



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region

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Memorandum

To: Management Committee, Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program

From: Fish and Wildlife Service Representative of Management Committee *Larry Shanks*

Subject: Review of Progress Made Under Recovery Implementation Program
Recovery Action Plan

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the accomplishments made by the Recovery Program on actions identified in the September 8, 1994, Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP) to determine if progress toward recovery has been sufficient for the Recovery Program to continue to serve as a reasonable and prudent alternative. The following factors, identified in section II of the Section 7 Agreement, were evaluated:

- a. Actions which result in a measurable population response, a measurable improvement in habitat for the fishes, legal protection of flows needed for recovery, or a reduction in the threat of immediate extinction.
- b. Status of fish population.
- c. Adequacy of flows.
- d. Magnitude of the impact of projects.

The Service recognizes the dedication and commitment of all Recovery Program participants in updating and implementing the RIPRAP. The Service continues to believe that the Recovery Program is achieving "sufficient progress" toward recovery to allow the Recovery Program to serve as the reasonable and prudent alternative for depletions less than 3,000 acre-feet. This conclusion is based on our assessment that Program participants are working diligently to implement recovery actions within the schedules contained in the RIPRAP. The Service is especially encouraged by (1) the efforts of the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the State of Utah to legally protect instream flows in the 15-mile reach and the Green River, respectively, (2) the efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation to operate Flaming Gorge and the Aspinall Unit to provide research flows and benefit the endangered fish, and (3) the cooperation of the States to develop and implement the Interim Procedures for Stocking of Nonnative Fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The Service also recognizes the many accomplishments documented in the Fiscal Year 1994 Summary Report dated January 30, 1995.

Despite the accomplishments by the Recovery Program, the Service is concerned that the schedules for many RIPRAP items are slipping and that many of the efforts to acquire water and water rights for the endangered fish in Colorado are being challenged in court. With the possible exception of the Colorado squawfish, the populations of the endangered fish have not improved, and the razorback sucker is showing continuing signs of decline. Serious delays in the completion of major RIPRAP actions or a decline in the status of the endangered fish will affect the Service's future assessment of sufficient progress.

Over the past year, the Service has provided information to the Management Committee regarding anticipated section 7 consultations in the Upper Colorado River Basin. As you know, there are many large new and historic projects in the basin that the Service will be requested to consult on over the next several years. In that regard, the Service is recommending several changes and additions to the RIPRAP. These recommendations are being submitted to the Program Director for his consideration. The Service believes it is extremely important that the RIPRAP elements be implemented in accordance with the RIPRAP schedules in order for the Recovery Program to continue to achieve sufficient progress. This is especially important for RIPRAP elements which protect or improve habitat conditions and result in more immediate, positive population responses (i.e., the targeted actions in the RIPRAP).

The Service expresses its appreciation to the Recovery Program participants for their dedication in implementing the RIPRAP and making progress to achieve overall Recovery Program goals.