



COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL December 9, 2013

Meeting Notes

COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Jim Brooks, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Herb Becker
Michael Howe
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ted Kowalski
Brent Uilenberg
Kevin Flanigan
Patrick McCarthy
Absent

REPRESENTING:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe (UMUT)
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 6
Water Development Interests
Navajo Nation (NN)
State of Colorado
Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico
The Nature Conservancy
Bureau of Land Management

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:

David Campbell, Program Coordinator
Sharon Whitmore, Asst. Program Coordinator
Scott Durst

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Kristin Green, CC Alternate
Natasha Cuylear, CC Alternate
Bill Miller, BC Chair
Susan Behery
Mark McKinstry

State of New Mexico
Jicarilla Apache Nation
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Reclamation

AGENDA CHANGES:

- Added Ridges Basin Dam Fish Escapement Update

APPROVAL OF SEPT 4, 2013 CONFERENCE CALL NOTES – Pitts moved to approve with a minor change received from Condon and Green; Kowalski seconded; the summary was approved.

2014/2015 FUNDING UPDATE – McKinstry reported the 2014 SJRIP budget will be \$2,464,275 (includes 1.5% CPI and 8% sequestration reduction). Pat Tease in their Power Office gave him and Dave Speas the 2014 funding totals as they could never get an answer from their Washington office. The budget estimate in the 2014 AWP was \$2,431,113 so the way he and Whitmore calculated the estimate was not far off (about \$33,000 less). The total cost for projects in the approved AWP is \$2,429,028 so there should be enough money to do everything that was planned for 2014. He cannot say much about FY2015 funding. There is a disconnect in that CRSP funds are generated at the dam and are independent of the Treasury so should not be subject to sequestration but they have been treated the same as appropriated dollars. Even though those funds have been subject to sequestration, there is plenty of money in the fund. Supposedly, what is saved from sequestration (8% of the budget) will be returned the next year. He and Dave Speas both submitted requests to offset sequestration effects on the recovery programs' funds. If their request is granted, those funds will be

restored and the programs may get more than anticipated in 2015. The way Reclamation administers the CRSP funds has also been subject to the continuing resolution which creates additional spending limitations.

Pitts asked about the 2014 activities that were not funded due to the reduced budget. McKinstry said Reclamation is funding 2014 PIT tags and Lake Powell work outside of the Program. Campbell said the environmental flows workshop will be funded in 2015.

Uilenberg reported on appropriated dollars for capital projects. The President's 2014 budget was for ~\$8.5 million but there is still a continuing resolution so he cannot say much about what will happen. McKinstry pointed out that none of the capital funding is budgeted for projects on the San Juan River in 2014.

UPDATE ON TARGET BASE FLOW REDUCTIONS/SHORTAGE SHARING – Behery reported on this at the November 19-20, 2013 BC meeting. The monsoon season pulled the SJR Basin out of a shortage sharing situation. Under current minimum probable forecast operations, the reservoir will reach a low point of 6,005 feet in elevation in February 2015, which is ~125,000 acre-feet in excess of the minimum storage level for NIIP's intake. NIIP also did not take as much water as predicted (saved about 30,000 af). Reclamation will continue the current dam releases (i.e., maintaining a 250 cfs release as long as the 500 cfs baseflow is being met) in an effort to save water through the winter. Current forecast conditions look good in part because of saturated soils caused by a heavy late monsoon season. Behery cautioned that conditions could change and a shortage could again be in the forecast. Behery is not currently planning to send out the regular shortage forecast reports but if anyone wants that information to let her know and she can provide it. The group asked that the CC be informed if conditions change and a shortage is in the forecast.

Pollack mentioned at the last CC conference call that the committee should have a discussion about the implications of shortage sharing for the Program. Whitmore said she considered it for this agenda but thought it would be better for an in-person meeting. She also said she started working on a chronology of SJR shortage sharing and could finish it if the CC was interested in that information. The CC asked that she finish it and that shortage sharing be on the agenda for the next in-person meeting. Becker mentioned having the discussion at a Navajo Operations meeting where most of the parties to the shortage sharing agreement are present. Campbell said the Program is not a party to the agreement so has a different role in shortage sharing. Pollack pointed out this illustrates why the CC should talk about how the Program participates in the shortage sharing agreement.

2014 LRP/RECOVERY BENCHMARKS – Whitmore reported on the concept paper she sent out for developing interim benchmarks. She said the BC discussed the topic at their last meeting and their input was used to come up with the concept; however, she did not have time to run the concept by them prior to this meeting. In summary, the CC tasked the Program Office with developing firm benchmarks to downlist and delist the endangered fish by 2023. The concept is to use the Program's existing documents and processes to accomplish the task and not reinvent the wheel. Interim benchmarks would be included as part of the Program's Positive Population Response Criteria which is used in the Sufficient Progress Assessment to track the Program's progress toward achieving species recovery. The assessment and reporting of the interim benchmarks would become part of the annual LRP update and the biennial Sufficient Progress Assessment processes. The Program Office will continue to work with the BC to develop the interim benchmarks. She also noted that the Positive Population Response Criteria and the Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Plan are currently being updated. She asked for input from the CC on the concept.

Pitts asked about changes to what will be required for Colorado pikeminnow downlisting including the demographic recovery criteria being removed, the need to address threats, and the need for some positive population response. Campbell pointed out the recovery team is just considering the changes. Pitts asked what is meant by "threats need to be addressed" and how do you measure it. Campbell replied that for the

San Juan Program, the LRP includes the management actions necessary to remove threats and even if we do not see a specific response, the threats are still being addressed. Whitmore said she did not include threat reduction in the interim benchmarks concept because benchmarks are more suited to specific numbers and threat reduction is not necessarily easily quantified. Pitts is concerned that having no downlist demographic criteria and no threat reduction criteria identified in benchmarks will make knowing what has to be achieved by 2018 to downlist Colorado pikeminnow more nebulous than it is currently.

Campbell said R6 is the lead on the recovery plan and he will pass along all concerns/comments to R6 and the Recovery Team. The CC will provide comments on the concept paper to Whitmore by mid-January.

BC UPDATE – Miller reported that the BC had their fall meeting November 19-20. During this meeting, the BC reviewed the LRP and priorities for the next year. They discussed the flow recommendations revision SOW and will provide comments to the Program Office by January 13. A revised SOW will be discussed at the next meeting. Several changes to the LRP were identified including making the sections in front consistent with the tables in the back and adding native species to Element #2. Comments on the LRP from the BC are due to the Program Office by the end of the year. No action was required on shortage sharing. TNC provided an update on Phase II of the habitat restoration project. McKinstry reported on remote PIT tag reader installs. None have been installed yet because of some anchoring and other problems but they hope to start installation soon. Campbell gave an update on the Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan. The group discussed Program peer review. Ron Ryel is retired and will not be returning to the Program as a peer reviewer. The current peer reviewers are Mel Warren, John Pitlick, Steve Ross, and Brian Bledsoe. Ross and Bledsoe were at the meeting. The group discussed the possibility of retaining someone with statistical and ecosystem expertise.

Miller said the annual joint UCR/SJR recovery program researchers meeting will be in Grand Junction on January 14-15 and the next BC meeting is February 26-27 in Durango.

TNC SCOPE OF WORK FOR REVISING FLOW RECOMMENDATIONS – Campbell gave background on the e-flows SOW. As a result of the habitat workshop in 2011, the Service requested that TNC prepare a SOW for reviewing and revising the flow recommendations. At the prompting of the BC, he sent an initial draft SOW out before it was ready for review. He said he was surprised by the reaction from some Program participants and should have waited to send it out until it was more developed. Some people perceived it as a TNC project but it is a Program Office project as stated in the Program Document under Service responsibilities. Campbell sent out his responses to the comments received on the SOW. He said the Service wants TNC to facilitate the process because they have extensive experience and expertise in the science of environmental flows and facilitating collaborative processes to establish environmental flow targets. TNC is in the process of revising the SOW based on comments received from the BC and CC.

Pitts said he appreciates TNC's involvement in both recovery programs but does not think the Service should pre-select who will do this work. The Water Development Steering Committee wants it to go out as a RFP. Campbell said the Service has the responsibility to revise the flow recommendations and fears the Service will lose control of the process with a RFP. Also, if it goes out as a RFP, it may cost more, take longer as the contractor gets up to speed, and be limited to only a few contractors who are in a position to complete for SJR contracts. He said people are reading more into the draft SOW than they should. It is and always was intended to be a collaborative Program project. Pitts asked about the process. Campbell said a new draft of the SOW will go to the BC for another technical review. After the Program Office, TNC, and the BC are satisfied with it, it will go to the CC. There was some discussion about the Program Document giving the Service full responsibility for doing this. Pollack said he agrees with Pitts and Condon that the CC did not intend to give full responsibility to the Service. Kowalski and Becker said they have the same concerns as the others.

Miller said that Campbell told BC members not to share the draft SOW with their CC members. Whitmore disagreed. She said BC members were told to make sure CC members understood that the SOW is a draft that is still in technical review and development by the Program Office, TNC, and the BC.

Hawkins asked how UMUT will get information on project progress since they are not on the BC. She said it is unclear how UMUT's water rights will be included in the revised flow recommendations. Campbell indicated UMUT could appoint a BC representative and said the Program received verbal confirmation from DOI solicitors that if there is an approved settlement, then that water is included in the baseline and the flow recommendations. He recently requested a written determination from DOI solicitors regarding tribal water rights in the baseline. Whitmore pointed out that the CC's Hydrology Baseline Workgroup (HBWG) was formed to deal with water depletions in the baseline and will probably want to meet when the SJRB hydrology model is done in 2014.

McCarthy thanked the group for all the comments. He said TNC will do their level best to make the SOW consistent with the operating rules of the Program. McCarthy said a new draft may be done by mid-January but he will need to check on the exact date.

COLORADO PIKEMINNOW RECOVERY PLAN STATUS/UPDATE – Campbell reported a draft for review by Service R2, R6, and Headquarters will come out around the first of the year. Pitts said that is 2-3 months behind the original schedule. Campbell said bringing in the states set the process back. Pitts asked if removing demographic criteria for downlisting will delay the recovery process and thinks “addressing threats” is too nebulous. Campbell said the recovery team has discussed these potential changes but a final decision has not been made. Pitts said the schedule delay will also delay publishing in the Federal Register and he recommends a new schedule be sent out. Campbell said he is not the lead for the recovery plan revision so is not sure if R6 plans to put out a new schedule but will pass along all the recommendations and comments received at this meeting to R6 and the recovery team.

RIDGES BASIN DAM FISH ESCAPEMENT STUDY – Uilenberg reported Reclamation met with Patty Gelatt twice and sent a memo to the Service saying they believe they are in compliance with the Animas-La Plata biological opinion. The memo was sent about 6 weeks ago but they have not yet heard back from Gelatt. They will contact her after the holidays if they have not heard from her by then. Condon asked about sending letters of support. Uilenberg said it is not his place to say but it couldn't hurt.

Schedule next CC meeting(s) - Pitts said the annual meeting should be scheduled soon. The annual DC trip is the week of April 7.

Brooks said there may be a need to have a face-to-face meeting on some of the topics discussed including shortage sharing, interim benchmarks, and the e-flow SOW. Becker suggested having the meeting with the signatories of the shortage sharing agreement. Campbell reiterated the Program is not a party to the agreement so has a different role in shortage sharing. Becker emphasized shortage sharing cannot be done in a vacuum. Pitts said he thinks a face-to-face CC meeting may not be needed. Brooks suggested scheduling an early February conference call. The Program Office will send out a Doodle poll for the first part of February, i.e., 3-14. Agenda items also identified included tribal water and environmental baseline and population model.