

Management Committee Meeting Summary  
May 15-16, 2003  
Vernal, Utah

Attendees: See Attachment 1

Assignments are highlighted in the text and listed at the end of the summary.

CONVENE - 1:00 p.m.

1. Review/modify agenda and time allocations and appoint a time-keeper - The agenda was modified as it appears below.
2. Approve March 3, 2003, meeting summary - The summary was approved as written
3. Recovery Program updates -
  - a. Status of environmental group representation on the Implementation Committee - Resolutions signed by The Nature Conservancy and the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies were distributed to the Committee. >Tom Iseman will make sure the Program Director's office gets a copy of the originals. >Ralph Morgenweck will send a letter accepting the nominations of Dan Luecke for the Implementation Committee, Tom Iseman for the Management Committee, and John Hawkins for the Biology Committee.
  - b. Tusher Wash screen - Sherm Hoskins reported that the water rights case was heard by the Utah Supreme Court and the screen will be on hold until the court has made its decision (3 weeks to 6 months).
  - c. Coordinated Facilities Operations Plan - Bob Muth distributed a summary of progress. George said the report should go to the Water Acquisition Committee in June and they'll make recommendations to the Management Committee in July.
  - d. Steamboat lease - George Smith discussed the proposed 2003 lease for up to 2,000 af of water from Steamboat. The cost would be \$40 per af, which is a significant increase over the past \$16/af rate, but we would only pay for the water we need. Committee members expressed concern about the vague "to the extent practicable" language in items b and d. George said he hasn't begun negotiation on this yet and will get clarification on those items.
  - e. Gage maintenance costs - George reported that USGS is considering giving up their match program, in which case Program gage costs in Colorado will roughly double (Utah gages could increase also, but George hasn't heard yet). The Water Acquisition Committee will discuss which gages need to be maintained (the Management Committee expressed support for all the Colorado gages).

- f. Ruedi long-term contract - The Colorado PBO requires a long-term lease of 10,825 af from Ruedi. George said he and Bob Muth and the Colorado Water Conservation Board staff have worked through the contract language and the Board will vote on the lease next week.
  
- g. NIWQP - Bob Muth said that 2003 funding has been cut by ~40% for the National Irrigation Water Quality Program (which conducts selenium remediation in the Grand Valley, Gunnison and along the Green River). This remediation work is included in both the RIPRAP and razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow recovery goals. FY 04 funding could be even less. The recovery goals recognize selenium as a potential threat, encourage additional research, and notes that remediation work is underway under NIWQP. Due to the cuts, there will be no Adobe Creek backwater remediation. The Uncompaghre Water Users Association lateral line plans to do a lateral piping project this year with \$750K FY03 write-in money, although it may suffer from a 10% funding cut due to the underfinancing. Next year, there may be another \$750k write-in used in conjunction with cost share funding from the salinity control program to pipe more laterals. In the middle Green, NIWQP will continue to address Stewart Lake remediation in 2003. Brent Uilenberg asked if the Program would be willing to pick up some of the O&M costs for these remediation sites in future years (if so, that might encourage NIWQP to do Adobe Creek remediation next year). Tom Pitts said he has concerns about crossing the line of the Program's previous position not to fund water quality remediation. Frank Pfeifer agreed, noting there is still controversy as to the threat of selenium to endangered fish. The committee did not indicate a willingness to pick up O&M costs. Letters from the water users, States, and/or environmental groups to the Commissioner of Reclamation might help John Harb's effort to appeal the NIWQP budget cut. It was left up to the individual members to decide if they want to send letters supporting the NIWQP. Tom Pitts said he's heard there may be no funding for NIWQP after 2004. Bob Muth asked about the relationship of Reclamation's 2025 initiative to the kind of work NIWQP does; Brent replied that initiative is targeted more toward core mission efforts.
  
- h. Flaming Gorge EIS process - Brent Uilenberg distributed a memo from Beverly Heffernan confirming the previous schedule (cooperating agencies draft in July) and noting issues regarding spillway use. Clayton Palmer said Western is meeting with Reclamation to discuss their concerns about potential increased use of the spillway.
  
- i. Reports status - Angela Kantola provided the Committee with an updated late reports list. Tom Pitts said he'll prepare comments regarding whether the report status list is fulfilling the Committee's purpose in advance of the next meeting.
  
- j. Drought impacts to ongoing studies and projects - Bob Muth said things are looking "wetter and better," so hopefully there will be no impacts.

- k. Thunder Ranch and other land acquisition - Bob Muth distributed a summary of the appraisal, response, similar acquisitions, and a run of the razorback sucker model showing the potential benefit of the property (expected to produce ~1,000 razorbacks per year). The owners responded that they believe the Program's \$275K offer for a 455 acre perpetual easement is too low. The Committee discussed the issue, agreed this is a valuable property and approved making a counter offer. >Bob Muth will contact Chuck Sullivan.
  - l. Floodplain management plans - Bob Muth said Rich Valdez is under contract with Reclamation to produce plans for the Green and Upper Colorado basins. Rich met with the Green River basin action team a few weeks ago and Bob said he expects the draft of the Green River plan the first week in June.
4. Program Funding
- a. Capital Funds - Brent distributed budget spreadsheets and discussed impacts of the underfinancing of Reclamation's FY 03 appropriation for the Recovery Program. Brent said they were required to identify and return Federal appropriated capital funds that would not be *expended* in FY 03 (~\$700K). Brent said the Program could find the additional funds for Thunder Ranch by structuring the Grand Valley fish screen and passage contract so that mobilization costs aren't incurred until FY 04, but this means managing the capital projects budget **very** closely from now on. All this leaves ~\$3.6M deficit in capital funds for both programs in FY 04. However, carry-over capital power revenues and State funds in the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation should cover this deficit in FY 04. Brent said the Program is very close to the total capital funding cap, and so has very little room for unexpected expenditures. Brent said he has concerns about service from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in the transition to support from the California office (noting that New Mexico needs to make a contribution and NFWF has not returned their calls). >Bob Muth will get specifics on the new contact(s) in the California office and inform the Committee next week. John Shields and Brent also noted that the NFWF's quarterly reports are overdue.
  - b. Annual Funds - Clayton Palmer said funds are available to cover 2003 O&M expenses, but the Colorado River Basin Fund balance is projected to go to zero in April of 2004. Reclamation and Western do not currently believe they need to seek appropriated funds to replace basin funds. They hope to find keep the basin fund whole in FY 04 by borrowing from the Western States Power Corporation and also from the Continuing Fund (the latter is subject to OMB approval). Western also will meet with its customers in May to discuss options for keeping the fund whole. Clayton said if borrowing and other options aren't successful and appropriations aren't sought, then there is some risk of underfunding for the Recovery Program in FY 04. Clayton also noted that Western borrowed its capital fund obligation from Colorado (CWCB construction fund) in FY 03 and plan to apply for loans for FY 04 and 05, as well.

5. Black Canyon of the Gunnison River Water Rights Agreement - Tom Blickensderfer said that on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of the Interior announced agreement has been reached “on a long standing dispute involving management of water from the Gunnison River that flows through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.” The agreement is for 300 cfs with a 1933 priority date and an additional 2003 right for peak flows (variable by hydrology) when and if Blue Mesa expected to fill and spill by July 31 and all Aspinall obligations are met. Tom said this agreement and the Gunnison River flow recommendations probably will be considered together in some form. An MOA will be developed to describe how the agreement will be implemented. Bob McCue said the Service’s Solicitor in Washington, D.C., has said there is no connection between this agreement and the Gunnison River flow recommendations. Clayton said that eventually there will be an operational link between fish flows and this agreement, because the water provided for both must somehow be integrated into a single *operation* of Aspinall.
  
6. Capital Projects Update
  - a. Redlands Fish Screen Operation and Maintenance - Bob McCue said the Service will do an intra-Service consultation based on the Program installing and operating the screen. This opinion will be similar to the 15-Mile Reach PBO and will address potential take issues associated with the operation and maintenance of the Screen.
  
  - b. Price-Stubb - Brent Uilenberg said Jacobsen has indicated a willingness to give Reclamation an easement for construction and operation. Reclamation also is working to make the passage compatible with recreational boating (with any additional costs being borne *outside* the Recovery Program) and are trying to get Mesa County to assume liability for this portion.
  
  - c. Elkhead Reservoir expansion project - Dan Birch distributed a summary of the project status: 1) Preliminary engineering is complete, including an updated cost estimate (also distributed). Costs are better than previously estimated and the Program share of the project is now estimated at \$8.3M (instead of \$8.75M). However, there are still uncertainties in the estimates, and the \$8.3K does not include a fish screen (~\$900K). 2) Agreements are needed for the enlargement with the City of Craig, the Yampa Participants (the consortium of power companies that own the bulk of the existing capacity in Elkhead), the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (who will provide an alternate supply of water during construction), Colorado Division of Parks, and the Colorado Water Conservation Board. Significant progress has been made on all agreements in the past six months, but they are not yet in final form. 3) Conceptual understanding has been reached that CWCB will provide a \$2M contribution (which will be recognized as part of Colorado's capital obligation to the Recovery Program). CWCB's contribution will be wrapped into the River District's loan from the CWCB. The balance of the funding of the Program share -- roughly \$6.75MM -- will need to come directly from the Program. The River District is working on the

first draft of an agreement among the Program, CWCB, and the River District to memorialize this arrangement. 4) In April, the District reviewed progress on the agreements with their board of directors, and decided to wait on final engineering until the agreements are done. Therefore, construction may not begin until 2005 (which is reflected in the revised budget table). 5) The District is about to submit their 404 permit application and begin the NEPA process (with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as lead agency). They will conduct Elkhead public scoping meetings in conjunction with Yampa Plan meetings, likely in mid-June. The District has fine-tuned the conceptual mitigation plan and it appears they will be able to mitigate all wetland impacts on site. 6) The District will soon survey and prepare legal descriptions of properties they need to acquire from a few private owners surrounding the reservoir. They also are pursuing a land swap of District property in Juniper Canyon with the State Land Board's fee lands at Elkhead (for which the Land Board is preparing an appraisal).

- d. Other capital projects - Brent reported that the Grand Valley Project fish screen is settled, but passage still poses problems. They need a permit from CDOT for access to site and there are potential cost implications to accommodate road access. The Grand Valley Irrigation Company has concerns about operation of their screen. They will provide equipment to keep the screen clean, but won't operate the screen until that equipment is available. Reclamation is still having problems getting an agreement with Colorado State Parks for Highline Lake (need to site the pumping plant on the lake). Price Stubb and Redlands are progressing well.
7. Additional follow-up from the March 2003 D.C. Briefing Trip - John Shields and the Management Committee commended George Smith for his interesting and well-attended presentation on drought at the staff luncheon in Washington. The Program continues to receive support from the delegations and the agencies, and is held up as a model for addressing endangered species issues. >John will follow-up with Tom Blickensderfer regarding the effort to include language on the Ouray Hatchery funding request in the committee report. >Tom Blickensderfer and Tom Pitts will continue to seek support for the Program from Representative Beauprez. John has posted the trip report on the Program's website. The committee approved John's trip report.

ADJOURN 5:00pm.

Friday, May 16

CONVENE 8:15 a.m.

8. Nonnative fish management activities and recent public outreach (I&E) activities – Angela Kantola gave a report on the public meetings held at the end of April in Grand Junction, Steamboat Springs, and Craig. Frank reported that some of the planned nonnative fish removal activities won't go forward this year because the public meetings and permits weren't completed in time. Frank said Colorado asked for a variance to put nonnative fish in Elkhead, but the Service didn't agree because of the potential for

escapement when the reservoir is enlarged. The Service recommended developing a plan to eradicate nonnative fish from Elkhead (or otherwise implement containment measures) before construction. Catfish removal in the White River couldn't be done due to the delays this year. Yampa northern pike trap-netting was delayed by 3 weeks. Catfish removed from the top and bottom reaches of Yampa Canyon will be put in Kenney Reservoir. These fish will be marked, and if more than 10% escapement is detected, the translocation will be reconsidered. We need to be better prepared next year so that we can have all the permits in place and accomplish all the work planned. Frank said smallmouth bass are increasing in the system and emphasized that the need to better implement nonnative fish management. We need to continue coordination between the Service and CDOW regarding where the fish will be relocated next year. Tom Pitts recommended briefing the congressional offices in Grand Junction and Bob agreed. Tom asked for an update on plans for next year in the fall. John Shields recommended that the Implementation Committee be briefed on this at their September meeting, as well. The Committee agreed that a plan needs to be developed for how to manage the fishery in Elkhead after construction (Colorado lead). Bob Muth said he believes there might be ways to manage releases from Highline and Elkhead to minimize escapement without nets.

9. Gunnison River flow recommendations report - Frank distributed the May 15 conference call summary and reported that the Biology Committee discussed revisions and approved the report with those revisions. >Bob Muth and Frank Pfeifer will review the revised report to make sure everything agreed to is included. Clayton and others thanked Bob for working to resolve remaining issues over the last few weeks.
10. Program planning and schedule - Angela distributed the schedule for the FY 04-05 work plan.
11. Review of April 15, 2003 Implementation Committee conference call - John Shields asked about the status of the rebuttal to the *BioScience* article. John Shields said the Glen Canyon AMWG has increased their recovery efforts for humpback chub; there will be a presentation at their upcoming meeting on May 29 regarding the option of putting together a recovery implementation program. Tom Czaplak has been participating in AMWG discussions. Clayton said recent information appears to conclude that humpback have declined in the Grand Canyon since the early 1990's. Clayton is developing a proposal for a Grand Canyon recovery implementation program and he will make a presentation on that at the May 29 AMWG meeting. Tom Pitts expressed concern that the proposed implementation program doesn't address the razorback sucker or Colorado pikeminnow in the lower basin and that Congress is unlikely to support a piecemeal approach to recovery in the lower basin. Clayton said it is piecemeal today. Tom said he would prefer that Region 2 take the lead on a program for the lower basin. Bob McCue said the Fish & Wildlife Council assigned staffers to set up a workshop to discuss a lower basin program (although it's not clear how soon that would take place). >Bob Muth will check on the progress of that. Clayton said he believes Region 6 should have the lead in a lower basin program with Region 2 having a supportive role.

12. Next meeting – The Committee will meet July 31 starting at 9:30 a.m. and a half-day (adjourning by 1 p.m.) on August 1 in Cheyenne (if possible or Grand Junction, if rooms are not available). >John Shields will check on room availability and >Brent Uilenberg will reserve the Grand Junction conference room in case it's needed.

ADJOURN – 9:30 a.m.

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Tom Iseman will make sure the Program Director's office gets a copy of the original supporting resolutions signed by The Nature Conservancy and the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies.
2. Ralph Morgenweck will send a letter accepting the environmental groups' nominations of Dan Luecke for the Implementation Committee, Tom Iseman for the Management Committee, and John Hawkins for the Biology Committee.
3. Bob Muth will contact Chuck Sullivan regarding a counter-offer on Thunder Ranch.
4. Bob Muth will get specifics on the new contact(s) in the California NFWF office and inform the Committee next week.
5. John Shields will follow-up with Tom Blickensderfer regarding the effort to include language on the Ouray Hatchery funding request in the committee report.
6. Tom Blickensderfer and Tom Pitts will continue to seek support for the Program from Representative Beauprez.
7. The Program Director's office will arrange to brief the congressional offices in Grand Junction on nonnative fish management activities.
8. Bob Muth and Frank Pfeifer will review the revised Gunnison River flow recommendations report report to make sure everything agreed to is included.
9. Bob Muth will check on the progress of the workshop that the Fish & Wildlife Council assigned staffers to set up to discuss a lower basin program.
10. John Shields will check on room availability for the July 31 - August 1 meeting in Cheyenne.
11. Brent Uilenberg will reserve the Grand Junction conference room in case the Committee can't meet in Cheyenne July 31 - August 1.



**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**Colorado River Management Committee, Vernal, Utah**  
**May 15-16, 2003**

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg	Bureau of Reclamation
Tom Blickensderfer	State of Colorado (via phone)
Sherm Hoskins	Utah Department Of Natural Resources
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
John Shields	State of Wyoming
Clayton Palmer for Gary Burton	Western Area Power Administration
Bob McCue	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dave Mazour	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
John Reber	National Park Service
Tom Iseman	The Nature Conservancy

Nonvoting Member:

Bob Muth	Recovery Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Recovery Program Staff:

Angela Kantola	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Others:

George Smith	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ray Tenney	Colorado River Water Conservation District
Mary Simbala	Western Area Power Administration
Heather Patno	Western Area Power Administration
Ning Lu	Dexter National Fish Hatchery
Dan Birch	Colorado River Water Conservation District
Frank Pfeifer	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Melissa Trammell	National Park Service