

I. Project Title: Floodplain habitat restoration (construction) for the Recovery Program.

II. Principal Investigator(s): Pat Nelson
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III. Project Summary:

The purpose of the project is to configure floodplain habitats to assist in recovery of the endangered fishes of the upper Colorado River Basin. In FY 04, construction was completed at Unaweep Charolais Ranch (Butch Craig's) on the Gunnison River near Whitewater, Colorado (October 2003); Walter Walker State Wildlife Area on the Colorado River near Grand Junction, Colorado (March 2004); Thunder Ranch on the Green River near Jensen, Utah (July 2004); and Grand Valley Audubon Society's Ela Wildlife Sactuary on the Colorado River near Grand Junction, Colorado (August 2004). Post-construction evaluation is scheduled to occur during 2005 if flows are adequate for site connection.

IV. Study Schedule:

Initial Year: 1996
Final Year: TBD

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

Green River Action Plan: Mainstem

- II. Restore Habitat
- II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitats.
- II.A.3. Implement levee-removal strategy at high-priority sites.
- II.A.3.b. Construction.

Colorado River Action Plan: Mainstem

- II. Restore Habitat
- II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitats.
- II.A.4. Implement levee-removal strategy at high-priority sites.
- II.A.4.b. Construction.

Colorado River Action Plan: Gunnison River

- II. Restore Habitat
- II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitats.
- II.A.2. Implement levee-removal strategy at high-priority sites.
- II.A.2.b. Construction.

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2004 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Butch Craig's was acquired by the Recovery Program in 2001. The site is adjacent to the Gunnison River (RM 12) just downstream from the Highway 141 bridge near Whitewater, Colorado. The 98.7-acre parcel includes a 52-acre gravel pit pond that was configured in 2003 (construction completed in October 2003) to serve as a nursery habitat for razorback sucker. The levee separating the pond from the river was breached at both the upstream and downstream end to entrain drifting larvae. The site was designed to connect with the river when Gunnison flows exceed 4,160 cfs (1.11-year recurrence interval). Post-construction evaluation was planned for 2004, but Gunnison peak flows did not get high enough. Evaluation will occur in 2005 if flows cooperate.

A levee was lowered at the Walter Walker State Wildlife Area on the Colorado River near Grand Junction in March 2004. Within the Colorado River sub-basin, Walter Walker has been the highest-use area by Colorado pikeminnow and, formerly, razorback sucker. Lowering the levee is expected to enhance and help maintain the habitat for use by endangered fishes. The levee excavation was done by United Sand and Gravel in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Recovery Program, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Site evaluation will occur in FY 05 if flows are adequate.

The Recovery Program obtained an easement on 455 acres of floodplain habitat on Thunder Ranch near Jensen, Utah, in December 2003. Restoration of a 330-acre wetland on this property will provide important nursery habitat in a key location for young razorback suckers and is expected to greatly contribute toward recovery of the species. Installation of manifolds and pipelines to divert selenium-laden waters to the river and breaching of levees was completed in July 2004. Completion of site evaluation is slated for FY05 (or as soon as adequate flows are available).

Habitat restoration was completed at the Grand Valley Audubon Society's Ela Wildlife Sanctuary in August 2004. The site is located on the Colorado River downstream from Grand Junction, Colorado. A 50-foot levee notch was excavated to allow drifting razorback sucker larvae access to floodplain nursery habitat. Site evaluation will occur in FY 05 if flows are adequate.

VII. Recommendations: None

VIII. Project Status: Ongoing through 2005.

IX. FY 2004 Budget Status

A. Funds Provided: \$279.0K

B. Funds Expended: \$374.8K

C. Difference: \$ 95.8K

Construction at Thunder Ranch cost more than anticipated.

D. Percent of the FY 2004 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100

E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: NA

X. Status of Data Submission (Where applicable): Not applicable

XI. Signed: /s/ Pat Nelson January 6, 2005
Principal Investigator Date