

3 September 2013



**Approved Summary  
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program  
Biology Committee Conference Call  
2 July 2013**

**Attendees:**

**Biology Committee Members:**

Bill Miller, Chair – Southern Ute Indian Tribe  
Jicarilla Apache Nation – absent  
Brian Westfall – Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Jason Davis – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2  
Mark McKinstry – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Benjamin Schleicher – 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  
Tom Wesche – Water Development Interests  
Dave Gori – Conservation Interests

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

David Campbell  
Sharon Whitmore  
Scott Durst

**Interested Parties:**

Dale Ryden – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Carrie Lile – Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Howard Brandenburg – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers  
Robert Dudley – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers  
Susan Behery – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Brian Hines – Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Katie Creighton – Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

**Tuesday 2 July 2013**

**Approve draft summary for 4 June 2013 conference call:**

- Durst incorporated earlier edits.
- Wesche motioned to approve and Gilbert seconded. Approved unanimously.

**Discuss budget reduction options provided by PIs:**

- Whitmore gave details on the documents that were sent out. These were provided by PIs and included pros and cons of cutting activities within individual SOWs.
- Campbell indicated that going into detail on the possible reductions in scopes is premature given the overall budget uncertainty. If the Program Office's additional 2013 funding of \$125,000 comes through, it would be carried over and likely cover the entire deficit and there would be no need to

make any cuts. However, the total savings from the proposed cuts would do much to cover the \$87,000 deficit if this funding does not come through. The current budget estimate includes cuts within the Program Office budget and removal of acquisition of PIT tags and removal of the flow recommendation review and revision workshop. Even if additional \$125,000 comes through, there would not be enough money to cover proposed workshop.

- In the interim, the Program Office will proceed with the originally submitted SOWs. The CC plans to discuss and, if possible, approve the 2014 AWP during their July 31 conference call. The AWP can be approved without total budget resolution because the AWP budget is just an estimate and typically has to be tweaked some after it is approved. If there is a need to make cuts, the Program Office will review what PIs provided and develop a revised AWP budget. If necessary, the BC will hold another conference call to provide input.
- Gori noted that most of the RERI sites now have water in contrast to what was detailed in the justification for potentially cutting RERI sampling in 2014. Westfall indicated that KB will be getting new photos of these sites and Brandenburg will provide an update on the status of these sites following the July larval monitoring trip.

#### **Preliminary discussion on TNC SOW reviewing and revising flow recommendations:**

- Campbell described this SOW as part of what was developed in the past habitat workshops.
- Miller thought the SOW needed additional detail particularly on the overall schedule and how BC member's contributions would be funded. Campbell said that PIs providing additional analysis would be compensated but given the budget uncertainty the details of this have not been worked out. Miller also indicated the SOW should focus on biology and biologic response in addition to flow, habitat, and hydrology. Gori responded that all monitoring data is on-the-table for review and analysis. Also any revised flow recommendation will be at least as specific and prescriptive as the current ones. Wesche thought the limitations of the system should be acknowledged up front and suggested fewer workshops might be needed to accomplish the review and revision of the flow recommendations. Gori highlighted that climate change is an important limitation to consider for future water availability. Westfall brought up the need for a better understanding of the capabilities of the Hydrology Model would be important.
- BC members should provide written comments on the TNC SOW to the Program Office for compilation by 30 August 2013. PIs should review past workshops for an idea of the workload commitments that may be necessary for analysis and meetings for this workshop. Small work group may also be convened to complete particular tasks.
- A more detailed discussion of this SOW should occur during a conference call or meeting later in the fall.

#### **Discuss options for target base flow reductions:**

- Wesche provided background of the Water Development Steering Committee's concerns of the ongoing drought and the need to store water for 2014. Reduced target base flows from October through February, while maintaining flows during monitoring activities, would be a good step to store additional water. The potential impact of reduced flows during winter is not well understood so additional monitoring may be in order. However, reduced flow during winter appears preferable to other times of the year. Evaluating biologic response to flow will inform how best to use available water to benefit the endangered fish. Historically base flows were frequently below 350 cfs but antecedent flow conditions, channel geomorphology, and stream side vegetation were also much different than they are today.
- Wesche asked for clarification on how water savings was calculated given particular target base flows. Behery can provide all of the factors she uses in making these calculations but the impact of varying withdrawals for irrigation may account for any discrepancies.

- June inflow to Navajo Reservoir were only 17% of average and forecasts call for lower than normal inflows to the reservoir. Monsoons could increase these inflows. Shortage sharing takes effect when the minimum probable forecast reduces reservoir elevation below 5990 feet. The Program could voluntarily reduced base flows to bank water for future peak or base flows while irrigators may not have this option. Campbell indicated that if irrigation is deemed detrimental to recovery, action could be taken by the Program.
- If the Program voluntarily reduces target base flows in one year and shortage sharing still occurs in the next year, the situation for the endangered fish could be dire. Could water users voluntarily reduce their water use? If the Program reduces now, are the fish guaranteed the saved water? It would be difficult to tease apart water designated for fish or irrigation. Water is released for both fish and irrigators and there is no way to bank the water that would be saved as part of voluntary reduction in base flows for endangered fish. However, not entering into a shortage sharing situation would benefit everyone. The group discussed the option of making a recommendation that asks Reclamation to pursue voluntary reductions in water use by irrigators. Base flows are utilized by irrigators and fish and it is difficult to determine relative proportion of use because while water is metered at diversions, water lost to evaporation, and return flow and illegal diversions are not monitored.
- Behery will provide an updated forecast this week and discuss with Ryan Christianson how to account for fish versus irrigator water.
- Discussions will continue at future calls or meetings about reducing target base flows starting 1 October 2013.

**Discuss Ridges Basin recommendation and CC review:**

- Whitmore indicated that the Program Office will not change the BC's recommendation for preventing and monitoring escapement from Ridges Basin Reservoir based on the CC review. The Program Office will pass along the BC recommendations and any CC comments received when requested by FWS Region 6 – Grand Junction.
- BC members should ask their CC counterpart first for details regarding the CC review. If BC members are not satisfied with what they receive from their CC representative, then a request for that information can be sent to the Program Office.

**Review assignments and schedule next meeting:**

- BC members should submit comments on the TNC SOW for reviewing and revising flow recommendations by 30 August 2013. Comments should be submitted to the Program Office for compilation.
- Behery will provide a new forecast and look into providing clarification on distinguishing between irrigator and endangered fish water in the reservoir or base flows.
- A conference call on 3 September 2013 from 9-11 am will be held to discuss reduced target base flows and other BC business.
- An in-person meeting will be held in Durango 19-20 November to discuss LRP, 2015 priorities, and data integration results and needs. This meeting typically does not require peer reviewers attendance.

**BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG**

(Updated 3 July 2013)

Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination 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 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		

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8	Annual Data Delivery		Pls 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	

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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	Crockett and Gilbert	12/1/09	5/14/13	
18	Pursue effects study on Hg/pikeminnow with other groups/programs	1/14/10	Program Office lead	ongoing		
19	Discussion of what is the appropriate number of fish to stock	3/23/10	BC	ongoing		
20	Southern Ute funding of Population Model	5/10/10	Miller	11/2010	ongoing	
21	Work with I&E Coordinator to determine feasibility of brochures and signs	11/10/10	PO	2/24/11	Ongoing	
22	Prepare memo to CC conveying BC recommendation to conduct a feasibility study on removing fish barriers in the lower Animas River	7/9/12	PO	8/20/12	5/7/13	

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23	NNF workshop recommendations to Davis	2/21/13	BC	3/18/13		
24	Pros and cons of moving non-native removal trips from lower to middle sections of river	5/7/13	Davis	6/28/13		
26	Finalize memo on Ridges Basin recommendations, CC review, forward to FWS-R6	5/7/13	Miller, PO	5/31/13		
27	Revise SOWs based on recommendations from February and May meetings	5/7/13	PIs	5/31/13	6/21/13	
28	Complete Threats Assessment draft	5/7/13	TNC	6/28/13		
29	Prioritize within project activities and pros and cons of removing low priority actions	6/4/13	PIs	6/21/13		6/21/13
30	Provide written comments on TNC SOW reviewing and revising flow recommendations	7/2/13	BC to PO	8/30/13		

\* 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"> <li>• Identify questions for annual data integration</li> <li>• Review data integration results from previous year</li> <li>• Discuss Program priorities</li> <li>• LRP review and provide recommendations (pros and cons) to Program Office</li> </ul>	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"> <li>• Prepare for Annual Meeting</li> <li>• Provide preliminary results; draft report presentations</li> <li>• Review updated LRP</li> <li>• Review annual data integration priorities</li> </ul>	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"> <li>• Program overview</li> <li>• P.I. presentations</li> <li>• Review preliminary draft AWP</li> <li>• Committee reports</li> </ul>	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			