

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY-2009 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Project No.: PIP 12L**

**I. Project Title:** Communications/Public Involvement Plan for Nonnative Fish Management

**II. Principal Investigator:**

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**III. Project Summary:**

In 2009, the Recovery Program continued management actions to minimize or remove nonnative smallmouth bass and northern pike in sections of the Colorado, Duchesne, Green and Yampa rivers in the states of Colorado and Utah. The Recovery Program prepared and implemented a comprehensive communications plan to raise public awareness of the purpose and nature of nonnative fish management. After careful deliberation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, it was determined that public meetings were not needed this year. It was noted, however, that a concerted effort should be made in 2010 to raise awareness about the Recovery Program in the Yampa River Basin. Tasks this year included updating and issuing key messages, fact sheets, questions/answers and news releases. In addition, the Information and Education Committee worked with the Recovery Program's nonnative fish coordinator to evaluate recommendations from the Biology Committee and Nonnative Fish Workshop participants. More work in this area needs to occur in 2010.

**IV. Study Schedule:**

Initial year: 2003  
Final year: Duration of Recovery Program.

**V. Relationship to RIPRAP:**

**VI. INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR THE  
ENDANGERED FISHES AND THE RECOVERY PROGRAM.**

**VI. Accomplishment of FY 2009 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:**

Tactic: Maintain Action Planning Teams

Status: The Recovery Program continues to provide team members with all written outreach materials to distribute to the appropriate people in their respective organizations. In addition, the Recovery Program asked team members to provide feedback re: public reaction to nonnative fish management actions.

Tactic: Develop and Promote Key Messages

Status: Key messages were developed and approved by Recovery Program partners and the action planning teams. These messages remain the basis of all communication.

The Recovery Program's nonnative fish coordinator worked with the I & E Committee to review and evaluate recommendations for improved outreach that were made by the Biology Committee and Nonnative Fish Workshop participants. Of the many recommendations made, it was decided to pursue putting signage at the Craig Justice Center pond and at Elkhead Reservoir where nonnative fish removed from the Yampa River were relocated for sportfishing opportunities. Before these signs were produced, concerns were raised about possible contaminants (mercury) in the fish at these sites. After further evaluation, translocation to the Justice Center pond was discontinued and signs were not made. Other recommendations will be reviewed for possible implementation in 2010.

Tactic: Maintain Active Communication with Members of Congress and their Staffs (Local and D.C.) and Local Elected Officials

Status: A news release and updated questions/answers and fact sheets were prepared and distributed in advance of field activities to key members of congress for both Colorado and Utah, and to local sheriffs and county commissioners in Rio Blanco, Routt and Moffat counties in Colorado.

Tactic: Actively Seek News Media Coverage of Nonnative Fish Management Actions and Public Meetings

Status: A news release, fact sheets and questions/answers were issued in the spring before field work began. The news releases and questions/answers were customized for the states of Colorado and Utah. CDOW Public Information Specialist Randy Hampton participated in a two-part television (KJCT TV-8 in Grand Junction, Colorado) interview about nonnative fish management, water development and the Recovery Program in general. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Public Information Specialist Mark Hadley reported that he was pleased with the news media coverage by Utah news media this year (*Deseret News*,

Associated Press and more). He said the articles help people understand how the Recovery Program helps the state of Utah.

Tactic: Identify and Seek Permission from Landowners to Access Their Property as Part of Recovery Actions

Status: Principal investigators sought permission on an as-needed basis.

Tactic: Establish Local Spokeperson(s)

Status: Key people from the Recovery Program and agencies conducting the field work were identified to address news media inquiries. Their names and contact information were provided on all fact sheets and in the question/answer handouts.

Tactic: Train Appropriate Staff/Volunteers Who Might Receive Questions from the Public and Congressional Staff

Status: The Recovery Program staff asked agencies involved with the nonnative fish management activities to brief their staff and volunteers about the nature of the work and who to direct inquiries to. To the best of our knowledge, this occurred.

Tactic: Participate in Angler Roundtables and/or Public Meetings

Status: The Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Recovery Program carefully considered whether or not to hold public meetings on this subject in 2009. Because the nature of the work taking place had not changed from the previous year and there was no new information to present about research findings, the decision was made not to hold public meetings. All parties agreed that a meeting should be scheduled to present new information. At the same time, it was noted that increased efforts are needed to raise the Recovery Program's visibility in the Yampa River Basin. This will be pursued further in 2010.

Tactic: Post Information on Agency Websites

Status: The Recovery Program posted a news release, questions/answers and fact sheets on its website. CDOW and UDWR did not post this information on their respective websites, however, they plan to do this in FY 2010.

Tactic: Distribute Information to Fishing and River Guides/Sporting Goods Stores

Status: Action Planning Team members and principal investigators continued to recommend that this strategy not be implemented. For this reason, this tactic was not included in the Nonnative Fish Management Outreach scope of work for 2010-2011.

Tactic: Work with Dinosaur National Monument staff to prepare appropriate materials that explain this project to include with boat permit distribution.

Status: The Recovery Program coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) staff in Vernal to have Dinosaur National Monument staff distribute a bookmark-size handout with boat permits. The handout explains the nature of the work and provides contact information. Service and monument staff continue to report improved relationships with boaters as a result of this effort.

Tactic: Publish Articles in Agency Publications

Status: Information about nonnative fish management was included in the *Program Highlights 2009* document and the Recovery Program's winter February 08 *Swimming Upstream* newsletter.

**VII. Recommendations:** In FY 2010, proactive communication efforts should continue in an effort to ensure that target audiences are well informed of nonnative fish management activities. The Recovery Program should continue communication with members of the Action Planning Teams. The Recovery Program should continue to seek feedback from principal investigators regarding public reaction to research efforts and to get their ideas on ways to improve communication with target audiences. The Recovery Program should continue to seek support from Recovery Program partner agencies to help with outreach efforts. A concerted effort should be made to raise awareness about the Recovery Program in the Yampa River Basin.

The Information and Education Committee should work closely with the Recovery Program's nonnative fish and I&E coordinators to review and prioritize recommendations from the annual nonnative fish workshop and Biology Committees.

**VIII. Project Status:** On-track and ongoing.

**IX. FY 09 Budget:**

- A. Funds provided: \$ 5,000
- B. Funds Expended: \$ -0-
- C. Difference: \$ 5,000 (returned to Recovery Program budget)
- D. Percent of FY 09 work completed and projected costs to complete: 100%, none
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: Not applicable.

**X. Status of Data Submission:** Not applicable.

**XI. Signed:** Debbie Felker  
Information & Education Coordinator

November 16, 2009  
Date