported an RFP is out for the 2011 habitat/temperature monitoring and closes September 7. The RFP is based on the current protocol. It will be awarded by September 12. Reclamation will convene a Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee (TPEC) to review proposals. A total cost was not specified in the RFP but an estimate of ~\$90,000 was provided. A clause is included in the RFP that specifies the contractor must have necessary Navajo permits. The contract can cover up to five years.
- NMDGF's contract/agreement expires September 30 and can easily be extended through 2012 but it is increasingly difficult for NMGFD to subcontract. NMDGF's contract with ASIR expires in 2013 so McKinstry is going to do an RFP for larval fish monitoring work in 2012. It will be a competitive bid and will also require potential contractors to have all Navajo permits and permissions.
- Options for full funding for the Program in 2012 have narrowed (e.g., getting legislation passed). Reclamation set aside about one million to cover both programs non-monitoring and non-O&M activities and they will cover costs associated with Reclamation's funds management; however, this will not make the programs whole. If Reclamation cannot find more money, the SJRRIP will be \$296,782 short. Campbell said he plans to use the SJR portion of the one million on nonnative fish removal and education and outreach and use the remainder, about \$140,000, for FWS Program Management. He is hopeful Reclamation will come up with rest. The BC indicated agreement with the priorities Campbell described.
- Whitmore pointed out that the \$26,864 marked as "unallocated" on the budget spreadsheet is erroneous. There is no good way to show the actual budget at this time because of all the unknowns. If all non-qualifying expenses are taken out, the unallocated expenses are actually

\$1,026,592. The Program will be fully funded with hydropower revenue dollars but it can only be used on monitoring and O&M.

Discuss 2012 AWP and make final recommendation to Program Office

- Other than adding experimental sampling to the small-bodied fish monitoring, the BC supports the current draft 2012 AWP.

Discuss habitat workshop outline and additional planning

- Whitmore said the dates for the habitat/flow workshop will be January 11 and 12, 2012 at the FWS office in Albuquerque. In summary, the overall goal is to evaluate and develop the process for revising the flow recommendations. This is expected to take two workshops. The first one would primarily involve evaluating and revising the current habitat monitoring protocols and data in the context of the flow recommendations. The second one, date undetermined, would focus on developing a process for revising the flow recommendations. She sent out a draft workshop outline for BC review and comment.
- McKinstry said he is hoping to obligate some 2011 money for workshop participation now that it will be held in 2012. He asked LaMarra to put together a SOW for a presentation at the workshop. LaMarra will do a SOW for compiling information on current knowledge of habitat response to flows and other factors (e.g., vegetation encroachment).
- McKinstry said Katrina Grantz and Ryan Christainson can do the hydrology part.
- Miller said it appears the first workshop is geared too much toward the flow recommendations revision. It should focus more on, what we have done, why we did it, and was it correct.
- The group asked that Durst give a presentation on preliminary results of his fish response investigations at the next meeting.
- BC comments on the habitat-flow workshop outline are due to the Program Office by September 30.

Discuss reviving 6-Pack Ponds

- Davis sent out evaluation and survey of the six-pack ponds in a July 28 email.
- The ponds were taken off-line primarily in response in part due to poor production and the Programs recommendation to move towards a single cohort rearing strategy at the Avocet Ponds and Hidden Pond. Manuel Ulibarri said the ponds could be used without much renovation now but would probably face the same problems as before (e.g., no drainage). His recommendation would be to make them hatchery quality. Westfall said it may not be possible to retrofit with drains as they were not designed to drain. The possibility of combining six ponds into three was mentioned.
- The ponds could be fixed up but management will still be an issue. You can have a great facility but without good management, success is questionable.
- Uvalde NFH is funded to provide the Program's annual stocking goal of 11,400 razorback sucker > 300 mm TL. NAPI ponds have the potential to produce up to 8,000 razorback sucker that could make up any potential short-fall in hatchery production. The group agreed they cannot expect NAPI ponds to produce that many fish every year. During the 2010-2011 stocking season, Uvalde stocked 16,000 razorback sucker, 5,000 above target. They currently have enough fish on station to stock through 2013. A distinction between NAPI and Uvalde is NAPI gets 200 mm fish and Uvalde gets larval fish
- Grant Webber has implemented strategies to increase survival such as tagging in spring instead of right before transport, doing their own distribution with more trips and fewer fish per trip, and all fish will be acclimatized to river conditions by NMFWCO prior to release. Dexter is looking at blood cortisol levels in relation to handling and hauling stress in the lower basin but nothing on the San Juan as yet.

- Horsethief ponds are supposed to be operational next year if production space is needed. Ryden said his office has been working on the disease issue. Utah has said they will not allow fish to be stocked from hatcheries that have disease. Whirling disease is in the water that will supply the ponds. NM does not have a problem with stocking fish produced from that area.
- Wesche, in an email, and Ryden both indicated starting up the six-pack ponds at this time would be a waste of money. Campbell indicated the FWS will need assurance that there will be good management before supporting putting money into reviving the ponds. Davis was in agreement with others that reestablishing the 6-Pack Ponds might not be the best option at this time. Should not have all our fish in the same basket. The Southern Utes have asked about the possibility of a facility there. Development of broodstock also needs to be considered.
- Any recommendation regarding fish production facilities was tabled.
- Campbell mentioned a \$50,000 request from Dexter for disinfection equipment. He is evaluating the request. The Program might consider using capital funds for cost-sharing with others for this type of equipment.

Discuss additional upstream stocking locations

- Furr did a good job on investigating potential soft release sites upstream of RM 166.6 and that NAPI is already using some of the sites in the report. Sites identified in this report will be used for the fall Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker stockings.
- The BC supports implementing the plan.

Non-native fish stocking policy

- Crockett reported the UCR policy was modified for the SJR by Nesler and himself. When he tracked the policy down, two versions were going through the approval process in both NM and CO simultaneously. He said CO is good with the policy but NM has problems. He is not clear how the final approval process will work since 7-8 parties may potentially want to sign it.
- Gilbert said NM's solicitor said the policy is contrary to NM's importation of fish policy which would make it illegal for the state to sign. Fisheries staff also does not like the policy as they think it is heavy-handed and includes too much FWS involvement. It reads like the FWS will be giving approval to stock fish in the state. NM supports the concept but how to write a policy that NM would sign is the question. Miller suggested having NM put edits in the document so they can be considered by the other signatories.
- How the draft agreement could be revised to clarify the states and tribes' authority and sound less heavy-handed was discussed. Ryden pointed out that the "stocking plan" a private individual needs to submit can just be their stocking permit application. Crockett noted that although the draft agreement says ponds must be inspected by FWS and CO Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the practice in the Upper CO has always been for the FWS to honor CPW inspections so there has never been a redundant inspection or one agency second-guessing the other. Crockett said he is all for revisions that improve efficiency and reflect state/tribal sovereignty but hopes the specifics of the agreement concerning what species are acceptable and where they can be stocked is not substantively weakened. These policies need to be broadly consistent between the San Juan and the Upper CO basins to avoid enforcement/compliance confusion (e.g., private fish vendors with clients in both basins). It should not be watered down such that it no longer serves its purpose.
- Crockett asked if there was anything he could do to help out. He said there is urgency for CO to get this done because CDOW has completed a draft management plan for Lake Nighthorse but prefers not to release it until there is a stocking policy in place.
- Gilbert will attempt to re-write the NNF policy to make it palatable to NM. She will try to do the re-write and get a NM reaction by November 15.

Revised monitoring plan and protocols

- Whitmore said Durst incorporated all comments, edits, and nonnative fish sampling protocols into the large-bodied monitoring section in the plan. He also made some substantial changes to the format in an effort to streamline the document. He and Platania have not been able to get together yet to complete the integration section.
- The group agreed that the background information that was removed needs to be put back into the document so it can serve as a planning tool and provide a guide for data analysis.
- The Program Office will revise the monitoring plan and work with Platania on the data integration and analysis section with a deadline of September 30.

Non-native fish workshop summary

- Whitmore sent a draft report to the BC for review August 18. It combined her summary and SWCA's report. She did some editing to SWCA's part but tried to keep it mostly intact. The final report will include an appendix with the workshop presentations.
- The BC will provide comments on report back to the Program Office by September 30.

PIT tags and associated equipment

- McKinstry reported that a contract is about to be let for both the UCR and SJR programs. It will be a \$4 million contract for 5 years with Biomark. The contract is mix and match for tags and tagging equipment. There are a lot of options for P.I.'s to select from. He brought some of the equipment to the meeting for the BC to look examine. He needs principle investigators to let him know what they need otherwise he will just order loose tags for now. Davis said he needs to ask the hatcheries also. Ryden said he thinks the pre-tags will be a nice option for the hatcheries. Ryden indicated he will get with Travis Francis and get back to McKinstry by next week.
- Pit tag/equipment needs to McKinstry by next Friday, August 26.

RERI Project Update

- Westfall reported they are still waiting on the cultural/historic preservation-related permit. It has taken much longer than anticipated. He just received a 44-page archeology report from BIA today which feeds into the process. He still expects they will be able to begin work at the end of September.
- He said K-B Engineering is working on before/after LA-HR photography of the sites.

Campbell conveyed that the Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) was awarding grants to non-Federal participants. He was not sure of the details, however.

Next meeting – November 15-16, 2011

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 29 July 2011)

Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Complete d
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 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		

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 29 July 2011)

Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Complete d
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		
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	Recapture analysis on PIT tagged fish		Durst	Annually by March		
13	Coordinate CPM stocking closely with Reclamation to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases		Project Leads	Annually		
14	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	

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 29 July 2011)

Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Complete d
15	Revise RBS Augmentation Goals (based on the outcome of experimental stocking)	5/10/10	FWS Fisheries/Program Office	5/2011 – provide update and extend as needed	ongoing	
16	Develop a detailed outline for San Juan River Recovery Program case history manuscript	11-5-08	Propst/Miller			On hold
17	Pursue Non-native fish stocking procedures	11/5/09	Gilbert will attempt to re-write to make compatible with NMDGF and run by NMDGF for reaction	12/1/09	11/15/11	
18	Pursue effects study on Hg/pikeminnow with other groups/programs	1/14/10	Program Office lead	ongoing		
19	Blank database structure for data integration	1/13/10	Durst	3/23/10	2/24/11	
20	Discussion of what is the appropriate number of fish to stock	3/23/10	BC	ongoing		
21	Redo monitoring protocols and integration analysis document by including all background info. and completed data integration section	3/24/10	PO, Platania	5/10/10	9/30/11	
25	Prioritized integration analysis – Platania will distribute to group	11/10/10	Integration sub-group	1/31/11	9/30/11	

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 29 July 2011)

Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Complete d
22	Complete non-native fish workshop report	5/10/10	BC to provide comments to PO	11/2010	9/30/11	
23	Southern Ute funding of Population Model	5/10/10	Miller	11/2010	ongoing	
24	Work with I&E Coordinator to determine feasibility of brochures and signs	11/10/10	PO	2/24/11	Ongoing	
26	Habitat-Flow Workshop Planning	7/27/11	BC comments on Habitat-Flow Workshop outline to PO	8/25/11	9/30/11	
27	Compile info. on current knowledge of habitat response to flows and other factors (e.g., veg. encroachment) for Habitat-Flow Workshop	8/25/11	LaMarra to put together SOW			
28	Pit tag/equipment needs	8/25/11	P.I.'s provide needs to McKinstry next Friday	9/2/11		
29	Draft summary of small-bodied monitoring discussion	8/25/11	PO to BC Sept. 12; comments back by morning of Sept. 19	9/12/11; 9/19/11		
30	Presentation on preliminary results of Durst's fish response investigations	8/25/11	Durst	11/15/11		

* Items were re-numbered after changes were made

Yellow highlight indicates annual action items

Green highlight indicates new action items

Red highlight indicates completed action items that will be removed from the next iteration of the Action Item Log

Annual SJRRIP Cycle (Oct. 1 –Sept. 30)

January 2011 version

Date	Annual Tasks	PO	CC	BC	P.I.
Oct.	Reclamation administers contracts	X			
Nov.	BC Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify questions for annual data integration • Review data integration results from previous year • Discuss Program priorities • LRP review and provide recommendations (pros and cons) to Program Office 	X		X	
Dec. 31	RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data to Program Office				X
January	Notification/update of Program rosters/ mailing lists	X			
January	Executive meeting (Program Office; Reclamation Fund Manager; CC and BC Chairs) to do preliminary planning for upcoming year	X	X	X	
January	Updated LRP to BC and CC for review	X	X		
Jan. 31	Distribute consolidated PIT tag data and post other data	X			
February	BC Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for Annual Meeting • Provide preliminary results; draft report presentations • Review updated LRP • Review annual data integration priorities 	X		X	X
February	Final updated LRP to CC (with explanation of input included/not included)	X			
Feb/Mar	Approval of yearly LRP		X		
March	Annual guidance/solicitation for SOWs based on LRP/list of prioritized projects	X			
March 31	Draft reports due/SOWs to Program Office			X	X
April	Preliminary draft Annual Workplan and Budget	X			
May	Annual Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program overview • P.I. presentations • Review preliminary draft AWP • Committee reports 	X	X	X	X
June/July	Draft Annual Workplan and Budget	X			
June 30	Provide final reports and data sets				X
August	Tech review of draft AWP; recommendations with pros and cons to Program Office			X	
August	Revise AWP based on input and transmit final draft to CC with documentation of all input	X			
Sept.	Review and approve final AWP		X		
Sept.	Post final AWP to website	X			