

**Bear River Environmental Coordination Committee
Final Meeting Notes
October 21, 2009
Grace, Idaho**

ECC Members Present

Mark Stenberg, PacifiCorp
 Cary Myler, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Warren Colyer, Trout Unlimited
 Lynn Van Every, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
 Katie Strong, Greater Yellowstone Coalition
 Jim Capurso, U.S. Forest Service (by telephone)
 Mary Lucachick, Utah Department of Parks and Recreation (by telephone)
 Charlie Vincent, American Whitewater (by telephone)

Others Present

Eve Davies, PacifiCorp
 Miriam Hugentobler, Project Coordinator
 Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater (by telephone)
 Joselin Matkins, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust
 Deb Mignogno, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust
 Neal Artz, Cirrus Ecological
 Bryan Dixon, Cirrus Ecological
 Joan DeGiorgio, The Nature Conservancy

Commitments Made at the October 21, 2009 Meeting	
Stenberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak with Mink Creek conservation easement proponents. • Schedule Jeff Horsburgh, USU Water Lab, to attend an ECC meeting in fall 2009.
Hugentobler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a conference call with interested ECC members to scope Oneida Dam Fish Passage proposal. • Once proposal (above) is scoped, set up a conference call to rank the proposal.
Action items in blue have been carried over from previous ECC meetings.	

Consensus Decisions Made Via Email Since the Last ECC Meeting

- Approve the 125-acre Harris conservation easement with a maximum cap of \$235,000.
- Approve matching funds in the amount of \$27,804 for the irrigation portion of the Eight Mile Creek project. Declined participation in the stock watering portion of the project.

Decisions Made at This Meeting

- Provide \$10,000 in habitat enhancement funding for repair of the Ovid fish screen.
- Provide \$675.00 in habitat enhancement funding to repair the Cub River fish screen.
- Approve the 2010 whitewater boater flow calendar.

Oneida Dam Fish Passage Design Project – Capurso

ECC members considered a habitat enhancement project proposal to fund design of a fish passage structure for Oneida Dam sponsored by Jim Capurso. Project proposal and application forms were routed to ECC members prior to the meeting. Capurso presented the proposal to the ECC by telephone during the meeting.

Capurso noted that during development of the Settlement Agreement, it was agreed that during the first 30 years of license implementation, work should be focused on tributaries to the Bear River, then during the next 30 years, on the mainstem. He said that new data available show that connectivity has improved in the tributaries. Capurso said he had spoken to an engineer regarding design of a fish passage structure at Oneida Dam. He provided a cost estimate, which was shown to ECC members as an overhead. Capurso said the estimate presented in the project application would cover all cost of the design project, \$171,000.

Stenberg said he has spoken with PacifiCorp management about the proposal and has forwarded information to Portland. He said there was no opposition to the project but there were questions, for example, how to maintain minimum flows. Other questions were in regard to timing. That is, the ECC had agreed to fund work on tributaries first. Also some wondered about the potential effect on the Twin Lakes project, as Twin Lakes is not being required to study fish passage as part of their proposal. Capurso asked Colyer if he had any idea why. Colyer said because Oneida does not have fish passage.

Colyer said that to fund the project, the ECC would need to justify not working on tributaries first; that is, why is fish passage needed within 8 years. Colyer noted that the ECC has had excess habitat enhancement funds over the past few years and that may not always be the case. He said he believed the ECC should take advantage of that.

Stenberg noted that in 8 years we may be ready for fish passage [at Oneida]. He said work could be expedited if planning for the structure took place now.

Colyer said the mainstem fish are in toughest shape in this area of the Bear River, with very few fish remaining. We have done about as much tributary work as we can in that stretch, he said, and mainstem work is the next step.

Stenberg said the ECC may want to re-examine the scope of the proposal to include intake screening, otherwise fish may be making a one-way trip. He noted that there is approximately \$80,000 remaining in this year's habitat enhancement fund.

Stenberg proposed that the aquatics group get together, develop a mission statement for the proposal, decide how to phase the project, and decide on a yearly amount—then pass the proposal on to the project ranking subcommittee, which would rank the proposal and then vote on it.

Van Every said he does not think the ECC is ready to approve the proposal today. He said he believed that if constructed, expenditures for this project could preclude the opportunity for habitat enhancement funding for 15 years. He said he believed that Stenberg's proposal is prudent.

Stenberg said he was concerned about the ECC funding design of a project it cannot build. Stenberg said PacifiCorp would not fund the project. Colyer noted that there are other sources of grants.

In regard to the cost estimate presented for the proposal, Vincent said he did not believe the numbers will hold up, as they would be likely to increase over time. He said he agreed that there should be a phased approach. He said he likes the project, and would like to see it go through. Stenberg said internal comments at PacifiCorp were that the cost estimate looked 3 to 4 times low.

Capurso said he would welcome estimates from other engineering contractors.

ECC members agreed to schedule a conference call to discuss the proposal further, and then forward the proposal to the ranking subcommittee.

Grant Project Update

Ovid - Colyer

Colyer said repairs to the Ovid fish screen were recently completed and showed photos to the ECC. He said the screen was retrofit with a rotary drum to address problems with the structure being repeatedly clogged with debris. He said he expects that it will function better, as the design was based on one used with success by the state in many other areas. The rotary drum was installed October 13. He said the invoice for the screen was \$8835. He is also expecting an invoice for backhoe work, which would bring the total cost of the repair to approximately \$9700. Colyer said a damaged fish screen on the Cub River was also repaired on same trip for a total cost of \$675.00

Stenberg checked to see how it was agreed to proceed with this work. He noted that the ECC agreed to fund \$10-15,000 for the repair to the Ovid fish screen, but the \$675 for the Cub River screen would clearly be maintenance. Colyer said it would be OK if the ECC did not fund the Cub repair, but he has no other funding for Ovid. Van Every asked whether the ECC had agreed to put money aside for maintenance. Stenberg said the ECC had discussed it, but there had been no formal agreement. Van Every said we should. Stenberg noted that Colyer had an action item from the June ECC meeting to send a letter to him detailing the proposal for retrofit; however, he believed the ECC could approve the expenditure by consensus at this meeting.

Proposal: Provide \$10,000 in habitat enhancement funds to repair the Ovid fish screen, which the ECC originally funded. Repair is already complete. Consensus reached.

Proposal: Provide \$675.00 in habitat enhancement funds to repair Cub River screen, which the ECC originally funded. Repair is already complete. Consensus reached.

Cub River

Colyer said that design for both Cub River projects is now complete and construction is mobilizing for the Upper Cub next week. Work on the next section starts in November.

2010 Whitewater Boater Flow Schedule

A calendar of 2010 whitewater boater flows was circulated via email prior to the ECC meeting. Stenberg asked for consensus support of the calendar. Consensus reached.

Site Plans - Davies

Davies informed the ECC that the Soda Site Plan is now complete after undergoing internal revisions over the past year.

The Grace Dam – Last Chance Site Plan is also complete. Comments on the draft were received from the National Park Service and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. She said that during this process, it became clear that the public safety plan for this area was out of date and steps were being taken to address that. She added that as with other plans, fencing is the biggest story. Some gates will be added as well. Davies asked for comments/questions from the ECC. There were none. She said the Final Grace Dam - Last Chance Site Plan will be available soon. Implementation begins next year (spring) and the year after.

Maintenance at Alexander

Stenberg noted that Alexander Reservoir has been down approximately 16 ft. for maintenance. Work should be wrapped up soon, and PacifiCorp plans to refill next Friday. He informed the ECC that planting is taking place now for the vegetation planting project funded by Fish and Wildlife Service and the ECC.

Current Land Trust Activities - Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust - Matkins

Closed session

2009 Boater Flow Fish Stranding Study - Cirrus

Dixon gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining findings presented in Cirrus's recent report to the ECC, *Black Canyon Boater Program Ramp Rate Study, Year 2 Annual Report – Fish Stranding following Boater-Flow Releases*, then took questions from the ECC.

Colburn asked whether there were ongoing efforts to note changes in vegetation as the study moves forward. Dixon said they are not documenting vegetation at this point. He added that he believes that slope and surface of the varial zone is a more important factor.

Colburn asked whether Dixon thinks the change in flow regime is responsible for the change in vegetation. Dixon said there is some change in deposition in some reaches but he has not figured out how to analyze variables up and down the river.

Colyer expressed concern that the date of fish hatching may affect data, that is, the number of fish counted is related more to the date of hatch than to flows. Van Every noted that some of the very young

fish being counted were difficult to positively identify to species. Colyer suggested Colorado State University's larval fish lab as a resource.

Colburn asked whether Dixon had seen any statistical differences between the two years of the study so far, in other words any red flags yet? Dixon said there is not enough data yet to say. Colburn noted that habitat can cause changes as much as flows and he is not sure that the study will show that. He expressed concern that the effects of ramp rate could not be isolated. Artz said we may not be able to isolate ramp rate but we can draw other conclusions, such as the scope of the problem. Stenberg said that seasonality may be more highly correlated to stranding than ramp rate.

Van Every said he thinks the data gathered are valuable, and that the ECC will likely wrestle with the issues raised for some time.

Update on Black Canyon Monitoring - Stenberg

Stenberg said he had received word from Gangemi, who was recently in the Black Canyon to conduct 2009 monitoring, that fish numbers were extremely low in all reaches this year, including the control reach. Also, he noticed a lot less filamentous algae, although he is not measuring that. He also reported finding a big, fat rainbow trout in the middle of the Black Canyon.

Next Meeting:

Next meeting set for December 16 in Pocatello.

Agenda items include updates from the land trust and grant proposals.

Adjourn

Regular ECC meeting adjourned to a conservation action planning session with Joan DeGiorgio of The Nature Conservancy, followed by field review of the completed Kackley Springs project.