

UPDATE
August 1992

A. Population Status

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

B. Program Management

Goal: Ensure effective implementation and coordination of the Recovery Program

Status:

- oAll parties actively participating in various technical and Management Committees. However, the Colorado Division of Wildlife has expressed dissatisfaction with the Program and is reducing its involvement.
- oColorado River Energy Distributors Association accepted an invitation to become a nonvoting committee member.
- oNational Park Service declined an invitation to become a nonvoting member.
- oCommittee reorganization has been in place for over a year and the results have generally been positive. However, concerns persist about technical committee and subcommittee membership and operating guidelines. The Management Committee is evaluating.

* FY 93 Work Plan has been developed; full funding (\$3.0M) is expected.

oFor FY 93, Congress earmarked \$200,000 of Section 6, ESA funding for the State's participation in the Recovery Program.

*Significant funding (\$100 million) will be needed to implement major recovery projects. BuRec is pursuing funding for FY 95+.

C. Habitat Management (Instream Flows)

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

- Status:
- o 10,000 AF being provided from Ruedi Reservoir (long-term).
An additional 10,000 AF is being released on a year-to-year basis.
 - o Short-term agreement completed to provide 2,400 AF of water from Steamboat Reservoirs (Yampa River). A long-term agreement is being negotiated.
 - o Flaming Gorge Reservoir being re-operated to benefit the fish pursuant to the draft biological opinion.
 - o Aspinall Unit (Gunnison River) being re-operated to provide research flows.
 - o The Colorado Water Conservation Board moving forward with appropriating a 581 cfs instream flow right in the 15-Mile Reach (July-September).
 - o A proposal is being evaluated to acquire the Juniper-Cross Mountain water rights on the Yampa River for instream flows. Elements of the proposal include:
 - enlargement of Elkhead Reservoir.
 - rebuilding several Yampa River diversions.
 - reserving adequate water rights for future enlargement of Stagecoach Reservoir.
 - converting the Juniper/Cross Mountain decrees to instream flows for the endangered fish.
 - o An independent senior scientist will complete a review of the Service's instream flow recommendations and methodologies by May 1993.
 - o A review of legal, policy, and institutional issues related to instream flow acquisition and protection in Colorado has been completed. A strategy for providing instream flow protection that address uncertainties about the Compact and the Service's flow recommendations is being finalized.

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 Actively pursuing restoring fish passage to the Gunnison River and upper mainstem Colorado River near Grand Junction, Colorado.
 - o Restoring access to flooded bottomlands on the Green River (demonstration project)

- o Initiative to inventory flooded bottomlands throughout the basin planned for FY 93/94; acquisition, restoration and management may begin as soon as FY 94.
- oEvaluating a proposal to rehabilitate several diversion structures on the Yampa River to reduce annual maintenance and provide for fish and boat passage.

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:
- oGenetic surveys underway; analysis to be completed in FY 94.
 - o Refuge/brood stock populations being established.
 - o Colorado completing hatchery feasibility study.
 - o The Service's hatchery/research facility at Ouray, Utah, being expanded.
 - oRefuge ponds developed at Horsethief State Wildlife Area, Grand Junction, Colorado.
 - o Comprehensive plan being developed to identify hatchery facility needs.
 - oIn response to the loss of fish at Dexter National Fish Hatchery, the Service and the States are evaluating the operation of existing facilities, including procedures and protocols.
 - o Imprinting and chemoreception study being conducted.
 - o Habitat suitability assessment being conducted in unoccupied reaches of the Colorado River.
 - o Service's draft policy on stocking of native fishes has been withdrawn--meeting planned with the States to resolve differences.

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 Determine habitat/flow needs of the fish
 - o Clarify confusion in the taxonomy of Gila (chubs)
 - o Long-term monitoring programs for:
 - fish populations
 - flow
 - habitat
 - channel change
 - o Interagency data management program
- *Biology Committee developing "interim recovery objectives" for the fish.
- oIntegrated research efforts to refine/validate flow recommendations related to Flaming Gorge and Aspinall
 - oImpacts of sampling on fish being evaluated.

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 Altering flow regimes to provide unfavorable conditions for nonnatives.
 - o Information and education efforts directed at anglers.
 - o Disagreement with the States over impacts of nonnatives and procedures for addressing nonnative fish stocking.
 - o Service's draft policy on stocking of non native fishes has been withdrawn--meeting planned with the States to resolve differences.

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 Public attitude survey
 - * Media relations and press releases

I. Section 7 Consultation

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

- Status:
- * "No jeopardy" biological opinions have been issued on 65 projects since the inception of the program in 1988, with a potential to deplete about 165,000 AF of water.
 - * Partial agreement has been reached on "sufficient progress," including development of a list of "recovery milestones" and agreement on several principles on how Section 7 consultations will be conducted. Remaining issues are being addressed by the Management Committee.
 - * The Service and BuRec are addressing comments received on the draft biological opinion on the operation of Flaming Gorge Dam.
 - o Technical studies were initiated in 1992 to address reoperation of the Aspinall Unit. A biological opinion is scheduled for 1998.

J. Other Items

*The Service is pursuing designation of critical habitat for all four of the endangered fishes.

o A separate San Juan River Recovery Program is being developed by the Service's Region 2.

oThe flannelmouth sucker and roundtail chub are now candidate species for listing under the ESA.