

Final Meeting Minutes
Gila River Basin Native Fishes Conservation Program
Joint Policy and Technical Committees
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Arizona Ecological Services Office
August 13, 2008

Attendance:

Rob Clarkson and Henry Messing (Reclamation), Doug Duncan and Steve Spangle (FWS), Tim Frey and Ted Cordery (BLM), David Propst, Renae Held, and Yvette Paroz (NMDGF), Jeff Sorensen, Bob Broscheid, and Tony Robinson (AZGFD), Amy Unthank (USFS)

Review of AZGFD Program:

Tony Robinson reviewed the status and progress of tasks being undertaken by AZGFD, which is provided in the attachment (201816J808 Final Report Draft July 21 2008.pdf). Primary hindrance to the program was delay in getting fully staffed. Future impediment could be that annual funding provided to AZGFD for their participation in the program is not enough to fully cover the three staff salaries. Robinson requested an additional \$25,000/yr for this purpose. This issue will be further addressed in the upcoming Technical Committee meeting, and a recommendation will be made to the Policy Committee in January.

Consensus was that considerable progress has been made with AZGFD's accomplishments toward assistance with Program objectives, and that the existing agreement with FWS for funding be continued, either through a modification or execution of a new agreement.

Review of NMDGF Program:

Yvette Paroz reviewed the status and progress of tasks being undertaken by NMDGF, which is provided in the attachment (CAPInterim Progress Report08.pdf). Most projects proceeding smoothly except that planned frequency of mechanical removals of nonnatives (task 3-65a and continuation years) has been reduced due to hydrological events. David Propst expressed that receipt of funding to NMDGF and its partners (e.g., USFS) from FWS occasionally has been difficult. Discussion of this issue at the meeting hopefully clarified billing processes, and both NMDGF and FWS will work further toward resolving the problem. There were no negatives expressed regarding NMDGF's progress toward implementing Program tasks and goals.

Review of Reclamation Program:

Rob Clarkson reviewed the status and progress of ongoing and pending tasks being undertaken by Reclamation. Blue River fish barrier design (task 4-15) should be accomplished in fiscal year (FY) 2009, as Reclamation anticipates a construction award that year. Redfield/Hot Springs barrier feasibility and design (tasks 4-32 and 4-33) is ongoing for Hot Springs Canyon, which is scheduled for construction in FY09, while the Redfield Canyon barrier is scheduled for 2010. Tonto Creek fish barrier feasibility (task 4-41) has been partially completed (Rock Creek), but a report on the preferred Tonto

drainage barrier site on Spring Creek is still in progress. There was much discussion about the Little Creek, NM, fish barrier (task 4-63). USFS will pursue hydraulic modeling of the Gila River at the Little Creek confluence in furtherance of redesigning the bridge crossing (to better accommodate debris flows), but it is unlikely a barrier could be designed in conjunction with the bridge that would function during high Gila River flows that would inundate the bridge site. Reclamation does not expect to expend any more than the ~\$16,000 already spent on this task (of \$70,000 allocated) unless or until USFS can define a workable design in the coming year. Further work on West Fork Oak Creek barrier design (task 4-67) and construction (task 4-79) is pending USFS progress with environmental compliance documentation.

Reclamation is continuing to slowly expend funds for miscellaneous helicopter support of Program tasks (task 3-73) and miscellaneous support expenses (task 3-43). Funding for Bubbling Ponds Hatchery O&M year 3 of n (task 3-86) will be moved from funds reserved for Reclamation activities to FWS activities; funding for this task will likely be added to the AZGFD “mega-agreement.” Monies will be reallocated for this and other tasks in next year’s fund transfer agreement with FWS.

Review of FWS Program:

Doug Duncan reviewed the status and progress of tasks being undertaken by FWS. The topminnow stock maintenance agreement with ASU (task 3-74) has expired and needs to be renewed. Stillman Lake renovation NEPA (task 4-51) is almost completed, and renovation (task 4-61) is tentatively scheduled for the first week of September. The latest budget estimate for renovation (\$44,440) is less than the amount reserved for this task (\$50,000). The genetic biocontrol symposium (task 4-72) has been scheduled for June 1-4, 2009, in Minneapolis, MN. Purchase of the new rotenone formulation (CFT Legumine; task 4-73) has been delayed pending sole source determination, but FWS is hopeful it can be purchased in time for the Bonita Creek renovation planned for October 7-9.

Overall and Fiscal Status of the Program:

Clarkson reviewed that FWS currently has approximately \$130,000 in reserve (funding received from Reclamation that has not yet been allocated to any task) under the RPA 3 fund (recovery of natives), in addition to other monies allocated for tasks that have not yet been implemented (such as \$153,297 for water rights survey, task 3-7). Reclamation has approximately \$25,000 in reserve under this fund, not counting the ~\$35,000 allocated for Bubbling Ponds Hatchery O&M that needs to be transferred to FWS (see above). Under the RPA 4 fund (control of nonnatives), FWS has approximately \$70,000 in reserve, while Reclamation is revenue neutral for this fund. The immediate goal for the upcoming year is to identify new worthy projects that will bring these reserves as near to zero as possible; the Program must remain focused on future expenditures toward on-the-ground recovery actions. With the latest fund transfer agreement executed in June, \$2.8M has been obligated for each RPA fund since the program inception (1997).

Other Issues:

FY09 task identification/review was postponed until the upcoming Technical Committee meeting due to Clarkson's failure to bring relevant paperwork. The issue of whether to develop a Program logo, as similar native fish recovery programs have done, was briefly discussed relative to the costs/benefits of making our program more publicly visible. Reclamation will attempt to develop some draft logos for consideration by the Program at a future meeting.

Agenda
GILA RIVER BASIN NATIVE FISHES CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Joint Policy and Technical Committee Meeting
August 13, 2008

1. Review of AZGFD program
 - a. Progress, including expenditures by project
 - b. Problems
 - c. Future needs

2. Review of NMDGF program
 - a. Progress, including expenditures by project
 - b. Problems
 - c. Future needs

3. Review of Reclamation program
 - a. Progress, including expenditures by project
 - b. Problems
 - c. Future needs

4. Review of FWS program
 - a. Progress, including expenditures by project
 - b. Problems
 - c. Future needs

5. Overall and fiscal status of the Program
 - a. Review of tasks (colored spreadsheets)
 - b. Review of RPA and Program accounts (b&w spreadsheets)
 - c. Review of the first 10 yrs of the program: objectives, results, future

6. Preview of potential FY2009 Program projects

7. Other issues, time permitting