

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Summary
February 13, 2003
Denver, Colorado

Participants: Chris Treese, Debbie Felker, Justyn Hock, Peter Roessmann, Matt Kales, Bob Muth, Angela Kantola, Kara Lamb, John Marshall, John Shields, and Betsy Blakeslee.

> Action items.

1. Program Director's Update - Bob Muth complimented the Committee on the effectiveness of the overall I&E program. Bob gave an update on recent Program activities.

Drought - Although the drought has posed major difficulties for all parties, it has demonstrated our ability to work together. The effects of the drought on the fish cannot be easily documented, although all fish certainly are negatively impacted. We don't know the long-term effects, but we do know that drought has long been a part of the system these fish evolved in. One interesting note was that we found significant numbers of fish up in Lodore Canyon this year (when they're normally found further downriver). Some of our population estimates had to be delayed due to the drought (e.g., Cataract Canyon). Also due to the drought, much of the river in the Grand Valley area was diverted for irrigation this year. Therefore, the Service and CDOW conducted a salvage operation in two of the major irrigation canals in the Grand Valley. Only one stocked razorback sucker was found. About 10,000 other native fishes (mostly large fish) were recovered from the GVIC canal, mostly small fish were in the Government Highline canal. Also due to the drought, we did not stock razorback sucker above the 15-Mile Reach this year.

Recovery Goals - The final recovery goals were published in August; subsequently, the Service received a FOIA request from Earthjustice on behalf of the Grand Canyon Trust. In November, the Service received a notice of intent to sue related to the recovery goals. The Service responded, countered the concerns raised, and has offered to meet with the Grand Canyon Trust board to discuss their concerns.

Stocking - We have indications that our stocking efforts are working for razorback sucker. In addition to continuing to find stocked fish in reproductive condition on the Green River, this year we found larval razorback sucker in the Gunnison River.

Other - The Program has hired Argonne National Lab to develop a strategy for future research on geomorphic conditions in the river. The Program is working to refine its floodplain restoration efforts and will be developing subbasin and site-specific floodplain management plans which will identify how each site fits into the overall recovery effort. P.L. 107-375 was signed in December and extended authorization for construction of capital projects through 2008. The Program is working to get Dan Luecke back on the

Implementation Committee (likely through the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies). Chris Treese suggested that the drought presents several I&E opportunities related to: cooperation among participants; fishes' long history of withstanding drought conditions; fish response; and modification of Program activities. John Shields noted that the briefing book will have a short article in the front that discusses the drought. Chris Treese suggested the cooperative effort related to the proposed Elkhead enlargement is another item that deserves billing. Chris recommended developing a statement that Program participants could use to respond to Earthjustice notice of intent to sue. Other possible stories: 1) population estimates (explain what is found and what that tells us); 2) stocked fish behaving like wild fish; and 3) floodplain work (take a proactive outreach approach once actions are confirmed)

>Debbie and Bob Muth will look into what they can do and focus on how the Program is moving forward in accordance with the recovery goals. Chris suggested that population estimates and survival of stocked fish are another item that we should promote. Bob and Matt agreed it would be good to emphasize the role of stocking in recovery and the care we've taken with regard to genetics. Chris urged that I&E continue to lay the groundwork for site-specific recovery activities.

2. Nonnative Fish Management Key Messages - With reference to Colorado's concerns regarding nonnative fish removal efforts in Colorado, Bob said he is meeting with Bruce McCloskey and Tom Nesler tomorrow. Until then, the specifics of key messages on nonnative fish removal in Colorado are somewhat up in the air. Debbie said that Utah is developing its key messages. Bob emphasized that nonnative fish control is essential for the Program to meet its dual goal of recovering the fish and providing water for people. Debbie Felker distributed draft overall key messages on nonnative fish removal. John Marshall said he believes a primary concern for Colorado's biologists is answering public questions regarding whether removing nonnative fishes will indeed have a significant effect on the endangered fish populations and whether leaving the nonnatives in the river will, in fact, prevent endangered fish recovery. The Committee discussed the messages we should promote to the public and when (now vs. later when we've arrived at greater consensus within the Program on what removal strategies will be employed in Colorado). The Committee concurred that it would be best to wait until Bob talks with Colorado. Chris suggested that our messages emphasize that nonnative fish removal will be a multi-year program that will be evaluated; we recognize that nonnatives have economic value in certain areas (>Debbie will see if Jeff Comstock or others with CDOW have specific numbers for warmwater fishes in these specific areas and ask Mark Hadley if there are regions in Utah where removal of nonnative fish would have an economic impact); and that the preponderance of nonnatives clearly indicates need to try to achieve better ecological balance. With regard to economic value, Bob Muth added that in most cases in Colorado we're moving the fish, so they are still more accessible to anglers. The Committee has already provided comments on key messages, so will not need to see revised drafts.

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3. I&E Update - Debbie reviewed the status of ongoing projects: the bid is out for a vendor to make the interpretive signs for the Colorado Riverfront Trail; our kiosk is in place at the Ouray National Fish Hatchery and one additional sign is in the process of being made; Dinosaur National Monument is interested in establishing an aquarium at the Quarry Visitor Center; Barry Wirth at Reclamation has asked to have our exhibit at the Lake Powell visitor center this summer. That would tie up both our exhibits for the summer (unless we were to temporarily remove the exhibit at the museum in Grand Junction, e.g., to take it to the water workshop in Gunnison if the Program decides to have it there again this year). We should check to see if we need a multiple language translation at Lake Powell. Debbie has been busily working on the briefing book (D.C. trip is March 12-18).
4. Interactive Map - The Committee brainstormed geographical data that should be included on the endangered fish “layers” of the map. Priority information would include: hatchery locations, historic distribution, currently occupied habitat, critical habitat, fish passage and screens (current and proposed), known spawning locations, and participating reservoirs. Second priority information would include: location of I&E sites (e.g., aquaria), population estimates, nonnative fish control areas, floodplain restoration sites (would link to site-specific management plans), and FWS endangered fish flow recommendations. Key water projects for which the Program provides Endangered Species Act compliance might also be considered (lower priority).
5. FY 2004/2005 Planning -Angela Kantola reviewed the draft Program Guidance for I&E. The Committee added a note to the Program Guidance text and FY 05 budget table that FY 05 funds for interpretive exhibits might need to be increased if a significant commitment were made at the Lake Powell visitor center. The Committee approved the draft guidance with that addition.
6. Committee Member Reports - Peter Roessmann said Project WET just held a 2-1/2 day K-12 curriculum writing workshop for the entire Colorado River. Peter noted a project suggested by a Glenwood teacher wherein participants “build” an animal that fits a niche of certain environmental parameters. Peter asked if the Program might want to work on this sort of curriculum development related to endangered fish. Angela said the Program contracted for curriculum entitled “Rivers at Risk” several years ago. Debbie said the Committee previously discussed reprinting this curriculum, but delayed it due to other priorities (although the suggestion was made that we put it on the web). The key question for the Committee may be to determine the best way of disseminating this curriculum and keeping it available to teachers. >Debbie will look into what it would take to put “Rivers at Risk” on the web and will also send Peter a copy of Rivers at Risk and the *Rocky Mountain News*’ teacher’s curriculum.
7. Other - We have funds to send three people to Bleiker training; >Debbie will send out the training dates. Chris noted that the water users hope to implement an e-newsletter this year to which the Program may be able to submit information.
8. Next Meeting - June 5, 10-3 near DIA. Debbie will get I&E scopes of work out early to

accommodate this meeting. The Committee needs to determine what (if anything) to do next for a Program “handout,” now that we’ve finished the magnet series.