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ES/Colo.River/FY2002

End. Species Act--Section 7

Mail Stop 65115

JUL 12 2002

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 2001 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 population estimates. The table contains population estimates only from final, approved reports (rather than including data from preliminary reports as was done in the past).

Population Estimates

| SPECIES | RIVER | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | MIDDLE GREEN ¹ | LOWER GREEN ² | COLORADO |
| Colorado pikeminnow | Annual population estimates were started in 2000, anticipate an estimate for each year of 2000–2003. | Annual population estimates were started in 2001, anticipate an estimate for each year of 2001–2003. | 1998–2000 annual population estimates ranged from 512–677; an increase from 1992–1994 estimates that ranged from 383–653. |
| Humpback chub | <u>Yampa Canyon</u> : Annual population estimates for 1998–2000 have not yet been accepted by the Program. | <u>Desolation/Gray Canyon</u> : Annual population estimates were started in 2000, anticipate an estimate for each year of 2000–2003. | <u>Black Rocks Canyon</u> : Annual population estimates for 1998–2000 have not yet been accepted by the Program. <u>Westwater Canyon</u> : Annual population estimates for 1998–2000 have not yet been accepted by the Program. <u>Cataract Canyon</u> : Annual population estimates will begin in 2002, anticipate an estimate for each year of 2002–2004. |
| Razorback sucker (All populations are currently being augmented through stocking) | Stocked fish returning to spawning bar; 2002 will begin to meet Utah's revised stocking plan. | 2002 will begin to meet Utah's revised stocking plan. | 2002 will begin to meet Colorado's revised stocking plan |
| Bonytail | Populations are currently being re-introduced in Colorado, lower Green, middle Green and Yampa rivers. | | |

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

² Lower Green River is from the end of the Middle Green River section to the confluence of the Colorado River.

Accomplishments:

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

- Ouray National Fish Hatchery now has a water reuse system, is fully functional, and is producing razorback sucker larvae for stocking and floodplain experiments.
- Endangered fish stocking plans for Colorado and Utah have been revised and are being implemented. The Program has secured adequate production and growout pond space to meet the needs of those stocking plans.

- Flow augmentation was accomplished in the 15-Mile Reach in the late summer of 2001. Grand Valley Water Management check structures helped augment late summer flows in the 15-Mile Reach and we anticipate completion of the automation system this year.
- The screen was installed on the Grand Valley Irrigation Company diversion to prevent fish from entering the canal. We anticipate that operational concerns will be worked out and the optimum operation will be achieved in the future.

The Service also wishes to acknowledge: 1) progress to complete recovery goals that specify the numbers of fish which will comprise self-sustaining populations and which identify management actions required to downlist and delist the species; and 2) recovery agreements signed under the 15-Mile Reach Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) (11 agreements were signed in FY 2001, and 11 more agreements had been signed by the end of the 2nd quarter of FY 2002).

Concerns

The Service's memorandum in 2001 assessing sufficient progress expressed concern regarding progress of: 1) fish passage at the Price-Stubbs diversion on the Colorado River; 2) two overdue reports (the middle Green River nonnative fish control report and the Little Snake River Management Action Plan); and 3) 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 Service is pleased with the progress the Recovery Program has made in most of these areas. Current areas of concern are:

- The Program needs to complete evaluation of the floodplain restoration and land acquisition program so habitat restoration can move ahead per whatever new direction is recommended.
- Progress to remove (relocate) northern pike and smallmouth bass from the Yampa River has been slow. The Program needs to adopt guidance from the nonnative fish control workshop.
- The Program needs to finalize the Service's Gunnison/Colorado flow recommendations report so that the NEPA process and PBO can move forward.
- The Program continues to experience delays in completing capital projects on schedule (e.g., Grand Valley Project fish passage and screen, Price-Stubbs fish passage, and storage in the Yampa River basin to augment late summer flows).

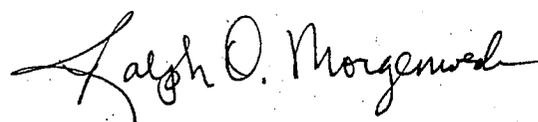
Other items of concern include: 1) slow progress to complete the Yampa Management Plan and PBO; 2) long-term protection of instream flows (needs to stay on the States' radar screens, as it is a requirement in recovery goals); 3) slow progress on Coordinated Facilities Operations to

augment spring peak flows and better meet flow recommendations for 15-Mile Reach; 4) long-term lease on Ruedi (in draft and must be completed by end of 2002); and 5) monitoring take of endangered fish as required by the 15-Mile Reach PBO.

Conclusion

Based on 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.

I am encouraged with the progress the Recovery Program made in 2001 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 2002 RIPRAP ASSESSMENT

Significant Accomplishments (✓) and Shortcomings (✗)

PAGE/ITEM # STATUS ASSESSMENT

These items fall under more than one river basin action plan:

- >*25, IIA2d
>*34, IIA5d
>*38, IIA3d ✓ ✗ Eight properties (including one access easement) were acquired during FY 00-01 for a total of 630 acres. This is fewer than anticipated, as land acquisition has turned out to take much longer than expected (and is currently suspended by the Management Committee pending evaluation).

- >*35, IIIA2
>*38, IIIA4 ✓ ✗ Sixteen ponds covering 123 acres were reclaimed to remove nonnative fish from the Colorado and Gunnison river floodplains. Three outlet screens were installed to prevent nonnative fish escapement from six ponds; two inlet screens were installed to prevent nonnative fish from re-colonizing ponds. Unfortunately, many of these ponds were quickly re-invaded by nonnative fish. Researchers are investigating improved methods to prevent nonnative fish escapement from pond complexes by screening return drains.

GENERAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

- 20, ID1 ✗ Workshop to determine scope of tributary management plan deferred until FY 2002 due to delay in completing the tributary report, delays in Gunnison PBO process, and the need to complete recovery goals.

- 20, IIB1-3 ✗ Unknown what FWS-ES has done to evaluate and resolve contaminants concerns within the Upper Basin. Program Director's office will meet with appropriate Service personnel.

- 21, IIIB5 ✗ Exploration of Tribal acceptance of Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedures not complete. Evaluation/revision of Procedures scheduled for FY 2002.

- >22, IVA4(a1) ✓ Twenty-five razorback suckers paired matings have been secured and progeny are being produced for meeting Utah's stocking plan.

- 22, IVC4 ✓ Mumma hatchery facility began raising bonytail and razorback sucker.

- 22, IVE2a ✓ Decision made to convert Ouray National Fish Hatchery to a water reuse system which became fully operational in spring 2002.

- 22, IVE2d1&2 ✓ As a result of revised State stocking plans, growout pond acreage in the

Colorado and Green river basins is now sufficient to meet required number and size of fish.

- 22, IVF1 ✗ Report to assess monitoring needed to evaluate contribution of stocked fish to recovery is overdue. Workshop scheduled for August 2002.
- 22, VA1 ✗ Program has not clearly identified the utility of continuing YOY Colorado pikeminnow monitoring. Program Director's office strongly recommends dropping this work. Biology Committee to discuss.
- 23, VF ✓ Tributary report completed.
- 23, VI ✓ Completed extensive outreach effort in support of draft recovery goals targeting seven Colorado River Basin states and including briefings with Native American tribes, State Fish and Game Directors, and representatives of recovery and conservation programs.
- ✓ Reached >800 Upper Colorado River Basin water users through exhibits at the Colorado River Water Users Association Annual meeting in Las Vegas and the Colorado Water Workshop in Gunnison.
- ✓ Established partnerships with public and private organizations in the Grand Valley to develop and install interpretive exhibits along the Colorado Riverfront Trail.
- 23, VIIA5 ✓ Recovery goals drafted for all four species and notice of availability published in the Federal Register.
- 23, VIIB ✓ Recovery Program extended through 2013 in accordance with long-term funding legislation.

GREEN RIVER ACTION PLAN

- >*24, IA3d ✓ Flaming Gorge being re-operated.
- 24-5, IIA
>25, IVA1c ✓ Several razorbacks captured in the Green River main channel had originally been stocked into floodplain wetlands, suggesting voluntary movement from the floodplain to the river.
- ✓ Of the Age I razorbacks that were stocked into the Above Brennan wetland in 1999, 49 survivors were captured in the spring of 2001. Many were ripe males.
- ✗ The stocked razorbacks did not do well over the summer, presumably because of low levels of dissolved oxygen.
- ✗ No survival was detected for razorback larvae stocked into Baeser Bend in May 2001. Inability to detect larval survival may be due in part to sampling limitations. FY 2002 scopes of work to improve research methodology.

- >*25, IIA3b ✓X Levees were breached on the upstream end of two sites to entrain drifting razorback larvae in 2000. Evaluation could not be conducted during 2000 or 2001 because of low spring peak flows.
- 25, IIB5b,c X Design and construction of the fish screen at Tusher has been delayed for years because of a water rights dispute. Currently in the hands of the Utah Supreme Court.
- >*25, IIIA3 X 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).
✓ The first draft of the report was reviewed by the Program coordinator in February 2002; now out for peer and Biology Committee review.
- >*25, IIIA4a ✓ A total of 248 northern pike were removed from the middle Green River.
- >*25, IIIA4b1 X Revised report on cyprinid removal in lower Colorado and lower Green rivers overdue; Utah to determine how to complete.
- >25, IVA1c ✓ > 98,000 razorback larvae were stocked to wetlands and >11,000 juvenile razorbacks were stocked into the Green River near Jensen.
✓ 46,500 juvenile bonytail (3.5"-4") were stocked into the Green River system.
- 26, VB1 ✓ Data collected for estimate of humpback chub in Desolation/Gray canyons.
- 26, VC1,2 ✓ Population estimates for Colorado pikeminnow in the middle and lower Green River collected.

YAMPA/LITTLE SNAKE RIVERS

- 27, IA2 ✓ Draft Yampa River Management Plan was completed and submitted for public comment.
✓ The overdue report entitled "Little Snake River Management Action Plan, Parts I & II" was completed and is undergoing review for consistency with the objectives of the Yampa River Management Plan.
- >*27, IB2a(1)b ✓X Steamboat water leased to augment late summer flows. However, a long-term lease has not yet been negotiated (but is in draft).
- >*28, IIIA1b ✓ A total of 500 northern pike were captured and translocated to Rio Blanco Reservoir and Yampa State Wildlife Area ponds. Average length of translocated pike was 23 inches (35 inches maximum).

- >*28, IIIA1c **X**✓ 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 final report was distributed in May 2002.
✓ A total of 4,970 channel catfish were removed from Yampa Canyon.
- >29, IVA1a1 ✓ 5,000 bonytail (3.5"-4") were stocked in the Yampa River at Echo Park.
- 29, VA **X** Report on Yampa Canyon humpback chub population estimate is late.

DUCHESNE RIVER

- 30 IA2 ✓ **X** The overdue report entitled "Endangered Fish Use and Flow Recommendations for the Duchesne River, Utah" was submitted to the Program Director's office. Following peer and BC review, a final report will be completed in 2002.

WHITE RIVER

- 31 IB2 ✓ **X** The overdue report entitled "White River Flow Recommendations" was returned to the authors for revision prior to peer and BC review. We expect a final report will be completed in 2002.

COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN

- 32 IA2a&b ✓ Flow recommendations for the upper Colorado River, Rifle to Palisade reach, have been adopted.
- >*32, IA5 ✓ Flows in the 15-Mile Reach maintained at >1240 cfs from early August through mid-September of 2001. A total of 68,186 af of water was released to support late summer target flows. This total included 34,656 af from Green Mountain, 19,584 af from Ruedi, 8,490, af from Wolford and 5,412 af from Williams Fork Reservoir.
✓ 15-Mile Reach Programmatic Biological Opinion Section 7 accounting sheet created and has been used for presentations to the Management Committee.
- >*32, IA5b **X**✓ Long-term lease of 10,825af of water from Ruedi Reservoir was to be completed in FY 00 (originally earlier), now expected in early summer 02. Because the long-term lease is not yet complete, another 1-year lease (for 10,825 af) was prepared.
- 32, IA5c&d ✓ 10,825 cfs delivered for flow augmentation under the 10-year 5,412.5 agreements.
- >*33, IA5I3 ✓ 7 check structures on the Grand Valley Project canal have been

- constructed and were manually operated in 2001 to reduce river diversions and help maintain flows in the 15-mile reach.
- ✓ The Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources, Colorado Division of Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Service have 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).
- 33, IA515 ✓ Green Mountain municipal lease was completed and 21,342 cfs was provided. Also under the lease, an additional 14,461 af was delivered to the Orchard Mesa Power Plant and returned to the 15-Mile Reach to provide for late summer flow augmentation.
- 33, IA5m ✓ Phase II of the Coordinated Facilities Study is slow, but producing results.
- 34, IIA3e ✓ Two of the three selenium reports that were several years behind schedule were completed.
 ✗ The third selenium report has yet to be submitted for review, and there are no estimates as to when it will be submitted.
- >*34, IIA5d ✓ A property was acquired that can be configured to entrain drifting razorback larvae.
- >*35, IIB2a3 ✗ Provision of fish passage at Price-Stubb is still behind schedule, was awaiting a congressional decision on the project proponent's FERC license extension request; however final EA expected soon.
- >*35, IIIA3a ✓ More than 180,000 nonnative fishes were removed from backwaters within the Grand Valley of the Colorado River.
- >*35, IIIA3b ✓ ✗ Since 1999, nearly 15,000 centrarchids have been removed from nursery habitats. However, no significant depletive effect has been observed.
- >*35, IIIB1a&b ✓ The fish barrier net installed in Highline Reservoir continues to operate successfully.
- >36, IVA2a2 ✓ 2,150 8" razorback stocked.
- >36, IVA2c2 ✓ 10,000 bonytail (3.5"-4") stocked in Colorado and nearly 28,000 in Utah.
- 36, VC1 ✗ Report on population estimate of humpback chub in Black Rocks;
 36, VC2, ✗ Report on population estimate of humpback chub in Westwater; and
 36, VD ✗ Report on population estimate of Colorado pikeminnow in the Upper Colorado River late. However, they are being revised based on the new

population estimate protocol.

GUNNISON RIVER ACTION PLAN

- >*37, IIA2b ✓ Habitat enhancement was completed at the Escalante State Wildlife Area near Delta, Colorado.

- >*38, IIA3d ✓ A property was acquired that can be configured to entrain drifting razorback larvae.

- >*38, IIB1c&d ✓ Redlands fish ladder is working for Colorado pikeminnow and native fishes. In 6 years of operation, 52 pikeminnow and roughly 45,000 other native fishes have used the passageway. Five adult razorback sucker used the ladder in 2001.

- >38, IVA1c ✓ 4,100 8" razorback stocked in the Gunnison River near Delta, Colorado.