

February 12, 2009

**Information & Education Committee Meeting
February 12, 2009
Downtown Denver Aquarium
700 Water Street, Denver**

Participants: Kara Lamb, Debbie Felker, Matt Kales, Randy Hampton, Betsy Blakeslee, Martha Moore, Sharon Whitmore, Robert Muth, Angela Kantola, and Tom Chart. Colleen Shipley of the Denver Aquarium also joined the meeting.

CONVENE: 10:00 a.m.

1. Introduction – Colleen Shipley introduced the group to the Aquarium and described many of their educational programs. She suggested that the Recovery Program might want to help them establish a school program on native and endangered fishes. >Debbie, Bob and Kara will provide some educational materials on the endangered Colorado River fishes.
2. Program Director's Update – Bob Muth congratulated Debbie on this year's *Program Highlights* document, which highlights both recent accomplishments, as well as landmark accomplishments over the last 20 years. This document is heavily relied upon during the Program partners' annual Congressional briefing trip. Bob noted that we expect a final EIS on operation of the Aspinall Unit (and possibly a record of decision [ROD], as well). Rehabilitation construction on the Myton Diversion Dam on the Duchesne River will be completed this year (as a cost share with Water 2025). This will allow water rights to be fully delivered and measured and allow water to be moved downstream to benefit the endangered fishes. East and West slope water users have agreed on an alternative for the 10,825 acre-feet of water for the Colorado River. The alternative includes a surrendering of rights in an existing irrigation diversion system; then that water from Granby could be used for the Colorado River during the baseflow period. This alternative also helps local water users. Kara noted this should present an opportunity for both education and some promotion of the Recovery Program. We had the best year yet in terms of baseflow augmentation in the 15-Mile Reach in 2008. Management of water available through the Grand Valley Water Management Project continues to improve. With regard to Price-Stubb, monitoring of fish movement currently occurs upstream at the Grand Valley Project fish passage. Colorado pikeminnow surveys also will occur between Price-Stubb and the Grand Valley Project, with the Service working out an agreement with the Grand Valley Water Users for a boat launch for monitoring. The Program also is considering installing a passive PIT-tag monitoring system at Price-Stubb (the Service has sought funds for this through the Economic Stimulus package). Kara and Randy suggested we consider opportunities to publicize fish use of these facilities. Debbie noted that I&E efforts are integrated throughout the Program Highlights document this year. Bob wrapped up by noting that Mike Montagne, the Ouray NFH manager will give this year's

presentation on propagation and stocking at the Congressional staff appreciation luncheon during the D.C. briefing trip. His presentation will include outreach efforts.

3. Changes in D.C. administration and what this may mean for the Recovery Program – Matt Kales began by discussing the post-election, pre-inaugural transition process; DOI had a transition team of ~13 people (primarily policy folks from the former Clinton administration). Each bureau provided this team with information about their agency, and also policy proposals. Of course, many of us have a rich history of working with the new Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar (who knows the Recovery Program very well). Other new folks in the Administration will need more education about water, how we collaborate, etc. We've had very significant turnover in Congressional representatives for every state in the Recovery Program (and thus the partners' briefing trip this year will have a very different character, given the need to educate the new members and their staffs about the recovery programs from the ground up. The stimulus package may have some tangible benefits for this and similar programs. Matt added that Region 6's new Regional Director and Deputy Regional Director both strongly support the Recovery Program and Bob Muth's and Mike Montagne's participation in the Washington, D.C., briefing trip.
4. D.C. briefing trip (March 4-11) – Bob Muth said John Shields has been working to set up the various meetings. Sharon noted that Bill Miller, the San Juan Program's new Biology Committee chair, will participate in the trip this year. Matt emphasized the importance of stressing the vital tribal nexus these programs have during the briefings, especially with Interior.
5. Status of nonnative fish management – Tom Chart reviewed current nonnative fish management activities (see attached). The Committee discussed potential for signage and what we do and don't want to emphasize. Randy said health concerns regarding mercury concentrations in these fish are now being raised.
6. States' perspective of outreach needs re: nonnative fish management; review of FY 09 nonnative fish outreach scope of work - Debbie Felker distributed the scope of work for communications/public involvement for nonnative fish management in 2009. Randy said CDOW has been working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Northern pike from the Yampa River have mercury levels above the Federal standard (0.3) but below the State standard (0.5) (the State will switch to the Federal standard this year, which will put mercury warnings on most State waters and could result in catch and release in the Yampa River). Mercury levels also are elevated at Rifle Gap Reservoir with higher levels in walleye than in northern pike. This likely will result in a health warning within a few weeks and complicates CDOW's consideration of answering angler concerns with a walleye fishery in Rifle Gap. Randy noted increasing concerns about potential quagga and zebra mussel invasions. Randy emphasized publicizing Recovery Program tangible benefits, especially the water use made possible by the Recovery Program. He suggested that perhaps every time a water use is approved, we should send out a press release noting that the Program's existence makes this possible. Kara agreed, for example, Reclamation's entire Round II marketing program

for Ruedi water is made possible and is a success due to this Program. Tom Chart noted that to some extent the anglers are a different audience than the audience that appreciates the water use benefit. Matt agreed (but suggested exercising caution to make sure we don't characterize this in any way that would suggest to the public that the ESA prevents water use). Randy acknowledged what Tom Chart said, noting we don't want to focus our entire public education effort on the **very** small number of Coloradoans who object to our nonnative fish management activities. With regard to the angling public, Betsy emphasized the need to get our message out to the fishing guide companies. Kara proposed the Committee discuss at every meeting *how* we're going to promote our messages and actually develop (and annually review and update) a set of talking points to be used in all of our public meetings and related activities. Matt agreed and added that we need to consider what other additional big-picture, practical I&E actions we should embark on (e.g., in addition to the Congressional briefing trips, exhibits at the Colorado Water Congress, etc.). The Committee agreed with this and will brainstorm potential proactive activities at the end of this meeting.

7. Roundtable discussion of each committee member's projects related to the Recovery Program – Kara said four of their reservoirs have quagga or zebra mussels. The Ruedi public meeting will be the second or third week of May. A public attitude survey discussed at the recent Colorado Water Congress meeting revealed that Coloradoans are very aware of potential water shortages and where their water comes from. Still, most thought additional reservoirs were the best way to secure additional water supplies, and recreation and environment were at the bottom of folks' priorities for water use (see www.cowaterinitiative.org). Martha gave an update on the Elkhead interpretive signs. State Parks funds have been frozen, which probably means smaller signs (no shade, less sign space). Martha will be sending the design to the Committee for review. Sharon said the San Juan Program Director's office now has four people (Dave, Sharon, Joann, and Scott). They're working to increase coordination with the Upper Basin program, as well as their own partners. Sharon brought samples of canned drink cozies and keychains the San Juan Program recently had produced. Their nonnative fish management activities are proceeding well (with less opposition than seen in the Upper Basin). A \$400K grant was received for side channel and backwater restoration work (for which more outreach may be needed). Randy thanked the Program for the letter to the CDOW Director on his TV interview.
8. Review of work planning materials:
 - a. Draft RIPRAP assessment – No changes.
 - b. Draft revised RIPRAP – Noting media training mentioned in the RIPRAP, Kara said that the Committee members could offer Program-specific media training for managers. The Committee will first develop materials and methods, then consider developing media training around that. Matt noted that the Service has a new employee, Steve Martano, who was previously heavily involved in public involvement related to northern pike removal from reservoirs to benefit golden trout. Matt will talk to him about potentially making a "lessons learned" presentation at the 2009 nonnative fish workshop.

- c. Draft FY 2010-2011 program guidance – No change, although the Committee will brainstorm activities which may be added to #12 and #12L (both for 2009, as well as out years).
9. Recovery Program website update – Debbie and Angela previewed the Program’s new combined (public and Program partner) website, which should be live within the next month or so. Ellen Szczesny has done a great job getting this website organized and the content loaded.
10. Brainstorming methods & messaging:
 - a. Three to five standard key points to promote the Program and provide necessary background. Something easily put in paragraph format and added as a boilerplate to the end of press releases. Points: collaboration; win-win; ESA recovering 4 endangered fish found in UCRB and nowhere else. Through the ESA, we’ve found ways to ensure there is water for people, wildlife, and communities now and in the future. Value/spirit of the ESA provides the over-arching context for our 3-5 points. More and more folks using these rivers are not native English speakers and have very different heritage, so we need to consider this in our messages, as well. Use more lay terms, steer clear of polarizations (e.g. consumptive/non-consumptive).
 - b. Proactive topics. Consider climate change, invasive mussels, mercury, selenium...
 - c. Materials & activities
 - d. Opportunities for promotion
11. Schedule next meeting – The Committee scheduled a conference call for Thursday, April 9 from 10 a.m. to noon to continue discussing new activities (see item #10, above). Randy suggested we may want to have a public meeting related to nonnative fish management in Moffat County again this year (August?).
12. Behind-the-scenes aquarium tour and look at exhibit that features endangered Colorado River fish – Life Sciences Manager Ken Yates provided a comprehensive tour of the aquarium.

ADJOURN: 4:00 p.m.

Upper Colorado River Recovery Program
I & E Committee
Feb 12, 2009

Nonnative Fish Updates

1. 2008 NNF Update from the field (Powerpoint presentation).
2. Prioritized Recommendations from Past Nonnative Fish Workshops
 - Increase Communication between Biology and I&E Committees
 - Increase the I&E message of the predatory impacts of northern pike and smallmouth bass
 - Educate children about both the general recovery message as well as the effects of nonnative fishes
 - **Increase PR – importance of sportfish in settings compatible with native fish conservation – eg. Justice Center and Yampa State Park Headquarters**
 - i. Researchers have suggested that the public appreciates the smallmouth bass and northern pike that we have been translocating to readily accessible fishing spots. We need to make sure the public understands where the fish are coming from and why.
 - ii. The importance of tagging information – please provide the recovered tags in the receptacle.
 - iii. DO NOT TRANSPORT LIVE FISH ANYWHERE – IT’S ILLEGAL !!
 - iv. Should we open the Justice Center pond up to all ages ??
 - Designate native fish conservation areas
 - Increase penalties for illicit introductions
 - Reduce/eliminate illicit introductions
3. Debbie and Tom will draft letters of appreciation (for Bob Muth’s signature) to Moffat County Sheriff; Ron Delacroce (Colorado State Parks) for providing nonnative fish translocation sites. Are there others we should recognize for their assistance with nonnative fish management?