

February 4, 2009

Biology Committee Draft Conference Call Summary  
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Biology Committee: Dave Irving, Melissa Trammell, Pete Cavalli, Krissy Wilson, Dave Speas, Shane Capron, Tom Pitts, and Tom Nesler. The environmental groups and CREDA were not represented at the meeting.

Other participants: Tom Chart, Angela Kantola, John Shields, Trina Hedrick, John Hawkins, Jana Mohrman, and Kevin Bestgen.

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

1. Discuss content of the Recovery Program's Flaming Gorge Flow Request letter due to Reclamation by the end of February – Tom Chart noted that Bob Muth had provided some discussion points to the Committee. Dave Speas provided the latest forecasts this morning; he noted that the Yampa is trending toward a moderately wet year at this point. Dave suggested making this year's spring flow request similar to last year's with the addition of recommendations for moderately dry scenario, particularly for the Stirrup. The letter might describe the 2008 base flows and indicate that our request may be similar this year, but a more detailed baseflow request may come later. The group agreed. Tom Chart suggested that we may want to indicate interest in a more specific experimental base-flow release to disadvantage smallmouth bass in 2010. Shane Capron suggested including a summary of the rationale for that and any data we've collected to date. With regard to peak and duration, we know that 15,000 cfs will allow the fish to move easily in and out of the Stirrup; we don't know if 14,000 cfs would be adequate. Tom Chart noted that Reclamation has been very helpful staying in touch; we'll rely on field observations and determine actual connection flows at the Stirrup. Trina said she didn't think sedimentation has been significant. Trina and her crew will take depth measurements at the breach this year. > The Program Director's office will draft a letter and circulate it to the Biology and Management committees for review next week.
2. Approve Project # 125 synthesis report – John Hawkins has addressed the comments he received in late October. John said the discussion has been rewritten, and he's added discussion regarding the history of control/treatment. John said Tom Nesler asked about tag data, which John said he believes is best addressed outside the context of the report. Shane said it seems discussion on potential shift in size class might have been warranted (with regard to potential impact of removal) (whether or not size shift was observed). Line 785 in discussion probably should say we “propose” instead of “believe.” Shane said he still has concerns beginning at line 815 and will suggest a re-write something like “Although we observed declines in abundance that we attributed to our removal, compensatory mechanisms including recruitment and emigration offset much of our effort as would be expected in a large metapopulation...” >John Hawkins will work with Shane to revise that portion and send it back to the Committee for final review by a date certain (no later than early next week). With that change, the report will be accepted as final and >John will finalize it.

3. Approve entrainment report – The authors have worked hard to respond to the extensive comments they received. Trina said the biggest changes in the report were how they discussed the effectiveness of entrainment and entrainment rates. Kevin said entrainment increases at increasing flow stages, but not necessarily faster than flow. Dave Speas Conclusions p 56 “in wetlands w multiple breaches, the upstream breaches will capture more beads than downstream...” makes it sound like upstream will capture more regardless of configuration of downstream breach; suggested reword to “captured” to tie it specifically to the study. Trina will clarify that (and also address single vs. multiple inflow breaches). There’s a typo on page 15 line 353 typo (2007, not 2008). Krissy noted there’s also an extra space on line 1245. With regard to travel time, Melissa suggested that if a daily mean flow average is being used, they need to note that there may be hourly differences that may impact entrainment. Dave Speas pointed out the need to use consistent language in describing where the beads were more thoroughly mixed. Melissa suggested a recommendation to evaluate retention of larvae in flow-through wetlands (to help discern if flow-through wetlands are indeed better); Pete concurred. Kevin said he thinks this would be affected by many variables and this is a relatively small issue, and that it also would have to be addressed in single-breach wetlands. Melissa and Pete agreed that an additional recommendation wasn’t needed, then. Retention may be discussed in the floodplain synthesis report, but Dave said he doesn’t want to lose track of evaluating whether these floodplains can over-winter fish. Trina said she agrees that over-wintering fish needs to be evaluated; they will modify the recommendation to address over-wintering. Melissa asked about the Dudley’s comments that weren’t addressed. Kevin said they did end up addressing most of Dudley’s comments, except for things like analyzing results and comparing with particle diffusion models. The Committee accepted the report with the foregoing changes. >Trina and Kevin will revise and finalize the report.
4. Next meeting – February 20 meeting in Grand Junction at the Doubletree from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. (coffee and refreshments to be provided) to discuss RIPRAP revisions and assessment, Program Guidance, and new/revised FY 09 scopes of work.

## Attachment 1

### **Assignments carried over or modified from previous meetings:**

1. Tom Czapla will work to get the questions regarding what hatchery repairs are needed at Grand Valley resolved as soon as possible. 10/31: Grand Junction working to get cost estimates; \$44.4K funds placeheld. 1/17: Chuck said that a larger de-humidifier would be too costly; their current plan is to repair the walls so they can withstand the humidity. The Biology Committee expressed interest in a full solution. >Chuck will provide the full estimate to Tom Czapla. >Bob Muth will discuss the possibility of using capital funds with Brent Uilenberg. 2/15: Reclamation & FWS working on getting this contracted; dehumidifier will be installed first, then walls will be repaired. 3/31: Reclamation waiting for report from an HVAC mechanical engineer on what's needed for dehumidification. Due to oil and gas activity in the Valley, they've had difficulty getting anyone to work on this relatively small project. 6/13: Contractor visited site June 5; appraisal study pending. 7/22: Report and initial cost estimate provided mid-July; BOR & USFWS discussing construction and contracting options. Tom Czapla said Reclamation likely will contract the planned building refurbishment (insulation, dehumidifiers, etc.) with assistance from FWS Engineering; with the goal of getting bids by the end of the calendar year. 1/15: Chuck reported that Reclamation is close to sending their RFP request to Salt Lake with the goal of work being conducted from the first of May through mid-October. Current cost estimates range from \$300-\$500K (annual funds) for a complete refurbishing of the system, new insulation, and one to two dehumidification systems.
2. Tom Nesler will see if CDOW can provide a report on Billy Atkinson's work on pike in Catamount and the river below. Update provided at nonnative fish workshop; workshop participants recommended CDOW provide some kind of management plan. 1/17: Billy will provide a Catamount pike removal document/strategy by the end of February. 4/15: Nesler will provide update at BC. 4/28: Tom has reminded Billy that this is overdue and will try to get it to the BC as soon as possible. 6/13: Nesler received the draft today and provide it to the BC by the end of July. 8/18: Nesler will provide Billy Atkinson's upper Yampa "strategy" report to the Biology Committee by September 18 (Nesler's and Chart's birthday). 10/30: Tom Nesler and Sherm Hebein will revise Billy's report and provide that to the Recovery Program (Biology Committee, NNFSC, PI's, etc.) along with an outline of CDOW's strategy for nonnative fish management in the Yampa River above the diversions for discussion as part of the nonnative fish workshop. Tom Chart said it would be very helpful to have that outline before the December. 9-10 workshop. Sherm noted that Billy removed >2,000 np from Catamount this year (>4,000 np total). 1/15: The upper Yampa strategy has been separated out and provided to the Committee; Billy's report is still being revised.
3. The Program Director's office will work with CDOW and Aaron Webber on the potential for designing a permeable, hydrologically-stable (gravel?) berm to prevent northern pike access to the oxbow slough at RM 151 on the Yampa, and then clean it out once and for all. 2/15, 4/15: Pending. 4/28: Chart has discussed with Nesler and with the Partners for Wildlife Program, also. Will focus on this summer/fall. 6/13: CDOW will be contacting the landowner regarding access, if they are amenable, then CDOW and Program will determine

*a feasible solution (before the end of spring runoff). 8/18: Tom Chart said Sherm will try to get someone from CDOW on this as soon as possible. The Biology Committee would like a date certain on this; >Sherm Hebein will accelerate this. 10/30 said CDOW has contacted the property owners of the RM 151 backwater, but hasn't been able to meet with them yet. Mark Wernke from Reclamation is willing to take a look at the property with CDOW. A fairly long berm would be required (>3,000') and we'll need to determine the best type of berm (more permanent configurations could be very expensive). The funding source would need to be determined, with Partners for Fish and Wildlife, lottery funds, grant funds, etc. as possible sources to be explored. 1/15: Tom Nesler said they plan to get engineers develop specs/estimates this spring for something like a 10-year berm structure; the next step will be to find funding (perhaps as a habitat project through GOCO). This would be the first of three or four such projects. Tom Pitts suggested that if the Program provides some matching funds (annual or capital), it might improve the probability of getting GOCO money. Tom also suggested that if we have a project in the hopper, we might be able to compete for end-of-year Reclamation funds.*

4. Tom Chart will review the latest draft of the nonnative fish stocking procedures and get comments back to the States no later than February 15, then Krissy, Kevin, Tom, and the Service will submit it for agency review (one month review time). 2/15: *Dates need to be modified. 4/14: Group discussing a few more revisions before seeking agency approval. 4/28: Krissy said a bill passed in Utah's latest legislative session (the Aquaculture Revitalization Act) took away Utah's ability to issue a COR to anyone with a private pond; Krissy will provide language incorporating that within two weeks. Kevin Gelwicks should have comments back from Wyoming by early June, but doesn't expect anything substantive, and will try to expedite their comments. Tom Chart said Tom Nesler realized we may have missed stipulations that would apply to private pond owners within critical habitat outside the 100-year floodplain. Krissy will review that; she thought that a private pond outside the 100-year floodplain would still be covered if it had the potential to connect. Melissa suggested including language regarding extending and revising the document; Tom Nesler said we're on a 5-year revision schedule. 6/13: A subgroup met yesterday, Wyoming has reviewed and provided comments, and Utah also has reviewed it. Further streamlining is underway. 7/11: Utah and Wyoming have reviewed; Colorado and FWS reviewing (FWS comments due 9/5/08). Colorado has shared the draft Procedures with their legal counsel and expects to provide any comments within two weeks. Krissy said Utah's legal counsel still needs to review this. 10/16: The PD's office is responding to Wyoming's recent comments, then will send these revisions to the States and Service for review, with the goal of beginning the surnaming process in November. 10/30: Tom said Bob Muth sent the revised stocking procedures to the States and the Service on October 22. Krissy said Utah has some new concerns about moving fish from one body to another and potentially spreading quagga mussels. >UDWR will provide draft language for review. Dave Irving said we also need to be sure we're not transferring mussels on equipment. Colorado and Utah have equipment-cleaning protocol in place. Sherm said they're using Sparquat for disinfection and Krissy said UDWR is using Quat128. Tom Nesler added that where the draft Procedures suggest certain stocking may become routine, we need to consider potential mussel transfer. 1/15: Tom Chart said Nesler has addressed the quagga mussel spread issue along with some other minor revisions; they've met with Krissy and UDWR is okay with the changes. After double-*

*checking with Kevin Gelwicks in Wyoming, the Program Director's office will move this forward for NEPA compliance (should be able to rely on the original document) and the Regional Director's signature.*

5. Researchers are to submit all their nonnative fish data to Chuck McAda by April 1 (the Program Director's office will sent out an e-mail notification on this). 4/28: *Tom Chart said Chuck had only received data from Tim Modde ten days ago. Trina said they're making sure their data is in the right format. Tom Chart said that at a minimum, he would like the data sent to Chuck even if it's in the old format. >Tom Nesler will check on Lori's data; >Krissy will check on Moab's data. All the data on captured nonnative fish should be submitted, not just data on tagged fish; >Chuck will make sure the correct data are submitted and work with principal investigators if anything is missing. 6/13: Krissy said Utah has submitted their data. Tom Chart said Tim Modde submitted Vernal's data; Tom will get with Chuck to determine what data are still needed and e-mail the PI's. Tom Nesler will check on Lori's data. Sherm suggested cross-checking with CDOW's data system to be sure all data is in both places (Chuck's database and CDOW's). 7/11: Data have been submitted by Vernal CRFP, Badame, Hedrick, Hawkins, Bestgen, Bestgen/Zelasko and Burdick. 4 August 2008: Harry Vermillion submitted an extract from ADAMAS in the appropriate format to Chuck McAda on August 4th. The extract included Colorado River data from 2003 and 2007; Gunnison River data from 2007; and Yampa River data from years 2004 - 2007. 8/18: >Chuck will send the most recent version of the database to the NNFSC; and the NNFSC will review status of the data with Chuck and Travis after the Biology Committee meeting. 10/30: Tom Chart said the NNFSC will follow-up on this at the workshop, most of the data are in; we need to determine how quickly we can get the 2008 data added. 1/15: Chuck said all the data are in through 2007. Delete all foregoing text. Researchers need to have all their 2008 data **IN THE CORRECT FORMAT** to Travis by March 1, 2009 (data not submitted in the correct format will be sent back with a copy to the appropriate Biology and Management committee members). Similarly, Biology and Management committee members will be notified of any data not submitted by March 1.*
6. The Program Director's office will modify Rich Valdez' technical assistance scope of work as needed to accommodate the initial work on the second-level nonnative fish management synthesis. 4/14, 6/13, 7/25, 8/18: *Pending. 1/15: delete after this meeting; the Program decided to go with an RFP for the second-level synthesis.*
7. Tom Nesler will check on the status of revision of the Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan. 4/14: *Colorado's new completion date is May 1, 2009. (In the interim, CDOW will need to produce an Upper Yampa River strategy to assist the Program in our prioritization of 2009 field activities. This strategy should ultimately be incorporated into the Aquatic Wildlife Management Plan for the Yampa River Basin. 4/28: Tom Nesler said they don't plan to provide a formal strategy, but will describe what they [primarily Billy Atkinson] are doing down through Steamboat and with regard to isolating sloughs in Sam Finney's reach. See #3, above.) 1/15: The Upper Yampa strategy will be directly incorporated into the Yampa River Aquatic Management Plan (which will be completed by May 1, 2009).*
8. The PD's office needs to schedule a humpback chub population monitoring workshop.

*Pending (the Program Director's office will discuss this with Rich Valdez); a workshop might also include discussion of humpback chub broodstock. 10/30: Tom Czapla said this is still pending. He would like to see the workshop address the issue of first acceptable population estimates.*

9. The Program Director's office and CDOW will send letters of thanks to Sherriff Tim Jantz for the use of the Craig Justice Center Ponds for nonnative fish translocation (with a cc: to the County commissioners and others, as appropriate). *Pending. 1/15: John Hawkins suggested a thanks to Ron Dellacroce and his supervisor in State Parks who provide a translocation site, facilitate our putting fish into Elkhead, and allow access to the boat launch areas critical to Yampa River management efforts.*
10. 1/15: Melissa suggested following up on signage at the translocation ponds acknowledging that the Recovery Program has provided the fish (but keeping in mind the concern re: potential elevated Hg levels; which CDOW will investigate).
11. Within the next month, >the Service and Program Director's office will provide the Committee a draft addendum to the White River report that will present the measured flow requirements in a historical hydrologic perspective. The Program Director's office also will research where we left Schmidt and Orchard's draft report on peak (channel maintenance) flows and recommend whether to have it reviewed by the geomorphology panel. The Program Director's office will use the information currently available to >develop a position paper on Price River flow recommendations for Committee review. *10/16 Pending; out by the end of November-1/5: February 2009.*
12. Dave Irving will call the Mantle Ranch landowner to give him an update on work to raise *Gila* in captivity (since the Ranch's cooperation made it possible for the Service to get the fish out to the hatchery quickly). *10/30: Dave Irving sent him a letter. CDOW and the Park need to discuss the future of the captive Gila in light of plans for those fish as broodstock under Three Species conservation and Colorado's Management Use agreement with the Park (Tom Nesler and Melissa will work on this). 10/30: Pending. The Program Director's office will move forward to establish a Yampa River humpback chub broodstock using young fish. Tom Czapla will work with Melissa on a letter to the Park. 10/30: Pending. Czapla said he's been drafting a refuge/broodstock plan for discussion within the Service, then for sharing with the Park Service and the Recovery Program. Tom Nesler and Krissy Wilson also are working on related roundtail plans. 1/15: Dave Irving said the landowner is open to our returning, as long as we coordinate with Ron Velarde. The fish are doing well at the Ouray hatchery and they believe they have 29 humpback chub. Dinosaur National Monument has asked what our plans are for the other fish. Dave will try to set up a conference call on this on February 5. Tom Nesler said disease testing will be required before any fish can be returned to the wild. Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado are considering a proposal for use of the roundtails for broodstock. Tom Czapla said he'd like to keep the humpback chub in captivity and conduct genetic testing (perhaps on some of the roundtail, also).*
13. Biology Committee members will provide comments on the nonnative fish priorities document by December 1 (and the NNFSC can discuss this as part of their December 12

meeting). *Comments were received from Trina Hedrick.*

14. Biology Committee members are invited to provide questions/expectations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> level synthesis to Tom Chart by November 28. The NNFSC will have a conference call at 8:30 a.m. on December 1 to further discuss the RFP. *1/15: No comments were received.*
15. John Hawkins will talk to Grant Wilcox in CDOW's Fort Collins office to see if smallmouth bass movement data can be mapped.
16. John Hawkins will revise the #125 report (in discussion with the commenters), and provide a copy to the Committee by January 5 so they can review and approve it at their January 15 meeting. *1/15: Revisions have been made; Tom Chart will send this to the Biology Committee next week and this will be on the next meeting agenda.*
17. Krissy Wilson will work with Zane Olsen to make sure that Wahweap's budget for FY 09 is accurate. *1/15: Krissy said UDWR now has Wahweap under their hatchery system. The FY 09 budget is still \$237.8K, but may be reduced in future years as they carefully track costs.*
18. Trina Hedrick, Dave Irving, et al. will prepare a rough draft SOW for removal of small nonnative fishes in the Green River in advance of the nonnative fish workshop. *1/15: Dave Irving said they met yesterday to discuss the draft scope of work; Leisa said they'll revise the draft to scale the scope back somewhat and include drift net samples. Tildon said the focus will be on verifying larval drift and arrival into the nursery reach and manipulating a few backwaters (blocking, etc. after removing all nonnative fish) to determine subsequent fish community effects. The revised scope will be reviewed by the PD's office, then it will come to the BC for approval in advance of the next meeting.*
19. Angela Kantola will send out a revised reports due list after this meeting.
20. Tom Nesler will check on the status of Lori Martin's report (98a).
21. Tildon Jones will draft objectives for potential catfish removal from the Green River for NNFSC review.
22. Kevin Bestgen will let the the Committee know within the next month if there are ways of using recaptures on subsequent passes in the population estimate (when the tagging pass isn't done first).
23. The PD's office and CRFP-GJct will coordinate with CDOW on the development of a Colorado River native fish monitoring component for Program Guidance.
24. Tom Nesler will find out why CDOW is limiting upper Yampa in-river electrofishing to the 2.5 miles of the Yampa River south of Steamboat Springs.
25. Tom Nelser will look into existing fines and enforcement for illegal stocking (suggestions were made that the disincentives needed are real possibilities of CDOW closing

sportfisheries like Elkhead and significantly fining those who illegally stock fish).

26. The PD's office will e-mail PI's and the Committee with instructions for revising nonnative fish scopes of work.
27. Leisa will finalize and distribute the report for project 123. *Done.*
28. Tom Chart will provide Kevin Bestgen's smallmouth bass presentation to the BC for review prior to the February 4 conference call. *Done.*

### **New Assignments**

1. The Program Director's office will draft a Flaming Gorge flow request letter and circulate it to the Biology and Management committees for review next week.
2. John Hawkins will work with Shane Capron on a small revision to the #125 report, send that revision to the Biology Committee for final review no later than early next week, then finalize the report when the revision is accepted.
3. Trina and Kevin will revise and finalize the entrainment report.