

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

April 16-17, 2002
Salt Lake City, Utah

Biology Committee: Paul Dey, Frank Pfeifer, Tom Nesler, Tom Pitts, John Wullschlaeger, Tom Chart, Mark Wieringa, Kevin Christopherson, and Bill Davis.

Other participants: Matthew Andersen, Pat Nelson, Angela Kantola, Tom Czapla, Chuck McAda

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

Tuesday - April 16, 2002

1. Revisions / additions to the agenda - The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Review summaries and action items from the February 12th meeting - The summary was approved as written. >Tom Czapla will send the Biology Committee a copy of the Carmichael manuscript. >Utah would like a letter from the Service saying they concur with UDWR managing Stewart Lake to entrain drifting razorback sucker larvae (selenium issues don't preclude this). The Committee discussed how the report review process is working. >Coordinators will post a reminder to the listserver of upcoming Biology Committee report review/comment deadlines. >Coordinators also will make sure that Biology Committee members have copies of the peer reviewers comments. >Angela will clean up the language in the report review policy. At a minimum, Biology Committee members will have a revised report with peer reviewer comments attached two weeks before the meeting in which the report is scheduled for review.
3. Review summary of February 25th conference call with an update from the Program Director's office on status of the Population Estimates and Non-native Control Workshop - The full draft nonnative fish control workshop summary will be out in May. Colorado's comments on population estimates summary are still pending (currently in review by DNR). Comments also are still pending from the lower basin. >Tom Chart will determine a new due date for Reclamation to provide a budget breakdown of funds spent on land acquisition. Bill Davis asked the status of the synthesis of knowledge on habitat restoration. Pat said Bob Muth is reviewing it and it will go to the Biology Committee by end of April. Bill asked if the time for review of that portion of the RIPRAP would be extended in light of that. The following changes were made to the summary: Third paragraph on page 2: Biology Committee gave permission to proceed with *evaluation* of Thunder Ranch... Third paragraph on page 3, Bill Davis suggested stocking 20,000 razorback sucker adults *as an example*. Third paragraph on page 4 - change *should* to *may* in the next to last sentence. >Angela Kantola will revise the summary and post the final to the listserver.
4. Review of the March 8th conference call with an update from the Program Director's office on progress with model FLOODPLAIN and the evaluation of the Floodplain Restoration program. Item #3: Clarify sentence “Hawkins is working from the ground up.” Bill Davis previously submitted written comments on the summary which >the

Program Director's office will review, respond to Bill, and revise the summary as needed.
>The Program Director's office will determine a due date for developing a strategy for public/State participation in nonnative fish control decision making.

5. Review Summary of Colorado's Pond Reclamation Project - Project Cap 18/19 (A. Martinez and T. Nesler) with a discussion of future direction. The Committee discussed the proposed redirection and agreed it's a good start, but it needs to be made more specific in the form of a revised scope of work. The Committee agreed that the direction of this nonnative fish control work needs to be changed and that this approach is on the right track. The Committee agreed that first site should be Labor Camp. The scope of work will need to include specific budget breakouts for engineering, etc. >Tom Nesler will work with Anita to revise the scope of work according to this approach. Tom Pitts suggested having a Biology Committee meeting in Grand Junction with a field visit to one of these locations. Frank Pfeifer recommended including a site visit to see the GVIC fish screen. (Schedule a half-day for field visits.) The following day, the Committee discussed the broader issue of changes in nonnative fish control. Tom Nesler noted that Colorado will need to review consistency in their regulations with regard to pond screening (e.g., if Program only pays for screening in hot spot areas, what will be required of landowners outside the hot spot areas?). Kevin Christopherson warned that sportfish issues may increase in Utah, especially in the Duchesne.
6. Reports due list update - The Committee reviewed the list. The Committee asked >the Program Director's office to write CSU regarding Hawkins' two late electrofishing reports (with cc: to the Biology Committee). If the Program Director's office hasn't yet written USU regarding Todd Crowl's late report, then that letter needs to be written (with a cc: to the Committee). >The Program Director's office will write Steve Hamilton's supervisor requesting the razorback contaminants report by June 20.
7. Plan to Monitor Stocked Fish (UDWR, USFWS, CSU) - Kevin said Tim Modde provided comments (add to background section; include trap-netting). Tom Pitts asked why we need special effort to monitor stocked fish considering all stocked fish are pit-tagged and we have extensive population estimate monitoring already. Kevin agreed that perhaps the plan needs to have intensive monitoring early on, then taper off after several years. The Committee discussed monitoring stocked fish as part of population estimates versus specific monitoring for stocked fish (especially for razorback and bonytail). Additional electrofishing sampling stress on Colorado pikeminnow is a concern. Frank Pfeifer commented that the Committee needs to see Bestgen's report, Burdick's stocked razorback monitoring report, and Utah's bonytail stocking report. However, we need to reach a decision before bonytail and razorback are stocked this fall. >The Biology Committee will reconsider the plan in August after they have an opportunity to review the three aforementioned reports (Tom Czaplá will make sure those stay on track). Clearly, we need to coordinate all sampling to minimize stress and be as effective as possible. Paul pointed out the need to rephrase objective one on page 2.
8. RIPRAP Assessment - Tom Pitts questioned calling poor survival of stocked razorback (page 2) a shortcoming. The work was done, the results just weren't what we'd hoped

for. Angela clarified that this assessment simply states accomplishments and shortcomings, it's not the "sufficient progress" assessment.

9. Summary of Recommendations from FY 2001 Annual and Final reports (provided in the Feb 21, 2002 mailing from the PD's office) - Tom Pitts pointed out that Colorado's Water Quality Control Commission is revising TMDL's and >the Program Director's office should review their new proposals.
10. Discussion of PD's draft RIPRAP revisions. (provided in the Feb 21, 2002 mailing from the PD's office). > The Program Director's office will provide a schedule for finalizing the RIPRAP revisions (Management Committee review and approval, etc). >Tom Pitts will provide minor written comments on the text. Other Committee members also are welcome to submit comments (by April 30).

<u>Page</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Comment</u>
20	ID1	Will there really be a tributary management workshop in 2002?
20	ID3	Why tributary management plans for the White and Dolores but not Price and San Rafael?
20	IIC2&3	Perhaps the Management Committee should approve these in final.
21	IV13b1&2	Explanation of changes should note that the Biology Committee did not see a need to pursue this work further.
22	IVF1	Monitoring stocked fish report is no longer late (on hold).
22	IVE2d	Change "secure and manage" to "acquire" (one item); and manage becomes part of "operate and maintain" items under IVC.
23	VIIA5e	Change text to read to "Conduct species status review." Begin in 2007 (with an 'x' in the outyears).
24	IA4a4	When is policy supposed to be evaluated?
24	IC2	Price River pikeminnow winter use work won't be completed until FY 03.
25	IB2b&c	Change dates based on Supreme Court decision which is not expected until early 2003. Perhaps move out one year.
25	IIE	Quantify area of <i>floodplain</i> inundation as a function of flow, <i>if necessary</i> .
25	IIIA4b	Are we going to carry forward nonnative cyprinid and centrarchid removal in nursery habitat?

26	VC	Middle Green River includes Yampa and White.
27	IA2b	State of Colorado and CRWCD may also be party to the agreement.
28	IIA3	Perhaps change to review NPS/USGS report. >John Wullschlaeger will check on report date.
28	IIIA1b2a&c	Will be completed in 03.
29	IVA1a2	When will stocking evaluation begin? 03 and outyears?
30	IIIA3a1	Isn't Bottle Hollow screening in 02?
30	IIIA3b1	Wouldn't Starvation screening begin in 04?
32	IA5c1&d1	Change "from" to "by."
34	IIA2d	Adobe Creek is being managed for razorback sucker growout, so operation and maintenance is ongoing.
34	IIB1b2	GVIC construction complete.
35	IIB2a...	Change dates: Price Stubb construction won't be complete by 4/03.
35	IIB31a	Gov't Highline passage site design/environmental compliance ongoing in FY 02.
35	IIB3b	Screen construction and related dates should match passage dates.
35	IIIB3 & 4a	Aquatic Management Plan implementation (not specific law enforcement item) will be ongoing.
35	IIIA1	Flow effects study report contained this and it is complete.
35	IIIA2	Will need to be changed (or something added) based on redirection
38	IIIA3	of pond reclamation work.
36	Vb4a	What happened to the date for to developing a plan to monitor incidental take of endangered fish in diversion structures?
37	IA1c-e,2	The dates for the Aspinnall opinion & NEPA and Gunnison River management plan need to be moved out.
38	IIB1g	Delete "if warranted" for Redlands screen.

Delete "if needed" for Hartland passage unless this on hold pending temperature studies? If on hold (as shown in text), then table should match.

Wednesday; April 17, 2002

11. Review Fish Disposition Policy - Bill Davis recommends adding an option to release surplus hatchery fish live into appropriate waters (e.g., Lake Powell) before considering euthanasia. Bill noted that whether or not we change the policy now, if euthanasia of excess fish is proposed, CREDA will raise this issue because of the public perception problem. Mark Wierenga and Tom Pitts agreed that euthanasia would be a real public relations issue. The Committee acknowledged that it's unlikely we'll get to this point (since fish would first go to lower basin stocking efforts). If we ever do change the policy to add an option to release surplus fish live into surplus waters, then it should require approval of *both* the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director and the appropriate State wildlife agency director. The Committee agreed they would want to approve any disposal of surplus fish.
12. Update on alternatives for Fish Passage at Grand Valley Project Dam and Fish Screen in the Govt. Highline Canal - Frank Pfeifer said Reclamation conducted a value engineering study and came to a preferred alternative of an upstream rock fish passage structure (with a fish trap) at the Grand Valley Project. Reclamation is still considering where to screen the Highline Canal (right at the headgate; in the canal just above the Cameo power plant; or below Cameo). None of these locations can be screened year-round due to icing conditions. Frank recommends screening at the headgates and believes that 10 months of screening each year is worth the cost. Tom Nesler agreed, noting that he believes fish movement is reduced in the winter, anyway. Bill Davis suggested other devices might be used during icing. Tom Chart said Bob Norman would like to continue to work with Frank as the on-the-ground Biology Committee contact for capital projects. Frank and the Committee agreed.
13. Changes to razorback larval and bonytail floodplain SOW's - Pat Nelson outlined reasons for modification to these SOW's: 1) anticipated low flows; 2) need for effective sampling to provide definitive results on larval razorback and bonytail survival; and 3) lower than hoped for anticipated larval stocking densities (~50,000 larval bonytail, razorback numbers unknown). The original study design was to stock larvae into several sites, but that's been changed to focus on just two sites (Old Charlie Wash and Above Brennan) so survival can be demonstrated if it is occurring. Some larvae will be put into enclosure cages and closely monitored. There will be no change in budget (although fewer sites will be stocked, they will be more closely monitored). >Kevin Christopherson and Frank Pfeifer will provide the Committee with revised scopes of work by April 26. The Committee will have a conference call on May 2 from 10:00 - 12:00. >Angela Kantola will set up the call. Tom Pitts recommended using an automated probe to continuously monitor temperature. Bill Davis questioned changing the scopes of work before the synthesis report is out and reviewed. Pat added if flows are again inadequate for evaluation of larval drift and entrainment in Bonanza Bridge and Above Brennan, that study will be put off for another year (and funds carried over by Utah).

14. Birchell, G. J. et al. The Levee Removal Project: Assessment of Floodplain Habitat Restoration in the Middle Green River. Garn Birchell said they added a section to the report describing how the Biology Committee's recommendations were addressed. In light of the original goal to restore floodplains where the fish could be naturally self-sustaining, Bill Davis questioned the five management actions (page 10-14) to counter negative effects. Pat said self-sustaining populations are the ultimate goal, but we recognize the need for some temporary management activities during recovery. At the same time, we're trying to determine what's required achieve self-sustaining populations. Bill maintained that we shouldn't waste time and money on floodplain restoration when we could be putting that effort towards stocking that we know works. Bill questioned recommendation #1 (page 10-17) that says "no deleterious effect on the native fish community" – does this applies to the nursery areas? Kevin said this applies to the river fish community and they will clarify that. Tom Pitts said he believes that based on the data, the recommendation should be not to continue this work (the data show no contribution to recovery). Kevin countered that there were definite benefits to native fishes (adult resting areas, increased productivity to the river, etc.). Tom Pitts questioned the basis for recommendation #4 that says: "this will maximize larval razorback entrainment..." That recommendation will be re-stated. Tom Pitts noted that recommendation #5 is really a conclusion (authors will re-word) and that the data do not support recommendation #6 (authors will remove). Tom Chart suggested incorporating in recommendations Tim Modde's conclusion that all larvae were collected in sites on the outside bend of the channel. The authors will note that. Tom Pitts said he doesn't believe the study data support recommendation #1 or #3, either. The Committee approved the report, but not the recommendations. >The report authors will submit revised recommendations via e-mail by April 26 and those will be discussed on the May 2 conference call. Mark noted that people outside the Committee may not understand separating approval of reports from approval of report recommendations.

15. Next meeting: June 12-13 in Grand Junction (with a site tour the morning of June 12). Agenda items: report reviews, presentation from Bill Miller on their research on sediment and productivity in the Colorado River (morning of the second day). Tom Pitts said he will propose new starts for 2003 related to this work (maintaining the Clifton site and expanding in the Gunnison and/or 18-Mile Reach). Miller will submit a report on the work in July or August. >Tom Pitts will send web address of the draft reports to the Biology Committee. >Tom Chart will try to arrange a meeting room at Reclamation.

ASSIGNMENTS

Tom Czapla will send the Biology Committee a copy of the Carmichael manuscript.

Utah would like a letter from the Service saying they concur with UDWR managing Stewart Lake to entrain drifting razorback sucker larvae (selenium issues don't preclude this).

Coordinators will post a reminder to the listserver of upcoming Biology Committee report review/comment deadlines. Coordinators also will make sure that Biology Committee members have copies of the peer reviewers' comments.

Angela Kantola will clean up the language in the report review policy.

Tom Chart will determine a new due date for Reclamation to provide a budget breakdown of funds spent on land acquisition.

Angela Kantola will revise the February 25 conference call summary and post the final to the listserver.

The Program Director's office will review Bill Davis' written comments on the March 8 conference call summary, respond to Bill, and revise the summary as needed.

The Program Director's office will determine a due date for developing a strategy for public/State participation in nonnative fish control decision making.

Tom Nesler will work with Anita to revise the pond reclamation scope of work.

The Program Director's office will write CSU regarding Hawkins' two late electrofishing reports (with cc: to the Biology Committee). If the Program Director's office hasn't yet written USU regarding Todd Crowl's late report, then that letter will be written (with a cc: to the Committee). The Program Director's office also will write Steve Hamilton's supervisor requesting the razorback contaminants report by June 20.

The Biology Committee will reconsider the monitoring stocked fish plan in August after they have an opportunity to review Bestgen's report, Burdick's stocked razorback monitoring report, and Utah's bonytail stocking report. Tom Czapla will make sure those stay on track.

The Program Director's office should review Colorado's Water Quality Control Commission's new TMDL proposals.

The Program Director's office will provide a schedule for finalizing the RIPRAP revisions (Management Committee review and approval, etc). Tom Pitts will provide minor written comments on the text. Other Committee members also are welcome to submit comments (by April 30).

John Wullschlaeger will check the due date for the USGS/NPS Yampa River pH report.

Kevin Christopherson and Frank Pfeifer will provide the Committee with revised floodplain scopes of work by April 26. The Committee will have a conference call on May 2.

Angela Kantola will set up a Biology Committee conference call for May 2 (10:00 - 12:00).

The levee removal evaluation report authors will submit revised recommendations via e-mail by April 26 and those will be discussed on the May 2 conference call.

Tom Pitts will send the web address for the draft Miller reports (on Colorado River sediment and productivity research) to the Biology Committee.

Tom Chart will try to arrange a meeting room at the Grand Junction Reclamation office for the June 12-13 Biology Committee meeting.