



**Approved Summary
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program
Biology Committee Conference Call
26 March 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
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
Tom Wesche – Water Development Interests
David Gori – Conservation Interests

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

Sharon Whitmore
Scott Durst

Interested Parties:

Carrie Lile – Southwestern Water Conservation District
Stephen Saletta – PNM Resources
W. Howard Brandenburg – American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Steve McCall – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Brent Uilenberg – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Susan Behery – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Kurt Broderdorp – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tuesday 26 March 2013

Changes to agenda:

- Update from Behery on the impact of reduced baseflows on reservoir elevation.
- Whitmore request for data to be included in TNC threats assessment.

Approve draft meeting summary for 20-21 February 2013 meeting; review Action Item list:

- Durst incorporated earlier edits. Wesche motioned to approve the summary as revised and Gilbert seconded, approved unanimously.
- Actions items due in May: (1) non-native fish stocking procedures, (2) positive population response criteria, and (3) providing historic perspective on San Juan data are moving forward to be completed on schedule.
- Ryden completed the Lake Powell SOW for 2013 and 2014 and will distribute it to the group.
- Miller has identified some earlier San Juan reports that he will distribute to the group. These documents will be made available on the Program website.
- Crockett will meet with the State of Colorado attorney general's staff to discuss the non-native fish stocking procedures and should be able to provide an update in May.

Discuss 2013 LRP:

- Whitmore had questions on LRP Task 2.3.3.3 about how the deflection weirs at APS and other locations should be prioritized. Miller indicated that the passage at APS may be accomplished as part of Navajo Gallup project. Uilenberg indicated that capital projects funds are typically not used to evaluate passage or entrainment and should be paid for out of base funds. ASIR previously conducted investigations at these locations. The BC should review the Renfro et al. report from 2004 and discuss at a future meeting. This report can be found on the SJRIP website.
- The Program Office is moving forward on Task 2.4.3.2 with TNC's threat assessment SOW. The activities being completed by this SOW should be highlighted in the LRP because they are included in the sufficient progress report.
- Action 3.1.2 should be updated to reflect that channel catfish are no longer being translocated from the San Juan River due to mercury contamination concerns.
- There was some discussion on how the T&E fish population estimates that have been conducted by UDWR and NMFWCO meet Task 4.1.4.1. While population estimates have been calculated these estimates should be considered preliminary because the study was not specifically designed to estimate the abundance of T&E fish. It is possible to retroactively arrive at population estimates for any year using the PIT tag databases. These estimates should also be tied to the positive population response criteria. Davis and Durst should work on determining these estimates.
- As part of Tasks 5.1.2.1 and 5.1.2.2 Biological Opinions related to the SJRIP should be highlighted in the LRP.
- Element 6 should be updated, it does not currently include current information related to the I&E program.
- Miller provided some wording to Whitmore to update Task 2.1.1.3 about the effects of flow on fish.
- Gori provided an update about the work Bledsoe et al. are conducting to inform Task 2.1.1.4 on selecting the next round of sites for habitat restoration. These efforts by Bledsoe could be included as a specific line item under the habitat monitoring section. Wesche suggested adding some wording related to a workshop in conjunction with the flow recommendation revision. The history and background behind the various actions and tasks should appear in the narrative section.
- The redundancy in Elements 2 and 4 on habitat protection and monitoring should be resolved. Perhaps the goals and action in one section would carry to tasks in the other section?
- Vegetation modeling or monitoring could be included as a task to track non-native vegetation. Modeling would address the scour and flow necessary to remove non-native vegetation seedlings.
- Details on outside funding for particular tasks should be included in the LRP.
- The Stamp et al. report should be reviewed to provide some information on Russian olive recruitment dynamics for Task 2.2.2.3. How can channels that have been cleared of vegetation be

kept clear? What degree of scour is necessary to keep seedlings from becoming established? Past Program reports by Westfall, Lamarra and other have addressed this at least in parts.

- Climate change projections should be included in Task 2.2.5.1 so future flow scenarios can be modeled using the Hydrology Model.
- Whitmore will incorporate the comments she received and highlight items that will require further discussion for future LRP revisions. Whitmore will provide a cleaned up version of the LRP to the CC for their 3 April 2013 conference call.

Discussion of recommendations for non-native fish management at Ridges Basin Reservoir:

- The Program Office compiled the comments sent by the BC and sent them to the Ecological Services Office in Grand Junction (R6 has the lead for the Ridges Basin Biological Opinion). The FWS will review these comments and determine the next steps of the process.
- In general everyone agreed the report was thorough but most who commented felt Reclamation needs to consider secondary containment. However, some did not feel that secondary containment would be necessary and Westfall commented that releases from Ridges Basin represent a small portion of total reservoir releases in the San Juan River Basin and that other reservoirs have no mechanism in place to stop non-native fish escapement so additional containment effort at Ridges Basin will have little benefit on the introduction of non-native fish from a basin-wide perspective.
- Uilenberg noted that while the Recovery Programs take on mitigation for existing project they typically do not for new projects. Additional costs to monitor or mitigate escapement at the out-flow structure of Ridges Basin could affect funding of other Program efforts. Uilenberg considers the potential threat of escapement of Ridges Basin Reservoir minor compared to other sources of non-native fish escapement across the San Juan River Basin.
- Broderdorp indicated that the Biological Opinion indicates no escapement of non-native fish but it is not clear what the biological significance of any release would be or where a potential release ranks in terms of other threats. It may be possible to revise the Biological Opinion.
- The group discussed operational means of reducing the threat of escapement. The group also discussed introducing some biological control into the reservoir to control non-native fish. The role of the BC is to provide the FWS and Program Office with its recommendation on the technical aspects of how the proposed action would impact the biology of the San Juan River Basin.
- Miller will compile all recommendations that were previously received and that were part of the current discussion into a draft to advise Reclamation, the Program Office, and FWS. Miller will distribute this draft by 1 April and get comments back from the group by 15 April.

Update on possible base flow reductions to store additional water in Navajo Reservoir - Behery:

- Recent forecasts have indicated a low inflow to Navajo Reservoir and Reclamation is considering possible shortage sharing options. If target baseflows are reduced from April to 1 October from 500 cfs to 450 cfs, an additional 3 feet of reservoir elevation and 30,000 af of water could be stored. Reducing target baseflows to 400 cfs would save 6 feet of reservoir elevation and 60,000 af.
- Under the minimal probable inflow scenario, shortage sharing would be likely with baseflows of 500 cfs. Under most scenarios there will be no spring release in 2013.
- Under these proposed shortage sharing conditions, water users would have their full allotment while flow would be reduced for the fish. This would potentially allow for more water to be available for a spring run-off releases next year. This small reduction in flow would allow for more water compared to past shortage sharing agreements when flows in the river were as low as 250 cfs. Reduction in flows this year would not necessarily result in more water being available for a release next year. The long range forecasts show the same probability of a release next year with or without reducing the flows this year.

- Reduction in baseflow should also be examined over the winter when it would presumably have less impact on the fish.
- So flows are not reduced during spring spawning, Behery will examine potential water savings if flows are reduced as low as 350 cfs during August and September. Also need to consider potential impacts to fieldwork with these reduced flows.
- Behery will follow up with the group on these other scenarios and also distribute the revised shortage sharing agreements documents. These revised documents should be posted to the Program website.

Priorities for 2014 SOWs:

- Priorities identified in 2013 were: (1) ESA compliance and O&M, (2) Augmentation, (3) Non-native fish removal, (4) Fish monitoring and efforts to document recruitment, (5) Integration, (6) Habitat monitoring, (7) Peer review. The group discussed how integration would be accomplished. The impact of water temperature depression can likely be evaluated by integrating existing data rather than conducting a new study. \$220,000 - \$240,000 was budgeted for integration during the last integration effort. The group agreed that these priorities would be reasonable to pass along to the CC. Discussion of how 2014 integration will be funded will occur at the May meeting.
- Because of the continued stocking in upper portion of the San Juan River and stocking in the Animas River, these areas should continue to be sampled during Fall Monitoring to evaluate that management action.
- Sequestration issues still need to be sorted out but the 2% CPI should be added to all SOWs.
- Integration needs to occur in advance of flow recommendation revision. The products that would come out of any integration work need to be defined.
- McKinstry said that overhead costs should be reduced to 3% but line items should be added to cover any needed costs.

TNC threats assessment:

- Whitmore asked for PIs to identify “hotspots” for T&E and native fish that can be incorporated into the TNC threat assessment project.
- PIs should provide to Whitmore by 19 April 2013 the location (by RM), description, and time of year of areas to be included in this assessment. TNC will produce a GIS map of that will include fish data as a layer in addition to the threats.

Upcoming meetings:

- BC agreed to a conference call on 19 April 2013 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm to discuss Ridge Basin report recommendations and LRP revisions prior to Annual Meeting.
- Gilbert will be available for the Annual Meeting.

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 1 April 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		

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 1 April 2013)

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

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 1 April 2013)

Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Completed
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		
20	Discussion of what is the appropriate number of fish to stock	3/23/10	BC	ongoing		
21	Southern Ute funding of Population Model	5/10/10	Miller	11/2010	ongoing	
22	Work with I&E Coordinator to determine feasibility of brochures and signs	11/10/10	PO	2/24/11	ongoing	
23	Revised positive population response criteria	11/15/11	PO and FWS to BC	2/13/12	5/7/13	

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG

(Updated 1 April 2013)

Item No. *	Action Item	Meeting/O rigination Date	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Date	Date Completed
24	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	
26	Revise Lake Powell 2013 SOW	8/13/12	FWS-GJ	8/31/12	3/26/13	3/26/2013
33	Provide historic perspective on historic San Juan data	11/8/2012	Pls	2/20/13	5/7/13	
38	Comments on LRP to Whitmore	2/21/13	BC	3/18/13		3/18/13
39	Review and comments on Lake Nighthorse report to PO	2/21/13	BC	3/18/13		3/18/13
40	NNF workshop recommendations to Davis	2/21/13	BC	3/18/13		3/18/13
	LRP revision for BC review	3/26/13	Whitmore, BC	4/3/13 and 4/15/13		
	Consolidate Ridges Basin non-native fish escapement recommendations	3/26/13	Miller, BC	4/1/13 and 4/15/13		
	Identify fish "hotspots" for TNC threats assessment	3/26/13	Pls to Whitmore	4/19/13		

* 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"> • 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			