



# United States Department of the Interior

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End. Species Act--Section 7  
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JUL 20 2001

## Memorandum

To: Implementation/Management Committee, Consultants, and Interested Parties

From: Regional Director, Region 6

Subject: Sufficient Progress/Section 7 Consultations--Upper Colorado River Recovery Program

In accordance with the Section 7, Sufficient Progress, and Historic Projects Agreement, the Fish and Wildlife Service recently reviewed the Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program's 2000 and cumulative accomplishments. Per that Agreement, the Service used the following criteria to evaluate whether the Recovery Program is making "sufficient progress:"

- 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 the fish population
- c. Adequacy of flows
- d. Magnitude of the impact of projects

A complete assessment of recent accomplishments under the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP) is contained in Attachment 1. Previous years' accomplishments are outlined in the RIPRAP itself.

### Status of the Species

Significant changes in the status of the four species generally are not detected on a year-to-year basis. The table on the following page summarizes current status of the populations.

SPECIES	RIVER		
	MIDDLE GREEN <sup>1</sup>	LOWER GREEN <sup>2</sup>	COLORADO
Colorado pikeminnow	Stable/increasing. ≈3,500	Stable	Stable. ≈650 <sup>3</sup>
Humpback chub	<u>Yampa Canyon:</u> Stable/small. ≈600	<u>Desolation/Gray Canyon:</u> Stable?/small. ≈1,500	<u>Black Rocks Canyon:</u> Stable. ≈1,000 <sup>4</sup> <u>Westwater Canyon:</u> Stable/doing well. ≈4,500 <u>Cataract Canyon:</u> Stable?/small. ≈500
Razorback sucker (All populations are currently being augmented through stocking)	<500 adults, very limited recruitment; stocked fish returning to spawning bar	Few adults, very limited recruitment	Few adults, no recruitment
Bonytail	Populations are currently being re-introduced in Colorado, lower Green, middle Green and Yampa rivers.		

<sup>1</sup> Middle Green River consists of the Yampa River to approximately 30 miles SSW of Ouray, Utah.

<sup>2</sup> Lower Green River is from the end of the Middle Green River section to the confluence of the Colorado River.

<sup>3</sup> Changed based on most recent population estimate from Osmundson.

<sup>4</sup> Changed based on personal communication from McAda.

### Accomplishments:

Recovery Program participants accomplished several important objectives over the last year.

- Twenty-four ponds covering 51 acres were reclaimed in the Colorado and Gunnison river floodplains to prevent nonnative fish escapement.
- The Recovery Program has made very good progress stocking hatchery-reared razorback suckers and bonytail. Stocked razorbacks have appeared on the Green River spawning bar in reproductive condition. Both stocked bonytail and razorback sucker have been found in Desolation/Gray Canyon area. Twelve new growout ponds totaling 15 surface acres were completed in the last year.
- Three hundred and fifty northern pike were removed from the Yampa River. The Recovery Program also is formulating plans for increased pike removal efforts in the future.
- The final Flaming Gorge synthesis report was approved by the Recovery Program and a final draft report was completed for flow recommendations for the endangered fish in the Gunnison and Colorado rivers. As these recommendations are implemented, it will result in improved flows for the endangered fish.

- Ten-year agreements were signed by both Denver Water and the Colorado River Water Conservation District for delivery of 5412.5 acre-feet of water from Williams Fork Reservoir and 5412.5 acre-feet of water from Wolford Mountain Reservoir. Delivery of this water was begun this past year.
- Two levees breached at the upstream end of two floodplain sites on the Green River to entrain drifting razorback larvae.

The Service also wishes to acknowledge: the continued success of Redlands fish ladder; progress to develop definitive recovery goals; passage of the long-term funding legislation; the way the Recovery Program worked together to resolve funding concerns when WAPA ran short in the CRSP basin fund this year; and the efforts of the Grand Valley Water Users Association and Reclamation in augmenting late summer flows in September 2000 to assist with high-resolution aerial photography of the mainstem Colorado River.

### Concerns

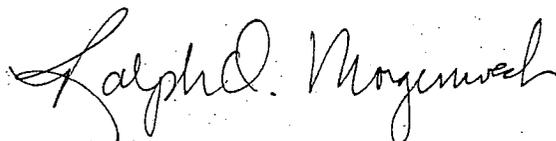
The Service's memorandum in 2000 assessing sufficient progress expressed concern regarding progress of: 1) Duchesne Coordinated Reservoir Operations project; 2) acquiring floodplain easements; 3) modifications to Leota and Johnson Bottom floodplain sites; and 4) use of highway ponds east of DeBeque Canyon for endangered fish growout; and 5) water quality and treatment at the Ouray National Fish Hatchery. The Service is pleased with the progress the Recovery Program has made in some of these areas. Remaining and new concerns are:

- The Recovery Program has been unable to move ahead with fish passage at the Price-Stubb diversion on the Colorado River because FERC has not completed their final EA on the Jacobsen Hydro project.
- Although Recovery Program participants have been working to get overdue reports submitted and approved, two outstanding reports which are impeding management actions are of particular concern: the middle Green River nonnative fish control report (UDWR/USU); and the Little Snake River Management Action Plan (BR/LFL). The Service asks that Utah and Reclamation's Management Committee members seek a firm commitment from these principal investigators and get these reports completed as soon as possible before we elevate the issue to their respective superiors.
- Two pending items to provide flows need completion: the long-term lease of 10,825 acre-feet of water from Ruedi Reservoir; and renewal of the lease for water from Steamboat Lake (Colorado). The Steamboat agreement should be finalized by August 1<sup>st</sup>. The Ruedi long-term lease will take longer, but should be completed no later than 2003. Meanwhile, the Recovery Program continues to rely on 1-year leases.

### Conclusion

In light of cumulative Program accomplishments, some Recovery Program participants have asked the Service to consider increasing the "per project depletion threshold" from the previous 3,000 acre feet. Based on this request, careful evaluation of the status of the fish, adequacy of flows needed for recovery, magnitude of depletion impacts, and cumulative Recovery Program accomplishments and shortcomings, the Service concludes that progress in the Recovery Program is sufficient for projects that have an annual depletion of up to 4,500 acre feet. In reality, the Recovery Program relies more and more on programmatic biological opinions than upon this "per project depletion threshold." For example the 15-Mile Reach PBO raises the cumulative depletion threshold on the Colorado River to 120,000 acre-feet. When the Gunnison, Yampa, and tributary PBOs are completed, the "per project depletion threshold" will essentially become obsolete. Nonetheless, we believe that raising the threshold can be viewed as recognition of the progress being made by the Recovery Program, which has become a national model in cooperatively progressing towards recovery of endangered species while address the demand for water development to support growing western communities.

I am encouraged with the progress the Recovery Program made in 2000 and efforts accomplished so far this year. Recovery Program participants need to actively pursue resolution of the issues identified above, and I ask that a report of progress in these areas be provided to the Implementation Committee at their September meeting. I am confident that with continued cooperation by all Recovery Program participants, the Program will continue to make significant strides toward recovery of the four endangered fishes.



Attachment

FY 2001 RIPRAP ASSESSMENT  
Significant Accomplishments (✓) and Shortcomings (✗)

PAGE/ITEM #      STATUS ASSESSMENT

These items fall under more than one action plan:

- >\*25, IIA2d      ✓ Five properties (152.7 acres) acquired during FY 00.
- >\*33, IIA5d      ✓ An easement management manual was developed for lands acquired by the Recovery Program.
- >\*36, IIA3d
- >\*34, IIIA2      ✓ Twenty-four ponds covering 51 acres were reclaimed in the Colorado and Gunnison river floodplains (to prevent nonnative fish escapement).
- >\*37, IIIA4

GENERAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

- 20, IIIA      ✓ Northern pike that were unintentionally produced in Old Charlie Wash in 1999 were successfully removed before they got into the Green River.
- >21, IVA4(a1)      ✓ Twenty-two of the planned twenty-five razorback suckers paired matings have been secured. The last three will be secured from nearest neighbors.
- 22, IVE2a      ✓✗ Ouray National Fish Hatchery being modified to run more cost-effectively.
- 22, IVE2b      ✓ Wahweap wells completed.
- 22, VA1a      ✓ Monitoring converted from ISMP to population estimates.
- 23, VF      (✗ Tributary report behind schedule, now anticipated in final by 6/01. *Note: this report was approved by the Biology Committee on February 21, 2001*)
- 23, VI      ✓ Increased news media coverage of Program activities including a 24-page, three-part series that ran in the Rocky Mountain News. The News also developed a teacher's curriculum that was distributed to 800 Colorado school classrooms through its "Newspapers in Education" program.  
  
✓ A video on Recovery Program activities in the Grand Valley video was completed and distributed. It has received positive feedback.
- 23, VIIA4c      ✓ Recovery goals drafted for all four species and preliminarily incorporated in RIPRAP revisions. Population estimates scheduled or underway as a result (also relates to p. 22, VA1a).

23, VIIB ✓ Long-term funding legislation passed.

### GREEN RIVER ACTION PLAN

24, IA1, IB1 ✓ Final Flaming Gorge synthesis report was approved by the Recovery Program.

>\*24, IA3d ✓ Flaming Gorge being re-operated.

24-5, IIA ✓ Age-1 razorbacks stocked into depression wetlands in 1999 survived over winter, and some left the wetlands for the river during spring runoff 2000. At least one stocked adult was identified at the spawning bar.  
>25, IVA1c ✗ The stocked razorbacks did not do well over the summer, presumably because of poor water quality.  
✗ No survival was detected for the 57,000 razorback larvae that were stocked into the Stirrup in spring 1999.

25, IIA1a(3) ✗ Razorbacks (10,000 larvae + 2,200 age 1) stocked into Old Charlie did not survive (thought to be due to bird predation and/or water quality).

>\*25, IIA3b ✓ Levees were breached on the upstream end of two sites to entrain drifting razorback larvae.

>\*25, IIIA3 ✗ Report on this nonnative fish control effort from USU is late and is hindering progress to identify and implement future nonnative fish control measures (which is required for downlisting listed species).

>25, IVA1c ✓ Eleven stocked razorbacks were captured on the razorback spawning bar; 2 were ripe, one of which had been stocked into a restored Green River floodplain site.

✓ Bonytail were stocked in the lower Green River.

### YAMPA/LITTLE SNAKE RIVERS

27, IA2 ✗✓ Completion of Yampa River Management Plan delayed by unresolved issues concerning quantification of future depletions. However, consensus was achieved on most of the major issues.  
✗ The Final report entitled "Little Snake River Management Action Plan, Parts I & II is extremely overdue (original due date September 15, 1995; revised due date September 30, 2000) and may delay work on the Yampa River Programmatic Biological Opinion. (A draft is now expected to be submitted to the Biology Committee by April 2, 2001.)

>\*27, IB2a(1)b ✓ Steamboat water leased to augment late summer flows.

- >\*28, IIIA1b
  - ✓ A total of 475 northern pike were captured and 350 were translocated to Rio Blanco Reservoir. Average length of translocated pike was 20 inches (36 inches maximum).
  - ✗ Northern pike outnumbered Colorado pikeminnow by about 4 to 1. Ten percent of pikeminnow captured exhibited evidence of attempted predation by northern pike.
- >\*28, IIIA1c
  - ✗ Report on the pilot catfish removal work (due June 2000) from the Service is late and is hindering progress to identify and implement future nonnative fish control measures (which is required for downlisting listed species). *(A draft is now expected to be submitted to the Biology Committee by July 1, 2001.)*
- >28, IVA1a1
  - ✓ 5,000 bonytail were stocked in the Yampa River upstream of Echo Park. (Note: 5,000 bonytail also were stocked in Lodore Canyon in the Green River.)

#### DUCHESNE RIVER

- 29, ID1
  - (Concern was expressed previously that improved communication was needed on Duchesne coordinated reservoir operations to be sure the desired outcome is achieved so that the Service will be able to make final flow recommendations for the Duchesne River. However, the water availability model is now almost completed and validation will occur soon. Meetings will occur this summer to run scenarios with biologists responsible for the Duchesne River flow recommendations. Completion of water availability/coordinated reservoir operations assessment and flow recommendations for the endangered fishes are now on track to converge by the end of September 2001.)

#### COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN

- >\*31, IA5  
(several)
  - ✓ Flows in the 15-Mile Reach maintained at >810 cfs through most of the late summer and fall to meet the dry year flow recommendations. Green Mountain/City of Grand Junction 10,000 af lease implemented quickly.
  - ✓ 15-Mile Reach Programmatic Biological Opinion was completed, included in the FY 200 RIPRAP revision, and is now being implemented.
- >\*31, IA5b
  - ✗ Long-term lease of 10,825af of water from Ruedi Reservoir was to be completed in FY 00 (originally earlier), now expected in 01.
  - ✓ Water is currently being delivered on a year-by-year basis.
- 31, IA5c&d
  - ✓ 10-year 5,412.5 agreements completed.
- >\*32, IA5i2
  - ✓ Colorado River Coordinated Reservoir Operations has enhanced peak flows during 1997–2000.

- ✓ Reservoir operators coordinated timing and provided flows over and above that available from fish pools, providing 1,100 cfs for 3 days in September for high resolution aerial photography of the main stem Colorado River from Rifle to Loma (needed to refine flow recommendations).
- 32, IA5m
  - ✓ Phase II of the Coordinated Facilities Study is underway.
- >\*32, IA513
  - ✓ Contracts awarded on Grand Valley check installation; construction underway.
  - ✗ The Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources, Colorado Division of Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Service have not completed a Memorandum of Agreement to allow construction of the Highline Lake pumping plant (a component of GVWM which would allow optimum use of Grand Valley Project water).
- 32, IA515
  - ✗ Green Mountain municipal long-term contract not completed in FY 00.
  - ✓ Negotiations underway, however, and lease should be in place by 8/01.
  - ✓ A one-year lease was completed and the water delivered in 2000.
- 33, IIA1e
  - ✓ Gravel pits were used by Colorado pikeminnow during spring runoff.
  - ✗ Unfortunately, green sunfish and largemouth bass spawned in the gravel pits.
- 33, IIA3e
  - ✗ Three selenium reports are several years behind schedule. The first and second reports may be available for Biology Committee review by Feb/Mar 2001. The remediation report may be available by the fall 2001.
- >\*34, IIB2a3
  - ✗ Provision of fish passage at Price-Stubb behind schedule due to delayed relicensing decision by FERC.
- >\*34, IIIA3-4
  - ✓ Since 1999, almost 18,000 nonnative fishes have been removed from the Colorado River.
- >\*34, IIIB1a&b
  - ✓ Operation of the fish barrier net installed in Highline Reservoir continued. Evaluation of the barrier's effectiveness to date indicates a high degree of success. While largemouth bass in the lake doubled from 1999 to 2000, the number of bass captured below the lake fell by almost 50 percent.
- >35, IVA2a2
  - ✓ Over 25,800 8" razorback stocked in the Colorado River to meet augmentation plan.
- >35, IVA3c
  - ✓ Bonytail were stocked in the Colorado River in Utah.

## GUNNISON RIVER ACTION PLAN

- >\*37, IIB1c&d      ✓ Redlands fish ladder is working for Colorado pikeminnow and native fishes. In 5 years of operation, 51 pikeminnow and roughly 40,000 other native fishes have used the passageway.
- >\*37, IIB1f      ✓ Contract to deliver flows below Redlands extended for 5 years.
- >37, IVA1b1      ✓ Over 6,600 8" razorback stocked in the Gunnison River to meet augmentation plan.