**Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission**

**Emergency Meeting – Teams Teleconference June 29, 2020**

**Meeting Convened at 10:10 AM**

**Membership Attendance (Tribe / Rep)**

1. Jicarilla Apache Nation Jacob Mazzone (Chairman)

2. Navajo Nation Glenn Selby (Vice-Chairman)

3. Southern Ute Indian Tribe Steve Whiteman (Secretary-Treasurer)

4. Mescalero Apache Tribe Tori Marden

5. Zuni Pueblo Cody Lanyate

6. Laguna Pueblo Raymond Lucero

7. Santa Clara Pueblo Garrett Altmann

8. Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Dan Mosley

9. Isleta Pueblo Not present

10. Sandia Pueblo Not present

11. San Carlos Apache Tribe Not present

12. Taos Pueblo Not present

13. Acoma Pueblo Not present

14. Ohkay Owingeh Not present

15. Cochiti Pueblo Not present

16. Picuris Pueblo Not present

17. Nambe Pueblo Not present

18. San Ildefonso Pueblo Not present

19. Ute Tribe (U&O) Not present

**Other Attendees:**

Adam Ringia, SWTFC Executive Director

Shelley Belin, Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery Manager

**Welcome / Introduction (Adam Ringia)**

Adam welcomed the group and spoke about work and life challenges with the current COVID19 pandemic

Adam offered words of encouragement to continue doing good resource stewardship in a COVID-safe manner

Cody Lanyate is the new interim Zuni representative to SWTFC, following Nelson Luna’s recent retirement

Cody (Technician) introduced himself to the group and indicated his interest in continued work with SWTFC

Talisa Ortega has also moved on from Taos Pueblo. Unfortunately, the new Taos representative is not present today

Adam spoke about importance of getting more membership engagement, including stories, photos, updates, etc.

Steve commented that the Weekly Digests are great; he suggested updates from member tribes should be included

Adam agreed with the suggestion, and reiterated that more involvement from SWTFC member tribes is needed

**Coronavirus Impacts (Adam Ringia)**

During COVID19, the communication from member tribes has dropped dramatically

Adam is typically only hearing from the SWTFC officers and hatchery personnel

At Adam’s request, members provided the following feedback regarding COVID impacts at their tribe/pueblo:

*Zuni Pueblo:*

Zuni has struggled with coronavirus impacts, including a virus spread at a recent traditional ceremony

Zuni govt has been in a partial shutdown, with many on administrative leave for extended period

Cody (at Zuni) has been on leave since beginning of June

*Laguna Pueblo:*

Raymond indicates many staff are now returning to work. Laguna continues to be closed to non-members

*Jicarilla Apache Nation:*

Jicarilla is still largely on administrative leave

Game & Fish has been on light-duty work, providing some basic functions and services, like stocking fish

*Navajo Nation:*

Navajo has over 7,000 COVID19 cases, but new daily cases seem to be declining.

Govt is still on admin leave and is scheduled to open July 6. The closure may get extended, however.

*Southern Ute:*

Southern Ute has remained relatively healthy, with no COVID19 cases in the membership.

The government continues to operate under Chairman Stay-Home Order, with many staff teleworking

Fish & Wildlife field work continues, especially where solo-work can be done in COVID-safe manner

Southern Ute is considering extending 2020 non-member fishing permits into 2021

*Santa Clara:*

Santa Clara Pueblo is on Partial Office Closure, with most office staff operating per usual with State and Tribal COVID recommendations.  Field work commencing since May with SCP staff. Contractor site visit authorizations considered on individual basis.  Pueblo village is closed to all visitors, but field sites accessible and new projects starting.

*Mescalero Tribe:*

Tribe went into lock-down in May/June. Majority of departments are closed, but some are now re-opening.

Several hatchery staff were placed on furlough, but some returned to work in mid-May.

Some hatchery staff are designated as essential, for ensuring survival/health of fish on-station

There are a limited number of COVID cases in the tribe and surrounding communities

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe:

The tribe is under local emergency order due to increasing COVID cases; PLPT is closed to visitors

The tribe’s enterprises are being significantly impacted, as well as fisheries operations

Hatchery continues with a skeleton-crew until re-opening when most hatchery workers can return.

Artificial spawning operations for LH cutthroat and cui-ui have been cancelled

Some natural river spawning occurring with LH cutthroat thanks to the tribe’s water rights/supplies

For the first time in the history of PLPT hatchery, there are no cui-ui or LH cutthroat on-station

Some hatchery work continues, including an order placed to Germany for new circular fish tanks

A new replacement chiller has also been purchased; and a new cooling tower is also being pursued

Dan described the challenges of wildfire smoke impacting hatchery source water (via ammonia toxicity)

If Federal COVID impact funding comes through for PLPT, another tribal hatchery can be re-opened

Dan also spoke about aging staff at PLPT Fisheries, and a need to train young tribal members to take-over

**Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery Update (Shelley)**

The hatchery has been shutdown to visitors/tours, but remains open to essential staff and administration

They are unable to deliver fish to off-reservation clients at this time; they ARE able to stock Mescalero waters

There are various COVID19 safety equipment/measures available at the hatchery in case of unexpected visitors

Repair work continues on a clogged pipeline that supplies spring water to the hatchery

There were recent issues with high mortality of trout fry due to some type of environmental/water quality factor

Testing was performed, followed by formalin/salt treatments, and daily mortality rate has dropped substantially

A filtration system was recommended to improve quality of source water; would be a large capital investment.

Current mortalities are slightly elevated, but are not at emergency/unsustainable levels

The majority of fish on-station are currently in the 6-8” range, and the future stocking of these fish is uncertain

Shelley is uncertain about stocking plans given the COVID19 travel restrictions, as well as those at client tribes

Shelley believes it is POSSIBLE that MAT will open 3rd week of July, and deliveries can resume. TBD.

There was discussion of possible fish stocking in fall season at major clients - Sandia/Isleta/Nambe

MTFH budget is going okay overall, but a little short in the Maintenance Account (i.e., oxygen, electricity expenses)

Shelley and Adam discussed making minor adjustment to the budget to address the small shortfall in Maintenance

Mescalero has submitted a request to extend USFS funding for youth workers at the hatchery

The COVID lock-down initially presented a challenge with starting a new USFS Intern, but now she is working well

Monsoon rains have been flooding roads by the hatchery, but there are no significant flooding issues at the hatchery

Rains have slightly elevated turbidity of hatchery source water, but nothing too serious

There is still BIA funding available for refurbishment of tanks in the tankhouse

**Santa Clara Project Updates (Garrett Altmann submitted the following narrative)**

Santa Clara Project Updates: Multiple projects in 2020, including work with FEMA, State Forestry, NRCS, and WNTI.  After nearly a decade of erosion treatments in our tributaries post-fire, we began our first creek work in 2019 since the system is finally stabilizing.  This initial work with the Nature Conservancy -Rio Grande Water Fund, will extend this year with our WNTI grant, which is currently being finalized with USFWS and our start date is anticipated for July.  The WNTI project work will include developing headwaters habitat, with a focus on creating winter habitat, expanding riparian areas, revegetation, and bypassing a natural fish barrier created from post-fire debris flows. Optimizing areas for beaver reintroduction will also be integrated.  WNTI is also being supplemented with a New Mexico State Forestry FAWA grant that will include fencing to protect key regeneration areas from grazing and provide additional planting.  Moving on, our $3Million FEMA Flood Mitigation and Creek Restoration Project is slated for construction start in August.  This follows two years of design, and most recently re-design which was warranted by the Tribe to limit the quantity of concrete introduced from the proposed pre-cast concrete arch structures.  Final design now includes $1.9 Million to upgrade three existing CMP culvert crossings with bottomless metal bottomless arch culverts, 1,800' of roadway/stream embankments optimizing local materials and natural design, and flood mitigation of 2,200' of canyon roadway.  The 25% cost-match for this grant was generously provided by the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians in Southern California.  Moving on, our most recent big development is an award from the USDA/NRCS Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentive Program, which received $50M from the 2018 Farm Bill.  The VPA has awarded us $1 Million to restore habitat and provide public access for fishing and wildlife viewing.  We intend to apply the maximum 25% of this grant allowable for habitat restoration, primarily designing and integrating off-channel ponds.  These ponds are similar in concept and function to an oxbow lake in a natural system.  These ponds will serve as conservation trials and be considered as a 'dam-less' alternative to the four recreation ponds relied upon for fishing since the early 1960's.  Additional work with the NRCS will be included from the EQIP program that will provide woody residue/slash treatments to provide access to new stretches of stream, and planting of pollinator, shrub and conifer species to promote canopy development to sustain cold water fisheries.  Lots of great projects!

**Member Roll Call / Officer Elections (Steve Whiteman)**

Steve indicated there are 19 member tribes, and a simple majority of ten is needed to elect officers

SWTFC continues to need to elect Chairman and Sec-Treasurer for two-year terms

The only nominations that have been made are the incumbents (Jacob and Steve)

There are only eight members present, so we are unable to hold the elections at this meeting

The decision was made to postpone the elections until a future meeting where a simple majority is in attendance

**Executive Director Business (Adam Ringia)**

Adam has accepted a full-time position at Laguna Pueblo running their Water Rights Office

Adam is willing and interested in continuing on a part-time basis as Executive Director for SWTFC

Adam described how he could continue to serve SWTFC on a part-time basis

Adam said he would also like to continue in his 2-year appointment to National Fish Habitat Partnership

Jacob indicated his appreciation for Adam’s good work for SWTFC and willingness to have Adam continue

Jacob pointed-out past difficulty we’ve had with recruiting for the SWTFC Executive Director position

It was suggested that ½ time work for ½ compensation could be a good approach beginning in July 2020

There was unanimous consensus among all members to proceed with ½-time employment of Adam

All members present (Jacob, Steve, Glenn, Shelley, Garrett, Raymond, Cody, Dan) spoke of support for this option

**Member Participation / Committees (Adam Ringia)**

Adam again spoke about need for greater participation in SWTFC, in a variety of different areas, via committees

Committees could include: Fish Hatchery, Membership, Fundraising, Education, Youth, etc., etc.

Adam asks members to think about ways of participating further, and let’s discuss this more at our next meeting

Main reasons are for this are: (1) we need better member representation, and (2) reduced burden on officers

Jacob motioned to adjourn; second from Dan. The consensus of everyone was to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM

**Next Meeting:**

***SWTFC Quarterly BOD Meeting – Late July or Early August, TBD***

**Meeting Minutes taken by**:

Steve Whiteman, Secretary-Treasurer

Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission

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