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

II. Principal Investigator:
Gerry Roehm
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (retired)

III. Project Summary:

The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement management plans for the Yampa 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 (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: Ongoing

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:
VLC. 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 2005 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tactic: Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed.

Status: The final *Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin* (Yampa Plan; Roehm 2004) and its accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) were completed in September 2004, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued in October 2004. Written and oral comments received from stakeholders and other interested parties in response to the October 2003 draft of the Yampa Plan were addressed in preparing the final documents. A draft PBO was completed in September 2004; the final PBO was completed in early FY 2005. A Cooperative Agreement was signed in January 2005 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Colorado River Water Conservation District (River District) and the states of Colorado and Wyoming to implement the Yampa Plan. The Recovery Program participated in a signing ceremony and issued a news release announcing the signing. The Recovery Program continued to work with the River District to conduct outreach on the expansion of Elkhead Reservoir, one of the first management actions to occur under the Cooperative Agreement.

The Recovery Program participated in meetings and conference calls related to development of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Aspinall Unit on the Gunnison River and reviewed the draft EIS for Flaming Gorge Dam on the Green River. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) assumed the lead on public outreach efforts for these projects with limited participation by Recovery Program staff.

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: In FY 2005, the stage of completion of the Yampa Plan did not warrant further outreach efforts other than to announce completion of the project. Reclamation is handling dissemination of information related to the draft Aspinall Unit EIS and Flaming Gorge Dam EIS.

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 (TNC) at Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs.

Status: TNC’s education specialist at Carpenter Ranch continued to work with local schools to educate students about endangered and nonnative fish issues and the Yampa River ecosystem.

Status: Attended meetings of the Yampa River Basin Partnership to provide progress reports on the Cooperative Agreement and the expansion of Elkhead Reservoir.

VII. Recommendations: The Recovery Program should continue to support Reclamation’s outreach efforts related to the development of EIS’s for the Aspinall Unit and Flaming Gorge Dam operations.

VIII. Project Status: Ongoing

IX. FY 2005 Budget Status

A. Funds Provided: $ -0-
B. Funds Expended: $ -0-
C. Difference: $ -0-
D. Percent of the FY 2005 work completed: 100%
E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: 0

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

XI. Signed: Debbie Felker
Information & Education Coordinator

December 7, 2005
Date