



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Summary Dated: July 18, 2012

Information and Education Committee Meeting Summary July 17-18, 2012, Grand Junction, Colorado

1. **Participants:** Randy Hampton, Justyn Hock, Mike Porras, Brent Stettler, John Shields, Leith Edgar, Melissa Trammell, Joann Perea-Richmann, Sharon Whitmore, Leslie James, Dean Riggs, Kara Lamb (via phone), Debbie Felker, Pat Martinez, Tom Chart, and Angela Kantola.

Tuesday, July 17

2. **Program Director's Update** – Tom Chart reviewed current Program activities/issues. Tom described the 2012 water year (comparing it to 2002). Although precipitation through June, 2012 is bad, 2002 was worse. Spring and early summer temperatures so far this year are higher than 2002 (thus river temperatures are likely as warm or warmer than 2002). Tom showed hydrographs comparing 2002, 2012, and average conditions for the Upper Colorado River Mainstem. Tom described Flaming Gorge releases to create a peak at Jensen, Utah, after razorback sucker larvae were detected in the Green River. On the Colorado River, 810 cfs is the dry year target, but 2012 is so dry, we're working to maintain 250 cfs using our ~30,000 acre-feet of available water. On the Yampa River, the Program is working to maintain at least 93 cfs (currently releasing 40 cfs from Elkhead, which can be maintained for ~80 days). Tom gave an update on capital projects. The downstream end of the fish passage at Price-Stubb was affected by the 2011 high flows and Reclamation is conducting maintenance on that now (made easier by this year's low flows). A levee was damaged at Thunder Ranch on the Green River in 2011; repairs were completed earlier this year. The Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facilities ponds are nearing completion (ahead of schedule). The Committee will tour this site tomorrow. A capital project that the Program continues to discuss is how best to prevent entrainment at the Tusher Wash diversion in Utah. Tom reviewed the status of the endangered fish (details can be seen in the most recent [Program Highlights](#) document and the soon-to-be-released [2012 sufficient progress memo](#)). Colorado and Green River Colorado pikeminnow populations have looked pretty good (though apparently are declining again in the Green River). Colorado pikeminnow are stocked in the San Juan River, but recruitment has not yet been documented. Humpback chub levels vary among populations. Razorback sucker recaptures continue to be encouraging; spawning was documented for the first time on the White River last year. Sharon described the 2-year survey of fish at the San Juan River Lake Powell inflow (which Reclamation has offered to help continue this year, along with potential Colorado River inflow).
3. **Nonnative Fish Update** – Pat Martinez gave an update on nonnative fish management activities. Pat showed graphics illustrating: 1) the presence of nonnative aquatic species from 1980 through 2010 throughout the basin; and 2) ranking nonnative nonsalmonid sportfishes

by piscivory in rivers, invasiveness in riverine habitats, and incidence of illegal transfer into ponds and reservoirs. Factors that can increase distribution or abundance of nonnatives include: illegal introductions; reservoir escapement; and low river flows. Pat reviewed tools we have to manage nonnative fishes, including ones we've used (like removing harvest limits and mechanical removal), and tools we are considering. Debbie asked what tools we have to prevent nonnative fishes from invading the Gunnison River, which currently does not have the same level of nonnative fishes as other areas.

4. **Nonnative fish subcommittee comments on outreach section of basinwide strategy –**

General versus nonnative fish-specific message

- Nonnative fish are the most significant obstacle facing recovery;
- Does the public adequately understand this point? Randy said Colorado is looking at two rotenone projects right now. A press release will be issued soon about proposed rotenone at Miramonte slated for fall 2013. The release will be distributed statewide to increase awareness about nonnative fish problems.
- Nonnative fish-specific/specialized messaging recommended.

Who should send the nonnative fish message?

- Public has heard from the Recovery Program
- Agency/entity with different brand-name recognition (e.g., water users, fishery organizations/NGOs)? Melissa emphasized the need for all to pitch the *same* message; John Shields agreed, and endorsed the idea of all partners pitching the message.
- Discussion about who pitches nonnative fish message recommended.

Funding

- I&E must be able to achieve agency and public understanding of purpose and scope of nonnative fish management
- Prioritization of optimal I&E activities recommended.

The Committee discussed the idea of conducting another public attitude survey (Randy suggested some of the questions would be repeated; others would be new based on new challenges like nonnative fishes). Kara said that if a Federal agency does a survey, there are a number of restrictions and requirements. Surveys conducted by CSU's Human Dimensions are expensive. Randy suggested that perhaps someone from Brett Johnson's department could collaborate with a graduate student in CSU's Human Dimensions. Tom Chart suggested we might ask the water users if they would see this as an appropriate use of Section 7 funds. Both the I&E Committee and the Nonnative Fish Subcommittee believe a survey would provide information to help target the Program's messaging.

With regard to nonnative fish being the Program's greatest impediment to recovery, Tom Chart said he thinks this is the Program's general sense and that's reflected in the Service's sufficient progress memo. Tom suggested that if we haven't been explicit about that, perhaps we should be (e.g., starting at the Management Committee and leading to an Implementation Committee revised policy or similar). John Shields agreed, and noted that we have to find new tools since we have limited funds to implement mechanical removal of nonnative fish.

Melissa noted that six new introductions or expansions of nonnative fish occurred in Upper Basin waters this year.

Pat showed a mock-up of endangered fish playing cards that might be used as a Program giveaway.

The Committee discussed the PIP-12L (nonnative fish) scope of work, the communications part of the basinwide strategy, and what's needed. Kara liked the idea of developing a Recovery Program Communication Plan (which she said is very different from a PIP or a scope of work). Melissa suggested that for the purpose of the basinwide strategy, a brief description of the communications plan likely would be in order, with more detail about nonnative fish.

Next steps: >Randy and Debbie will work with Tom Chart and Pat Martinez to clarify what the program needs and then reconvene the sub-group (Leith, Debbie, Randy, Kara and now Brent Stettler) of the I&E Committee that worked on the communications section of the basinwide strategy.

- 5. Social media and the U.S. Fish and Service** – Leith polled the group and found that a majority of the members have facebook accounts, some have twitter, and some use photo sites like flickr. Reclamation (one portal for the entire agency), the Service, Utah, and Wyoming have agency use of social media and Colorado is moving in that direction. Kara said that a couple of years ago, Reclamation's public affairs team heard a presentation by someone from the State Department who said they tried a single Twitter portal, but found that individual Twitter accounts got *many* more followers (emphasizing the power of the personal approach). Leith gave an overview of the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region's social media use. Social media benefits include that it: is real-time; is standard practice (people expect it); is much more dynamic (interactivity); allows interaction with the public *on their terms*; has built-in tools to quantify success; and provides a captive audience. Government agencies have some security concerns about social media, but restrictions have been relaxed considerably. For the Service, use of social media has become standard practice. The Mountain-Prairie region uses flickr, YouTube (*short* segments, linked together in episodes), facebook (approaching 1,000 likes), and twitter (approaching 5,000 followers). Leith noted that people don't like it if you don't consistently post content to twitter, so his office has a goal of at least one quality tweet a day (Service policy is a minimum of two tweets a week). In response to a question of keeping up with social media, Leith said account holders become more efficient over time. The number of likes in facebook and re-tweets in twitter are a good measure of a post or tweet. You can also track how many people use a unique bit.ly url to link to content you've provided. The Mountain-Prairie external affairs group is adopting a proactive communications model: not waiting for the media to come to them; story-driven, focused on field work; and relying on subject matter experts. Leith suggested the Committee discuss how we might best use social media. >Leith asked Committee members to provide him with their agencies' social media contacts. Leith noted that social media is being consumed at a much higher rate by people age 40+ than you might think. Social media can be a way to connect and communicate with supportive audiences; it also can provide space for useful dialogue with detractors. And, it's free.

6. **Review/discuss draft talking points re: how Upper Colorado and San Juan programs benefit people and fish** – Based on comments received, Debbie & Randy will provide a final draft for the Committee's review.
7. **I & E update** – Debbie reviewed recent I&E activities.

Tom Chart and Angela Kantola staffed the Program's booth and provided information at the Grand Junction Downtown Farmer's Market on Thursday evening, July 12. They estimate 75 people stopped to talk with them including one 5th -grade student and her mother. The excited student said she knew all about the endangered fish from her participation in this year's Water Festival.

The Recovery Program worked with Colorado to hold a public meeting in Rangely in April. Instead of just focusing on nonnative fish messages, presenters gave the bigger picture about recovery and water development. Debbie thanked Mike Porras for coordinating the meeting.

Debbie participated in the Water Festival held May 14-15 in Grand Junction. She thanked Justyn Hock and Grand Junction U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff for representing the Program at this event which targets all fifth-grade students in the Grand Valley.

The Program set up its exhibit at the Downtown Denver Aquarium on May 18 to celebrate Endangered Species Day.

The Southern Ute Tribe obtained a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service to establish an aquarium with endangered razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow at the Tribe's Montessori School in Ignacio, CO. The Program provided educational materials to the school.

The City of Grand Junction public works department staff helped the Program this spring by: removing the damaged/faded interpretive signs along the Colorado Riverfront Trail; sanding and spray-painting the stands; and repairing the damaged park bench, all at no cost to the Program. New signs for the Colorado Riverfront Trail and Grand Valley Audubon will be delivered and installed in mid- to late- August

Angler notification signs were ordered to replace worn signs and add additional signs in sections of river in Utah and Colorado. Signs will be delivered in August to the Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Interpretive signs for the James M. Robb-Colorado River State Park system in the Grand Valley will be produced and installed this fall.

The Program purchased a cooler for the aquarium at Lake Powell Visitor Center in Page and Debbie will work with Wahweap Fish Hatchery staff to pursue obtaining humpback chub -- possibly from Dexter National Fish Hatchery -- to add to the exhibit.

The Program ordered a new educational item – “stress fish,” shaped like a razorback sucker and humpback chub. The San Juan Program ordered razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow. These will be available in limited quantities to help raise the programs’ educational goals. Rulers and magnets were reordered with funds that will expire at the end of this fiscal year.

Debbie and Sharon Whitmore are starting to work on the fall newsletter. Anyone with story ideas, please tell either of them by the middle of August.

Leith will help Debbie issue a joint news release with Questar Energy on August 1 to announce the installation of a PIT tag antenna on the White River that will be installed the week of August 13. Questar paid the \$125,000 to make this happen. Kevin McAbee with the Services Salt Lake City Ecological Services office is overseeing this project.

The Program is sharing the cost with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to purchase an aquarium for the Ouray NFH in Grand Junction that will display endangered fish. Kathleen Tadvick with CPW works closely with the hatchery staff to run the classroom aquarium program and frequently brings students to tour the hatchery.

The Program had a 6-foot Colorado pikeminnow made that staff in Grand Junction will share for outreach programs. In addition, the PIT tagged cutouts of endangered fish that were made for the Boy Scout National Jamboree in 2010 are now housed at the Ouray NFH for educational purposes.

The Program continues to rely on all of its partners to identify opportunities to meet the Programs’ outreach goals and we appreciate everyone’s efforts in this regard.

8. Roundtable updates –

Kara said the annual Ruedi operations public meeting is this Thursday (July 19) at 5:30 p.m. in Basalt. Service Hydrologist Jana Mohrman will give a presentation on behalf the Program. NEPA is complete on the 10,825 contracts and public contract negotiation sessions will be forthcoming this fall/winter. The Shoshone Powerplant outage protocol has been under negotiation and operation this year is as if that protocol were already in place.

Leslie described Lower Colorado River Basin activities including an ongoing EIS for Glen Canyon Dam operations. Live trout removal was recently complicated by whirling disease discovered at the Lees Ferry tail race fishery.

John distributed copies of H.R. 6060 and the Wyoming governor’s support letter (the latter of which was provided in a record two days!). The bill has 13 (of 14) sponsors, and was introduced and a hearing held on quite a fast track on July 10th. (John was one of five people who were asked to testify).

Justyn said she’s working on a press release to announce completion of the Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility ponds. The media has been very interested in river flows, and

Reclamation has been able to use that to its advantage since Gunnison River flows are higher than they have been in the past due to the Aspinall EIS.

Sharon said Joann does more of their outreach work and she (Sharon) works with Debbie on press releases, etc. The San Juan Program just issued a news release on its habitat restoration project and soon will do one on the Lake Powell work. Sharon said her office recently did brown-bag lunch presentation about the Program at the Regional Office and had good attendance of 15-20 people. Joann showed the Program's new educational items: a water bottle and a mini-frisbee in a new color.

Randy said Colorado's new fishing brochure came out in early April. It highlights penalties for illegal stocking and Operation Game Thief information related to that. Information on invasive species is included. Pictures of the endangered fish also are featured.

9. **Fryingpan-Arkansas Project: 50 years of Golden Benefits Anniversary (movie sneak-peek)** – The Committee viewed the video which includes information about the endangered fish; Kara said she will send a copy to anyone who wants one. (Contact her at: klamb@usbr.gov.) To commemorate this special event, Reclamation and its partner, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, are hosting a public event day to be held August 18, 2012, at Lake Pueblo State Park. For more information, contact Kara or go to the following websites: <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/pueblo/pueblo.html> or <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/ruedi.html>.

10. **Schedule next meeting** – Conference call October 23, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 18

The Committee toured the Ouray National Fish Hatchery - Grand Valley Unit and Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facilities.