



# Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Summary Dated: October 27, 2011

## Information and Education Committee Conference Call October 27, 2011 – 10 a.m. to Noon

### Summary

**Participants:** Kara Lamb, Leith Edgar, Mike Porras, Pat Martinez, Joann Perea-Richmann, Randy Hampton, Martha Moore, Mark Hadley, Leslie James, Debbie Felker, Tom Czapla, and Angela Kantola.

- 1. Recovery goals/plans update** – Tom Czapla said the Program Director’s office is working first on revising the Colorado pikeminnow recovery goals (these may be revised in a recovery plan). The revision will recognize that populations fluctuate and will incorporate that into the demographic criteria. The plan is to present a webinar to Service offices (Regions 2, 6, and 8) outlining the changes to the overall document. After making any needed revisions based on Service review, the information would be presented to the Programs’ partners in a similar way, webinar or as a presentation at a committee meeting. Following any needed revisions resulting from that, public review and comment will be solicited via the *Federal Register*. Randy emphasized our need to show Congress the progress which has been made toward the recovery goals. Leslie James recommended checking with the Solicitor regarding the Grand Canyon Trust case in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit before going public with humpback chub recovery goal revisions.
- 2. Discussion of draft nonnative fish management strategy** – The draft is out for review. Randy appreciates the basinwide emphasis this document brings. Pat Martinez outlined how the strategy fits into overall recovery criteria and downlisting/delisting. Pat is meeting November 28 with the nonnative fish subcommittee (which formulated much of the preliminary information that went into the strategy). The subcommittee will review comments received and how best to use the information in Appendix 1. Randy asked about I&E Committee involvement in reviewing the document. Pat said he hopes Randy can participate in the November meeting (Randy will attend). In December, there will be a follow-up meeting on illegal stocking (as discussed with the three States’ and FWS law enforcement folks last week), and States will consider if they want I&E members to participate in that. After comments are incorporated into the strategy (early 2012), the document will undergo external peer review (by individuals from the University of Washington, South Dakota State University, and USGS). Randy suggested Pat consider having someone -- for example, from CSU’s Human Dimensions Program -- provide peer review also. Pat said he would certainly consider that and asked Randy to provide suggested name(s). Randy asked if the Committee would like to provide additional input or rely on his comments and participation. The Committee was comfortable with Randy’s participation. Randy will keep the Committee in the loop and emphasized that the Committee may see

some short review deadlines coming up. Randy welcomed any other I&E Committee members to join him at the meeting on November 28 (Leith will try to attend); Pat endorsed this, as well, emphasizing the importance of I&E committee help to review this document.

3. **Shaping messages about who benefits from water depletion projects through the Recovery Program** – Randy noted that we’ve discussed this before, but he’s spent more time with the consultation list recently and thinks we may be able to do more. As there is, of course, considerably more to our work than nonnative fish management, perhaps there are opportunities to emphasize Program benefits. Randy suggested that Committee members review the four consultation lists at <http://www.coloradoriverrecovery.org/documents-publications/section-7-consultation/consultation-list.html> (click on the links: “Main Table,” and the three links for Individual Consultations under the Colorado 15-Mile Reach, Yampa, and Gunnison River PBOs). Golf courses, agricultural interests (peaches, wine, etc.), skiing, and other water users directly benefit from these Recovery Programs, but folks involved with those may never consider the importance of the ESA compliance the Recovery Programs provide for much of this water use. Randy said he thinks we need to emphasize how these industries are beneficiaries of these Recovery Programs and we should intentionally message to this broader audience. Randy encouraged Committee members to consider how they can use this in their agency messaging. Kara heartily agreed and said this ties back to our key messages. The only caution she would offer is that we be sensitive to water users’ perspective and not suggest that the Recovery Program makes all water use possible.
4. **Pit tag mapping update - can maps help us tell some stories?** – Randy said he’d previously wondered if the fish data available via web-based GIS might be interesting to the public, although he recognizes that the maps themselves may not be particularly interesting. Angela outlined how these fish data are gathered via sampling and passive monitoring stations. She agreed that the maps themselves aren’t particularly public-friendly, but they and the data they’re based on, may tell interesting stories. Debbie said there will be a newsletter article about PIT-tag antennas and how they enable researchers to track fish movement. For example, Travis Francis provided details of fish that used the antenna at the Price-Stubb fish passage during the past year. Leith Edgar said FWS in the Pacific Northwest did a social media campaign where they tracked the life-cycle of a fish inland and back out to sea to give the public an idea. We might be able to similarly use social media and describe how our endangered fish move into spawning areas, through fish passages, etc.
5. **Roundtable updates** –

Kara gave an update on the 10,825 process. The NEPA review of the contracts and exchanges that will allow the permanent commitment of this water from the East and West slope water users is in the draft EA stage. The draft is out for review (please see “Collecting Your Comments” at [www.usbr.gov/gp/eca0](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca0)). The public comment period ended Monday, but Reclamation will still take comments from agencies. Kara expects a final in the first quarter of next year. After the EA is finalized, Kara said she thinks it would be good for the Recovery Program to recognize the water users’ commitment to this process; Kara and Martha will help Debbie with this in January (e.g., article in 2012 newsletter, something on webpage, etc.).

In August, the Recovery Program called for some of its water from Elkhead Reservoir to disadvantage nonnative fishes. Angela said this all happened very quickly and though the Program Director's office and others involved tried to work with everyone affected, there were probably some folks who were missed. We want to improve our communication protocol for any future releases. Elkhead State Park Manager Ron Dellacroce would like us to give as much advanced notice in the future and consider an announcement to alert public. Debbie thanked Martha, Leith, Randy, and Deb Frazier (public information officer for CO Parks and Wildlife) for their prompt review and approval of the news release that was issued to announce the increased flows.

6. **Debbie's update** – Debbie said she had a good trip to Grand Junction in early October. She and Patty Gelatt surveyed the Recovery Program interpretive signs and Colorado pikeminnow benches on the Colorado Riverfront Trail. Most were in good shape with only signs of normal wear and tear. Two signs and one bench were recently vandalized, however, and will need repair/replacement. Greg Trainor with the City of Grand Junction told Debbie earlier this year that the city might be able to help fix the signs/benches. She will follow-up with him to discuss this. Debbie and Patty also met with Bob Wilson from Grand Valley Audubon. Although the signs at that location are in fairly good condition, Debbie recommends the program replace the ones that have cracks in them. (This appears to be normal wear and tear – not vandalism.) Bob also provided an update on the site's plans for trail improvements. Bob will relocate the existing signs and Colorado pikeminnow bench to locations that are more accessible to visitors when the improvements are made.
7. Debbie and Patty also met with Pete Firmin who manages the James M. Robb-Colorado River State Park system in the Grand Valley. (In his experience with state park signs, Pete said that he doesn't think that the vandalism to Recovery Program signs along the Riverfront Trail has anything to do with the subject or content of the signs.) Pete asked the Recovery Program for help to replace interpretive signs that were installed nearly 10 years ago and are now severely damaged by weather. He wants to support the program's efforts to get our messaging out. Debbie will prepare a sign replacement plan with associated costs for the I&E Committee's information and work with contracting to order the new signs. Randy suggested including funds in future I&E scopes of work for sign repair/replacement.

Debbie and Patty also visited Clifton Sanitation which the Recovery Program worked with to set up an aquarium exhibit in its lobby. Although they've had some trouble maintaining their fish, the Director is highly enthused about the exhibit and committed to keeping it going. Right now they have two large razorbacks and several small razorbacks. They may get some bonytail again soon.

Debbie and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Tildon Jones participated in the grand reopening of Dinosaur National Monument's Visitor Center on October 4, which drew 1,000 visitors that day. National Park Service staff were very welcoming. Tildon brought a small, tabletop aquarium with razorback sucker to go with the Recovery Program's banner stand and handouts. The Visitor Center features a permanent exhibit about the endangered fish.

The *Swimming Upstream* newsletter was sent to the graphic designer today. Debbie thanked Sharon Whitmore and her colleagues with the San Juan River program for submitting articles

and photos. Researchers are providing a lot of great photos for both programs that can be used in publications, etc. Both programs are starting work on the *Program Highlights 2011-2012* briefing book.

Zane Olsen with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Wahweap Fish Hatchery will bring fish for the Upper CO River and San Juan River Basin programs' exhibit at the Colorado River Water Users Association Annual Meeting in Las Vegas (December 14-16, 2012.)

On January 26-27, 2012, the recovery programs will exhibit at the annual Colorado Water Congress in Denver. We've never had live fish at this exhibit. Debbie will send Randy an e-mail to ask if someone from the J.W. Mumma Native Aquatic Species Restoration Facility in Alamosa could bring live fish in an aquarium. Deb asked if any Committee members could help staff the booth on January 26 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and 27<sup>th</sup> (8 a.m. to noon). Randy will help. Kara doesn't know if Reclamation will have its own booth this year.

Kara asked if the Recovery Program would have an exhibit at the Four States Irrigation Council meeting in Fort Collins, January 11-13, 2012. Debbie said that if a partner (e.g., Kara) could do that, it would be great, but it is Briefing Book preparation and researchers' meeting time for our office and we just can't do it. Kara said all Reclamation area managers provide an update there each year. She will talk to Debbie about taking the banner stand and other materials on behalf of the Recovery Program.

8. **Schedule next meeting** – The next meeting will be March 1, 2012, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. near DIA in Denver. >The Program Director's office will arrange a meeting room.