

Information & Education Committee Meeting
April 19, 2007
National Park Service, Lakewood, Colorado

Participants: Mark Hadley, Debbie Felker, Bob Muth, John Reber (National Park Service, representing Carla Beasley and a member of our Management Committee), Randy Hampton, Tom Blickensderfer (CO Dept. of Natural Resources, participating in nonnative fish discussion and also a member of Management Committee), George Smith (Fish & Wildlife Service hydrologist), Jana Mohrman (with Fish & Wildlife Service. She will be working on water issues with our program when George Smith retires), Justyn Hock, Kara Lamb, Jim Pokrandt, Matt Kales, John Shields, Joann Perea-Richmann (San Juan Program), Pat Nelson

CONVENE: 10:00 a.m.

1. Welcome/Introductions – Chairman Mark Hadley convened the meeting with introductions.
2. D. C. Briefing Trip –
 - John Shields gave a summary of the 32 congressional briefings in D.C. this year. He reported that joint delegation meetings worked really well, we received great support, the briefing materials were well received, and bringing Dave Campbell, Bob Muth and other biologists to the briefings added a lot of credibility.
 - Ethics rules for funding letters have changed. We need to get clarification so we can follow the rules.
 - John suggested that disk drives and sticker sheets might be a good handout next year instead of the fish magnets.
 - John mentioned that there is an annual award from the Fish and Wildlife Service that recognizes effective conservation partnerships. He said he thinks the Recovery Program should be nominated for this award. >Matt Kales said he would help get more information about that, and other, awards that might be worth considering.
 - Randy Hampton suggested that oil shale may become a question of interest at these meetings because of water rights issues. He recommended that we brief the government affairs staff with energy development companies like Shell Oil where former Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton now works. > Randy and Matt Kales will develop internal recommendations that the I&E Committee Chair will provide to the Management Committee for discussion at its July 11-12 meeting.
3. Nonnative Fish Management –
 - Pat Nelson said that researchers meet yearly to review current nonnative fish management actions and to determine future actions. This information is used to revise scopes of work and update outreach materials (key messages, news release, questions/answers, river fact sheets).
 - The Recovery Program will hold a public meeting in Grand Junction on August 14, 2007, to address misinformation among anglers in the area (primarily about channel catfish removal).

- Elkhead Reservoir is filling to its new level. Once removal passes begin in the Yampa River, all smallmouth bass over 10" will be placed in Elkhead. The reservoir is scheduled to open for boating on May 1.
- On Thursday, April 26, 2007, the Recovery Program will issue a press release on this year's planned nonnative fish management actions.
- Tom Blickensderfer said Recovery Program environmental interests want to talk to the Colorado Wildlife Commission about nonnative fish management. The Commission meets in May in Grand Junction and June in Craig.
- Jim Pokrandt offered to distribute nonnative fish and other Recovery Program materials at State of the River meetings this year. The first will be held May 9 in Grand Junction. >Debbie will send Jim the appropriate handouts.

4. State's Perspective of Outreach Needs re: Nonnative Fish Management –

- Utah - Mark Hadley
 - Public and media interest is different in Utah than in Colorado.
 - Utah doesn't have a fishery for northern pike.
 - Smallmouth bass removal occurs in a very remote area, so there is little public interest.
 - There is only a small group of catfish fishermen that are upset about catfish removal, and we have stopped removing them.
 - Outreach in Utah is good and not a big deal to the public. It is almost impossible to get media interest in nonnative fish.
 - Utah is happy with the Recovery Program's current level of outreach and has no recommended changes.
- Colorado – Randy Hampton
 - The draft Elkhead Reservoir Management Plan is expected to be approved soon. The reservoir will be managed as a smallmouth bass fishery and will be aggressively publicized as one.
 - The Colorado Division of Wildlife bought materials to create bass habitat at Highline Lake. Volunteer anglers are putting together a structure to create bass cover in the lake. Materials were purchased by CDOW. This is an opportunity for some great PR. >Kara said she would provide Randy with Bass Club contacts she works with to host the Casting for Kids program.
 - We need to clearly let the public know how we are managing lakes, so the public doesn't try to manage them for us.
 - Rifle Gap Reservoir's management plan includes an increase in walleye and the removal of northern pike. Anglers are planning a northern pike removal event, including a fish fry, on June 8.
 - Northern pike management remains a challenge because most are illegally introduced. CDOW is trying to figure out if the fisheries that currently in existence should be managed or removed.
 - Energy workers from states like Texas and Oklahoma are moving into Colorado and asking CDOW to establish warm-water fisheries.

5. New Outreach Idea –

- Kara Lamb put together a list of questions that we can use to survey our partners, stakeholders, and public about the Recovery Program. The questions will be distributed at operations meetings in the near future. The questions are:
 1. Have you heard of the four endangered fish? If so, where did you hear about them?
 2. Are you familiar with the benefits and success of the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Recovery Programs?
 3. Do you find value in the recovery of endangered fish?

>Kara will finalize the questions and send to the I&E Committee for review and comment.

6. Interpretive Exhibits –

- Debbie Felker provided background on existing Recovery Program interpretive exhibits and discussed FY 2008 and 2009 recommended projects. The committee agreed with the recommendations which will be explained more fully (including budget) in the FY 08 and 09 scope of work.

7. Elkhead Reservoir –

- Jim Pokrandt distributed the Colorado River Water Conservation District's annual report which includes information about the Recovery Program and the Elkhead Reservoir enlargement.
- Jim reported that the reservoir was expected to fill by April 20, and that the public is excited to see the state park reopen. The River District will hold a dedication on July 11. Tom Blickensderfer said he is working to get the governor to attend. During discussion about the public's anticipation that the smallmouth bass fishery will be immediately reestablished at Elkhead, John Shields suggested reviewing how long it took to establish a quality fishery at Wolford Mountain when it opened. >Jim will work with Randy Hampton re: appropriate messages related to fishing at Elkhead and to see if CDOW can stock smallmouth bass removed from the Yampa River into the reservoir during the event.
- The State Engineer sent letters asking water users to comply with the law by installing head gates and gages for water from the Yampa River. This sparked some controversy because this river has previously remained unmanaged. The head gates and gages will help ensure that water releases for the endangered fish reaches them. The River District established a \$500 grant program to help water users fund installation of the new equipment.

8. Colorado West Slope and Recovery Program –

- Kara Lamb and Jim Pokrandt advised the committee that we need to be aware that some big water contracts will expire in the near future and we need to pay attention to renegotiations and related communication issues.

9. San Juan River Program –
 - Joann Perea-Richmann reported that the San Juan Program hired a new biologist named Ann Davis. Joann helped staff the joint exhibit at the Utah Water Users Association’s annual meeting in St. George, Utah, which drew more than 600 people.

10. Price-Stubb Outreach –
 - Justyn Hock provided an overview of the Price-Stubb fish passage issue that included a request from local boaters and the Town of Palisade to include a whitewater park feature. After reviewing all options and learning that the boaters and the Town of Palisade were unable to raise the needed funds for the whitewater park feature, the Recovery Program announced that it will proceed with constructing the fish passage only and the Bureau of Reclamation awarded a contract to begin this process. Justyn discussed outreach efforts that occurred throughout this process. These included a public meeting held last August in Grand Junction, numerous meetings with local Congressional staff, meetings with the editors of the two local newspapers and several news releases. Justyn asked the Committee for recommendations for a public education campaign as fish passage construction goes forward. Recommendations included:
 - Post warnings to stay out of that part of the river on kayaking websites and blogs. (Kara recommends www.mountainbuzz.com.)
 - Have the State Parks post signs stating that it is illegal to enter the river and fine anyone who enters the river because they will be trespassing if they float down to the fish passage area. Randy said he has access to 11,000 anglers whom he can notify that river access is illegal.
 - Issue warning press release(s).
 - The committee recommended that we focus on telling people to stay away from the passage and to avoid mentioning safety features because that encourages people to try to boat it.

11. Outreach Materials – Due to lack of time, this item will be discussed during an upcoming conference call that will be scheduled to discuss FY 08-09 scopes of work.

12. Other Business –
 - This year marks the Recovery Program’s 20th anniversary. John Shields recommended that we consider celebrating by inviting members of past Implementation Committee meetings to attend this year’s meeting. Another idea might be to send a letter to these original people. >The Program Director’s staff will discuss this further and make a recommendation.
 - The Committee discussed participation in a discussion on outreach issues with the Biology Committee at its April 24 meeting. Randy Hampton and Kara Lamb plan to participate. BC members will be invited to attend future I&E Committee meetings.
 - Bob Muth announced that the Recovery Program gave a Special Outreach Award to Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Biologist Quent Bradwisch for several

outstanding contributions he has made to the Recovery Program's Information and Education efforts. These include: working to establish the new aquarium exhibit at the Carl Hayden Visitor Center at Glen Canyon Dam; working with Page High School students to raise razorback suckers in a local golf course pond, and bringing live fish and his scientific expertise to the Recovery Program's exhibit at water user conferences.

- Bob also announced that the Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of revising recovery goals for the endangered fishes. This work is scheduled for completion by December 2007. The biggest issue will probably be developing time and cost estimates for recovery. The Service is also conducting a 5-year species status review of the endangered fishes this year.
- >John Shields will schedule a conference call in the near future with Dave Campbell, Bob Muth and Tom Pitts to discuss the Program Highlights briefing book. The purpose is to reach agreement regarding whether or not the book that is currently used is the right format with the right content for the intended audiences. This may be a subject for Committee discussion at a later date.
- Debbie thanked Mark Hadley for his leadership during the past four years as I&E Committee chairman and introduced Kara Lamb (Bureau of Reclamation, Loveland) as the new chairperson.
- A conference call will be scheduled in the near future to review/discuss FY 08-09 scopes of work, and any other issues that require followup.

ADJOURN: 4:00 p.m.