

Gila River Basin Native Fish Conservation Program
Technical Committee Meeting
Bureau of Land Management, Safford Field Office
January 17, 2012

Final Meeting Minutes

Meeting Participants:

Rob Clarkson (Reclamation)	Scott Bryan (CAWCD)**
Eliza Gilbert (NMDGF)*	Doug Duncan (FWS)
Andrew Monie (NMDGF)	Tony Robinson (AZGFD)
Heidi Blasius (BLM-AZ)	Jeff Sorensen (AZGFD)
Tim Frey (BLM-NM)	

*Will no longer be representing NMDGF on the Technical Committee

**Invited guest

See full meeting agenda appended below.

1. Review /discussion of NMDGF proposed projects (see file '2012 CAP NM Proposals and Existing Projects.doc')

The following list of projects was submitted to the Program for consideration of NMDGF's request for "block" funding in the amount of \$120,000 per year. This amount is also intended to fund the participation of the USFS Gila National Forest, NM Fisheries Resources Office, and BLM Las Cruces District Office for these tasks.

- *Pantosteus* genetics in the San Francisco River (new) – There was some discussion concerning the research vs. management aspects of this proposal, but NMDGF will only use Program funds to collect specimens for a separately-funded Tom Turner project to do the genetic analyses. Approved.
- Turkey Creek inventory and mechanical removal (new) – Approved.
- Monitoring of repatriated fish populations (new) – Approved.
- Survey of lower Gila River mainstem and tributaries (new) – Approved.
- Repatriations to Gila and San Francisco rivers (new) – Approved.
- Repatriations to Gila trout streams (existing task 3-76b) – Approved.
- Gila forks and tributaries inventory (existing task 3-76d) – This task has been refined and extended. Approved.
- Redrock Cienega restoration (existing task 3-85c) – Mostly vegetation work. Approved.
- Repatriate spikedace to San Francisco drainage (existing task 3-79b) – Extended a bit longer. Approved.
- Chub surveys in San Francisco River tributaries (existing task 3-85d) – Approved.
- Private lands restoration (existing task 3-85e) – Approved.
- Inventory of canyon-bound Gila River reaches (new) – Approved.
- Turkey Creek mechanical removal (new) – Approved.

- Little Creek mechanical removal (existing task 4-78b) – Purpose of the mechanical removal would be to facilitate repatriation of headwater chub and loach minnow. Approved.
- Blue Creek Inventory and feasibility for Fish Barrier - Approved
- Apache Creek Inventory – Approved
- Bear Creek Inventory - Approved

NMDGF was asked to recraft the original project proposals into the short, concise blurb format used by the Program.

2. AZGFD repatriation and monitoring program (and related issues)

a. Topminnow/pupfish stockings – The sites selected for stocking are from the Voeltz and Bettaso (2000) report.

b. Verde/Black river rare population monitoring – It was agreed that monitoring should not be more frequent than every other year.

c. Post-establishment monitoring frequency – Variable, between once every year and once every five years.

d. Fate of Muleshoe monitoring – Agreed to stop stocking Redfield Canyon, but will continue monitoring.

e. Status of proposed Mineral Creek Gila chub repatriation – Compliance should be completed this year for repatriation to non-native free reaches above natural barriers.

f. Blue River repatriations and mechanical removal – All AZGFD compliance is completed, and both aspects should be initiated by early summer.

g. Population viability discussion – Recovery plans state minimum population sizes of 500 overwintering adults necessary to “count” for pupfish and topminnow establishment, but it was not decided what numbers should be appropriate for the federally-listed minnows. This will be a topic for recovery teams to consider.

h. Fossil Creek monitoring – It was decided to cease the Marsh & Associates monitoring, and AZGFD Region 2 (Flagstaff Office) will submit annual reports.

3. Arizona rotenone use status

Sorensen reviewed the findings of the Rotenone Review Advisory Committee report findings. Continued use of rotenone will be dependent upon following the 2010 AFS standard operating procedures manual and new regulatory and reporting requirements under the Clean Water Act and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. It was thought that a Fossil Creek renovation would not occur until summer or autumn at the earliest, if the state-imposed moratorium on piscicide treatments is lifted.

4. Alternative fish barrier sites discussion

Clarkson provided the reasoning for why Reclamation needs to start considering backup fish barrier sites. He will transmit to the Committee a draft list of stream sites being considered.

5. Update on fund transfer process

Duncan and Clarkson provided details about upcoming changes to the way the Program will be funded and implemented. Because the Blue River fish barrier construction contract was \$2M over the government cost estimate and Reclamation's FY2012 budget was not sufficient to cover it, Reclamation was forced to deobligate \$1M from the IPAC account that funds FWS in order to complete the Blue River barrier construction. Reclamation will have to reimburse the Program for the money it deobligated, which may occur over a long or short time period, depending on future budgets and other fish barrier construction schedules.

Reclamation also did not transfer any FY2011 funds, and may not transfer FY2012 funds either. However, because of excess monies available in the IPAC account, it appears there should be no immediate impact to cooperators' funding levels. Reclamation likely will add these missing annual transfers to the end of the program, unless funding becomes available sooner and the Program has the capability of spending it.

With the recent changeover to a new federal budget system, the goal of the Program's fund transfer process is to finalize a list of native fish recovery/nonnative fish control tasks by May of each year for funding **and implementation** for the upcoming fiscal year. Thus, we should have a full package of tasks ready to turn over to Reclamation's acquisition staff by May of this year to execute on October 1, 2012 to fund FY2013 projects.

6. AZGFD CAMP (Conservation and Mitigation Program) update

Sorensen described the CAMP program, which was developed in response to potential negative impacts to native fishes (and other biota) from its sportfish stocking program. Funding is derived from existing state/federal monies, and does not rely upon extra FWS funds. The need to not duplicate conservation actions between our Program and CAMP was discussed, and thus some coordination between the two programs will likely be necessary. The two programs deal with some species in common, especially loach minnow and headwater chub.

7. Miscellaneous

a. Blue River and O'Donnell Canyon stock tank monitoring – It was decided that AZGFD could handle approximately ½ of the Blue drainage stock tanks that need surveying for presence of nonnatives under their existing funding agreement this year. The other half will go to Marsh & Associates under an existing Blanket Purchase Agreement¹.

¹ Further consideration by AZGFD since the date of the meeting suggests that they will be able to survey all of the stock tanks, and therefore assistance by Marsh & Associates may not be necessary.

b. SRP Pond at Page Springs Hatchery – After considerable discussion, it was decided that topminnow from this site will not be used for repatriations funded by the Program until the yellow grub problem is solved.

c. Gila chub repatriation to Fresno Canyon – The AZGFD Region 5 will turn over the implementation of this task to Clay Crowder. It was discussed that the repatriation may have to occur over an extended period using small lots of fish derived from propagation efforts.

d. Website – It was agreed to turn Reclamation’s website into an official Program site. Final reports under the Program will be formatted with the Program logo and other attributes.

e. Post/Welch Canyon repatriations – It was agreed that this task will be deleted from Program tasks due to the short reach of water involved and drought concerns.

f. Final report review and title page formatting – It was agreed that all final reports should be offered for review by Program personnel, and that title pages would be standardized to identify them as Program reports.

g. Illegal stocking reward/penalty – It was agreed to increase (and advertise) a reward increase to be paid using Program funds, but that any penalty increase would have to wait for the next regulation review cycle.

h. Status of chub propagation report (task 3-67) – The report has been finalized, but it was never transmitted (since rectified). Task can be closed out.

i. West Fork Oak Creek fish barrier task (4-79) accounting – The task has been deleted, but Reclamation owes the Program approximately \$115K that was unspent. It will reimburse that amount in a future agreement modification.

j. New piscicide development task (4-93) fate – Clarkson noted that emergency Policy Committee action agreed to fund the entire year one of the USGS proposal for this task if money became available.

k. Topminnow refuge needs – Robinson and Duncan determined that the Bylas and Sharp springs and mixed lineage stocks are adequately replicated in secure refuges, and ASU does not need to continue to hold them. Cienega Creek and Redrock Canyon stocks should be held longer at ASU. It was undecided if the Cottonwood/Monkey springs stocks needed to be held.

l. White River loach minnow acquisition – There has been little news on this task, which is awaiting approval by the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

m. Strategic plan update (not on agenda) – Sorensen noted that a 5-year revision of the plan will be needed in the near future.

8. Identification of FY2013 tasks

The tables on the agenda (below) were approved mostly as shown. It was agreed to possibly increase the funding for helicopter support (task 3-115) to \$50K, and add tasks to mechanically remove green sunfish from Horse Camp Canyon (Aravaipa Creek tributary), and add Blue River mechanical removal of nonnatives to AZGFD's list of tasks to be accomplished.

It was agreed that there might not be any need for a Policy Committee meeting relative to issues from this Technical Committee meeting, and that approvals for FY2013 projects could probably be accomplished via email.

FINAL AGENDA
Technical Committee Meeting
Gila River Basin Native Fishes Conservation Program
January 17, 2012

1. Review/discussion of NMDGF proposed projects
2. AZGFD repatriation and monitoring program (and related issues)
 - a. For topminnow and pupfish sites, does the TC get advance input into where these stockings occur? If not, should we provide Program approvals for these stockings? Need for a summary report (w/map)?
 - b. Reduce frequency of Verde/Black river rare populations monitoring
 - c. Summary of generalized post-establishment monitoring schedule (i.e., once a repatriation is considered established, how is it to be monitored?)
 - d. Decision on fate of Muleshoe monitoring
 - e. Status of proposed Mineral Creek repatriation (Gila chub)
 - f. Status of proposed Blue River repatriations (spikedace, roundtail chub) and mechanical removal
 - g. Discussion of viability (population size) relative to success of repatriations
 - h. Follow-up on AZGFD monitoring of Fossil Creek in advance of Marsh & Associates contract termination
3. Arizona rotenone use status
4. Alternative fish barrier sites discussion (additional detail to be provided prior to meeting)
5. Update on fund transfer process
6. Description of AZGFD sportfish mitigation (CAMP) program, and potential for interaction with GRBNFCP
7. Miscellaneous
 - a. Blue River and O'Donnell Canyon stock tank monitoring
 - b. Discussion of "SRP Pond" at Page Springs Hatchery
 - c. How to move forward with Gila chub repatriation to Fresno Canyon
 - d. Place annual GFD progress reports on Reclamation website? Make the website the official GRBNFCP website?
 - e. Drop Post/Welch repatriation (3-75h)?
 - f. Final report review process/title page formatting
 - g. Increase reward/penalty for illegal fish stocking?
 - h. Task closeouts – chub propagation report (Bonar)
 - i. West Fork Oak Creek fish barrier (4-79) cleanup/accounting
 - j. New piscicide development task (4-93) fate
 - k. Review of topminnow refuge needs
 - l. Update on White River loach minnow acquisition

8. Identification of FY2013 projects. Goal is to identify only projects that can be completed within the fiscal year.

a. Prior-approved FY2011 projects* (but not yet funded):

3-109	Topminnow stock maintenance (yr 4 of 5)	\$ 15,000
3-110	NMDGF recovery actions (yr 6 of n)	
a	—spikedace repatriations (yr 5 of 5)-	\$ 12,000
b	—NM private lands fish restoration (yr 4 of 5)	\$ 5,000
3-111	AZGFD recovery actions (yr 6 of n)	\$ 100,000
3-112	USFS spikedace repatriations (yr 5 of 5)	\$ 12,000
3-113	FWS spikedace repatriations (yr 5 of 5)	\$ 12,000
3-114	Bubbling Ponds O&M (yr 6 of n)	\$ 100,600
3-115	Extra funds for helicopter support (task 3-73)	\$ 25,000
3-116	Acquisition of White River loach minnow	\$ 50,000
4-96	NMDGF nonnative control actions (yr 6 of n)	
a	—W Fk Gila River mechanical removal (yr 2 of 5)	\$ 20,000
4-97	AZGFD nonnative control actions (yr 6 of n)	\$ 175,000
4-98	Redfield Canyon green sunfish removal (yr 4 of 5)	\$ 7,500
4-99	Fossil Creek nonnative fish monitoring (yr 2 of 5)	\$ 30,000
4-100	USFS W Fk Gila River mechanical removal (yr 2 of 5)	\$ 10,000
4-101	Bonita Creek fish barrier fill (yr 1 of 1)	\$ 50,000
	TOTAL	\$ 473,100

* Strikethroughs indicate projects to be rolled into NMDGF projects shown below, canceled projects (Fossil Creek monitoring), or those funded from prior year projects (Bonita Creek fill)

b. New proposed projects (especially NMDGF):

	NMDGF native fish recovery/nonnative control actions	\$ 120,000
	Bear Creek inventory/barrier need and feasibility	
	Blue Creek inventory/barrier need and feasibility	
	Apache Creek inventory/barrier need and feasibility	
	Gila chub restoration	
	Mogollon Creek speckled dace repatriation	
	Gila River forks barrier feasibility	
	Gila River forks nonnative fish removal continuation	
	Little Creek nonnative fish removal continuation	
	San Francisco River spikedace repatriation continuation	
	Saliz Canyon loach minnow repatriation	
	Native sucker genetics	
	San Francisco River tributary evaluation for repatriations	
	Secure Blue River tributary loach minnow into refugium	
	Blue River stock tank surveys	\$???
	Others?	
	GRAND TOTAL	\$ 593,100