

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

February 20 – 21, 2001

Bureau of Reclamation, Grand Junction, CO

Participants: Art Roybal, Tom Pitts, John Hawkins, Tom Chart, Matt Andersen, Tom Nesler, Bill Davis, Tim Modde, Gerry Roehm, Mike Hudson, John Wullschleger, Paul Dey, Tom Czaplá, Frank Pfeifer, Chuck McAda, Steve Petersburg, Angela Kantola, Dave Soker, Bob Muth, George Smith, Kathy Holley, Doug Laiho, Bill Miller, Ray Tenney, Doug Osmundson, and Harold Tyus.

Assignments are indicated by ">" and at the end of the document

Upcoming agenda items are indicated by "*"

New or revised policy is in bold italics.

1. Revisions/Additions to Agenda - The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Overdue reports list - Angela distributed an updated overdue reports list which the Committee reviewed. >Matt will contact Crowl's office and try to get his two overdue reports to the Committee as quickly as possible. Bob Muth said he didn't support Kevin Christopherson's proposed early Program guidance for additional nonnative fish control work in FY 2002 because the results aren't yet available from Crowl's Green River nonnative fish control work. However, >the Program Director's office will talk with Kevin about any additional Green River nonnative fish control which should be done in FY 02. >Tom Czaplá will check on the status of Larry Harris' intensive culture technique manual. >Matt will check with Robert King on the status of the mosquito report/memo. >Hawkins will provide the revised report on the Little Snake River management plan by the end of March 2001 to the Biology Committee. His other two reports are due by May 15th (CSF electrofishing injury) and July 1st (Evaluation of the effects of electrofishing...). **REMINDER: Principle investigators are to submit their scope of work with their draft report to the Biology Committee.**
3. Approval of December 14-15 Meeting Summary - Under item #6, the report "Channel catfish and Centrarchid Removal in the Middle and Lower Green River, Utah" (Crowl and Badame) was sent out for external (peer) review, not just internal review. The summary was approved with that change.
4. Outline of an approach to addressing northern pike control concerns - The Committee discussed the outline that Tom Nesler posted to the listserver on February 16. Frank recommended adding a discussion of how the fish have fared in Rio Blanco Reservoir. John Hawkins suggested that the discussion address overall objectives for northern pike control in the Yampa basin. A workshop on northern pike control will be held Friday, March 2, from 8:00 a.m to 3:00 p.m. at the Bureau of Reclamation office in Grand Junction (to be attended by the Biology Committee and those who have data to present). One question to be addressed is whether to reprogram FY 01 activities to intensify northern pike control in the Yampa.
5. Discussion/Approval of Draft RIPRAP Revisions

Bob Muth noted that the major revisions this year are inclusion of items from the draft recovery goals and the Gunnison River PBO process.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Change</u>
<u>TEXT:</u>		
2	1.3	Correct first sentence ("being" is out of place).
3	1.5	Clarify what "both goals" of the Program are in the last sentence of the first paragraph.
7	2.2	Add Redlands to list of diversions to be screened (since it's in the tables and on

page 19).

- 19 3.6.2 Clarify that screening is for adult and subadult fishes.
- 21 Abbvs. Wyoming Game and Fish *Department*.

TABLES:

- 20 IIB1a Preface with “If needed for recovery,” and note that it’s not just a Service responsibility.
- 20 IIB3 Change to “Review *and recommend* modifications to state and Federal hazardous materials spills emergency response programs.”
- 21 IIIA1c1 Add “If necessary, implement actions to minimize hybridization between white sucker and razorback sucker.” **The Program Director’s office will make similar changes throughout the RIPRAP; i.e., where evaluation of a problem is identified, a next-step to remedy the problem, if necessary, will be added.**
- 21 IIIB6 Review of nonnative fish stocking procedures begins in FY 02 and occurs every 5 years.
- 21 IVA4c1&2 For now, broodstock are represented by wild stock in the river, so this is really ongoing, not on hold.
- 22 IVE1 Change “to meet long and short-term fish needs” to “based on revised augmentation plans.”
- 22 IVF2 Delete (covered in IVF1).
- 22 VA3a Modify to indicate draft habitat monitoring plan by 12/01, final by 9/02.
- 23 VIIA4 IMO’s are complete and the need to update them has been superceded by the recovery goals.
- 23 VIIA4a Delete “population model and”.
- 23 VIIA6 Call “conservation plans” “post-delisting conservation plans” so they are not confused with habitat conservation plans.
- 23 VIIA5e Change to “Reevaluate recovery goals (ongoing).”
- 23 VIIA5f Add item to review species status and update recovery goals (every 5 years beginning in FY 06).
- 25 IVA1d Add “as identified in augmentation plans” after “Evaluate stocking success”.
- 26 VB2 Move this item (Cataract Canyon) to Colorado River action plan on page 35 as VC3.
- 28 IIA3 Add item to support actions to assess potential for negative impacts of elevated pH to endangered fish (Program, FY 02-04).
- 28 IIIA1b2a Add “for exclusion devices.”
- 34 IIC Change to “Support actions to reduce or eliminate contaminant impacts. (NOTE:

Contaminants remediation...”).

- 34 IIC1 “Support actions to reduce or eliminate contaminant impacts of heavy metals and selenium in the Grand Valley.”
- 34 IIC2 Number this IIC2 and revise to read: “Support remediation of groundwater contamination at Atlas...”
- 34 IIC3 (Number this IIC3 instead of IIC2.)
- 37 IIIA1 Delete. No evidence of significant angling mortality on endangered fishes below Redlands.
- 37 IVa1b1 Experimental razorback stocking is complete.
- 38 IVA1a Augmentation in the Dolores will begin in FY 04 and continue through the outyears.

Comments on draft FY 2001 RIPRAP assessment: Tom Pitts said he thought there was a 1-year lease for Green Mountain municipal water in FY 2000. Mike Hudson noted that an accomplishment should be noted for stocking bonytail in the Green River and in the Colorado River in Utah.

6. Discussion/Approval of Draft Program Guidance

Instream flow identification & protection - The RIPRAP item for evaluation of Lodore/Whirlpool should be Green River, I.D. Tom Nesler suggested that we may be asking for much more in this project than we’ve scoped/budgeted for. Bill Davis suggested that long-term monitoring for this area may be more appropriate. Tom Chart said he assumes that it would be appropriate to repeat this work in 5 years. >Tom Chart will modify the guidance to clearly identify the questions to be answered (e.g., response of fish community in Lodore to Flaming Gorge flows, assessing humpback chubs in Whirlpool Canyon, etc.). Bill Davis expressed concern about stocking bonytail outside of critical habitat. Angela Kantola responded that the Program does not constrain its recovery activities to critical habitat.

Habitat restoration - Tom Pitts expressed concern that we’re putting a lot of money into floodplain restoration but not getting the acres we expected; the Program needs to look at our fixed costs for this effort in relationship to actual acres acquired/leased and levees removed. John Hawkins suggested revisions to the Yampa entrainment new start (delete inflammatory “take” language, etc). Tom Nesler said he believes this will be a lower priority since we have not established a problem of entrainment on the Yampa. >Gerry Roehm will discuss this with John Hawkins and Tom Nesler.

Nonnative fish control - Tom Nesler noted that we propose to evaluate the need to control escapement out of Starvation Reservoir, but we didn’t evaluate escapement from Highline before we screened it. Tim questioned whether this is our highest nonnative fish control priority. Tom Nesler noted that we should not assume that Highline-type nets will be the best solution to prevent nonnative fish escapement from every reservoir. John Hawkins asked what the plans are for Catamount, Stagecoach, and other reservoirs on the Yampa from which nonnative fish may be escaping.

Propagation & genetics management - Tim Modde said he thinks it would be worthwhile to stock bonytail in floodplain wetlands. Mike Hudson suggested that could be part of the scheduled stocking in the middle Green River. Tom Czapla said he doesn’t oppose doing this in 2001 as a no-cost effort, but doesn’t want to put a full study in 2002 Program guidance without knowing how many fish would need to be stocked to see a result. Clarify that the recommendations from the bonytail introduction project will be conducted under the Program’s augmentation and monitoring efforts. >Tom Czapla will follow up on the potential of using Colorado’s native fish hatchery to raise fish for the Program in FY 2002.

Research, monitoring, & data management - No comments.

7. Discussion and Approval of Revised Conclusions/Recommendations from: Channel Narrowing of the Green River Near Green River, Utah: History, Rates, and Processes of Narrowing, Project 37, Allred and Schmidt, May 1999 (Anderson) - Recommendation #3 contains a recommendation, but the rest are conclusions. Thus, the rest of the “recommendations” will be moved to the conclusions section and the report was accepted as final with that modification. >Matt will finalize the report.
8. Wahweap damage repairs – During storms in October 2000, the wash adjacent to the Wahweap State Fish Hatchery transported large volumes of surface water which eroded the south bank, nearest the hatchery grounds. UDWR has observed the damage and made repair recommendations. They can replace the washed-out gabions, but advise the application of Armorflex would be more durable and longer lasting (albeit more expensive). UDWR can provide some of the funding necessary to accomplish repairs, and federal sportfishing dollars can also contribute. At least half of the facility is used to raise endangered fish species for the Recovery Program, so Utah asks that the Program consider funding half of the repair effort (\$37K):

Armorflex		\$44,000
A-jacks embedded at toe	10,500	
Repositioning		1,402
Earthwork		3,329
Subtotal	\$59,231	
Engineering	10%	5,923
Contingencies	15%	<u>8,885</u>
TOTAL	\$74,039	
(50% of TOTAL)		\$37,020

The Biology Committee recommends that the Management Committee approve \$37K for these repairs. Angela says this amount is available in the FY 2001 capital funds budget from: 1) \$32,000 which is not needed to purchase an ASV to maintain floodplain water control structures at Ouray; and \$5K not needed for northern pike exclusion device assessment (which had a \$25K placeholder, but the scope of work has only requested \$20K).

9. Status Update on Stocking Plan Implementation - Tom Czapla gave a Power Point presentation reviewing the endangered fish produced and stocked to date and stocking plans for the upcoming year. Recommendations include: increase production and determine appropriate growout pond stocking densities; modify state stocking plans (bonytail size and location, razorback sucker size); evaluate stocking (bonytail in floodplain wetlands and use of PIT vs. coded wire tags). >Tom Czapla will prepare a species by river summary of our stocking goals and the actual numbers of fish stocked and post this to the listserver by the end of March.

Tim Modde said that Mike Hudson has proposed a spawning matrix of the 22 fish which would minimize the di-allele crosses (proposal distributed to Committee). This reduces some of the flexibility of total half-sibling crosses, but Tim said it seems like a good plan. The Committee briefly discussed use of growout ponds in Utah (requesting a variance from the Fish Health Board to allow us to raise fish in private ponds without having to lethally sample 60 fish per pond before stocking the fish in the river), which is on the Management Committee meeting agenda. Mike noted that the Service needs to submit a permit request to UDWR. >Mike will get the variance request to the Committee within the next two weeks. *There will be an update on this at the next meeting.

1. Discussion and Approval of Revisions to Final Report – An Evaluation of the Role of Tributary Streams for Recovery of Endangered Fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin, with Recommendations for Future Recovery Actions, Project 101, Tyus and Saunders, August 15, 2000 - Harold Tyus reviewed the comments

received and how they were addressed. Requested changes/additions which were addressed are: providing complete objectives from the scope of work; more information on physical habitat; information on native fish diversity in Table 3; and clarifying the ranking method. Tom Pitts expressed concern about the recommendation to consider removing Taylor Draw Dam and asked where Harold got the data that Kenney Reservoir is rapidly filling with sediment which could limit its usefulness. Tim Modde said he'd heard Rio Blanco WCD speak of the significant filling of the reservoir and suggested that Ann Brady would have the specific data. Tom Pitts maintained his concern about this recommendation. Tom Pitts questioned the statement about dead animals being "not uncommonly dumped" into UCR streams; Harold agreed to change that to say he has observed these things. Harold will clarify the statement about what limits the recovery value of the Dolores (water quality) and Gunnison (barriers and temperature). The Committee discussed the tributary ranking and methods. Table 14 will be better explained. Clarifying modifications also will be made to Table 16. Harold will add a cautionary paragraph explaining how Figure 14 might be used. The Committee then discussed the conclusions and recommendations. The concluding statement about selenium on page 77 will be "there is some *concern* that high levels of selenium may have hastened the decline..." Steve Petersburg recommended including a recommendation to exercise extreme caution regarding any future modifications to (depletions from) the Yampa River. Harold responded that the importance of the Yampa is clearly stated in the conclusions, but he would agree to that recommendation if that's what the Committee wants. Other Committee members did not believe that would be an appropriate recommendation. Paul Dey questioned the feasibility of the recommendation about completely eradicating northern pike. Tom Pitts asked what specific additional nonnative fish control activities are recommended; Harold will recommend an integrated plan for each tributary. The Taylor Draw recommendation will be modified to recommend that the Program reevaluate providing fish access upstream of Taylor Draw Dam and consider alternatives including removal and passage. Related text in the executive summary and elsewhere will be similarly modified. Harold will clarify the portion of the second recommendation so it says "reintroduction offers the only possibility to recovering the bonytail." Mike Hudson suggested reiterating in the recommendations that the tributaries' direct and indirect contributions may change as more fish are added to the system and as more information becomes available. The Committee approved the report as final with inclusion of the modifications discussed.

2. Discussion of Proposed Revisions to Final Report: Recommendations for Flows in the Upper Colorado River between Palisade and Rifle, Colorado for Recovering Populations of Endangered Razorback Sucker and Colorado Pikeminnow. Osmundson. This report was approved at the Oct 24-25, 2000, meeting pending review of proposed revisions; substantial comments were subsequently offered. Doug Osmundson reviewed the additional graphs he's prepared and the recommended changes he was able to address. Art Roybal noted that uncertainties 5-7 seem to be incomplete sentences (they aren't stated in a parallel fashion to uncertainties 1-4); Doug will try to correct that. Tom Nesler questioned Doug's two statements about potential upstream spawning sites; Doug will clarify his statement as a hypothesis. Tom Pitts believes the spring flow recommendations should still be characterized as preliminary. Tom believes the legal protection of flows portion is out of context: legal protection is a tool, not an objective of the Program. Doug will determine if that was a direct quote. With regard to the statement "To date, flow regimes needed for recovery have been identified for the 15_Mile Reach" Tom pointed out that the PBO and draft recovery goals acknowledge that we may not have to achieve those flow regimes to achieve recovery. Tom recommends changing this to: "Flow recommendations for Colorado River populations..." Similarly, to say "they have to be protected" goes beyond the recommendations. Tom noted that statements in the report appear to assume that all life stages of razorback will be in the Rifle to Palisade reach. Doug agreed. For pikeminnow, we assume adult habitat, and maybe spawning habitat. Doug will add pikeminnow spawning in that reach to his list of uncertainties, along with whether razorbacks will successfully hatch in the main channel. Doug also will outline the bases for the statement that "455 cfs is too low for fish in this reach." Tom Pitts asked if we need higher flows to provide flooded bottomlands; Doug replied that they are recommending increased frequency of high flows. Tom said that whether or not we need peak flows to provide flooded bottomlands (even on a more frequent basis) seems to be an uncertainty. Tom said they have concerns about indicating that peak flows are required to provide flooded bottomland habitat. Tom Pitts believes these recommendations should be called interim because they are for an unoccupied reach, and thus have a very different basis than other flow recommendations. Doug is concerned about calling

them interim because he believes these *are* the recommendations until we get better data. The scope of work for this project indicated that these would be interim flow recommendations. The Committee agreed to accept the report with the foregoing modifications and title it “interim” with the understanding that “interim” means that they are the flow recommendations until we have better information to refine them.

3. Schedule next meeting - At UDWR in Salt Lake City Tuesday, May 1 beginning at 1:00 p.m. through 3 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2. >Matt will arrange a meeting room. Agenda items will include: Redlands fish passage report; update on variance from Utah Fish Health Board.

ACTION ITEMS

Matt Andersen will contact Crowl's office and try to get his two overdue reports to the Committee as quickly as possible.

The Program Director's office will talk with Kevin Christophersen about Green River nonnative fish control which should be done in FY 02.

Tom Czaplá will check on the status of Larry Harris' intensive culture technique manual.

Matt Andersen will check with Robert King on the status of the mosquito report/memo.

Tom Chart will modify the guidance to clearly identify the questions to be answered (e.g., response of fish community in Lodore to Flaming Gorge flows, assessing humpback chubs in Whirlpool Canyon, etc.).

Gerry Roehm will discuss the Yampa entrainment new start with John Hawkins and Tom Nesler.

Tom Czaplá will follow up on the potential of using Colorado's native fish hatchery to raise fish for the Program in FY 2002.

Matt Andersen will finalize the Allred and Schmidt report. (Note: In addition to printing final copies and announcing their availability on the listserv, finalization now also requires submitting the report to the Program Director's office in electronic form for posting on the Program website.)

Tom Czaplá will prepare a species by river summary of our stocking goals and the actual numbers of fish stocked and post this to the listserv by the end of March.

Mike Hudson will get the Fish Health Board variance request to the Committee within the next two weeks.

Matt Andersen will arrange a meeting room for the May 1-2 meeting in Salt Lake City.