



COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL

October 2, 2015

Draft Conference Call Summary

Coordination Committee Members:

Tom Sinclair, Chair
Catherine Condon
Celene Hawkins
Absent
Michael Howe
Dale Ryden
Tom Pitts
Stanley Pollack
Ted Kowalski
Brent Uilenberg
Kristin Green
Patrick McCarthy
Absent

Representing:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (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:

Sharon Whitmore, Program Coordinator

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

Other Interested Parties:

Dave Speas

Bureau of Reclamation

Introductions/Changes to Agenda – Pitts added 2016 DC trip schedule and authorizing legislation to the agenda.

Approval of August 3, 2015 Conference Call Notes – Whitmore said she incorporated all comments from the last meeting and verbiage changes from Condon and Pitts. Condon moved to approve; Pollack seconded; and the notes were approved.

2016 Annual Workplan – During their September 21, 2015 meeting, the CC unanimously voted to approve the FY2016 Annual Work Plan, exclusive of SOWs #17 *Upper/Middle River Nonnative Species Control & Rare Fish Monitoring*; #18 *Lower/Middle River Nonnative Species Control & Rare Fish Monitoring*; and #33 *Fish Entrainment Study on the San Juan and Animas Rivers* (RFP). The CC decision was to defer approval of the two nonnative fish SOWs until there was clear understanding and agreement among the CC on how nonnative fish removal will be addressed in FY2016 and FY2017. SOW #33 would be considered after Reclamation provided a summary of the sequence of events that transpired during solicitation and funding of the San Juan and Animas Rivers Fish Entrainment Study. Reclamation was also asked to provide budget information for this project, to the extent possible.

Agreement on Nonnative Fish Verbiage – The Program Office provided draft verbiage to the CC prior to the call that described how nonnative fish removal will be addressed in FY2016 and FY2017. Whitmore said she received comments from Condon and McCarthy and incorporated them into the

final draft verbiage included on the final agenda for the conference call. Pitts said he wanted, “and level of threat” added to item 3; second sentence (i.e., Workshop objectives will be to: 1) review 2016 results and determine, to the extent possible, the impact and level of threat of non-native fish on the endangered fishes.). The group also agreed that the last sentence about FY 2017 funding should be deleted. The verbiage with these changes is as follows:

1. The revised nonnative fish proposal for FY2016 (sent to the Biology Committee on September 14) will be fully funded with fieldwork to be conducted in 2016.
2. The 2016 nonnative fish removal SOWs will be revised by the principal investigators to include more detailed study designs and budgets. Budgets are expected to remain at 2015 levels. The revised SOWs will be reviewed by the Biology Committee and peer reviewers and any remaining concerns will be addressed by the principal investigators to the extent possible.
3. A nonnative fish management workshop will be conducted in late 2016 or early 2017 to review the data from the first year of the 2016 nonnative fish removal SOWs, past year’s nonnative fish data and related data, and information from the 2010 nonnative fish workshop. Workshop objectives will be to: 1) review 2016 results and determine, to the extent possible, the impact and level of threat of non-native fish on the endangered fishes; 2) develop a recommendation for 2017 nonnative fish control; 3) set priorities for nonnative fish management and compile a list of actions directed towards achieving those goals; and, 4) prepare an outline and timeline for development of a comprehensive plan to manage nonnative fish.

McCarthy said the Upper Colorado Program developed a long-term nonnative fish plan with clear priorities that the State agencies bought into and there was consensus of all partners. Speas commented it took 4-5 years to complete. Pitts said he is concerned that we have no plan. McCarthy said he isn’t recommending this type of plan for the San Juan Program because it may not be needed. He thinks #3 gets at it and may be all we need. Speas commented that #1 and #2 are realistic for the workshop but #3 and #4 should be secondary. He doesn’t think it can all be done in the amount of time available. Pitts emphasized that it is important to consider that the peer reviewers and half of the BC don’t think the nonnative fish removal program is benefiting the endangered fish. Ryden said we have seen a positive response. Pitts said the assumption is that 2016 will show us something. Condon said she wants to make sure the potential impact of electrofishing on the endangered fish is also considered.

San Juan and Animas River Entrainment Assessment - Pitts voiced confusion over how the San Juan and Animas rivers entrainment assessment came about. A SOW and \$50,000 for the study was included in the 2015 AWP and he questioned why it is included again in the 2016 AWP with a different SOW and another \$50,000. Uilenberg said he talked to Mark McKinstry who said the contract was awarded and fully funded in FY2015. The CC agreed that if it was fully funded in 2015 then it needs to be removed from the 2016 AWP.

Pitts asked why the 2015 and 2016 SOWs were different. He said it appears that an extra task was added about TNC estimating diversion efficiencies. Whitmore explained the 2015 SOW was not a full SOW but a description of what the BC wanted in an entrainment assessment. McKinstry took that and developed a request for proposals. He received proposals from contractors that included the details about how each contractor would accomplish the study. The 2016 SOW includes the actual details about how the work will be accomplished and is why the 2015 and 2016 SOWs are different. The original \$50,000 budget was an estimate and obviously an underestimation of how much it would cost

to do the work. Pitts said that when the scope changed, it should have come back to the CC for approval before being awarded. Uilenberg said the original estimate was low but the objectives were very clear in the 2015 SOW and RFP. He said the 2016 SOW appears to be more robust and if something was added, it probably should have come back to the CC. Whitmore said she thinks TNC's involvement in the assessment actually makes it more efficient because they can tap into work already done by TNC on diversion rates and structures in the San Juan Basin. Pitts said he is not trying to stop the study, he just wants to make sure that in the future, if an approved project changes from RFP to SOW, it needs to go back to the CC. Green said additional work regarding diversions is in the 2016 SOW. McCarthy said TNC's involvement in the project was an earnest attempt to help recover the fish and he didn't know it would be viewed as an overreach. Pitts said he thinks going into the Animas River for recovery is premature with respect to the Program. The group agreed that SOW #33 should stay in the 2016 AWP with no budget amount since it was funded in FY2015 but it should be footnoted to say that the 2015 SOW was a draft and the 2016 SOW is the final.

Uilenberg moved to approve the full 2016 AWP including the nonnative removal work and entrainment assessment as described above; Kowalski seconded; and it was approved.

Program Office Future Staff Selection Process – Pitts said the CC was involved in the hiring of the Program Coordinator (Dave Campbell) and the Assistant Coordinator (Whitmore) and wants to see this continue. Whitmore said she is more than willing to have the CC participate in the selection process, to the extent possible, and asked about the CC's past level of involvement in the process. Condon said the Service provided a list of qualified applicants and the CC made recommendations only. Three to four CC/BC members participated on the interview panel. Whitmore will check with her HR department to ensure CC involvement in the selection process.

DC Trip Schedule and Authorizing Legislation – Pitts reported the non-federal partners are scheduling the trip for the weeks of March 7 or March 14. It will probably be the first week since the entire Service Directorate will be gone at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference the second week. They won't be asking for more money this year but both programs will be under scrutiny. The authorizing legislation needs to be extended to 2023 but the capital funds do go until 2023. They may ask for more capital funds for operation and maintenance of facilities because the \$10 million allotted for the SJR and \$13 million for UCR is not a lot for doing this.

Next Meetings – The Program Office will send out a Doodle Poll in the near future to schedule a CC conference call during the Jan-Feb 2016 time frame to discuss the DC visit by the non-Federal partners, authorizing legislation for base funding beyond FY 2019, and possible increase in capital funding.

SJRRIP Annual Meetings (BC, Annual Meeting, CC) has been scheduled for May 10-12, 2016.