

RECOVERY PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S UPDATE
September 1998

A. Population Status: Little change in population status.

SPECIES	RIVER		
	GREEN	YAMPA	COLORADO
Colorado squawfish	Stable/increasing	Stable	Stable/increasing
Humpback chub	Stable/small	Stable?/small	Stable/doing well
Razorback sucker	500± adults, very limited recruitment	Few adults, very limited recruitment	Few adults, no recruitment
Bonytail	Rare ---- all rivers		

B. Habitat Management (Instream Flows)

Goal: To protect sufficient instream flows to support self-sustaining populations of the fishes.

- Status:
- o The Service, Reclamation and the Colorado Water Conservation Board have worked diligently through the summer to work out the details of a one year contract for 21,600 acre-feet of water from Ruedi Reservoir. The Recovery Program has agreed to pay the O&M cost for the one year contract and will begin negotiations with Reclamation on a long term contract for water from Ruedi with O&M charges based upon a formula to be negotiated. Through the long term contract, Reclamation will make up to 21,650 af of Ruedi Reservoir water available to the Recovery Program for up to 15 years to improve flows in the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River.
 - o The draft report of the Yampa Low Flow Studies has been sent to an expert panel for review. We anticipate that some changes may need to be made in the plan based on comments from the expert panel prior to presenting the results to the Biology Committee. The Yampa water demand study was completed in

March and will be considered in the development of the Yampa River Management Plan.

- o This past spring was the second year for coordinated reservoir operations on the Colorado River. During the spring runoff, an additional 2,500 cfs was added to the peak of the Colorado River at Palisade. Reservoirs participating were Denver's Dillon and Williams Fork reservoirs, Reclamation's Ruedi and Green Mountain reservoirs, and the Colorado River Water Conservation District's Wolford Reservoir. For a second year, the timing of the peak went well and the peak at Palisade was matched with the help of the National Weather Service and Colorado State Engineers Office, Water Division 5 staff. Based on comments at the Ruedi operations public meeting, an expanded fax and e-mail protocol was established to better inform the public of the pending coordination effort.
- o Work on the synthesis report to be used in preparing a new biological opinion on Flaming Gorge operations is progressing, but has been delayed because the supporting technical reports were late. The revised completion schedule is based on the work remaining: September 19 — Revised chapters for the draft final report will be forwarded to Argonne National Laboratory; September 21–25 — Initial compilation and editing of the draft final report by Kirk LaGory, John Hayse, and Bob Muth; September 28–October 2 — Professional editing and final compilation of the draft final report (Argonne National Laboratory) and initiation of the formal Recovery Program peer-review process.
- o A subgroup of the 15-Mile Reach work group has developed a scope of work for a coordinated facilities study which has been submitted as part of the FY-99 work plan. The facilities study will look at water facilities in the basin and options for managing the facilities to provide additional water for endangered fish recovery.
- o Grand Valley Water Management is on hold until the 15-Mile Reach programmatic biological opinion is finalized; when that is done, everything is in place to move forward.
- o The first Duchesne River Coordinated Reservoirs meeting was held on August 11 and a second meeting is planned for September 29 in Duchesne, Utah. The first meeting was an organizational meeting which highlighted the issues, reviewed the scope of work and outlined a plan for data collection to support a model which will be used by the group to identify possible coordinated efforts to provide water for the endangered fish.

C. 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 restoration of flooded bottomland habitats.

Status: o The fish ladder at Redlands Diversion Dam on the Gunnison River has been operational since June 1996. The ladder has been used primarily by native fishes, including 41 Colorado squawfish. Two of the squawfish have used the ladder twice. Native fishes that were marked and released above the dam dispersed upstream, some as far as 57 river miles to the base of the Hartland Diversion Dam.

- o A fish passage structure was constructed at the Grand Valley Irrigation Company Diversion Dam on the Colorado River in January 1998. So far this year, four Colorado squawfish have been captured above the structure. Providing fish passage at this structure, Price-Stubb, and the Grand Valley Project Diversion Dam will restore 55 miles of historically-occupied habitat for endangered fishes.
- o Design options are currently being developed for restoring fish passage at the Price-Stubb Diversion Dam. Construction was tentatively scheduled to begin in the fall of 1998. However, complex issues (e.g., potential effects of passage restoration on railroad, highway, Reclamation's siphon, and Ute pumping; ownership of property and FERC license) have caused delays. Construction is now scheduled to begin during FY 99.
- o Pre-construction activities are on-going through FY 99 to restore fish passage at the Grand Valley Project Diversion Dam. Construction is scheduled to begin during FY 2000.
- o Results of data collected through FY 98 will be used to determine the need for screening at diversion structures and the need for a fish ladder at the Tusher Wash Diversion Dam.
- o Between March 1997 and March 1998, levees were breached at 8 sites along the Green River, resulting in 1216 to 1734 floodable acres (depending on flows), and filling out the 8-site block design recommended by the Levee Removal Evaluation Group and subsequently approved by the Biology and Management committees. A report based on preliminary results of data collected from 1996 through 1998 will be developed by December 1, 1998 for review and evaluation by the Recovery Program.
- o Both public and private lands continue to be screened for contaminants and relative floodability (pre-acquisition; pre- and post-restoration). Land acquisition activities have resulted in offers on 9 privately-owned properties along the Green and Colorado rivers thus far.

D. 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 During the spring of 1998, 233 razorback suckers ranging in size from 8-12 inches were stocked in the Gunnison River. These fish were raised in Clymer's Pond, Grand Junction. Another 200 razorbacks are expected to be stocked this fall.
- o In the spring of 1998, 4 additional lots of razorback suckers were made in the Green River 25x25 spawning matrix to bring the total to 13.
- o In March 1998, 2800 (about 6 inches in length) and 10 larger radio tagged bonytail were stocked in the Colorado River in Professor Valley. Another 20,000 will be stocked in the fall of 1998 at sites in the Colorado and Green rivers. This will be the first stocking for the site on the Green River.
- o Construction at the Ouray National Fish Hatchery is nearly complete, the facility will be dedicated on September 19, 1998.
- o Construction of 10, 0.4 acre ponds at the Wahweap State Fish Hatchery will begin in fall 1998.

E. Nonnative Fishes and Sportfishing

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

- Status: o Removal of nonnative catfish, carp, and centrarchids on the Green River will be completed this summer. Recommendations for long-term control will be forthcoming.
- o Nonnative cyprinid removal was conducted this spring in nursery habitats in Utah along the Green and Colorado rivers. Nonnative control efforts in Colorado were not implemented along the Gunnison and Colorado rivers as approved in the FY 98 Work Plan. Removal efforts this summer include Yampa Canyon in Dinosaur National Monument.
- o Nonnative fish control efforts for FY 99 include: continued pond reclamation; expanding nonnative fish removal on the Colorado River to include the 15 & 18-mile reaches; and nonnative fish removal on the Yampa River.

F. Research, Monitoring, and Data Management

Goal: To support recovery activity, monitor endangered fish status and trends, and maintain Recovery Program data archives.

- Status: o During 1998, the Interagency Standardized Monitoring Program (ISMP) was expanded to incorporate population estimates of humpback chub, Colorado squawfish, and razorback suckers in various reaches of the Yampa, Green, and Colorado rivers. Over the next few years, sampling and estimates of all the populations will take place.
- o Interim Management Objectives (MO's) have been approved by the Management Committee. The current estimate of effective population sizes for each stock are: Colorado squawfish - 5,477; razorback sucker - 5316; humpback chub - 4,796; and bonytail - 4,118. These are adaptive objectives and can be modified as new information becomes available.

- o Increases in young-of-the-year and adult Colorado squawfish have been detected by the interagency standardized monitoring program. Comparison between 1994 and preliminary data of 1998 from the population estimates in the Colorado River suggests about a 40% increase in catch rate and 33% increase in number of adult fish.

G. Information and Education

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

- Status:
- o The Recovery Program Web site has been expanded to include more than 60 photos of endangered fish, research activities, hatchery facilities and scenic river shots. The site will continue to be updated over time. The address is <<http://www.r6.fws.gov/coloradoriver>>.
 - o Production of the next newsletter is under way. Printing and distribution should be completed by mid-October if not sooner.
 - o A contractor has been selected to help design and facilitate meetings in Colorado and Utah with program participants responsible for public involvement. Our goal is to increase communication, coordination and effectiveness among the program's public involvement activities. We plan to hold one meeting in each state by the second week in October.
 - o We worked with a cable television production company with the Outdoor Life Network on a one-hour special on the Colorado River this spring. Interviews were arranged with various Recovery Program participants including Dan Luecke, Brent Uilenberg and Fish and Wildlife Service staff as well as Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. The program is expected to air this fall. When we know the specific date and channel, we will post this on the list server.

H. Section 7 Consultation

Goal: To allow water development to proceed in the Upper Colorado River Basin in compliance with the ESA.

- Status:
- o The draft biological opinion for the 15-Mile Reach on historic and new depletions has been delayed. Discussions between the various water user groups have been very beneficial. Negotiations are continuing and Peter Evans has taken the lead since Jim Lochhead has resigned. Five subgroups have been formed to resolve specific issues. The main workgroup met on August 17 and will meet again on September 18.
 - o The Duchesne River biological opinion, addressing both historic and new depletions was finalized on July 29. The final opinion on the Atlas mill tailings in Utah also was issued on July 29.
 - o A biological opinion is being prepared on the High Savery project on the Little Snake River in Wyoming.
 - o The CWCB agreed to the contract for an additional 21,650 acre-feet of water from Ruedi reservoir this year. The amendment to the biological opinion is expected by October 1, at which time the Round II contracts can go forward.

I. Program Management

Goal: To ensure effective implementation and coordination of the Recovery Program

- Status:
- o The FY 99 Work Plan has been drafted for Implementation Committee approval.
 - o The funding authorization legislation for Colorado River and San Juan Recovery Programs was introduced by Senator Allard (R-Colorado) on March 14 (S. 1749) and in the House on April 1 (H.R. 3669) by Representative McInnis (R-Colorado). Program participants briefed their Washington, D.C. delegations in March on the long-term funding legislation and FY 99 appropriations. The legislation is on hold pending completion of the 15-Mile Reach biological opinion. The ad hoc long-term legislation funding group will meet immediately following the September 10, 1998, Implementation Committee meeting.
 - o The Program Director's office is developing a tracking system for program activities including research, Recovery Action Plan items, final reports, etc, which will be operational in December 1998.