

**Biology Committee Meeting
January 21, 2005
Grand Junction, Colorado**

Biology Committee: Tom Chart, Tom Nesler, Tom Pitts, Melissa Trammell, Gary Burton, Kevin Christopherson, Dave Speas, Kevin Gelwicks, Bill Davis, and John Hawkins.

Other participants: Bob Muth, Tom Czapla, George Smith, Pat Nelson, Angela Kantola, Sam Finney, Kevin Bestgen, Frank Pfeifer, John Reber, Chris Keleher, Dave Irving, Trina Hedrick, Lori Martin.

Assignments are indicated by “>” and at the end of the document.

Convene: 8:00 a.m.

1. Review agenda and December 10, 2004 meeting and January 6, 2005 conference call summaries - The summaries were approved as written. John Hawkins suggested that it would be good to summarize what we're trying to do with each nonnative fish scope of work. >The Program Director's office will write up a summary as an addendum to the December 10 meeting summary.
2. Review reports list - The Committee reviewed the list and made modifications. >Angela Kantola will post a revised list to the listserver.
3. Atlas mill tailings (Moab) - Tom Chart noted that comments on the Department of Energy's EIS are due February 15. See <http://gj.em.doe.gov/moab>
4. Tusher Diversion Screen - Bob Muth said that the Service believes the Tusher Wash diversion should be fully screened to prevent entrainment of adult and sub-adult endangered fish.
5. Genetic and propagation protocols - Tom Czapla is working with the hatchery managers regarding Tim Modde's questions and >will respond to the Biology Committee in about a week.
6. Committee chair - Tom Nesler was established as chair beginning with the February meeting. Kevin Gelwicks was elected the new vice-chair, pending approval of his supervisor.
7. FY05 workplan revisions - Dave Speas asked if we're prepared for monitoring in conjunction with higher flows if we get those this year. Tom Chart asked Bob Muth if RIPRAP items regarding evaluating flow recommendations will be made more specific, and Bob replied that some should be made more specific. Tom Pitts and Dave Speas agreed specific studies will be required. George Smith outlined current sediment and sampling related to evaluating the flow recommendations.

- a. Continued monitoring in Lodore & Whirlpool canyons - The Committee endorsed continued monitoring which should involve opportunistic bass removal (and removal of other nonnatives except salmonids), with no need for an additional marking pass. "Bill Davis raised the issue of why we're not addressing brown trout in Lodore Canyon; the Committee agreed that remains to be discussed. >LFL and the Service's Vernal office will submit a joint scope of work. A placeholder was put in the budget for an additional \$60K for this work.
- b. Larval drift SOW - Still need a revised scope from Kevins Christopherson and Bestgen. Since such a small percentage of beads and larvae were picked up, may mean they're being transported much further downstream than we thought. The pilot studies looked at two sites at one flow level. For FY 05 (contingent upon flows sufficient to connect the floodplain), the Kevins propose evaluating 5 sites (to 50 miles downstream), including mid-channel sampling, at 3 flow levels, which would cost \$84K (using larvae where possible and beads otherwise). Bob Muth asked if we could just sample for wild larvae, and Christopherson said we could do that if we knew exactly when the wild larvae drift. Bob Muth asked if multiple release sites would be needed (based on information gained about wild larvae in FY 04). To determine if the fish are being entrained (and at what flow levels), Melissa recommends at minimum, releasing beads and evaluate entrainment sites, and using hatchery larvae as available. Gary Burton suggested including a component to understand how and when the targeted depression floodplains fill and drain (when do the larvae entrain and how). Pat Nelson said we have some of that information from physical site evaluation. >Kevins Bestgen and Christopherson will revise the SOW for Committee review (and the SOW should address how information gained will be used in management).
- c. Razorback recruitment SOW (Deferred until high water year) - Do with carry-over funds if flows are adequate to connect the floodplain. UDWR will make sure fish are still present.
- d. Nonnative removal SOWs

109 - Nesler commented that he doesn't believe we should spend \$55K to remove 20 or 30 pike from the middle Green River. Bill Davis agreed. Christopherson agreed that as we're successful in removing nonnative fishes, "cost per fish" definitely increases. However, once they've concentrated on removing pike about to enter spawning sites and catch rates decline (spending only about half of the funds on northern pike control) they've then shifted the rest of their funds and effort to smallmouth bass removal. Nesler suggested that one or two years of no removal might better help us understand how that population will respond and determine our long-term nonnative fish control strategy. The drought has limited pike spawning habitat and thus greatly improved our success in depleting pike numbers. Melissa endorsed continuing the maintenance level of control (roughly

half the funds, as Christopherson described). Tom Nesler said he can accept the annual maintenance-level of control in Utah, but noted that when Colorado gets to that point, he expects they will test what happens if control is suspended for a year or two. >The Committee agreed to maintenance-level control; >UDWR will revise the SOW.

98a - Tom Nesler distributed a scope of work for CDOW to control pike (one marking pass and 3 removal passes) in reaches where CSU isn't doing smallmouth bass removal and native fish response (CSU would do the treatment/control reach and the Lily Park reach under 125). CDOW can't do additional passes, but if they are needed, CSU could do that, focusing on concentration areas. John Hawkins affirmed that he believes more than 3 removal passes are needed to adequately manage pike (the Committee agreed, and this will be built into Hawkins' #125 SOW).

125 - Smallmouth bass and northern pike - >John Hawkins will revise this scope in light of CDOW's 98a. Addendum to remove small, smallmouth bass - Most smallmouth bass captured at this time will be <200mm, so Nesler believes they can agree to lethal removal (unless numerous larger fish are encountered, in which case Hawkins will contact CDOW). Hawkins will use old pit tags to tag roundtail chub handled in this study and transition to new tags for pikeminnow. Tom Nesler said CDOW will provide in the permits a list of other fish (e.g., small black bullheads and other centrarchids) that will be lethally removed. The one-mile adult fish community assessment will be included.

Bob Muth said he believes standard protocol should be to work up every endangered fish encountered in these studies (system-wide) to help us better track the endangered fish in years when we're not doing population monitoring. The Committee agreed. >The Program Director's office will get that information out to all the PI's.

98b - No addition of smallmouth bass removal in FY 05.

98c - Budget cut approved.

110 - The Committee discussed reducing the angling passes (especially since we agreed to focus on smallmouth bass). Several Committee members expressed objection to translocating catfish captured on the last day/last section of each sampling trip into Kenney Reservoir (based on the escapement potential into the White River). >Tom Nesler agreed to discuss this with CDOW (especially in light of the fact that the majority of catfish are caught in the upper reaches where they are lethally removed).

119 - Starvation Reservoir escapement SOW (deferred until high water year) - Christopherson said there's still opportunity to get some information to evaluate

escapement if the reservoir spills this year (which it probably will), but he's not requesting additional funds to do this. >Tom Chart will check on requirements in the biological opinion. >Kevin Christopherson will revise the SOW to just address spillway escapement. Dave Irving noted that the pumps need to be fixed.

124 - Bob Muth asked if we can accomplish the same thing by increasing the mainstem effort, especially at the confluence. Kevin Christopherson agreed, unless we can target the smallmouth bass spawning population (which we probably can't). Dave Irving said we agreed to provide fish for the Ute Tribe Elders' Pond, so we need to fulfill that somehow. Dave said the Tribe has also received a grant to work on endangered fish on Tribal land in 2005, so they would like to be involved in the appropriate activity (original plan was to be involved in nonnative fish removal on the Duchesne River). >Dave Irving will revise the scope of work to focus on the mouth of the Duchesne River (should result in some cost savings). Fish from this work can be provided for the Elders' Pond, and Tribal involvement will be included.

123 - Green River smallmouth bass removal - The Committee agreed to add the \$30K taken out of #109. >UDWR will revise.

Utah native fish response - Kevin Christopherson said he thinks this could be combined with fall pikeminnow monitoring; >Kevin will revise these scopes of work (not combining, but indicating areas of overlap), and also be sure to include estimation of depletion of backwater nonnative fish populations. Also clarify that the first objective belongs to another scope of work. Kevin said he'll look at the possibility of using electric seines, but with the Green River's sandy backwaters, the existing techniques seem to be working fairly well.

140 - Yampa River native fish response - Kevin Bestgen said he's concerned that there may not be enough remaining native fish (especially in the upper Yampa) to rebound and show a response. Kevin recommended moving some flannelmouth suckers up from the lower Yampa so there will be fish available to respond. >Kevin Bestgen will talk to Tom Nesler and if Tom approves, will write up an addendum to the scope of work (Kevin said they can do this without additional Program funds).

e. New starts

1. Monitoring stocked razorbacks and bonytail in Utah - Melissa noted that when this work was recommended, we weren't conducting riverwide nonnative fish work, and the protocol the Committee established earlier today may cover the monitoring we need for stocked endangered fish at this point. Kevin Christopherson pointed out that we don't know yet if the nonnative fish sampling will yield the data we need in the long run. We don't yet have the results of the stocking evaluation that Tom Czaplá and

Chuck McAda are working on. Bob Muth clarified that the initial rationale for this work was to evaluate the assumptions of our stocking plans.

2. Intensive Bestgen-style population analysis - Bob Muth said he put in a \$30,000 place-holder for this. He's waiting to get the summary report from the population estimates work group. He would like to at least begin to frame the research process/approach in FY 05.
3. Pike reproduction sources - Tom Nesler asked for \$10K for partial funding of a \$35,000 CDOW SOW to identify Yampa northern pike reproduction sources using otolith microchemistry (Program funds probably could start in FY 06). If available, funding will be provided in FY 05.

Revised scopes of work should be posted to the Committee by February 4.

8. Northern pike escapement criteria – Deferred.
9. FY 06 and beyond Reclamation procurement procedures - Dave said he's been directed to compete the Program's funding from Reclamation, but has received little direction as to *how* to do that. Dave said Reclamation thinks they can do that while leaving the Program's work planning process intact. They would use Program Guidance to develop an RFP (divided into the various recovery elements), which they would advertise. Proposals are evaluated by TPEC, which can include Program personnel (but they can't review their own proposals). Dave said the evaluation criteria have to be developed for each RFP, but can be weighted heavily based on track record. Tom Pitts said he understands that certain categories of activities (e.g., monitoring) may be excluded from this process. Angela noted that not all projects in the Recovery Program are funded by Reclamation funds. Bob Muth pointed out the example of scopes of work changed and modified are often revised after workshops, etc. >By February 9, Angela and Dave Speas and Tom Pitts and Chuck McAda will develop a list of questions and outline a recommended process (Tom Chart will provide a first-level review) (>Angela will send a draft of these to Dave and Chuck by the morning of Feb. 8 and they will discuss by conference call on the 9th.)
10. Report reviews: Trammell et al. nonnative cyprinid control - Approved, with minor editorial corrections. Matthew Andersen will print and distribute the report.
11. Set date for next meeting and review agenda items - February 10 and 11, starting at 10:30 a.m. on the 10th and adjourning by 3:00 p.m. on the 11th. Agenda items will include: RIPRAP revisions, FY 06-07 work plan, northern pike escapement criteria, some report reviews, and an update on the Reclamation procurement policy. >The Program Director's office will arrange a meeting room near DIA with a high-quality speaker phone ("spider-style") or purchase a high-quality speaker phone to bring to the meeting.

Adjourn: 3:30 p.m.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. The Program Director's office will write up a summary of what we're trying to do with each nonnative fish scope of work. as an addendum to the December 10 meeting summary.
2. Angela Kantola will post a revised reports list to the listserver.
3. Tom Czapla is working with the hatchery managers regarding Tim Modde's questions and will respond to the Biology Committee in about a week.
4. Scope of work revisions (to be posted to the Committee by February 4).

FR-115 - LFL and the Service's Vernal office will submit a joint scope of work on continued fish monitoring in Lodore and Whirlpool canyons with opportunistic nonnative fish removal.

RZ entr. - Kevins Bestgen and Christopherson will revise the larval drift SOW for Committee review (and the SOW should address how information gained will be used in management).

109 - UDWR will revise the middle Green pike removal SOW to reflect recent level of control.

125 - John Hawkins will revise in light of CDOW's 98a, and include small smallmouth bass removal and the 1-mile fish adult fish community assessment.

110 will be revised to delete the angling passes.

119 - Kevin Christopherson will revise the Starvation Reservoir escapement SOW to just address spillway escapement.

124 - Dave Irving will revise the scope of work to focus on the mouth of the Duchesne River (should result in some cost savings).

123 - UDWR will revise and add the \$30K taken out of #109.

NEW & 138 - Kevin Christopherson will revise these scopes of work (not combining, but indicating areas of overlap), and also be sure to include estimation of depletion of backwater nonnative fish populations. Also clarify that the first objective belongs to another scope of work.

140 - Kevin Bestgen will talk to Tom Nesler and if Tom approves, will write up an

addendum to the scope of work to move flannelmouth sucker from the lower Yampa (Kevin said they can do this without additional Program funds).

5. The Program Director's office will inform all the PI's about the new standard protocol to work up (measure, weigh, PIT tag) every endangered fish encountered in nonnative fish work (system-wide) to help us better track the endangered fish in years when we're not doing population monitoring.
6. Tom Nesler will discuss with CDOW the issue of translocating catfish from the Yampa to Kenney Reservoir.
7. Tom Chart will check on the requirements related to Starvation Reservoir and nonnative fish in the Duchesne biological opinion.
8. By February 9, Angela and Dave Speas and Tom Pitts and Chuck McAda will develop a list of questions and outline a recommended process (Tom Chart will provide a first-level review).
9. Angela Kantola will send a draft of the questions and process outline (see #8, above) to Dave and Chuck by the morning of Feb. 8 and they will discuss these by conference call on February 9th).
10. The Program Director's office will arrange a meeting room near DIA for February 10-11 with a high-quality speaker phone ("spider-style") or purchase a high-quality speaker phone to bring to the meeting.