

Joint Meeting Minutes  
September 21, 2005  
Gunnison Basin & Grand Valley Selenium Task Forces

Attendees: Ken Leib (USGS), Fred Miller (NRCS), Mike Baker (US BOR), Brian Sorenson (NRCS), Dale Woodbury (NRCS), Dave Kanzer (CRWCD), Paul von Guerard (USGS), Dave Doty (NRCS), Bruce Bertram (Delta County), Jan McCracken (Delta County), Sonja R. Chavez de Baca (GB/GVSTF Coordinator), Rick Krueger (US FWS), Frank Riggle (State NRCS), Carl Zimmerman (CO State Conservation Board), Barb Osmundson (US FWS), Travis James (NRCS)

A. Coordinator Updates

1. Introductions & Welcome
2. WEF Selenium Summit Nov 2-4, 2005 Contra Costa, CA
3. Coordinator Funding: The Coordinator updated the TF about remaining funding for general coordination/facilitation. Fund balances are approximately:
  - BMP Grant - \$4,000 for coordination & completion of remaining deliverables other than brochures and guidance documents; and \$4,000 for education/outreach;
  - GBSTF 319 Coordinator Grant + Cash Match: \$6,000
  - GVSTF 319 Coordinator Grant + Cash Match: \$13,000

The Coordinator spoke to the TF about the need to get away from the dependency on soft money and the need to speak to our membership about long term funding support. The Coordinator expressed to the group the fact that she has not found any grants that can be used expressly for watershed facilitation/coordination. She did say that for every grant that they are applying for, they build in grant administration support into the budget and that this generally does not/cannot include general TF facilitation/coordination.

Paul von Guerard noted that going to CA for the Selenium Summit was a good opportunity to present to the audience that we struggle to make progress and that one of the barriers to progress is coordinator funding. The Coordinator agreed with Paul, noted that this is a good plan to continue to pursue, but that we need a more immediate solution/action/plan.

Dave Kanzer with the Colorado River Water Conservation District noted that the TF is a membership organization and that we should consider a membership fee. Dave asked Paul if the federal agencies had some mechanism for contributing to the Task Force. Paul indicated that they have given money in the past to the water conservation districts for things like the water festival and that if there is an organization that they can pass money to it (e.g. an organization like a water conservation district).

Dave Kanzer asked Jan McCracken (Delta County) if they would consider giving some financial support to the Task Force. Jan indicated that she could

look into it, but she emphasized that now is the time to act and that a letter from the TF would be good given that they are in the middle of their budget process. Sonja will follow up on this with a smaller subcommittee of the TF.

Bruce Bertram (Delta County) indicated that maybe there are other funds available from Oil & Gas developers or energy related industry (i.e. the severance tax for mineral exploration with a tie to water quality issues). Sonja will follow up with Bruce and check into this further.

Paul von Guerard suggested that the TF make a list of every potential contributor and what benefit we are providing to them.

Dave Kanzer indicated that he thought that Mike Baker (US BOR) had suggested at the last meeting that we submit a small scope of work to Recovery Program under the wise water use platform and information and education programs. Mike didn't recall this directly, but said that he thought if we did we should pitch a proposal in terms of selenium component. Barb Osmundson (US FWS) was uncertain about the success we would have given that the recovery program doesn't address water quality improvements.

Sonja (Coordinator) will follow up on all of the above suggestions.

B. Barb Osmundson (US FWS): Overview of the two studies she is conducting related to selenium.

1. CO-Water Quality Assessment of Growout Ponds Used for Colorado River Endangered Fish Propagation: US FWS is stocking fish in grow out ponds until they reach a size of 12 inches. At 12 inches they are stocked in the river. Sixteen (16) total growout ponds are being used. Barb was interested in looking at water quality in the ponds because there is a diversity of where they receive their water from in the ponds (ex. ground water, irrigation return, combination of groundwater and irrigation return, and Gunnison River water). There is diversity in how fish do in the different ponds and their resulting body condition. FWS has used the ponds for 5-6 years. FWS is working with USGS to look at water-quality parameters for low-level nutrient analysis. Barb is looking closely at the biota and has collected samples at the time of stocking, mid summer, and then at harvest time. Barb has collect zooplankton and benthic invertebrates. Base line muscle plugs have been taken in the hatchery before sending to ponds. At this time she is taking muscle plugs from the fish in the ponds. She will then compare the samples for selenium concentrations. She has also taken muscle plugs from Razorback Suckers in River, stocked Razorback Suckers and Colorado pikeminnow (wild, non stocked). She is hoping to tie selenium concentrations to fish condition. Individual fish can be tracked via a fish tag. Also doing recapture program for Razorback Suckers. She has one year of data.

2. Selenium in Fish Tissue: Prediction Equations for Conversion between Whole Body, Muscle, and Eggs: Barb Osmundson is conducting a study aimed at developing prediction equation for determining selenium residues in eggs from the use of whole body and muscle plug residues. The new EPA criteria is a whole body tissue method so question is how do you go from whole body to muscle plug. Other studies have suggested that there is a problem with accumulation of selenium in reproductive tissue. So the idea is to take muscle plug and predict selenium concentration of ovary and whole body. She is looking at different fish species – low accumulators and high accumulators (non-native green sunfish are high accumulators and white suckers are low accumulators) to develop prediction equations. She will take other species to see how they fit the developed prediction equations. She will also be looking at seasonality (prespawning, post breeding) and male/female to see if females have lower concentrations of selenium in muscle plugs and whole bodies post-breeding because of deposition into eggs).

Being able to take muscle plugs is better for T&E and native species rather than whole body. Barb is using more samples and more species which other studies haven't. Bullfish for example have 5-6 ppb in fish tissue but accumulate huge amounts in the eggs, so it's probably not just food source but also metabolism which plays a role. FWS contaminant money is being used for "on-refuge" and "off-refuge". Two years of data will be collected. Barb also collected some native fish 10 (roundtail chubs, flannel mouth, blue head) and non-native 10 (carp, bullhead, trout, etc.) to look at other species. Model will be pretty robust given the number of fish she is looking at. The Task Force felt that Barb's studies were very important and that EPA or other funding sources should be pursued to further her studies.

C. Bruce Bertram – Devil's Thumb (PPT Presentation of pond lining, seeps, etc.)

D. Issues Formulation Hearing. Purpose is to identify topics for Rulemaking Hearing. Coordinator (Sonja), on behalf of the Gunnison Basin & Grand Valley Selenium Task Forces, will be making a statement at Issues Formulation Hearing that we would like to see temporary modifications extended at the next Rule Making Hearing (June 06 in Cortez).

WQCD Assessment Unit– Dan Beley spoke to them about our wanting an extension of temporary modifications. Assessment Unit responded that they don't have a reason not to extend. The only potential problem (which Dan felt is not very likely given their previous compliments on our planning) would be if the EPA didn't agree. Assessment Unit has met with EPA and given their past discussion with Dan and Assessment Unit, Dan thinks they would be in support. Assessment unit would include our position in their Notice Proposal. (double check this with Dan) If so, the Task Force can

come in front of commission at meeting and support the assessment unit proposal.

A letter from both the TFs will be written. Address to Commission – Ext of Temp Mods of selenium segments and will cite our progress and successes.

Hope to have draft TMDL by or before Spring 2006. Dan is going to touch base with Steve Glazer and Randy See to see if they are on board with extending temporary mods. Dan will also check into a recent phone call from Matt Kenna of the Western Environmental Law Center (Durango).

Party Status – not necessary, TF will pursue mailing list status. The TF can testify at the rulemaking in support of assessment unit proposal as a member of public.

#### E. Miscellaneous Issues:

Devil's Thumb in relation to Newman family complaints with regard to water well contamination: More correspondence has been received from the Newmans. WQCD responded in letter that CWA & SDWA doesn't apply to individual wells on public water systems. Suggestion that they talk to City of Delta about tapping into their system. Public health issue would probably be covered by County Health Department jurisdiction.

- a. Is there a role here for the task force? From Bruce Bertram is sounded like things were going in the right direction in terms of the golf course and landfill.
- b. The remaining loading – how do we address it? We may want to remain involved with Golf Course in a less public manner (than previously when problem popped up). Given that the west seeps are dry it may take a while for Newman's to see any possible improvements in their well.

#### F. EQIP/NRCS Discussion

1. Sonja – action plan review
2. Evaluation of Se Remediation Concepts for lower Gunnison & Uncompahgre Rivers (Mike) – maps of loading info analyzed by NIWQP in different sub-basins in the lower Gunnison River Basin were presented. Some improvements have been made to the maps and our hope is that they continue to evolve. Mike continued with the Gunnison Basin's conceptual plan to meet selenium water quality standards in Gunnison River at Whitewater, Co. Need to reduce 5,600 lbs or 25% of existing selenium load. A second NIWQP goal for reducing se in food organisms for endangered fish is 13,000 lbs. To get an idea of what the Task Forces

should be doing, Mike put together a program of how to reduce 5600 lbs. of selenium loading per year

Frank Riggle – how can Task Force integrate with NRCS goals? Task Force: Relationship of salinity reduction and salt work is important to know in terms of integrating programs. Paul von Guerard (USGS) emphasized that the best we can do is to look at where historic salinity EQIP projects have occurred and relate salt reductions to selenium. USGS working on it?? CIG working on it??

3. NRCS funds earmarked for salinity control. Selenium would be eligible under water quality component of national priorities. Need to know more about how to make adaptations. Salinity program may experience future pressure on amount of federal match.

Ranking process designed to solicit local info/advice as to how to address local concerns. If someone had 5 acres and selling hay they might qualify, if they are feeding their horses they won't (need approx \$1000 income). Colorado has gotten \$7.75 million of financial assistance funding. About half of that goes into lower Gunnison area.

Dave Doty (Area 1 Conservationist, NRCS) responded that if we can get his office a map of high selenium/salinity areas they can start to try to address in 2006. Task Force will follow up.