

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

PROJECT NUMBER: PIP 12K (C-9, 113, 114)

I. Project Title: Public Involvement for Yampa River, Gunnison River and other Tributary Basins

II. Principal Investigator:

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III. Project Summary:

The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement management plans for the Yampa River, Gunnison River and other significant tributaries of the Upper Colorado River Basin. The purpose of these management plans is to provide and/or protect instream flows and other habitat needed to maintain and recover the endangered fishes while water continues to be depleted for existing and foreseeable future human needs. Each plan serves as the basis for development of a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO). This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is intended to engage stakeholders in the planning process for the purpose of identifying and focusing significant issues for consideration in formulating and evaluating alternative actions. This PIP has the following objectives:

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basinwide management plan and PBO.
- To enhance an appreciation by the public and key stakeholders for the uniqueness of their basin, its value to the endangered fish and other native species.
- To enhance the image of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recovery Program as credible entities in the eyes of the public and key stakeholders.
- To increase support within water-user, scientific and environmental communities to effectively implement the management plans.

IV. Study Schedule:

Initial year: FY 2002
Final year: FY 2004

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:

VI.C. Plan and implement information and education and public involvement activities for all significant Recovery Program actions (e.g presentations, public meetings, public involvement training, etc.).

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2003 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tactic: Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with ESA and NEPA requirements, if applicable. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed.

Status: A Notice of Availability for a draft *Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin* (Plan) was published in the *Federal Register* on July 30, 2003. The Plan also incorporates an environmental assessment (EA) for which public comments were sought. The Plan and EA were finalized and a draft PBO will be prepared and reviewed in FY 2004.

Tactic: Disseminate and/or present information about the Recovery Program to affected interest groups and stakeholders. Write and/or disseminate news releases, newsletter articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on the purpose, activities, accomplishments and status of basinwide planning processes, including NEPA/ESA compliance.

Status: News releases and questions/answers were developed and distributed and posted on the Recovery Program's public website. Paid ads were placed in local newspapers to promote attendance at public meetings and to announce that draft plans were available for review and comment at local libraries in Baggs, Wyoming; and in Hayden, Steamboat Springs, and Craig, Colorado. Public input was incorporated when formulating and evaluating alternative actions.

Tactic: Investigate opportunities to educate school children about the local riverine ecosystem and its importance to the endangered fish through the River Watch program, Project WILD, The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs.

Status: The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch education specialist continued to work with local schools to educate students about endangered and nonnative fish issues and the Yampa River ecosystem.

Tactic: Attend relevant meetings of county commissioners, city councils, water conservancy districts, and other stakeholder groups. Report on the status of planning processes and identify concerns. Address concerns in a timely and straightforward manner.

Status: Attended meetings of the Yampa River Basin Partnership, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District Board to provide progress reports on the Yampa River PBO and other tributaries planning processes.

VII. Recommendations: The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with local stakeholders to ensure their needs and concerns are adequately addressed throughout the planning process.

VIII. Project Status: Ongoing.

IX. FY 2003 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: \$2,000
- B. Funds Expended: 1,500
- C. Difference: \$ 500 (carry forward to FY 2004)
- D. Percent of the FY 2003 work completed: 100%
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$.

X. Status of Data Submission (Where applicable): n/a

XI. Signed: Debbie Felker January 22, 2004
Information & Education Date
Coordinator