

RECOVERY PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S UPDATE
September 1997

A. Population Status:

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

- Notes:
1. Relatively large numbers of YOY Colorado squawfish captured on the Colorado River in summer/fall of 1996.
 2. Presence of a spawning population of razorbacks in the lower Green River was recently confirmed.

B. Habitat Management (Instream Flows)

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

- Status:**
- o The change in the Steamboat Lake (Yampa River basin) decree to allow for reservoir releases for instream flows has been completed. The 5-year contract for the water has been signed. A purchase order for the lease of water in 1997 has been completed and water delivery began on September 13 at a rate of 100 cfs. The flows will increase fish habitat and facilitate the low flow studies in Yampa Canyon.
 - o Agreement was reached with the objectors to the CWCB's application for a 581 cfs instream flow right in the 15-Mile Reach. The final decree for the 581 cfs and 300 cfs of return flows was entered on September 2, 1997.
 - o Up to a 1-year contract for an additional 21,650 af of water from Ruedi Reservoir is pending. Because of wet conditions, it is unlikely that much of the water will be used this year. Issues over delivery of that water and a longer term contract are under review.
 - o Work to synthesize technical information related to Flaming Gorge and the Aspinall Units is progressing, but has been delayed because the supporting technical reports have been late.

- * The water demand study, as part of development of the Yampa Water Management Plan, is nearing completion. Public meetings have been held in Craig and Steamboat Springs.
- o Reservoirs in the upper Colorado River were operated to provide an additional 1,500 cfs of peak flows in 1997, until natural runoff exceeded flow targets.
- o CWCB continues to work with objectors to their instream flow filings on the Yampa and Colorado River flow filings.
- o The draft Environmental Assessment for Grand Valley Water Management / Green Mountain Surplus Water Contract will be released in October 1997. A draft surplus water contract has been developed, reviewed internally, and is ready for the public negotiation process. Critical path items include the 15-Mile Reach Biological Opinion and obtaining construction authority.

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 passageway at Redlands Dam (Gunnison River) has been in operation through the spring and summer months. One Colorado squawfish used the ladder during the short period of operation in 1996. This year, 18 Colorado squawfish moved upstream through the ladder. Additionally, over 19,000 other native fishes have used the ladder.

- o Levees were breached at three sites along the middle Green River in March 1997. Levees will be breached at an additional five sites during FY 98. This will complete the sites needed for the ongoing floodplain evaluation.

- o Work continues with nine floodplain landowners along the Green River, six landowners on the Gunnison River, and two landowners on the Colorado River for acquisition. The first priority would be to acquire flood easements for these properties.
- o Two gravel-pit ponds along the Colorado River will be reconfigured to function as terrace floodplains, thus reducing or eliminating their ability to produce nonnative fishes. These sites will be evaluated in FY 98..
- o The Environmental Assessment and Biological Opinion have been completed for the GVIC fish passage. All applicable contracts and agreements have been signed. Construction is underway.

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 On September 11, 1997, approximately 1,800 razorback suckers averaging about 7 inches were stocked in the Gunnison Rivers. Up to an additional 8,000 fish will be stocked by the end of September. These fish were raised in Clymers Pond. Up to 250 razorback suckers may be stocked in the Green River in October 1997.
 - o In October 1997, 10,000 age-1 and 250 age-2 bonytail will be stocked in Professor Valley near Moab, Utah.
 - o The Ouray National Fish Hatchery will be completed by the Spring of 1998, growout ponds will be acquired in the Grand Valley and possibly the Green River in 1997/98.
 - o Increased stocking of razorbacks is planned for 1998.
 - o The Hatchery Facility Plan and Genetics Management Plan are being reviewed by the Program Director's Office and will be submitted to the Biology Committee in October.

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 is proceeding on the Green River.
- o The Environmental Assessment for pond reclamation activities in the Grand Valley is completed. An Intra-Service biological opinion is being prepared.
- o Nonnative control efforts in 1998 will be expanded to include: removal of small minnows from backwater nursery areas on the Green, Colorado, and Gunnison rivers; catfish removal on the Yampa River in Dinosaur National Monument; and centrarchid removal from the Colorado River as part of an evaluation to determine if ISMP adequately monitors nonnative fish abundance.

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 The Interagency Standardized Monitoring Program (ISMP), which is designed to measure the status and trends of the endangered fish stocks in the upper basin, will be expanded in 1998 to incorporate population estimates of humpback chub, Colorado squawfish, and razorback suckers in various reaches of the Yampa, Green, and Colorado rivers.
- o Management Objectives (MO's) are expected to be completed by the end of 1997. These adaptive objectives describe what the effective population size for each of the stocks of the four endangered fishes would need to be in order for them to persist for 100 years.
- o Population estimates made under ISMP will be related to the MO's both to aid in determining priorities recovery actions within the Program and in refining the MO's as we obtain better information.

G. Information and Education

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

- Status: o In 1998, public involvement will be coordinated for the various Program activities by river basin: Colorado/Gunnison; Green; and Yampa.
- o The Recovery Program Web site will be "on-line" by the end of September 1997.
- o Our news releases and media relations about the Program and the success of the Redlands Fish Ladder have resulted in favorable coverage.
- o Our most recent Program Newsletter was sent out in June, along with the 1996 annual reports. We continue to get positive feedback about both of these products.
- o Connie Young has written two articles for the Colorado Outdoors magazine on Program recovery efforts in the Yampa and Colorado rivers.

H. Section 7 Consultation

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

- Status: *
- * FWS completed its annual review of sufficient progress in April 1997. The sufficient progress threshold was restored to 3,000 acre feet.
 - * The draft biological opinion for the 15-Mile Reach on historic and new depletions has been delayed because of the need for additional hydrology data analyses and disagreement over what the baseline hydrology should look like.
 - o A preliminary draft biological opinion on historic and new depletions from the Duchesne River was supplied to the cooperating Federal agencies. A revised draft will be released in the very near future.
 - o The biological opinion for the Ute Water District pipeline expansion which covers historic and new depletions is being finalized.

I. Program Management

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

- Status: *
- * The FY 98 work plan has been drafted for Implementation Committee approval; FY 98 capital funds are less than requested.
 - * Issues relating to long-term funding legislation for the Upper Basin and San Juan recovery programs are near resolution and the group has basically agreed to a Bill that will be/is being circulated in Congress.
 - * New Program Director, Henry Maddux, was hired in August 1997.
 - o Recovery Program electronic mailing list (fws-coloriver) is fully operational and has been helpful in speeding communication among Program participants.