



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dated: June 28, 2012

June 26, 2012, Management Committee Webinar Draft Summary

CONVENE: 1:30 p.m.

1. Updates

- a. Recovery Plans and 5-Year Status Review Update – Tom Chart said the Service has been communicating among regions and expects the recovery team to be a “go.” , The Service is preparing invitation letters for separate recovery teams for each of the four species. There also will be a writing team consisting of Tom Czapla, Rich Valdez, Tom Chart, Bob Muth, and Pat Martinez. They have been working on revised draft pikeminnow plan, and this will go to Pikeminnow Recovery Team as soon as it is established. The next step will be to send the draft to all stakeholder groups, including the Recovery Program. Tom responded to questions saying that the Recovery Teams are not subject to FACA and that summaries of recovery teams’ meetings will be made available. Tom said the hope is to have the recovery teams assembled by September and the pikeminnow team reviewing that draft plan, and then communicate with other stakeholders about that plan later in fall or certainly by end of calendar year. The humpback chub plan also is being drafted, but the Service basically will be working though the plans sequentially. >Tom Pitts recommended outlining timeframes for the plans, as Congress will ask; Tom Chart agreed. Tom Chart said the logic used in pikeminnow plan will carry through to humpback chub plan. Tom Czapla said that the bonytail and razorback sucker 5-year status reviews are in final review/revision and should be in surname process shortly.
- b. Capital projects – Brent Uilenberg said the final Thunder Ranch repair came in just under \$300K (completed in April). The Horsethief ponds facility was substantially completed as of last week and ponds, etc. are undergoing testing. Final costs were just under \$6M including contract and non-contract costs. According to the manufacturer, the pond liners should last 30 years. After the limited spring runoff, Reclamation inspected Price-Stubb and discovered substantial damage from last year’s high runoff and repairs to the rock ramp at the fish entrance are recommended to prevent further damage in future high flows. The estimated to cost is ~\$500K (capital funds, will count against ceiling). A higher design criteria will be employed to try to prevent future damage. The Committee approved this work, which Reclamation hopes to begin mobilizing in a couple of weeks and complete within a month. CWCB, CRWCD, OMID, and Reclamation had a conference call last week and are getting closer to solving Colorado’s contracting limitations related to OMID. Brent anticipates both grant agreements to be completed by September 1, 2012, and this will establish trust fund account. Reclamation will then finalize the design and award construction in FY13. Meanwhile, in the San Juan Program, Reclamation will install several remote PIT antennas (~\$558K, of which \$481K is from appropriated funds, remainder from Colorado and New Mexico’s NFWF capital funds). They also are moving forward on the Hogback fish barrier (weir wall in lieu of a screen).

2. Low water work plan adjustments – Pat Martinez said crews originally planned two nonnative fish electrofishing passes on the White River (~29 miles in 3 reaches), but captured ~175 smallmouth bass in first pass of the upper reach and subsequently decided to focus remaining effort on the upper reach. This has confirmed a hotspot for smallmouth below Kenney Reservoir and 10 miles downstream. After 12 focused and 7 additional passes, no depletion effect was observed. Spawning behavior was seen, but few bass >400mm. The Service estimates they removed ~2,000 bass in the 12 passes focused on the upper reach. They saw large numbers of native fishes, but fewer than anticipated Colorado pikeminnow. Utah crews saw fewer bass in the lower reach (all juveniles). Based on those observations, Pat believes there's a high potential that those fish may continue to increase downstream. We almost certainly have a resident smallmouth population below Taylor Draw Dam, which likely moved up from the Green River. Tom Chart asked about using low-water electric seine crews on the White and Pat said that's being discussed. Harry Crockett said CPW is discussing this with CSU and hopes to get crews on it later this summer. CPW also is discussing other recommendations Pat has made regarding managing this population; but probably won't pursue a change in regulations to emergency status for bag limits just below the dam because the proposal is already proceeding very smoothly through the current regulatory review process. Melissa Trammell asked if this might be a good location for a floating weir; Pat Martinez said we'd want to consider impacts to native fishes, but it could be helpful in this situation. Krissy noted we also will have a PIT tag antenna in the White River downstream. >The Biology Committee will discuss the possibility of using a weir in the White River. On the Yampa, low water limited access to some sites, but concentrations of northern pike were found in sites they could access. Spawning concentrations of smallmouth bass were seen at the confluence of Elkhead Creek and the Yampa River, but no concentration of smallmouth bass was observed just downstream as in previous years (note: Elkhead did not spill this year). Tom Czapl said Kevin Bestgen said sampling has been difficult to complete and these types of low-flow years do not bode well for adult pikeminnow; however, it looks like there may be a recruitable population of juvenile/sub-adult fish to adults. Spawning was probably early this year which may give larvae a longer time to grow before winter. Kevin Bestgen reported a larval pikeminnow picked up in the White River last year, which is an important confirmation of Colorado pikeminnow spawning in the White River. Tom Czapl said Aaron thought this would have been an ideal year to use floating PIT antenna over spawning bars. Jana Mohrman said we're meeting the low-flow target on the Gunnison River and the moderately low target on the Green River from Flaming Gorge. Other rivers will be quite low. Our dry year target is 810 cfs at Palisade, but that likely will drop to 250 cfs. The Program leased the additional 2,000 af in addition to our 5,000 af of water from Elkhead and hopes to maintain at least 50 cfs (target is 93 cfs). The Colorado Water Trust is considering purchasing 4,000 af from Stagecoach and have investigated a down river target (perhaps piggy-backing on Program water to improve August flows), if that can be administered. Finally, as everyone is aware from recent press releases, flows have been too low for regular operation of the Colorado River fish passages and screens.

3. Approval of Price River Position paper – The Committee discussed process regarding “approving” flow recommendations. The Service develops flow recommendations, but the Program then works on implementation. Robert Wigington said he thinks the Committee is being asked to look at the implementation aspects, although those are very flexible as outlined in this position paper. Tom Pitts agreed and said that concerns they had have been

resolved. The recommendations on page 27 promote cooperation to maintain conditions. Dennis Strong suggested we will need to consider whether the Program wants to spend time and funds in a tributary that's not critical habitat. Brent asked if it's feasible to find a 600 af pool for a 5 cfs minimum flow; Dennis said it will depend on what the Program can afford. John Shields clarified that this is something of a hybrid document rather than strictly a flow recommendation and suggested the Management Committee's role here is to "receive and accept" the report. Brent Uilenberg agreed. The Program will look for opportunities in the future to implement the recommendations. The Committee accepted the report. (It does not need to go to the Implementation Committee.) Tom Chart said he believes this will be acceptable to the Fish and Wildlife Service and will satisfy the RPA in the Narrows biological opinion. >The Program Director's office will post this final position paper to the Program's website.

4. Draft 2012 Sufficient Progress memo – The Management Committee reviewed the draft components of this memo in April and then the Program Director's office worked to incorporate comments received from the Committee and provided a draft to the Service in May. In this current draft final, the Service made some modifications as indicated in the track changes version sent to the Management Committee and concluded that the Program continues to make sufficient progress to provide ESA compliance for water depletion projects up to 4,500 af. Tom Pitts said the water users believe the 4,500 af is justified and they support it. The Committee reviewed the document and made a few comments for the Service's consideration. The Committee reviewed the Yampa PBO spreadsheet, suggesting revising line 28 to "no projects *formally* proposed *at this point*" and making this consistent with the sufficient progress document. Tom Chart said he anticipates that the Service can accommodate the Committee's comments. Tom Pitts asked about participation in the Southern Rockies LCC; Tom Chart said he seeks updates from the LCC and Steve and Becky are active on the LCC Steering Committee.
5. IC committee Sept 19, 2012, meeting agenda items (10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Country Inn and Suites near DIA). Agenda items will include:
 - Approve March 5, 2012, conference call summary
 - Program Director's update (including low flow and nonnative fish management updates)
 - Recovery plans update
 - Review of sufficient progress items
 - Legislative/funding update
 - Capital projects update
 - FY 13 work plan update (second year of 2-year work plan)
 - Southern Rockies LCC update
6. Funding legislation – John Shields said there now appears to be a path forward. Non-Federal Program participants have been discussing it amongst themselves and with Congressional staff. The Water and Power Subcommittee now appears willing to introduce the legislation, but wants three things in this "reform and improve" legislation: 1) more specific language as to what will be included in the Secretary of Interior's report prior to the end of the new authorization period; 2) an explicit section prohibiting DOI staff from participating in the non-Federal Program participants annual Congressional meetings or traveling to participate in those trips; and 3) a proviso regarding the overhead rate the Service can charge on funds transferred from Reclamation. Tom Pitts added that the bill would continue funding with

non-reimbursable hydropower revenues. This bill would go through a hearing, though no specific “cutgo” has been identified at this point (which is still a need).

7. DC Briefing Trip Report – John Shields said the [report](#) was posted to both Programs’ listservers. We may be headed toward a much smaller group of participants in future briefings and more conference call briefings of Congressional staff.
8. Schedule Management Committee meeting in Cheyenne, Wyoming – The Committee scheduled the meeting for August 7-8, starting at 1 p.m. on the 7th and going from 8 or 9 on the 8th until noon. >Angela Kantola will work with Melissa Trammell to avoid scheduling items important to the Park Service on the 8th if Melissa cannot attend that portion. >John Shields will work to arrange meeting room and hotel.

ADJOURN: 4:20 p.m.

Attachment 1: Attendees
Colorado River Management Committee Webinar, June 26, 2012

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg	Bureau of Reclamation
Rebecca Mitchell	State of Colorado
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
John Shields	State of Wyoming
(Not represented)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Melissa Trammell	National Park Service
Robert Wigington	The Nature Conservancy
Clayton Palmer	Western Area Power Administration
Leslie James	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
Krissy Wilson for Robert King	State of Utah

Nonvoting Member:

Tom Chart	Recovery Program Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Recovery Program Staff:

Pat Martinez	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Debbie Felker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tom Czapla	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Angela Kantola	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others

Patrick Redmond	Law & Resource Planning Associates, Albuquerque (representing Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, observing sufficient progress discussion for Middle Rio Grande)
Dennis Strong	Utah Division of Water Rights
Harry Crockett	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Jana Mohrman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jerry Wilhite	Western Area Power Administration
Dave Speas	Bureau of Reclamation
Lucy Maldonado	Bureau of Reclamation (took Will Tully's place)

Attachment 2 Meeting Assignments

1. The **Management Committee** will consider naming a floodplain site for Pat Nelson. *The Service's Grand Junction field office is considering what might be an appropriate location. We do have a memorial to Pat on the pikeminnow bench at Walter Walker SWA.*
2. **Tom Pitts** will work with **Clayton Palmer and Brent Uilenberg** and provide a list of additional Program contributions to be added to the Program's budget pie chart that appears in each year's briefing book. *In process; see discussion in agenda item #3.b.* For the 2012 *Program Highlights*, we will use the \$37.4M annualized estimate. By July 2012, **WAPA** will complete modeling and report actual power replacement costs going back to 2001. Subsequently, **WAPA** will provide annual power replacement cost for the previous year each January for inclusion in the *Program Highlights* pie charts. Those pie charts will include a footnote explaining the calculation and assumptions (the 2012 footnote will explain that these are annualized estimates, which will be verified beginning in 2013). **Program participants** will identify other significant costs that have not previously reported (e.g., the Granby component of 10,825 which is estimated at \$16M, \$1.25M contributed by Colorado for GVWM and \$1.5M for OMID, CRWCD contributed property for OMID, etc.). **Tom Chart** will ask **Dave Campbell** to work with the SJCC to determine their additional costs not currently reported. *1/30/12: Tom Pitts provided additional costs to be included in briefing book pie chart; need to follow up with documentation for the record. 3/21/12: Clayton will be asking modelers/analysts to look at economic impact of re-operation of Flaming Gorge Dam beginning in FY2001. Tom Pitts said P.L. 106-392 recognizes power replacement costs as non-reimbursable; is that the same thing as economic costs? John Shields asked why not include the ~7 years of "study flows" preceding 2001. Clayton will do both, since Flaming Gorge was originally reoperated in water year 1991 (a separate table for 2001 and forward will be included responding specifically to the P.L. 106-392). Clayton also will include analysis to show the year in which FG was reoperated under the new EIS (2006 to present). John said he and Robert were asked about retail level yesterday; Leslie doesn't believe that can be reported since each individual utility has a different amount of hydropower in their mix. Tom Pitts suggested setting up a work group of himself, Leslie, Clayton, Robert Wigington, Angela Kantola and/or Tom Chart; Tom Pitts will send out preliminary materials. 6/26/12: Work group held conference call 4/27/12; Argonne working on power replacement costs, water users working on their additional costs, San Juan also working on their additional costs.*
3. **Brent Uilenberg** will modify the OMID scope of work to reflect the ITRC contract to design the SCADA system. The **PD's office** will post the revised SOW to the web. *Pending; Brent Uilenberg will provide a copy of the contract to append to the SOW.*
4. The **Program Director's office** will work with Jerry Wilhite and Clayton Palmer on FY12 work plan items which Western may help fund. *In progress.*
5. **Brent Uilenberg and Dave Speas** will discuss the possibility of using "activities to avoid jeopardy" funds on the Elkhead screen repair.
6. The **Program Director's Office** will prepare a timeline for the recovery plans.

7. The **Biology Committee** will discuss the possibility of using a weir in the White River.
8. The **Program Director's office** will post this final position paper to the Program's website.
9. For the August 7-8 Management Committee meeting in Cheyenne, **Angela Kantola** will work with Melissa Trammell to avoid scheduling items important to the Park Service on the 8th if Melissa cannot attend that portion. **John Shields** will work to arrange meeting room and hotel.