

I. Project Title: Smallmouth Bass Removal and Further Evaluation of the Ichthyofauna in Cross Mountain Canyon

II. Principal Investigator:

Aaron Webber, Fish Biologist
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1380 South 2350 West
Vernal, UT 84078
(435) 789-4078 ext 21 / Fax (435) 789-4805
aaron_webber@fws.gov

III. Project Summary:

The Yampa River at Cross Mountain Canyon has had very little sampling to understand its fish composition. The purpose of this study was to further determine the fish composition of the Yampa River at Cross Mountain. We sampled this section of river by angling and setting trammel nets throughout the reach. We documented the following species through our sampling efforts: smallmouth bass, channel catfish, roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker, and white sucker. We removed all smallmouth bass and marked and released other nonnative fish with floy tags to potentially document their movement to other reaches of the Yampa and Green rivers where sampling may occur.

IV. Study Schedule:

We sampled the Yampa River at Cross Mountain Canyon September 25, October 8-10, and October 28, 2008. Provisional data collected by the USGS at their Near Maybell, Colorado gaging station indicate river flow was approximately 260 cfs during the first two sampling trips, and approximately 375 cfs on October 28, 2008.

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

Green River Action Plan:

V.A. Measure and document population and habitat parameters to determine status and biological response to recovery actions.

III.A.2.c. Evaluate the effectiveness (e.g., nonnative and native fish response) and develop and implement an integrated, viable active control program.

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2008 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and

Shortcomings:

We documented 8 fish species by our sampling and through angler surveys. Angling yielded the following species: smallmouth bass (37), channel catfish (2), roundtail chub (3), flannelmouth sucker (2), and white sucker (3). Trammel nets captured white sucker (15) and bluehead sucker (1). While netting we interviewed an angler who reported catching northern pike and common carp in this reach in addition to smallmouth bass and channel catfish. The downstream opening of Cross Mountain Canyon appears to have high angling pressure evidenced by fire pits, trash from fishing gear and anglers seen when sampling. Angling pressure in the canyon is probably nonexistent and at the upstream end of the canyon it appears to be very light due to difficult accessibility (dangerous rocky ledges). We used canoes to access the upstream and downstream openings of the canyon and hiked into the middle sections of the canyon.

All smallmouth bass were removed and other nonnative fish were floy tagged and released to be able to potentially document nonnative fish movement to different sections of the river where sampling occurs.

We did not use seines in our sampling because the habitat was not conducive to this sampling technique. Most habitat was too swift, rocky, or deep to effectively seine. We used trammel nets only on the uppermost and lower sections of the reach. There was no suitable habitat to set a trammel net in the middle section of the canyon, which has very swift water and rocky boulders all throughout.

VII. Recommendations:

Our sampling this year documented only 2 species not documented from sampling in 2007. Further sampling could potentially document endangered fish in this reach, but even if they were present, they would probably be in such low densities that capturing one would be very unlikely. We already know many of the species present in the canyon, and further effort would probably not yield any more information. Further studies of the Yampa River at Cross Mountain are important to understand how it is used by native fishes, however, I don't feel that this project is as high of a priority as other projects that could be funded.

VIII. Project Status: The project is completed.

IX. FY 2008 Budget Status:

- A. Funds Provided: \$14,669
- B. Funds Expended: \$14,669
- C. Difference: 0
- D. Percent of the FY 2008 work completed, and projected costs to complete:100
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges:0

X. Status of Data Submission: Data (lengths, weights, tag numbers and UTMs) were recorded in spread sheets and are available upon request.

XI. Signed: Aaron Webber October 30, 2008
Principal Investigator Date