

March 24, 2009

Biology Committee Conference Call Summary
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Biology Committee: Melissa Trammell (chairing the call in Dave Irving's absence), Pete Cavalli, Krissy Wilson, Dave Speas, and Sherm Hebein (for Tom Nesler). (WAPA, the water users, environmental groups and CREDA were not represented at the meeting. The Service did not designate a specific representative for the call, though Service employees participated.

Other participants: Tildon Jones, Aaron Webber, Tom Chart, Angela Kantola, Tom Czaplá, Kevin Bestgen, Trina Hedrick, Leisa Monroe, and Michelle Morgan.

Assignments are indicated by ">" within the document.

CONVENE 8:10 a.m.

1. Review/modify agenda – The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Approve February 20, 2009 Biology Committee meeting summary – Angela outlined changes submitted by Krissy Wilson on item #5 and by Melissa Trammell on item #7. The Committee approved the summary as revised, including an additional change from Dave Speas to clarifying the section of the Colorado River (below the confluence of the Gunnison River) discussed on page 3. >Angela will post the revised summary to the listserv (*done*).
3. Discussion and review of new/revised FY 09 scopes of work
 - a. New: GR backwater synthesis of biological & physical data (Argonne & LFL) – Melissa asked if there will be one synthesis report or two; Kevin said there will be a data summary under tasks 1 and 2 and then a single report (perhaps with chapters) under the synthesis. Krissy asked about the budget increase from 2009 to 2010. Angela clarified that the 2010-2011 draft Program's guidance on this topic relates to *inflationary* increases (as opposed to other salary increases that are part of agency policies); >Angela will suggest including that clarification when the Management Committee reviews the draft guidance this Friday. 2010-2011 budgets can be discussed further when the 2010-2011 work plan is reviewed this summer. Dave Speas asked about generating additional hypotheses and when conclusions may be drawn — have we progressed since the more definitive statements made about pikeminnow habitat 10 years ago? Kevin said the goal is to synthesize all the available information and draw conclusions about pikeminnow in the middle Green River, which he believes will be substantial progress. Dave agreed and said that seems consistent with the Green River Study Plan. Tom Chart says he believes this is realistic way to review the data (the Study Plan spoke more about physical habitat, including MD-SWMS, which seems less realistic). Pete Cavalli noted that the Argonne administrative support person appears to be receiving twice the salary as the principal investigator for LFL. Kevin said Argonne has always had very high rates (primarily due to overhead costs). The Committee approved the scope of work.

- b. New: Price-Stubb PIT tag antenna – Dave Speas asked if a more detailed scope of work would describe data to be collected and research questions to be answered if this work goes beyond the site visit stage; Angela said she agrees a study plan needs to be added to the scope of work for FY 2010 and beyond. Dave Speas said he believes the site visit likely will occur in the base flow period (July to September). The Committee approved the scope of work.
- c. RZ-Recr: Eval. survival of young and movement of subadult RZB from floodplains into the mainstem – Trina said this is a continuation of last year’s work, but includes building two more antennas and potentially a population estimate (if sampling for a population estimate is successful, then funds for that work would be included in FY 10). UDWR will be prepared to either implant PIT tags or clip fins if they encounter non-PIT tagged razorback suckers. They will first try electrofishing, then if that’s not successful, fyke netting. All fish should be scanned for a PIT-tag, in any case.
>Dave will send Trina and the Committee some pointers from USU regarding water in the antenna and turning on the automatic tuning (*done*). Trina noted that battery replacement has made a huge improvement so far. Dave noted they’ve already obligated \$19,419; >Trina will make the new scope match that amount (*done*). The Committee approved the scope of work.
- d. 98a: Middle Yampa smb & pike management – Sherm said this has been modified for additional passes and entire removal. Boyd has been contacting landowners and coordinating with LFL and the Service on sampling dates. In light of weather and flows, they may be on the river much earlier than originally planned (which will require additional coordination). Krissy asked if the Loudy-Simpson ponds reconnect and Sherm said they did last year, so they won’t relocate fish there until after high flows recede; >Study Goal #2 on page 3 should be clarified (like it is at the bottom of page 6). Melissa asked about equipment purchases each year and Sherm agreed replacement costs are significant. The Committee discussed replacement schedules for generators and GPP units. The Service and UDWR believe they incorporate these costs into general maintenance categories. >Tom Chart will talk to Dave Beers and John Hawkins about expected lifespan of this equipment (*in progress*). The Committee approved the scope of work.
- e. 110: Lower Yampa catfish & bass management – Tildon said additional passes in April have been added along with another population estimate to measure exploitation rate. Melissa noted that the goal of locating congregating bass isn’t mentioned again under deliverables (Tildon will be sure to address this in the annual report). Melissa proposed PIT-tagging all roundtails, given humpback augmentation that could be conducted in that reach in the future. Angela asked about potential numbers of tags and how the information will be used. If fish >150 mm are tagged, this isn’t likely to require more than a few hundred additional tags (John Hawkins is already doing this upstream). Krissy said she thinks we should tag roundtails wherever they’re seen. Tom Czapla agreed with Melissa’s proposal in light of the overlap with humpback chub in this reach and difficulties with identification. The Committee agreed to this change and approved the scope of work. This scope and some of the others discuss future synthesis report; however, the Committee has not

yet discussed how those will be approached. The programmatic synthesis may provide some recommendations on this and >the Nonnative Fish Subcommittee should discuss this.

- f. 123a: Green R. bass management – Tildon said they've added a catfish mark/recapture population estimate and subsequent removal. Melissa asked if the additional capture techniques are indeed new to this scope; Tildon said they've been in past scopes; these are experimental approaches in addition to boat electrofishing. Krissy said UDWR won't be removing catfish in this way (targeting them), but will remove catfish where encountered in the Ouray stretch. Sherm asked if this year's data will provide a basis for a decision regarding continuing or expanding catfish removal in the future; Tildon said he expects a very high population estimate but can't predict their exploitation rate (although they will be doing 14 passes — roughly triple the amount of past efforts). The Committee approved the scope of work.
- g. 144: Green R. fish response to nna mgmt – Leisa said this project will be phased out (2011 will be the last year) and moved into 138. The \$16K in 2009 is largely for data analysis already completed; 2010 and 2011 funds are for reporting. Melissa suggested that the first two objectives (nonnative fish removal) be moved to the introduction (*done*). The group agreed. The Committee approved the scope of work.
- h. New: Colorado R. fish community response – Sherm said they are still preparing the scope of work, but this would be a repeat of Rick Anderson's work in the Colorado River and could begin this summer or next. It will be a separate effort from 126b, smallmouth bass removal, as it's in slightly different reaches of the river and timing depends on the hydrology. As currently drafted, the cost would be \$88.5K in 2009 (gear costs assuming the 126b gear can't be used), \$20K in FY 10 and \$20K in FY 11. Angela said she's not sure the Program will have \$88.5K available in FY 09. >CDOW will work with Tom Chart to get a draft SOW to the Committee 2 weeks in advance of their April 20 web conference.
- i. 154: Duchesne R. NNA fish mgmt. – >Angela will add Jay Groves to the Biology Committee e-mail list (*done*). Leisa said they revised the budget. >Tom Chart will send out the latest revised scope of work (*done*). Sherm and Pete asked about the use of catch rate information; Tom Chart said the season is so short, they don't really have options. Melissa added that we're mostly trying to detect large changes. The Committee approved the scope of work.
- j. New: Weir Feasibility – Leisa said FishBio will visit the Duchesne and Yampa to determine feasibility and best locations at those sites. Tom Chart will participate in these visits (and the Nonnative Fish Subcommittee is welcome as well); John Hawkins will be available for the Yampa visit. UDWR will subcontract with FishBio. Melissa asked for more detail with regard to what the report will contain (e.g., potential construction costs, etc.). Leisa said the report will discuss all needed equipment, etc. >Leisa will add that to the scope (and provide a sample report, if available). Sherm asked who will do the biological part and discuss how nonnative fish will be disadvantaged; Leisa said FishBio's report will address this. On the Duchesne, they are considering both an upstream and downstream fish trap. Melissa

- suggested that the report should address ongoing maintenance and monitoring costs. Dave asked if the FishBio report will address potential permit requirements; Leisa said it would. From a permitting perspective on the Duchesne River, Tom Chart said Jay Groves has indicated the Ute Tribal Council is very interested in this idea. On the Yampa, the head of the Maybell Ditch is one location that has been discussed. Melissa said it would be nice to look at a site just above the Park (which is such a source/sink area). The Committee approved the scope of work.
- k. New: Green R backwater study – Leisa and Tildon described the two parts of this work: drift-netting (replicating data collected in the 90’s at Split Mountain and comparing drift densities between Echo Park and Split Mountain) and then using different blocking mechanisms on control/treatment backwaters to allow pikeminnow to enter, and then keeping nonnative fish out. Dave Speas asked about sample size; Tildon said it’s hard to compare the two sites except at peak spawning, so that will be their focus. Kevin said spawning varies from one to three or four spawning peaks. Dave asked about the need for a control backwater in light of earlier sampling in other backwaters (in the interest of adding more backwaters per treatment). The controls are to allow comparison of numbers of pikeminnow and effects of seining between control and treatment. Leisa thought adding another backwater to each treatment (two treatments and one control for three total additional backwaters) would probably only add a few work days and equipment; >she will provide a revised scope of work to the Committee for e-mail approval. >The PD’s office will check into the apparent inflation increase in this scope.
- l. 151: Survival of Gila from Yampa, Green – Tom Czaplá said there’s currently no scope of work for this other than the one for the original capture/transport/survival. Tom sent out a draft *Gila* captivity plan that contemplates seeking more fish in fall 2009 (FY 2010 funds). In FY 09, Tom Czaplá would like to have Dexter do genetic testing (~\$100/fish, for a total \$5,000-\$6,000) to determine how closely related they are. >Tom Czaplá will provide a full scope of work to the Committee two weeks in advance of the Committee’s April web conference.
- m. C-6 Baeser: Portable pump and trailer added – Aaron said they’ll assess survival next week and do a mark-recapture population estimate. If there are any fish >300 mm, they will be released to the river. They are purchasing an 8” trash pump to maintain water levels. Another population estimate will be conducted in the fall and fish >300mm PIT-tagged and released to the river at that time. If there are significant numbers of nonnative fishes, then Baeser would be drained in October and re-set (and thus no additional larval fish added this year). The scope of work should reference the management plan Modde prepared for Baeser. >Tom Chart will send that to Aaron (*done by Melissa Trammell*). The Committee discussed the direction of floodplain management overall; Tom Chart noted we have a floodplain synthesis report in the works. Sherm and Dave suggested calculating cost per fish. Krissy commented that she believes fish coming out of this floodplain are much better acclimated than fish stocked directly to the river. Melissa said that’s why it’s so important to keep careful records on these fish (to assist in evaluating razorback stocking). Dave asked for more detail on the pump (needed to provide funding); >Aaron will provide that as he receives it over the next few days. The Committee

approved the scope of work.

- n. 15: Larval Fish Lab Identification – Tom Czapla said revisions to this scope of work include anticipated identification for drift-net studies, lower Green razorback monitoring, etc. The Committee approved the scope of work.
 - o. 128: Green R. CPM est. – Tom Czapla said the Program Director’s office asked that Koreen’s work on razorback sucker stocking evaluation be extended to include 04-07 data (under the current stocking plan) to help understand how acclimation is working and to begin to develop a razorback monitoring plan (which includes looking at razorback captures as part of the pikeminnow sampling). Tom said that once a monitoring plan is developed, he thought it would then become a separate scope of work. Dave Speas said that \$83K is too much to incorporate into #128. >Kevin Bestgen will put this new work into a stand-alone scope of work and provide it to the Committee. The Committee approved the scope of work (#128 will revert to the old version).
 - p. 138: Green R. YOY CMP monitoring – This now picks up the extra samples in #144. Dave noted a slight decline in what’s already been awarded to UDWR. The Committee approved the scope of work.
 - q. New: Lower Green larval, juv RBS monitoring pilot study – Tom Czapla recalled that larvae were found in light traps on the lower Green last year. This would be a pilot effort for what may eventually become a razorback monitoring program and would include both larval light-trapping and sampling for juvenile fish. Melissa asked about the start date for light-trapping; Kevin agreed that this should say “begin when water temperatures and flows are favorable.” >Tom Czapla will work with Paul Badame to make that change. The Committee approved the scope of work.
 - r. #125 – On page 3, objectives #1 & #3 under northern pike are now CDOW’s, so should be removed. >Kevin will ask John to make that change.
 - s. #129 – >Krissy will have Paul Badame work with Tom Czapla to provide a 2009 SOW for this year (no new work, just moves funds from 2008 to 2009).
 - t. C18/19 – Tom Chart said ~\$4,600 for sampling of walleye from Red Fleet reservoir and nearby sources and the river. The Committee approved this work. >Tom Chart will work with Brett Johnson to revise the scope of work to post to the web.
4. Next meeting – Web conference April 20th from 9:30 to 11:30 and 1:30-3:30 p.m. to review final reports and a few remaining scopes of work (Colorado River fish community and *Gila* genetic testing (note: material must be submitted by April 6th).

ADJOURN 11:00 a.m.