

**Conference Call Summary
Colorado River Management Committee
September 8, 2005**

Participants: See Attachment 1

CONVENE - 2:00 p.m.

1. Escapement of nonnative fish from Elkhead Reservoir - Dave Speas reviewed the Biology Committee's discussion. Dave believes the data were adequate to show significant escapement. The Biology Committee recommended corrective action, preferably by preventing escapement from the reservoir (through a combination of fish salvage and rehabilitating the conservation pool by chemical treatment or de-watering, or by constructing a screen that would not fail), rather than trying to control fish after escape. The Biology Committee further recommended that translocation of smallmouth bass into Elkhead be continued only if a successful screen is constructed.

Bob Muth said the Elkhead conservation pool will be drawn down to ~1250 af through November (effects on fish unknown). It is anticipated that the outlet screens will be complete by spring runoff and will screen ~400 cfs. Tom Blickensderfer said fish salvage, chemical control, or lethal removal from the river would require considerable work with the public. Robert Wigington acknowledged the commitment made to maintain the reservoir fishery, and agreed it would be politically costly to renege on that commitment. Tom Pitts agreed. Brent Uilenberg discussed a potential screen with engineers in the Pacific Northwest who say it would cost millions of dollars to build a reliable screen; thus, he doesn't believe this is a viable option. (The rule of thumb for self-cleaning screens is \$3,000 per cfs screened; this type of screen in Elkhead would cost a minimum of \$3M and could not be constructed by spring runoff.)

Sherm Hebein said CDOW has nowhere else to put translocated smallmouth bass. To partially salvage the reservoir would require boat access. Bob Muth said the extensive mud flat to the conservation pool would likely prevent boat launching. Sherm said they could look into whether a crane could place boats in the water. To rotenone the reservoir (at 1250 cfs with no leakage for a month, if temperatures remain above 55 degrees) would require 5 boats and 25 people at a cost of ~\$122K if dust rotenone could be used (or ~\$150K to apply liquid rotenone by air). Sherm said water chemistry is a major concern: rotenone can sit in large reservoirs for months at a time with no effect, then become activated downstream when water is released. As for applying rotenone under ice, this technique has primarily been used on natural lakes in the midwest that freeze almost solid (unlikely in Colorado), and this would bear a risk of remaining toxicity in the spring. If fish could be salvaged out of the reservoir (as with removing fish from the river), there doesn't seem to be any good place to put them. Asian tapeworm concerns preclude most translocation possibilities and the nonnative fish stocking procedures prohibit use of Yampa SWA ponds or Loudy Simpson since these flood. (The possibility of using Rio Blanco Reservoir hasn't been fully investigated, but it isn't a preferred site.)

Bob Muth concluded we may have to consider lethal removal of smallmouth bass from the river (noting we never promised the public we'd never consider this option). In light of the alternatives, Tom Pitts said he thinks we'll have to leave the fish in Elkhead and take the Biology Committee's recommendation to lethally remove smallmouth bass from the river. Several other Committee members agreed. Sherm said he believes we'll need to present this to the public and ask if they have any suggestions. Bob Muth said surplus FY 06 funds could go toward additional efforts to capture fish from the river, but we also need to determine if there are funds remaining from last year's curtailed O&M on the failed Elkhead screen. Bob added that the Service will have to evaluate this new alternative and perhaps amend the Yampa PBO.

Sherm said he understands the main concern of the local public to be that if smallmouth are eradicated from the reservoir, they won't be replaced. Sherm agreed we made it clear in past that we reserved the option of lethal removal from Craig downstream, but he believes we committed to tell them if we're going to do that; thus, we will need to hold public information meetings on this. If we want to do any in-reservoir control, we need to get the lake management plan approved and signed as it commits to a bass fishery in Elkhead (largemouth bass if not enough smallmouth bass or if smallmouth don't succeed). Tom Blickensderfer asked if additional smallmouth stocking later might be something we could bring to the table; Robert Wigington said he's not sure the environmental groups could support that. Sherm said an alternate location for a smallmouth fishery would be helpful, but they haven't come up with anywhere.

The Management Committee agreed to increased effort of nonnative fish control with lethal removal of all smallmouth bass from the Yampa River from Elkhead Creek downstream (mostly from Craig downstream, but including the Hayden to Craig reach). The Biology Committee should discuss implementation of Yampa River lethal removal. If additional Management Committee discussion of this topic is needed, Bob Muth and John Shields will convene a conference call.

2. Report on legislation to authorize additional appropriations - John Shields said he understands there will be a Senate hearing in late September and a house hearing in early October, and letters of support will be needed shortly. The group discussed who would testify at these hearings.

ADJOURN: 3:30 p.m.

**Colorado River Management Committee (sub-group) Conference Call
September 8, 2005**

Management Committee Voting Members:

Brent Uilenberg & Randy Peterson	Bureau of Reclamation
Tom Pitts	Upper Basin Water Users
John Shields	State of Wyoming
Larry Gamble for Mary Henry	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
John Reber	National Park Service
Tom Blickensderfer	Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Dave Mazour	Colorado River Energy Distributors Association
Gary Burton	Western Area Power Administration
Robert Wigington for 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
Pat Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Others

Dave Speas	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Tom Chart	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service