Integrated Water Management Planning in the Middle Colorado River

To improve security for all water uses in the Middle Colorado River by understanding and protecting existing uses, meeting shortages, and maintaining healthy riverine ecosystems in the face of increased future demand and climate uncertainty.

Aquatics Focus Group Meeting
December 3, 2018
Meeting Summary

I. Attendees
Kendall Bakich - CPW
Jenn Logan - CPW
Tom Fresques - BLM
David Graf - CPW
Bill Hoblitzell – Lotic Hydrological
AJ Keith – Stillwater Sciences
Seth Mason – Lotic Hydrological
Laurie Rink – Middle Colorado Watershed Council

II. Meeting Purpose (Seth)
The purpose of getting together is to continue discussions regarding requested CPW aquatics data.

III. Draft Data Summary (Seth and AJ)
AJ passed out a draft table containing a summary of Native Fish Habitat, Distribution, and Limiting Factors. The group walked through the table and provided verbal feedback. Tom suggested adding sculpins to the list – they are sensitive to embeddedness so good indicators of sedimentation issues.

Seth shared some very preliminary fish distribution maps based on point data obtained from CPW. A conversation about data limitations ensued. The Senior Aquatic Biologist makes decisions on what data is provided when an outside data request is made, particularly point data. For the mainstem Colorado in this watershed, most data collection by CPW is related to non-natives control versus community distribution data, so it will look skewed towards non-natives. There is no sampling done between Parachute and De Beque because of the Bluestone diversion structure.

Is there any habitat data? The team is interested in identifying stretches of critical habitat. BLM collects some habitat data as part of their AIM (assessment, inventory, monitoring) program. Tom can provide access to his data. USFWS creates a floodplain analysis map in order to define critical habitat for T&E species. Creede Clayton is the ESA contact at USFWS.

IV. Additional Discussion on State of Fisheries in Watershed
A number of points were conveyed during the meeting discussion. Below is a summary.

- Floodplain controls may be a useful mechanism in the future to limit spread of non-natives.
- Low velocity, warm, nutrient-rich waters are good rearing habitat for T&E species. Not out of the question to create develop backwater rearing habitat here. But white suckers also use this slack water.
- Not sure if razorback are reproducing here – no one is monitoring for fry. They have recovered enough to have a breeding population. No idea if bonytail are reproducing – not enough information on habitat requirements. Pikeminnow are more temperature driven for spawning so they may not have
moved as high as Rifle historically. Razorback reproduction may be a good focus for restoration/mitigation.

- Our work should discuss the trending direction for aquatic resources in the watershed (rather than triage approach).
- Focus more on 3-species when developing habitat recommendations.
- Work to keep white suckers out of the system. Currently they are mechanically removed. Weirs can be used to block their migration up the trib – Roan Creek may be good place to experiment with this.
- Very shallow backwaters/ponds/oxbows with controlled outlets/inlets may be great for rearing and too shallow for the larger non-natives. Our work could help educate public around the perils of non-native stocking in ponds.
- Note that roundtail chubs are likely using the mainstem for spawning.
- Cottonwood Creek at the head of Glenwood Canyon on the south side is another candidate for native trout.
- There was considerable discussion and self-education on indigenous cutthroats, conservation populations, and the blue versus green lineage debate that has yet to be fully sorted out. This will need careful attention to detail when describing or mapping as distributions.
- Connectivity is a primary limiting factor for all natives – both structural and hydrologic.

V. Mental Model Exercise
We ran out of time for reviewing the latest version.

VI. Next Steps
AJ is seeking edits to the table he distributed. The team is also looking for very specific detail on species occurrence, distribution, and connectivity issues by way of populating a basemap as a group effort. Laurie and Seth will organize the group around this exercise.