



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

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Implementation Committee

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NEWS RELEASE

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Operation of Endangered Fish Passages Reduced During Low River Flows

LAKESWOOD, CO — The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Recovery Program) announced today that because of extremely low flows in the Colorado River this year, operation of fish passages on the Colorado River may not be possible throughout the summer and early fall. Low river flows make it difficult to operate the Grand Valley Irrigation Company Fish Passage, Grand Valley Project Fish Passage, and the Price-Stubb Fish Passage in western Colorado.

Fish passages were constructed as part of Recovery Program actions to restore access to important habitat for endangered Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, bonytail, and humpback chub. The fish passages have opened up access to habitat that extends from Lake Powell to Rifle, CO, on the Colorado River and from Grand Junction to Delta, CO, on the Gunnison River.

Although biologists believe that suspending operation of the fish passages this summer will have a short-term impact on the endangered fish, there is a real concern for long-term impacts if the drought lasts more than one year. Fish passages play an important role in the life cycles of endangered fish, including the Colorado pikeminnow which has been known to migrate up to 200 miles to spawn. Operating fish passages is critical to recovery of the species.

On the Colorado River, the Grand Valley Water Users Association and Grand Valley Irrigation Company are operating fish screens on their canals, as hydrologic conditions permit. The fish screens serve a dual purpose of preventing fish from entering canals and benefiting canal operations by reducing debris loads in the canals.

“We have a history of cooperation with the Recovery Program that helps our water users and the endangered fish,” said Richard Proctor, manager of the Grand Valley Water Users Association.

Colorado River Energy Distributors Association - Colorado Water Congress - National Park Service - State of Colorado

State of Utah - State of Wyoming - The Nature Conservancy - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Utah Water Users Association - Western Area Power Administration - Western Resource Advocates - Wyoming Water Association

The Recovery Program is also coordinating with the Redlands Water and Power Company on operating procedures for the Redlands Fish Passage and Screen, located on the Gunnison River. The Recovery Program is working to minimize impacts to water deliveries to Redlands irrigators while continuing to operate the fish passage and fish screen, as conditions allow.

“We are grateful for the continued support of Grand Valley water organizations and other Recovery Program partners,” said Recovery Program Director Tom Chart. “Working together, the partners provide flows for the endangered fish while meeting the water needs of people throughout western Colorado. This cooperation is especially important during times of drought when sections of the Colorado and Gunnison rivers have the potential to go dry.”

The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program is a cooperative partnership of local, state and federal agencies, water organizations, power customers and environmental groups, established in 1988 to recover the endangered fishes while water development proceeds in accordance with federal and state laws and interstate compacts. For more information, call 303-969-7322, or visit ColoradoRiverRecovery.org.

NOTE to Editors/Reporters: Photos are available by contacting Debbie Felker at 303-969-7322, ext. 227 or debbie_felker@fws.gov.

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