

DRAFT BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

February 12, 2002

Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction, CO

Biology Committee: Paul Dey, Tim Modde, John Hawkins, Mike Hudson, Tom Nesler, Tom Pitts, John Wullschlaeger, Tom Chart, and Mark Wieringa, Bill Davis.

Other participants: Connie KeelerFoster, Bob Muth, Pat Nelson, Kevin Christopherson, Angela Kantola, Tom Czapla, Frank Pfeifer, Chuck McAda, Ron Brunson, Rich Valdez, John Hayse, Steve Petersburg, Rob Simmons, Keith Rose, Dave Soker, Bob Burdick, Mike Baker (FWS), and Quentin Bradswich.

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

CONVENE: 10:00 am

1. Revisions and additions to the agenda - The agenda was revised at it appears below.
2. Approval of December 4-5 meeting summary - No comments were offered and the summary was assumed approved as written.
3. Review Action Items from 12/4-12/5/01 BC meeting. John Hawkins said he’s modified the Little Snake management plan and distributed those modifications to the Committee. The Committee made minor modifications to the Preface and approved them. >John will distribute the final document within 2 weeks.
4. Connie Keeler-Foster: Connie gave a presentation on Dexter’s molecular ecology program and the bonytail genetic information they’ve collected and analyzed. What are the implications for Wahweap bonytail broodstock? Wahweap has held back some fish since 1996 to develop their own broodstock so that they can produce fish for stocking when Dexter can’t produce enough. The question is whether those are truly viable broodstock, or if we should ask Dexter to develop replacement backup broodstock for Wahweap. The Committee agreed they would like to keep the current “broodstock” at Wahweap and would like to get the genetic information on them.
5. Region 2 request to transport wild bonytail from upper basin to Dexter to expand broodstock (scope of work currently provides for those fish to go to Wahweap). With regard to wild bonytail, the Committee agreed that any suspect wild bonytail should be taken to Wahweap, fin-clipped, the fin-clip sent to Dexter for analysis, then if it’s a wild bonytail, the fish would go to Dexter and be incorporated into the broodstock program (and perhaps sent to Wahweap the next year).
6. Dexter request for 20-40 adult CPM from the Green River. Rob Simmons said a Morizot and Williamson manuscript being published this month compares wild and hatchery Colorado pikeminnow and says that with stocking there’s now a panmictic population in the

upper basin with relic characteristics from fish occurring only in Yampa, White, etc. The report will recommend that a stock of each of Colorado River, Yampa River, and Green River source pikeminnow be maintained at Dexter (and if any are mixed, only Yampa and Green). Rich and Frank noted that Morizot's original paper showed no significant differences between Colorado and Green river Colorado pikeminnow. Bob Muth said since there's no plan to stock Colorado River pikeminnow in the Green River, it seems unnecessary for Dexter to maintain a broodstock. If fish from the Green River are needed for production, they're available in the river. If Dexter really needs these fish, then juvenile or larvae may be provided. >Dexter will provide a written plan for why they need these fish (in the form of the manuscript). The Biology Committee will consider this again at a future meeting (the Committee's decision will reflect that broodstock should be maintained in the river versus in a hatchery, but the Biology Committee will consider if other stocking programs need Green River fish).

7. Status and outcome of population estimate workshop - Rich Valdez said a workshop was held in early December to develop and provide guidance on reliable population estimates (focusing on Colorado pikeminnow and humpback chub). A summary and recommendations document was produced. Issues identified for further discussion were addressed in meetings yesterday and this morning. The pikeminnow estimates are promising, and show good precision and reliability for both the upper Colorado and Green river subbasins. A need for additional effort was identified in the upper Colorado River to improve precision. Humpback estimates show variability that's not clearly explained. This issue has been addressed and additional sampling needs identified. Humpback chub sampling in canyon reaches is difficult, but reasonable sampling protocols have been developed and will be tested as soon as possible. Statistical methods also are being addressed. Larger crews and additional gear types will be needed in some instances. We may not be able to get reliable estimates for small populations (e.g., Yampa River), so instead of doing multiple passes in 3 of 5 years, we might do a single intensive electrofishing pass to determine abundance and recruitment based on characteristics other than mark/recapture. This may also apply to Cataract Canyon, but we need to try multiple mark-recapture there for one year. Clearly, no one standard or protocol can apply to all the areas. Bob Muth said he'll accept >comments on the summary/recommendations document through March 1st.
8. Stewart Lake Management Plan status and update - Ron Brunson said managing for razorback and waterfowl is compatible, but they still have to work this out with selenium remediation. >Bob Muth will talk to Henry Maddux about the selenium issues. Waterfowl management would still be primary, but management to entrain drifting razorback larvae can be incorporated. >A management plan will be prepared no later than the end of this fiscal year, assuming agreement by all of the stakeholders. The Committee will review that plan when it's developed.
9. Starvation Reservoir revised scope of work - Ron has made the requested changes. The Committee approved the scope of work as revised.
10. New report approval process (limitations and strategies to make it work more smoothly). Paul Dey noted that peer and Biology Committee review times aren't being consistently met

(however, the holidays and lack of a listserver may have affected this). The Committee will stick with the approval process as written. >Program coordinators will inform Biology Committee members when the review timetable isn't being met.

11. Burdick, B. Evaluating the use of Sloped Gravel-Pit Ponds by Listed and Non-Listed Native Fishes and Removal of Nonnative Fishes from Sloped Gravel-Pit Ponds in the Upper Colorado River Near Grand Junction, Colorado. Project C-6-GP. Committee members made recommendations for revisions to the report, and the Committee approved the report as final with the incorporation of those revisions.
12. Review reports due list and revise completion dates.
 - Osmundson's revised report will be back to the BC for final approval by March 12. Doug would like to continue to use 500mm as adult size in the body of the report, but is willing to provide a population estimate in the appendix based on 450mm. With the exception of John Hawkins and Tom Chart, the Committee decided that the body of the report should provide a population estimate based on 450mm adult size. John W. said he'd be comfortable with this approach as long as 500mm adult size is also incorporated and discussed in the body of the report.
 - BC review of sediment monitoring program in Green and Yampa basin (has been peer-reviewed). The Committee does not want to review this, but would like a final copy.
 - Pat has final draft of the revised levee removal report and it will go to BC within next week or so.>Angela will mail out a copy of the revised list to the Biology Committee.
13. Gigliotti Pond nonnative fish stocking proposal - Mike Hudson asked that the 60-day period for review and comment be accelerated. Tom Pitts questioned if FEMA standards meet our 50-year flood criteria, but noted that the hydrology in this case would meet that criteria. >Mike Hudson will send a letter to the Service (PD's office which will send it to the ES office) and the states, as required in the Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedures. John Hawkins recommended incorporating appropriate cautions when/if maintenance (draw-down) occurs. Kevin Christopherson agreed. Bob Muth asked if the Committee wants to see every lake management plan, and the Committee declined.
14. Review Facility Needs Plan - The Committee suggested minor revisions and approved the plan with the incorporation of those revisions. >Tom will make the changes and finalize the plan. Bill Davis noted that we need to be aware that if the fish don't recruit as we think they will, our stocking plans and facilities needs could change significantly.
15. Review fish disposition policy - Tom Czapla provided a copy for the Committee's information. Bill Davis recommended that it be reviewed at a future meeting (and distributed recommended changes).
16. Progress on Floodplain Model - Pat Nelson said the ultimate question is how much of what kind of habitat is needed to sustain razorback sucker recovery. Pat said the intent is to have draft model results by mid-March and final results by mid-May. Rich Valdez reviewed and presented the components and framework of the model for the Committee's approval. Rich said he'd like to get input on ?empirical data, sensitivity analyses, and "data goodness"

ranking. It's a very straightforward model in Excel format, is empirically-driven, and made up of 4 sub-models. It does not currently include a flow component (although it may be possible for the Green River as part of Submodel B), and assumes that there will be larval entrainment. Rich needs additional data on: 1) length/weight relationships; 2) number of eggs by fish weight; and especially 3) cumulative proportion of drifting larvae surviving downstream. Mike Hudson said Steve Platania did something related to this on the San Juan River. Bob Muth said that he thinks the seed dispersal model is the best we have. The Committee generally felt this was on track and will >submit comments to Rich Valdez by March 1.

17. Floodplain Restoration Issues

- a. Thunder (formerly Escalante) Ranch on the Green River - Pat said the Program had been considering acquiring an easement to configure to entrain drifting razorback sucker larvae here (the site is immediately downstream of the spawning area). We're also awaiting contaminants analyses, but if the site is cleared, Pat would like Committee approval for TetraTech Engineering to determine if the site can be configured to connect (Service contaminants experts have commented that the wetlands seemed kind of perched and perhaps can't be connected to the river). >Steve Petersburg will send Pat a color copy of the 1984 aerial photos. The Committee recommended waiting until the land acquisition issue is resolved.
- b. PD's recommendations for floodplain program - Pat Nelson distributed these recommendations. The Committee scheduled a conference call for Monday, February 25 from 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. >The Program Director's office will set up the call.

18. Elect new chair/vice-chair - Tom Chart is the new chair and John W. the new vice-chair.

19. Set next meeting date - April 16-17 (starting at 10 a.m. on the 16th and adjourning at 2:00 p.m. on the 17th). >Kevin Christopherson will arrange for a meeting room at UDWR.

ADJOURN: 5: p.m.

ASSIGNMENTS

John Hawkins will distribute the final Little Snake River report within 2 weeks.

Dexter will provide a written plan for why they need these fish (in the form of the manuscript). The Biology Committee will consider this again at a future meeting (the Committee's decision will reflect that broodstock should be maintained in the river versus in a hatchery, but the Biology Committee will consider if other stocking programs need Green River fish).

Bob Muth will accept comments on the summary/recommendations document through March 1st.

Bob Muth will talk to Henry Maddux about the selenium issues at Stewart Lake (related to managing Stewart Lake to entrain drifting razorback larvae).

The Stewart Lake management plan will be prepared no later than the end of this fiscal year, assuming agreement by all of the stakeholders. The Committee will review that plan when it's developed.

Program coordinators will inform Biology Committee members when the timetable for a report review (peer and Biology Committee) isn't being met.

Angela Kantola will mail a copy of the revised late reports list to the Biology Committee.

Mike Hudson will send a letter to the Service (PD's office which will send it to the ES office) and the states, as required in the Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedures.

Tom Czapla will make requested changes and finalize the Facility Needs Plan plan.

The Committee will submit comments on the floodplain model to Rich Valdez by March 1.

Steve Petersburg will send Pat a color copy of the 1984 Green River aerial photos.

The Program Director's office will set up a Biology Committee conference call February 26 from 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Kevin Christopherson will arrange for a meeting room at UDWR, April 16-17 (starting at 10 a.m. on the 16th and adjourning at 2:00 p.m. on the 17th).