

# MEETING SUMMARY

## **SMP Work Group Meeting**

March 9, 2022

12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Attendees:** Jenny Ward (Reclamation), Mark Wernke (Reclamation), Andrew Limbach (Reclamation), Mark Wernke (Reclamation), Frederick Busch (Reclamation), Ken Leib (USGS), Cory Williams (USGS), Suzanne Paschke (USGS), Rachel Gidley (USGS), Jedd Sondergard (BLM), Dave Kanzer (CRWCD), Raquel Flinker (CRWCD), Nora Flynn (CWCB), Kenan Diker (CDPHE), Allen Distel (BPWCD), Cheryl DeJulio (UVWUA), Paul Kehmeier (DCD)

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## **Introductions and Discussion of Agenda**

The agenda was accepted, with the USGS's requested addition of the USGS 2020 Annual Report Update.

Nora Flynn is replacing Alex Funk at the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). Nora has been in this position for about a month. The CWCB is working on rehiring Jojo La's position. They are in the interview process right now.

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## **Science Team Update**

The Science Team met after the November 9, 2021 Work Group Meeting to discuss Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) money requests with CWCB. Selenium Management Program (SMP) priorities were discussed at the Science Team meeting, and ultimately a request was made for \$50,000 to continue monitoring water levels in the 30 well network. There was also a request to have some fish tissue data published which the USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) has collected over the past few years. Publishing this data will be prioritized by USGS in the event the SMP is able to supply additional funding.

The USGS is utilizing USGS and SCTF funds to update the SMP Science Plan. The Science Plan was originally finalized in 2014, and the intent of updating the plan is to review the past, present, and future of SMP scientific activities. The updated plan is close to a final that will be ready for review by USGS and the Science Team within the next couple of weeks. The USGS and Science Team review process can occur concurrently. Ken Leib will email the draft updated Science Plan out to the Science Team for review. The Science Team will provide comments on the Science Plan to the USGS, and a Science Team meeting will be held to discuss the draft plan.

The USGS has funding to develop a GIS database to compile GIS information which has been generated by the SMP over the past seven or eight years. The GIS database will be hosted on an USGS webpage. Relevant links to related reports and data could also be included on the webpage. The USGS would like to present this webpage to the Science Team at the next Science Team meeting.

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## **USGS 2020 Annual Report Update**

Cory Williams shared a PowerPoint presentation providing updates on the USGS 2020 Annual USGS Report.

The USGS annual report format has changed to an open file report to help cut down on costs and expedite the review process. The report is now published as a data release in the USGS science base. Since the data release consists of a series of tables, a more user-friendly format was requested, and the USGS is now developing PowerPoint presentations to present the data.

The USGS 2018 and 2019 report was published last year, and a presentation was previously provided to the Work Group. The 2020 report is with the USGS Bureau Approving Official and is anticipated to be published in March. The USGS anticipates the 2021 report will be published in August 2022. With these reports being published in an expedited manner, they can once again be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as an attachment to the Annual SMP Report.

Presentations on the USGS annual reports will be included in future Work Group agendas.

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## **Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) update**

No updates.

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## **Crawford Clipper Regulating Reservoir Seepage Issue**

The Crawford Clipper Ditch Company (CCDC) received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to construct a regulating reservoir (reservoir) near the Clipper Center Lateral. This work occurred adjacent to a Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Salinity Control Program project which piped the Clipper Center Lateral. In 2021, seepage began occurring on BLM land downgradient of the reservoir and upgradient of the Clipper Center Lateral. The USGS collected some water samples and elevation data. Rachel Gidley presented a PowerPoint presentation on their data collection efforts. In summary, selenium levels of the seeping water was high, but not as high as the SMP has seen in other areas. Some of the salinity values were high.

Mark Wernke discussed that the reservoir had been designed to have a clay liner, but it doesn't appear in the constructed reservoir that the sides of the reservoir were lined. CCDC had excess funds available from their Clipper Center Lateral Salinity Control Program project. Reclamation was able to modify CCDC's salinity contract to allow CCDC to utilize the excess funds to install a membrane cutoff wall adjacent to the reservoir which would extend from above the reservoir water surface down to the bedrock in hopes that the membrane would help prevent the reservoir from seeping. It is not expected that the membrane would completely solve the seepage issue, as seepage has occurred above the canal historically; however, it is hoped the membrane will help

improve the situation. CCDC has indicated that they haven't seen water losses in their system that are large enough to measure; they measure inflow and outflow from the pond.

Jedd Sondergard indicated it would be good for projects to consider better lining systems than clay lining in the future to help prevent this issue. Kenan Diker offered that 319 funds could potentially be used for lining ponds. 319 funds require a 40% total project cost-share. Kenan also indicated that 604 funds are monitoring funds from the EPA which are used for monitoring water quality in the State, and there is the potential that these funds could be used to monitor the CCDC reservoir seepage issue next year. Kenan was unsure if these funds required a cost-share match.

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### **Next Generation Water Observing System (NGWOS) update**

Suzanne Paschke presented a PowerPoint presentation.

NGWOS has three science priorities: linking snowpack to streamflow, determining groundwater contributions to streamflow, and developing water quality trends and assessments (for salinity and water temperature). The USGS is continuing to determine appropriate locations and permit new snow meters. There is a new website called From Snow to Flow (<https://labs.waterdata.usgs.gov/visualizations/snow-to-flow/index.html#/>). A table with the locations of all snow meters will be included on the website. A tabulation of the locations and types of groundwater wells included in the NGWOS system will be made publicly available this year through a data release.

NGWOS plans to complete a groundwater baseflow study near Louzenhizer. The study will include mass balance and hydrograph separation monitoring of specific conductivity and temperature in groundwater and surface water in an effort to look at groundwater contributions to surface water. There is the potential the study may also include some groundwater age tracers. Ken indicated it would be good to discuss the potential of adding this location to the SMP monitoring list.

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### **Next Steps for the SMP**

Jenny Ward recounted the discussion during the November 2021 Work Group meeting which suggested that now that delisting for water quality standards and impairment at Whitewater has been achieved, the SMP could turn their focus onto Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Recovery Program) issues. The initial goal of the SMP is to meet the State water quality standards for selenium in critical habitat, with the long-term goal being to ensure that selenium levels in the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers do not impede the achievement of recovery goals and the downlisting and delisting on the endangered fish.

Jenny asked for input on how the SMP can shift its focus to recovery goals, and how the Work Group should go about determining what the SMP is now trying to accomplish and prioritize. Jenny mentioned one of the roles of the SMP's Management Committee is providing input and oversight to the Work Group, so reconvening the Management Committee may be necessary to

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help answer these questions. It was determined that these questions and potential next steps could be discussed during the next Science Team meeting.

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### **Other Topics**

None.

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### **Schedule for next SMP Meeting**

Jenny will send out a Doodle Poll to schedule the next SMP meeting after the Science Team meets.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Ken will send out the draft updated Science Plan to the Science Team for review and comment.
- Jenny will schedule the next Science Team meeting after the review period on the updated Science Plan. The Science Team will discuss:
  - The draft updated Science Plan
  - The USGS GIS database website
  - Next steps for the SMP at the Science Team meeting
- If published, the USGS will present the USGS 2020 Annual Report at the next Work Group meeting.
- After the Science Team meeting, Jenny will send out a Doodle Poll to the SMP Work Group to schedule the next Work Group meeting.