

**SPECIES OF MANAGEMENT CONCERN (SMC) AD HOC MEETING:
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2014
10:00 A.M. MDT, 9:00 A.M. PDT:
DRAFT MEETING NOTES
(COMPILED BY LARRY STEVENS – PLEASE SEND COMMENTS TO HIM)**

Participants: Shane Capron, Paul Harms, Chris Harris, Larry Stevens (Chair), Jason Thiriot, and Linda Whetton.

Participant Interest in the SMC Ad Hoc: Participants were asked to clarify their interest in serving on the committee, and all replied that they were curious about the issue, interested in learning, and in providing better information and advice to the TWG and AMWG.

Administrative History of the SMC Ad Hoc Committee: We reviewed the Ad Hoc charge and scope (see admin history below and attachments), and reviewed how the SMC white paper was developed through discussions with committee members and biology experts. That group evaluated each species' distribution and relation to dam operation in the CRE, and used a multi-parameter assessment and scoring process to initially score each of 87 taxa. After that process, the species list was re-reviewed by the Ad Hoc in a "reality check" to confirm their importance to the AMP process.

The Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP): Mr. Harris provided the committee with a description of the MSCP effort to develop and manage a list of species of concern in the lower Colorado River basin. This effort is similar to that undertaken by the SMC Ad Hoc within the AMP, but is much larger in scope, intent, and funding. In the MSCP, federal and state managers developed an initial list of nearly 250 species, and then winnowed it down to 26 "covered species" (SMC), many of which were federally or state listed but some of which were of unknown status. Detailed species accounts were developed over several years for each covered species, including habitat needs. The MSCP group meticulously evaluated regulation compliance requirements obligations in the MSCP landscape, listing all possible projects that affect species. The status of some species (e.g., Mexican Garter Snake and Yellow-billed Cuckoo) have changed over the past 10 yr of the MSCP. The MSCP represents an effort to improve habitat conditions for these covered species without affecting flow regulatory obligations. There is much monitoring and reporting that has been accomplished, with annual monitoring reports and numerous scientific publications, all of which are posted on the MSCP website ([www. http://www.lcrmscp.gov/](http://www.lcrmscp.gov/)). Avian monitoring is performed by experts using standard protocols and includes all species detected during surveys for covered species, such as Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-billed Cuckoo, as well as at three long-term monitoring stations.

Overall, the MSCP is a good example of balanced, adaptive economic and environmental management, and is a program that the AMP should hear more about. Unlike the AMP, the 50 participating members of the MSCP contribute half of the program costs, and therefore the participating members have a strong interest in the success and progress of the

program. Mr. Thiriot mentioned that the MSCP has a year-end reporting symposium in January each year, with wildlife, fish, and restoration sessions. Findings presented at that symposium may generate formal recommendations regarding program changes. Those recommendations are submitted to the MSCP Steering Committee and then to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and may be implemented after due consideration.

Status of CRE SMC: Larry briefly reviewed the status of several SMC listed in the 2011 white paper.

Razorback Sucker have now been clearly identified in the Colorado River ecosystem (CRE) downstream from Lava Falls (Mile 179), including both mature individuals and young fish spawned within the past several years. The low levels of Lake Mead may be partially responsible for this newly recolonizing population, as the meandering river and backwaters in lowermost Grand Canyon appears to provide good spawning habitat.

Muskrat have colonized the CRE from the Little Colorado River (and perhaps other large tributaries) over the past three years, and now occur upstream into lowermost Glen Canyon (e.g., at Lees Ferry and Mile -6.5R). Reasons for this population increase, and its relation to dam operations remain unknown.

Goodding's Willow are gradually disappearing from the CRE due to reproductive failure in the post-dam's now-coarser sand deposits. The biggest remaining stand of mature plants is that at Cardenas Creek, and is rapidly dwindling because of beaver attack.

The endemic Grand Canyon Wetsalts Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela haemorrhagica arizonae*) were detected at the mouth of Granite Creek, one of the few springfed tributaries in which it occurs.

Sources of Information: New publications are coming out on CRE species, some of which are SMC. For example, Larry recently published on the distribution of sand-dwelling wasps in the genus *Ammophila* in the CRE and Grand Canyon region. Jason mentioned that the AMP WIKI site will provide housing for references and perhaps pdfs as well.

Non-native Species: We discussed expansion of SMC list to include non-native species. In particular, the committee felt that updates on Quagga Mussel, New Zealand Mudsnail, River corridor NN plants, Tamarisk leaf beetle, and other species (e.g., Africanized Honey Bee) is warranted. The committee will take up this discussion and consider development of a list of species and evaluation of importance to the SMC in its next meeting.

Communications: Larry led a brief discussion about SMC Ad Hoc Committee reporting to the TWG and AMWG, including presenting at least a brief update at each TWG meeting, and reporting to the AMWG as advised by the TWG Chair. The information may be considered worthy of posting on Reclamation and the GCDAMP WIKI websites.

Improved communications between the AMP, the NPS, and GCMRC staff could improve understanding on-going monitoring and status of SMC, as well as opportunities for collaborative species stewardship. The AMP WIKI site may serve as a venue for communicating with the river guides and the public. The SMC Ad Hoc may be interested in presenting a talk at the State of Knowledge Workshop in January 2015.

Shane – We need to keep better track of the ‘big picture’, by information tracking, and leveraging information from others working on these topics and species. Chris agreed, mentioning that intergrated, programmatic approach is not well developed among the various entitites throughout the Colorado River drainage. We need to ‘fly a little higher in the AMP and look down’ to apply lessons learned elsewhere (e.g., Botox for predator avoidance). Developing a committee among the basin programs would be useful. The example of the 2008 Colorado River species summit was brought up, promoted by Ted Melis and John Hammill, involving MSCP, AMP, SJR and the Upper Basin programs. Jason mentioned a similar summit on 16-18 June 2015, in which AMP should participate. Also, that such meetings are worthwhile conducting perhaps every 3-4 yr.

Next Call: The next SMC Ad Hoc call will be held well prior to the next TWG meeting.

The meeting call was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. MDT.

After the call, Mr. Harris suggested adding the Colorado River Board of California’s new Environmental Scientist, Ms. Jessica Neuwerth. She is included in the mail-out with the draft meeting minutes.

Species of Management Concern Ad Hoc Administrative History

AMWG April 2009: "In recognition of GCDAMP [Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program] goals toward management of the Colorado River through an ecosystem approach, AMWG directs the TWG [Technical Work Group] to establish the Species of Concern Ad Hoc Committee [SMCAHC, (the Committee)] and requests the participation of GCMRC [U.S. Geological Survey Glen Canyon Monitoring and Research Center] in that ad hoc committee, to produce a draft report to be presented to AMWG on or before by May 1, 2011, that contains the following with regard to species of management concern in the CRE: A review of information about an assessment of the status of habitat needs and availability, and ecosystem roles of the species."

Goal 3 Report forwarded from TWG to AMWG on 28 June 2011

AMWG accepted report on 24 August 2011: "AMWG accepts the report of the Species of Concern Ad Hoc Committee entitled, "Assessment of Taxa of Management Concern in the Colorado River Ecosystem, Glen and Grand Canyons, Arizona, USA: Habitat Needs, Availability, and Ecosystem Roles" dated 15 June 2011 (revised July 8, 2011), which meets the criteria set forth in the AMWG motion of April 2009, calling for "a review of information about an assessment of the status of habitat needs and availability, and ecosystem roles" of native species of management concern."

TWG formed Species of Management Concern Ad Hoc on 24 Oct 2012: "TWG recommends that AMWG establish a Species of Management Concern Ad Hoc Committee to integrate and regularly present information on native and non-native species that influence CRE structure, function, and management decision-making."

SMC updates (e.g., TWG presentation prepared for 9 April 2014 meeting)