



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Summary Dated: February 23, 2011

Information and Education Committee Web Conference February 23, 2011 – 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Summary

Participants: Peter Roessmann, John Shields, Kara Lamb, Diane Katzenberger for Matt Kales, Joann Perea-Richmann, Randy Hampton, Mike Porras, Justyn Hock, Leslie James, Tom Chart, Debbie Felker, Pat Martinez, and Angela Kantola. Randy Hampton said he has transferred to Denver as CDOW's statewide spokesman and Mike Porras has filled his former position on the West Slope.

1. **Nonnative fish management update and outreach strategy** – Tom Chart explained changes in nonnative fish management for the year. 2010 activities were reviewed at the nonnative fish management workshop and participants made recommendations to the Biology Committee. The Biology Committee recommended changes focusing on higher-density smallmouth bass areas (lower Green River, Yampa River) and targeting more of the smallmouth bass spawning period (“extended surge”). Most significantly, they also recommended: 1) ceasing translocation of smallmouth bass into Elkhead Reservoir; and 2) ceasing the marking pass for northern pike in the Yampa River. Pat Martinez added that translocation of largemouth bass to Highline Reservoir also will end (minor change, since this has rarely occurred in the past). Randy Hampton said CDOW has modified collecting permits accordingly. CDOW's major concern is to clearly communicate the reasons for the changes to the public, particularly with regard to smallmouth bass in Elkhead in light of potential impacts to that fishery. A bass group in Craig historically opposed removing smallmouth from the Yampa and viewed translocation into Elkhead as something of a compensation.

Randy said CDOW will work on stakeholder and internal communication before a public announcement. Randy thinks a public announcement should occur as part of the Program's annual spring news release. Prior to that, CDOW will reach out to State Parks and the bass group and the local paper in Craig and have conversations about the science that brought us to where we are today and where it may take us in the future. Ceasing translocation of smallmouth into Elkhead could become a permanent change, but additional scientific information will be assessed before this is finalized into a long-term decision.

Conversations over the next few years may need to include alternative fisheries, etc., since this change is expected to reduce the Elkhead smallmouth bass fishery over time. The main public communication about this change will come from the Program as part of the spring news release (late March/early April), which includes talking points and Q&A's (usually different for CO and UT). As part of this, we also send letters each year to the Moffatt, Routt

and Rio Blanco county commissioners and sheriffs. Debbie Felker added that this year's briefing book discusses the Program's shift to prevention in nonnative fish management and we will want to show this shift in the Q&As, etc., also. Randy said that at this point, he doesn't think public meetings will be necessary (unless CDOW's meeting with key stakeholders suggest otherwise). Pat explained the concept of propagule pressure, the invasive impact that occurred with Elkhead as the point source for smallmouth bass moving both up and downstream. Studies show that it takes only a surprisingly low number of escaped fish to have this impact. Kara Lamb suggested providing on-line links to this and Program research about smallmouth bass impacts. Tom thought that might be useful – links could be provided off the Q&A's posted to the Program and CDOW websites. Tom said that though these changes to nonnative fish management may meet some public opposition, he believes they move the Program in the right science-based direction.

2. **Legislative conference call and D.C. briefing trip update** – John Shields discussed the first Congressional conference call (which will be held tomorrow) and the March briefing trip. The call will be brief (20 minutes) with three agenda items: 1) a brief introduction to the Program; 2) mention of the non-Federal Program participants' work to get legislation passed this year; and 3) a short review of the Programs' progress and fish status. The non-Federal Program participants also will ask Congressional staff what they think would be the best way to seek Congressional support for Programs' funding in the President's budget this year. Roughly 25 people were invited to be on the call; John has heard from four or five that they can't participate (and has been following up with those to schedule briefing trip meetings). Kara asked how the Program will be characterized on the call in light of new staff and John said they plan to stress the number of water projects for which the Program provides ESA compliance. The briefing trip will include meetings with Congressional representatives/staff from the states' (CO, NM, UT, and WY) delegations, appropriation/authorizing committee staff, DOI and OMB, et al. The group is still working to determine who will speak at the Friday lunch. Debbie said everyone in both programs worked *very* hard on the briefing book. The book should be printed tomorrow afternoon and Debbie will send the final pdf file to the Committee and post it to the web. Debbie reminded the group that we're always looking for good photos (Justyn Hock offered to take photos for Service activities in Grand Junction as needed). John added that less color was used in this year's briefing book to keep it a little lower-key in this climate. Congressional support letters may not be sought this year, but the non-Federal Program participants are working on getting letters from the governors. Clearly they have immense challenges with Congress this year.
3. **Review of work planning materials** –
 - RIPRAP: no changes to text or tables. John noted the important accomplishment of completing the transition to the coloradoriverrecovery.org website.
 - Program Guidance: no changes; Kara will look into the possibility of Reclamation covering CROS expenses with non-Program funds. Debbie noted the FY 12-13 scope of work #12 will request \$18K in both years from the San Juan Program.
4. **I&E Update** – The Program had CSU conduct a public attitude survey in the mid-1990s. A CSU professor doing a climate change public attitude survey asked Debbie if our Program had anything we'd like surveyed and she provided him with the former survey and asked him to let her know if there was anything he might recommend including in his current survey. Justyn suggested that combining the two topics might color results; Randy said that if they

get more than 300 responses, this bias should be able to be identified and excluded.

Debbie said she and Jana Mohrman staffed the Recovery Program's exhibit at the Colorado Water Congress in Denver, January 26-28. Colorado's newly elected governor John Hickenlooper stopped by the exhibit to have his picture taken. He took a "nonnative" gummy fish and a set of magnets. Debbie and Jana will staff the exhibit at the Utah Water Users Workshop, March 14-16, in St. George. Zane Olsen, from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, will bring fish from Wahweap Fish Hatchery for the exhibit.

Photos: We continue to need high resolution photos of field activities and both endangered and nonnative fish that we can use in publications and other educational materials. Those who work with the researchers are asked to emphasize the need for them to take photos and to provide them to the Program Director's office (for San Juan River recovery efforts, also).

State park interpretive signs: Debbie will follow-up with Ron Dellacrose (State Park Manager for Elkhead and Yampa River State Parks) on his request to update interpretive signs about the endangered fish. She is waiting for confirmation that Ron has been notified by CDOW of the decision not to place smallmouth bass in Elkhead Reservoir this year.

The rack card is still in the process of being revised to include I&E Committee suggestions from the last conference call. A second proof should be ready for review by late March.

John Hamill, the Recovery Program's first Director is retiring from USGS's Glen Canyon Monitoring and Research Center; Leslie James presented Tomelleri artwork to John in thanks to him on behalf of the Recovery Program.

5. **Roundtable updates** – Justyn described the bus tour that will be hosted by the Colorado Foundation for Water Education June 13-15. The group will tour GWUUA ("Roller") Dam fish passage and screen on the 15th with Dick Proctor, Debbie Felker and Bob Burdick presenting. Debbie will share the itinerary with the Committee. Randy said CDOW will have a biologist speak on the upper reaches (let CDOW know if need someone on the Grand Junction end). Justyn said Ute Water's annual water festival will be May 16 & 17; they will have a setup in the exhibit hall for which Debbie will provide stickers, gummy fish, and the banner stand. Angela added that the Service's staff in Grand Junction also participates in this event by bringing endangered and nonnative fish for the students to view and touch.

Randy said the photos of the endangered fish will be back in CDOW's new fishing brochure. When the online version is available, we'll send a link to the Committee.

Peter Roessmann said that next Tuesday, March 1, Western Resource Advocates will release a new report, "Filling the Gap," that makes suggestions for addressing the water supply gap the front range will face by 2050 (without big reservoir or pipeline projects). River and stream health and habitat protection are a major focus of the report. Debbie will send the link to the Committee when it's available (and also get Peter the contact for the Water Education Foundation bus tour so those participants can be provided a copy).

Joann Perea-Richmann said staff are working on a brochure to provide to people that biologists encounter during their work on the San Juan River. (Joann will send Debbie a copy

when it's done). In light of budget cuts, Joann can't go to St. George this year, but should be able to conduct outreach events in Durango and Farmington.

Kara said this may be a high runoff year, depending on how March and April shape up. Reclamation is beginning to communicate with its partners in this regard. Several meetings may be held in relation to Ruedi Reservoir (both spring and base flows). Kara just learned that the 10,825 draft EA should be out by the end of this summer. Tom complimented Kara on the HUP report from the Loveland Office; Kara will provide a copy to the Committee.

6. **Elect new Committee chair** – Kara has chaired the Committee for three years and is ready to pass the baton. The Committee elected Randy Hampton as the new chair. Randy will meet with the Biology and Management committees in the future as the new I&E Committee chair.
7. **Schedule next meeting/conference call** – Web conference Wednesday, July 13, at 10 a.m.