

Biology Conference Call
March 8, 2001
1:00 pm –3:00 pm

Attendees: Rich Valdez, Tom Czapla, Bill Davis, Frank Pfeifer, Mike Hudson, Tom Chart, John Wullschleger, John Hawkins, Chuck McAda, Paul Dey, Tom Pitts, Tom Nesler, John Shields, Bob Muth, Pat Nelson.

1. No change in next meeting date (April 16-17 in Salt Lake City).
2. Population Estimates Workshop Report: Colorado pikeminnow Upper Colorado River Subbasin—Tom Czapla clarified that a full sampling protocol for the Gunnison is not needed, but need to have the fish that are estimated in that reach applied to the entire Upper Colorado River estimate. Tom Chart expressed an overall concern about the recommended size of adult Colorado pikeminnow (i.e., ≥ 450 mm TL) and suggested that a caveat similar to the humpback chub be included to recognize uncertainty associated with the recommended size and that this number could change with additional data. The mean annual adult mortality (15% for Colorado pikeminnow and 24% for humpback chub) could change as new information is developed as part of the population estimates. Colorado pikeminnow Green River Subbasin—Bob Muth clarified that the MVP applies to the entire Green River subbasin and that's why the estimate must be for the entire basin (i.e., combining estimates for the middle and lower Green River). Humpback Chub Black Rocks— Here and in other populations, the recommendations call for using other gear types to capture subadults, but we're not sure how successful we will be. Chuck McAda stated that the concern of stress from over handling is related to gear stress, not just the physical handling. Humpback chub Desolation/Gray canyons—Use a single electrofishing pass to avoid Colorado pikeminnow spawning (use of multiple passes in Westwater will be evaluated). The period of sampling should read from end of May to mid July. Humpback chub Yampa River—Sampling not scheduled for 2002 because we are awaiting approval of Bruce Haines' report. More detail on the "key" meristics and morphometrics to identify *Gila* will be provided in the document. Written comments on the report are due on March 29, 2002; the PD's office will then finalize the report and incorporate recommendations into the RIPRAP and work plan.
3. Nonnative Fish Control Workshop Summary of Major Conclusions and Recommendations: BC members agreed that it was an excellent summary. Item I.A. (Public Information and Education)—The Program needs to be clear and unified with set goals and then move that out to the agencies and then the local public. Use Debbie Felker as the foundation to work with the I&E committee and State and local entities (include "State" in recommendation I.A.1.). Need to talk about public/State participation involvement in decision-making - a sense of leadership. John Hawkins is interacting directly with locals regarding northern pike control, but we need a CDOW/Program strategy for public education and involvement. Have Debbie Felker think about this and

get back with a strategy. Item IV (Northern Pike Removal)—For smallmouth bass and channel catfish, at least get out and begin to see what we can do in FY02. Nesler suggested at a minimum get something started to remove smallmouth bass and channel catfish in critical habitat during the Colorado pikeminnow estimate. Remove channel catfish from recommendation IV.C-2. Tom Pitts suggested that we add recommendations to explore implementation of a bounty reward system for northern pike removed through recreational angling (move from conclusions and make recommendations). Item V (Centrarchid Removal) and VII (Small-Bodied Fish Removal)—Observation was made during the workshop that flows provided for endangered fishes may reduce some of the nonnative fishes. Bill Davis did not agree that this should be contained within the summary because its not a method of mechanical removal. Many reports note that they have been reduced in high water years, and low water years with warm water. This should be evaluated as part of the implementation of flow recommendations, looking for cause and effects to determine if there are any impacts on small-bodied fishes. Item II (Pond Isolation and Rehabilitation)—Concern here was operation of Old Charlie Wash; confusing over Modde’s conclusions and recommendations. Bill Davis suggested that the conclusion should also include that we also do not know if removal of nonnatives enhances native fishes. This issue will be addressed as part of the overall evaluation of floodplain habitat restoration. Item IV (in reference to the middle Green River)—Make it clear that removal methods used in 2001 were shown to be appropriate and effective in reference to the northern pike. The later recommendation is not intended to mean that this methodology is appropriate and effective for other species (clarify that the intent is to remove other nonnative fishes captured as part of the northern pike removal). Item V (Continue population estimates)—Intent here was to continue population estimates as a way to assess what will be done in “hot spots” (i.e., Anita Martinez’s efforts; II.A). Under 1B it is noted that all nonnative fish control efforts need to demonstrate measurable effects of the action. Strike the phrase in conclusions of VI.A. “treatment areas are rapidly recolonized.” Recommendation VI.A-2 should read “fyke nets to target subadults and electrofishing to target adults.” Written comments are due on April 5, 2002; the PD’s office will incorporate comments into a full draft report on the workshop that will be circulated within the Recovery Program. Intent is to use the report for recommending changes to the RIPRAP and work plan.

4. Outline of Floodplain Acquisition and Habitat Restoration Synthesis Document: Bill Davis questioned the assumption in purpose #1: Can providing floodplain habitat contribute to recovery, given the preponderance of nonnative fishes? Davis thought that objectives IV and V were redundant and should be combined. IV deals more with design, construction, and physical evaluation; V deals more with post-construction biotic response. The objectives will be kept separate in the outline for now, but may be combined at a later date. Tom Pitts asked if the PD’s Office was still developing a budget breakdown for the program. Bob Muth said that we are, but it will be separate from the synthesis document. The PD’s Office plans to get out a draft document by mid-April. The RIPRAP will be revised after the technical review, and as new information becomes available.

5. Request for Two High Priority Habitats: Buried pipe and selenium on Thunder Ranch; will need input from the contaminants folks. Waiting on more information, but would like to proceed with acquisition process, and will inform the Biology Committee as information becomes available. Want to move ahead to gather more information on the Hot Spot area (5 properties). The PD's Office will fax to the Biology Committee the justification memo that went to the Management Committee, along with the clarification memo.
6. An FWS Selenium Summit was held March 7 and 8, to review the Service's Region 6 position on selenium as it pertains to the endangered fishes of the upper Colorado River basin. The Region 6 position has not changed. The position statement and cover memo will be sent to the Biology Committee when it becomes available.

Assignments:

Written comments on the Population Estimate's Workshop Report are due on March 29, 2002; the PD's office will then finalize the report and incorporate recommendations into the RIPRAP and work plan.

Debbie Felker will develop a strategy for public/State participation in nonnative fish control decision-making.

Written comments on the Nonnative Fish Control Workshop Summary are due on April 5, 2002; the PD's office will incorporate comments into a full draft report on the workshop that will be circulated within the Recovery Program. Intent is to use the report for recommending changes to the RIPRAP and work plan.

The PD's Office plans to get out a draft Floodplain Acquisition and Habitat Restoration Synthesis Document by mid-April. The RIPRAP will be revised after the technical review, and as new information becomes available.

The PD's Office will fax to the Biology Committee the (Thunder Ranch and Hot Spot Area) justification memo that went to the Management Committee, along with the (Hot Spot Area) clarification memo.

The PD's Office will send the FWS Region 6 selenium position statement and cover memo to the Biology Committee when it becomes available.