

UPDATE  
Colorado River Endangered Fish  
Recovery Program

January 30, 1992

A. Population Status

<u>Species</u>	<u>River</u>		
	<u>Green</u>	<u>Yampa</u>	<u>Colorado</u>
Colorado squawfish	Increasing/ Moderate	Increasing/ Moderate	Stable ? Small
Humpback chub	Stable?/ Small	Stable?/ Small	Stable?/ Large
Razorback sucker	Few adults	--	No Recruitment
Bonytail chub	Very rare	--	No Recruitment

B. Program Management

**Goal:** Ensure effective implementation and coordination of the Recovery Program

- Status:**
- o All parties actively participating in various technical and Management Committees
  - o Program fully funded (\$3.9 million in FY 92)
  - o Reorganization of committees complete
  - o Management Committee considering proposal for a "strategic plan" for the Program.
  - o Efforts to refine recovery goals/objectives for each species are underway (FWS and Colorado).

- Issues:**
- o Program Management costs excessive (cap set at 15%)
  - o Process too bureaucratic and political (Management Committee evaluating).

**Additional Comments:** For FY 92 appropriations, Congress added \$250,000 to the Service's budget for the Recovery Program. Only \$200,000 are included in the FY 93 budget.

C. Habitat Management (Instream Flows)

Goal: To protect sufficient instream flow to support self-sustaining population of the fishes

- Status:
- o Flow recommendations developed for Colorado, Yampa, and Green Rivers
  - o 10,000 AF being provided from Ruedi Reservoir
  - o Active efforts to acquire major water rights on the Yampa River
  - o Biological opinion to be issued on Flaming Gorge Dam in February 1992
  - o Short-term agreements to provide additional water from Ruedi and Steamboat Reservoirs
  - o FWS has requested a change in Aspinall operations
  - o The Colorado Water Conservation Board moving forward with appropriating 581 cfs instream flow in the 15-Mile Reach (possible water user opposition).

- Issues:
- o Acceptability of Service flow recommendations
  - o Little progress in acquiring water after 4 years

Additional Comments: The technical, legal, policy, and institutional issues related to flow methodologies and water acquisition activities will be reviewed in 1992.

D. Habitat Development and Maintenance

Goal: To provide or enhance habitat for the rare fishes through habitat development or management measures such as:

- o fish passageways
- o backwater habitat development

- Status:
- o Agreement to actively pursue restoring fish passage to the Gunnison River and upper mainstem Colorado Rivers
  - o Restoring access to flooded bottomlands on Green River (demonstration project)
  - o Proposal to increase emphasis in FY 93 on flooded bottomland restoration

E. Stocking Native Fishes

- Goal:
- A. Produce a sufficient supply of hatchery reared fish to support research and recovery activities
  - B. Conserve the genetic diversity present in the wild

- Status:
- o Genetic surveys underway
  - o Refuge/brood stock populations being established
  - o Colorado conducting hatchery feasibility study
  - o The Service's hatchery/research facility at Ouray, Utah, being expanded
  - o Imprinting and chemoreception study being conducted

- Issues:
- o Service issued a draft policy on stocking of the endangered fishes.
  - o Need for a hatchery/research facility
  - o Management Committee recommended an immediate review of the propagation program.

F. Research, Monitoring, and Data Management

Goal: Collect critical information on the life history and habitat needs of the endangered fishes to support recovery efforts.

- Status:
- o Habitat/flow needs of the fish or major flows
  - o Clarify confusion in the taxonomy of Gila
  - o Monitoring
    - fish populations
    - flow
    - habitat
    - channel change
  - o Interagency data base management program
  - o Integrated research efforts related to Flaming Gorge and Aspinall

Issues: o Impacts of sampling on fish populations

G. Nonnative Fishes and Sportfishing

Goal: Minimize the impacts of nonnative fishes and incidental take associated with sport fishing on the endangered fishes.

- Status:
- o Service reviewing state proposal to stock nonnatives in Colorado (Utah agreement under development)
  - o Research on the problem is continuing
  - o Altering flow regimes to provide unfavorable conditions for nonnatives
  - o Information & Education efforts directed at anglers
  - o Proposal to increase emphasis on control of nonnatives in FY 93
  - o Service has issued a draft policy on stocking of nonnative fishes

H. Information and Education

Goal: To promote public understanding, appreciation, and support for efforts to recover the endangered fish.

- Status:
- o Biannual newsletter
  - o Information about the fish and Recovery Program
    - Brochure and poster
    - Signs and fishing regulations
    - Slide/tape show
    - Video
  - o Attitude survey
  - o Media relations and press releases

I. Section 7 Consultation

Goal: To recover the fish will allowing water development to proceed in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

- Status:
- o "No jeopardy" biological opinions have been issued on 51 projects since the inception of the program in 1988.
  - o Most of the projects involved "small" depletions (<3000 AF per year).
  - o The Service has concluded that the Recovery Program has not achieved "sufficient progress" to offset the impacts of large depletion projects (>3000 AF per year). Additional conservation measures beyond payment of a depletion charge will be required.
  - o The draft biological opinion on the operation of Flaming Gorge Dam is scheduled for release in November 1991.
  - o The Service has requested a change in the operation of the Aspinall Unit beginning in 1992.
- Issues:
- o Disagreement over how to address historic projects (e.g., the Grand Valley diversion) in the Section 7 consultation process
  - o The "sufficient progress" requirement by the Service is being challenged by water interests.

J. Other Items

A. Razorback sucker listed; critical habitat being pursued

B. San Juan Recovery Program to be developed by December 1992.