

Cheoah River Resource Management and Enhancement Fund  
Annual Meeting  
October 6, 2009, 1:00 p.m.  
USFWS Office and Conference Room  
160 Zillicoa Street  
Asheville, NC

Draft Meeting Notes

Participants: Chris Goudreau (NCWRC)\*  
Jason Farmer (USFS)\*  
Mark Cantrell (USFWS)\*  
Jim Mead (NCDWR)\*  
Mike Bolt (EBCI) [by phone for part of meeting]\*  
Marshall Olson (APGI)  
Jody Johns (Long View Associates)  
Dick Eyestone (Lake Santeetlah)  
Steve Fraley (NCWRC)  
Gary Kauffman (USFS) [for part of meeting]  
\* Board member

Chris Goudreau called the meeting to order and noted that all Board members were in attendance except Mike Bolt, who was attending a conference in Washington, DC. Unless Mike could participate by phone, the Cheoah Fund Operating Protocol states that any decisions made by the Board at the meeting would be considered tentative. Since there were no grant proposals before the Board, the only decision expected to be made during the meeting was the selection of the next Chair.

1. Update of Finances

Chris Goudreau provided a copy of the financial report for 2009 through September 30 (Attachment 1). The top part of the report was prepared by Darren England (NCDWR). Currently, there is \$145,596.71 in the account. Chris then added the bottom part of the report showing additional financial obligations of the Fund for the next few years. Without considering additional payments from APGI and interest in the next few years, the Board has obligated \$204.66 more than is currently in the account. This indicates that the Board has to be careful in deciding to fund any additional projects in the next few years.

2. Reports of Funded Projects

Chris led the participants through each of the projects funded by the Cheoah Fund since the first award in 2007. He noted that with the annual rotation of the Chair among the representative entities, it was difficult to keep track of the paperwork. Chris created a tracking form for each project, which he sent out to Board members, Advisors and the Licensee via email. There are several questions and issues with several of the projects that need clarification.

a. Appalachian elktoe genetics (USFWS & NCWRC 2007)

Steve Fraley reported that a final report has not been provided because the investigator who is to perform the genetic analysis (Dr. Morgan Raley) has not recovered from his move from NC State University to the NC Museum of Natural Sciences. The Cheoah Fund money (\$15,000) was paid to NCWRC, but NCWRC is holding the money and will not pay Dr. Raley until they get final report.

b. Virginia spiraea monitoring & management (USFWS, USFS, Hargreaves 2007)

Mike Bolt joined the meeting via phone for a few minutes and indicated that he was not comfortable assuming the position of Chair for 2010 due to other work responsibilities and asked that another person take the Chair position.

Gary Kauffman joined the meeting and provided an overview of the second year annual summary report produced by Jane Hargreaves (Attachment 2). To date, treatment has focused on buffering the 16 known spiraea locations from invasives. Most work has been chemical, but some early work was done using non-chemical treatment of kudzu. ARRA funds will be used by USFS to treat kudzu. Nantahala Outdoor Center and Warren Wilson College were scheduled to assist in treating mimosa and princess tree, but weather did not cooperate. NOC will assist USFS next year. Overall, it is still a little early to tell the effectiveness of treatment in 2009, but Gary will make a site visit soon to check.

Marshall Olson asked if Gary knew if spiraea had been surveyed near the dam, in relation to extending the safety fence. Gary will check it out next week.

Chris relayed a concern of Jane regarding releasing data to others assisting in vegetation control. After reading the contract language, it was decided that USFS or USFWS personnel could release those data without violating the contract.

c. Restoration ecology of fishes (Virginia Tech 2007)

Ryan McManamay joined the meeting via phone and discussed the written report he provided by email (Attachment 3). Jason Farmer asked if Ryan had a map of good locations for gravel addition. Ryan said he is now more inclined to focus on lower gradient areas of importance to certain species, such as redhorse. Site 1 would work (YD 7 and YD8). Ryan also recommended using diverse gravel sizes so that the gravel would be more likely to lock together and provide better habitat than gravel that is widely dispersed.

Marshall asked if chubs or other fish were using the new gravel. Ryan reported that they had in Site 1 (4 mounds in 2008 and 10 mounds in 2009).

In 2008 and 2009 Ryan has gathered data on 110 chub nests. Also, he assessed 30 nests before/after a high flow event. He is still analyzing these data.

In June and July 2009, Ryan snorkeled mesohabitats to assess habitat use by various fish species. He is still analyzing these data.

Also, Ryan is doing a comparison of Cheoah River to other streams in the Blue Ridge Physiographic Province to hopefully assemble a likely species community list and which species should be restored.

Steve Fraley asked if VPI work could be adjusted to also assess substrate for mussels. Steve also stated that he thought what is missing in the river is smaller materials, like sand. Chris indicated that the original concept of using VPI was that the mussel work could be done in a few years and that everything did not have to be accomplished concurrently.

d. Gravel enhancement (Clear Blue Grading 2008)

The gravel was added in February 2008. Mark Cantrell will provide e-procurement documents to Chris to assist him in making the next purchases of gravel in 2010.

e. Larval fish identification (Wallus 2008)

Mark indicated that the contract is completed. Although the contract was for up to \$2000, only \$420 was paid due to the small number of samples and small number of fish per sample. Mark has received written reports from Robert Wallus and will send them to Chris.

f. Captive culture of fishes and mussels (NCWRC 2008)

Steve reported he had submitted a final report to DENR for work in 2008-09. Chris will need to get a copy for the official files. Construction of the facility is completed. Additional work was done in 2009 to pipe cooler water into the facility to reduce impacts to fish and mussels from high temperatures and resulting infections.

Despite parasite problems with spotfin chubs in the winter, 600 of the original 1000 were stocked into the Cheoah River in 2009. Subsequent surveys have shown that spotfins are in the river and growing very well. Habitat looks great, but heavy periphyton seems to be a problem in the upper part of the river. If not corrected, this could affect recovery of some species.

g. Captive culture and reintroduction of fishes and mussels (NCWRC 2009)

Steve reported that spotfin mortalities were high from the beginning of the 2009 cohort, and already about 500 have been lost to parasites.

Over 18,000 wavy-rayed lampmussels and 7,000 rainbow mussels were produced in spring 2009. It is projected that about 30% of those numbers will be available for stocking in 2011.

Work has started on captive propagation of Appalachian elktoe. Several gravid females were brought in from the wild and transported to NCSU. After good early success, the entire cohort was lost. Steve suggested that in addition to continuing propagating elktoes, other research has indicated that translocating elktoes from Little Tennessee River or

Tuckasegee River could be done to speed recovery efforts up. The same thing could be done for wounded darters. NCWRC and USFWS will discuss this more and ask the Fund Board if such an approach would be considered as fulfilling the contract. No additional money would be asked for from the Fund to translocate the mussels.

Surveys in 2009 have found the first younger elktoe, aged 4, in the Cheoah River, indicating that natural reproduction and recruitment has occurred. The mussel showed good growth rates.

h. Propagation of wounded darters (Conservation Fisheries 2009)

CFI provided a written report of activities in 2008-09 (Attachment 4), work prior to the contract from Cheoah Fund.

i. Management of Yellow Cr. exotic vegetation (Land Trust for the Little Tennessee 2009)

No report. Contract just began.

3. Review of Fund Proposals for 2010

Chris reported that no proposals were received for 2010 prior to the meeting. However, there are several possible projects that were discussed.

a. Website creation

This proposal was submitted in 2009, but final action was not going to be taken by the Cheoah Board until the Tallassee Board provided feedback as to their interest in partnering to fund the project. Mark reported that although Tallassee Board appointed a committee to look into this in more detail, no action has taken place. Chris will contact the Tallassee Board chair to inquire about this proposal.

b. Yellow Creek exotic vegetation

Additional funding may be requested by Land Trust for the Little Tennessee in 2010, pending favorable progress in 2009. However, the Cheoah Fund has not received an update on activity in 2009, so no further discussion was possible.

c. Gravel addition

After reviewing the FERC order, Jody indicated that the gravel addition does not have to occur prior to March 1, 2010. However, it should be done in 2010, preferably in March – May, before most of the high flow events. Jason Farmer indicated that he needs to prepare a Biological Evaluation in order for gravel to be added on USFS property. Since the BE would be good for five years, all possible locations should be identified. In addition to the BE, a 404 permit will be needed from the Corps of Engineers prior to adding the gravel.

Discussion was held about possible sources of gravel, including Tuckasegee River (Dillsboro or near Whittier), Pacolet River, or Graham County (Rick Pennington). Another possible solution is to obtain substrate from the head of Lake Santeetlah by dredging or using a substrate collection device.

Jason, Mark and Chris will make a trip to the river to identify specific locations in October.

#### 4. Select Chair for 2010

The Operating Protocol calls for the chair to rotate to EBCI for 2010. Since Mike Bolt indicated that he did not want to be Chair, consensus was that Chris would remain Chair for 2010.

#### 5. Action Items

- a. Gary to send to Chris an electronic copy of Hargreaves 2009 report.
- b. Mark to obtain Ryan's final dissertation work plan and send it to the Board members. The Board will discuss the need for more detail on deliverables.
- c. Mark to send to Chris the 2008 gravel eprocurement files.
- d. Mark to send to Chris the larval fish identification report from Wallus.
- e. Jim to send to Chris a copy of the NCWRC 2008-09 report.
- f. Chris to call Susan Shaw (Chair of Tallassee Fund) regarding the website proposal.
- g. Jason, Mark and Chris to visit Cheoah River on October 26 to identify specific locations for adding gravel.
- h. Jason to prepare a Biological Evaluation for the gravel addition.
- i. Chris to initiate the 404 permit process for the gravel addition.