

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Meeting Summary

May 15, 2002

Denver, Colorado

Participants: Chris Treese, Jone Wright, Debbie Felker, Matt Kales, Bob Muth, Angela Kantola, Kara Lamb, John Marshall, John Shields, Ellen Szczesny, and Mark Hadley (via phone).

> Action items.

1. Program Director's Update - Bob Muth gave an update on recent Program activities. The Service's draft response to comments received on the recovery goals is in internal review. The Service plans to publish the notice of availability of final recovery goals in the *Federal Register* in July.

Instream Flow - On May 10, the Service proposed resolutions to issues raised about the draft Gunnison and Colorado river flow recommendations report. Those resolutions included a major revision to the peak flow recommendations. Reclamation can now move forward with modeling, but the EIS could be delayed by the Park Service's reserved water right claim for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument. The revised Yampa River Management Plan and draft environmental assessment will be forthcoming in June or July, with a final PBO expected in October 2002. A final EIS on Flaming Gorge operations is expected in April 2003 and record of decision in May 2003.

Habitat Restoration - The synthesis report requested by the Management Committee on the floodplain acquisition and restoration program was released this week to facilitate technical review and provide future direction for that program. The Redlands fish ladder has been shut down since late April to conserve water for operating the ladder in late June/early July when it's most critical for migrating Colorado pikeminnow. Price-Stubb fish passage issues have been resolved so Reclamation can now finalize the environmental assessment.

Propagation and Stocking - The Ouray National Fish Hatchery is up and running with a new water re-use system.

Nonnative Fish - The Program has received some positive feedback on the northern pike translocation which makes the fish more accessible (in reservoirs) than they were in the Yampa River. That positive story hasn't yet received press in Steamboat Springs or Craig.

Research and Monitoring - Colorado pikeminnow population estimates in the Green River are underway. Preliminary information indicates that captures are lower this year, due probably to lower sampling efficiency or to fish movement due to low flows.

The Committee discussed getting stories in the media about the drought from a "big picture" perspective. Todd Hartman of the Rocky may be interested in a story.

Bob asked for the >Committee's help to dispel a long-held myth about the effects of 1960's fish poisonings on the endangered fish. Bob distributed a draft fact sheet on the poisonings on the Green and San Juan rivers and asked Committee members to call him with any comments or questions.

2. Strategic Plan for State/Public Participation in Nonnative Fish Management Decision-making - Bob Muth outlined the need for a more focused effort to educate the public about both the broad intent of nonnative fish control and about project-by-project nonnative fish control objectives. Debbie Felker reviewed the draft plan, emphasizing the importance of improving internal communication among agencies conducting nonnative fish management actions and ensuring that participating agencies use the same message to convey the purpose of their actions. As Bob mentioned earlier, the Yampa River northern pike translocation seems to be better received by the public this year. Bob noted that in doing public involvement and news media relations on the Yampa River, we need to craft a message that talks not only about nonnative fish control, but also about the bigger picture of recovery efforts and water management in the Yampa River Basin.

The Committee discussed the target audiences for this outreach. Chris suggested that the general public is not really a target audience, but key local media certainly are. Chris noted that not only do we need to reach agency work crews, but also line staff, and volunteers. Kara suggested preparing a PowerPoint or other type of presentation that agencies could use for employees and volunteers. Bob said language from the recovery goals about nonnative fish control would be used to develop the key message. Local contacts will be key in working with the news media.

Kara suggested an e-mail newsletter for stakeholders (e.g., Bassmasters) and people who come to anglers' roundtable meetings. For website information, Kara suggested using the Recovery Program website and having agencies link to that rather than putting the information up separately themselves. Matt recommended contacts with and feedback from local Congressional staffs, as well. Bob suggested that we probably should focus on the Yampa River right now, since that's where the major issues are. >Debbie will provide a revised draft plan to the Committee.

3. Colorado State Fair Exhibit - John Marshall said work on this exhibit has been delayed, but will resume within the next few weeks. He believes Colorado may want to have endangered fish on display in aquaria. Although the State Fair displays are permanent, they are only open for visitation during the fair. Colorado may ask for some signs and fish for this display. The Committee told John that Recovery Program funds would not be available this fiscal year but requests for next year's fair would be considered.
4. Interactive Map - Chris said the map project work group of the Colorado River Water Users Association met to discuss short and long-term objectives for the interactive web-based GIS map under development. >Chris noted that he still needs any GIS-based or map information that agencies have which should be part of this project. The Program needs to begin to develop web-based information suitable for this project. >By the next meeting, the Program Director's Office will prepare recommendations for what

information related to the Program and the fish we should provide on this map (e.g., fish distribution, recovery activities/projects, etc.) John Shields noted that Reclamation's Provo Area Office has some good new map information on its website. >Angela Kantola will contact Tom Chart to get the \$20K for this project transferred from Reclamation to CRWCD or the appropriate entity.

5. Schedule Next Meeting - The Committee set a tentative meeting date for Thursday, September 26 in Denver near DIA (10 a.m. - 3 p.m.)
6. Congressional contacts - Matt Kales said he met recently with McInnis' staff in Grand Junction and they've requested a briefing with the Service on June 18 (also with Allard and Campbell's staff) on Program-related issues. Matt said the Service will be sure to highlight the cooperative multi-agency nature of this Program. Chris asked if this would be a good time to include any of the Program partners and >Bob Muth said he would talk to the Service about that. Kara recommended involving Program partners in any tours of their facilities.
7. Improving the Program's Web Site - Ellen Szczesny said the Program's current public website is written more like a book, going from page to page to page, and containing rather outdated information. Ellen and Debbie propose re-designing this web page with a standard drop-down menu across the top that would be easier for the user to navigate and which would be better lent to updating. Ellen showed the Committee an example from the Environmental Defense website and outlined elements for Program drop-down menus (e.g., "About Us," "Program Overview," "News & Events," "Publications," "Fish Facts," "Related Sites," "FAQ's," and "Contact Us"). Ellen noted that we have a new address for the public website: <http://ColoradoRiverRecovery.fws.gov>. Matt cautioned that having a "Contact Us" button on the same page as ESA information could open the door to considerable public comment unrelated to the Recovery Program. The Committee discussed having some of the web page translated into Spanish (e.g., the basic page and information about releasing the fish if accidentally caught). The Committee agreed the site should be clean and simple (the Environmental Defense website seems a little "busy"). Ellen and Debbie said the goal is to have this website finished in about a year. >They will provide the Committee with periodic progress reports. The Committee endorsed having a site search engine on the top of each page.
8. Ruedi Update - Kara Lamb said Reclamation is finalizing its EA on the "2012 agreement" with CWCB and FWS for annual release of 10,825 af of water from Ruedi Reservoir for the next 10 years. This agreement is part of Reclamation's compliance with the Colorado River PBO. The media is very interested in reporting on the drought. Kara noted that CRWCD's annual meetings on the Colorado River have been particularly well-attended this year.
6. Bureau Centennial - Jone and Kara outlined upcoming events celebrating Reclamation's Centennial. The big celebration is June 16-17 at Hoover Dam. >Kara will provide information on the Centennial for a fall Program newsletter story.

7. RIPRAP Review - Angela Kantola reviewed the recommended RIPRAP revisions. The Committee approved the one revision in the I&E section and had no additional comments.
8. FY 2003 Scopes of Work - The Committee had no recommended changes to the 2003 work plan.
9. I&E Update -
 - a. Interpretive Exhibits - Debbie reviewed the status of these exhibits.

Riverfront interpretive exhibit - The final draft is nearly complete. There will be a quick turnaround for final review/comment. Colorado provided input on the draft, and Bob Muth is addressing their three concerns. >Debbie will get back to local groups involved in this project so they know where we're at on this.

Montrose Pavilion – The pavilion director will install a set of the hatchery signs above the aquarium to match existing artwork displayed throughout the building. CDOW in Grand Junction is working with the aquarium to get it ready to receive fish. As soon as it's ready, Tom Czaplá will arrange to get razorback sucker and probably bonytail to exhibit. Debbie will provide the aquarium with bookmarks and fact sheets to accompany the exhibit.

The Carpenter Ranch – Program staff are working with The Nature Conservancy and the Fish and Wildlife Service to get TNC a permit to exhibit endangered fish. They also prepared a letter of agreement between the program and TNC that details responsibilities. CDOW in Grand Junction will oversee aquarium set-up and add it to its school program so that the razorback sucker on exhibit at the Ranch will essentially be raised at the Ranch and then released to the wild each year. This weekend, local high school students and their art and science teachers will be at the Ranch painting a mural of the Yampa River's ecosystem on a wall in the visitor center. The aquarium will be placed in front of this mural. The goal is to have everything in place by September (start of the school year).

Ouray Hatchery – Paperwork has been submitted to the Service's purchasing department to contract construction of a kiosk outside the hatchery building. The kiosk will match the one at the entrance to the refuge. Interpretive messages for the signs that will be placed in the kiosk still need to be prepared.

Ouray Refuge – The Refuge Manager would like to develop interpretive signs for the kiosk at the entrance to integrate messages about the endangered fish with Refuge messages. Debbie is working with him to make this happen. Hopefully, the signs will be ordered this fiscal year.

Vernal Museum – The Ouray Refuge Manager has verbal agreement from the museum that the Refuge's existing exhibit will be relocated to the new museum. Debbie has asked the Refuge if the Program can share its exhibit and has been

told that we can. The Program will have to incur the costs of doing this. Not sure at this time what will need to be done, the timeframe, and the cost.

b. Other exhibits

Request to I&E Committee from Chris Foreman, Park Manager, Highline State Park, Loma, Colorado - The Park is building a visitor center/office. It will have a display area of 21' x 28'. Because the Program has a barrier net in the lake, Highline would like to have an interpretive exhibit with an aquarium. The idea is to have endangered fish exhibited on one side with plexiglass separating from sportfish on the other side. A sample of the net would be placed along the plexiglass to demonstrate how the net works. Sportfish to exhibit would be largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie. CDOW in Grand Junction would work with the Park to take care of the fish. The park currently has more than 200,000 visitors annually. Chris anticipates about 50,000 will actually stop inside the visitor center. The budget is about \$500,000 for the building. Construction is slated to begin in June with completion in spring 2003.

Chris doesn't have firm numbers yet, but is requesting less than \$5,000 from the Recovery Program for the actual cost of the aquarium. State Parks has a budget for the interpretive signs. The Committee approved the funds, conditioned on the Program's Information and Education Committee having review and approval of the final interpretive display text that addresses the endangered fishes and the Recovery Program.

Debbie distributed the Program's "public contact" calendar (attached) and asked the Committee how often they thought the Program should take the display to various water user events. Kara suggested that every other year is probably adequate for the Gunnison meeting and the Colorado Water Congress. >John Shields will check with the Wyoming Water Association regarding how frequently the Program should display at its annual meeting. Matt Kales will provide Program materials at next week's Federal Congressional Expo in Denver.

- c. Video - Debbie said the draft Recovery Program video script should be completed by the end of this month, with final video production by September or October.
- d. News Media Opportunities - Debbie informed the Committee of a press release that will go out tomorrow about a photo opportunity in early June with the Stewart brothers of Vernal (two of the boys featured in the old photo on the front of the historical accounts book).

Adjourn 3:10 p.m.

Please notify Debbie Felker if there are any changes/additions to this calendar at 303-969-7322, ext. 227, or debbie_felker@fws.gov

**UPPER COLORADO RIVER
ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM
PUBLIC CONTACT CALENDAR
(May 1 - September 30, 2002)**

May 2002

15-16 Water Festival for 5th-graders, Grand Junction
23 Ruedi Reservoir and Coordinated Reservoir Operations Public Meeting

June 2002

_____ Summer issue – UDWR *Wildlife Review* Published/Distributed
18-21 Advanced Project WILD Workshop – Vernal (Sponsored by UDWR)
19 Yampa River Basin Partnership Meeting

July 2002

_____ Copy deadline, UDWR *Wildlife Review* Fall Issue
_____ Living Waters Exhibit at Vernal Library
3 Bureau of Reclamation Centennial – Provo
31-Aug. 2 Colorado Water Workshop, Gunnison (**EXHIBIT**)

August 2002

_____ Copy deadline, Utah Fishing Proclamation
17- Sept. 1? Colorado State Fair, Pueblo (**Coordinate with CDOW and BOR-Loveland for exhibit**)

September 2002

_____ Fall issue – UDWR *Wildlife Review* Published/Distributed
_____ Copy deadline, UDWR *Wildlife Review* Winter Issue
5-15 Utah State Fair, Salt Lake City (**Coordinate with UDWR for exhibit**)
DTBA** Yampa River Basin Partnership Meeting
DTBA** Yampa River Basin Management Plan Public Meetings

*Need to confirm date

**Date to be announced