

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2015 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM
PROJECT NUMBER: 3

- I. Project Title:
- II. Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number(s):
R11PG40023
Project/Grant Period: Start date (Mo/Day/Yr): 9/16/2011
End date: (Mo/Day/Yr): 9/30/2016
Reporting period end date: 9/30/15
Is this the final report? Yes _____ No X
- III. Principal Investigator(s): Tom Chart, Program Director, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225. Phone: 303/969-7322, ext. 226. FAX: 303/969-7327. E-Mail: tom_chart@fws.gov.
- IV. Abstract: The ongoing work of the Recovery Program Director's office is to ensure timely and effective planning, implementation, coordination, and administrative support of the Recovery Program by: 1) coordinating and implementing recovery activities; 2) conducting Program planning and evaluation; 3) managing the Recovery Program annual budget; 4) providing staff assistance to [Program committees](#); and 5) directing and coordinating Service Recovery Program activities. These tasks were carried out by Recovery Program staff including the director, deputy director, coordinators for the major recovery elements, and administrative staff. Significant FY15 accomplishments include: continued work with Program partners to implement the [Larval Trigger Study Plan](#); continued work with state partners to implement the [Upper Colorado River Basin nonnative and Invasive Aquatic Species Prevention and Control Strategy](#); finalizing the revised Integrated Stocking Plan; work with Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) to develop the web-based [Species Tagging, Research and Monitoring System \(STRaMS\)](#); continued work on the draft Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan (placed on hold pending population viability analysis); designating a recovery team for revising the humpback chub recovery plan; and initiating a Species Status Review for razorback sucker.
- V. Study Schedule: 1989-ongoing.
- VI. Relationship to RIPRAP:
General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:
VII.A.1 Assure consistency of RIPRAP with currently approved recovery plans.
VII.A.2 Recognize the role of the UCREFRP in revised recovery plans
VII.A.3 Update, refine, and prioritize recovery actions (RIPRAP) annually.
VII.A.5 Update recovery goals/plans.
VII.A.5e Conduct species status review and update recovery goals at least every 5 years.
VII.A.7 Monitor and assess Recovery Program accomplishments annually.
VII.A.8 Develop biennial work plan to address priority needs.
VII.B Actively participate in Recovery Program committees and secure funding for annual work plan and larger projects.
VII.C Manage, direct, and coordinate Recovery Program activities.

VII. Accomplishment of FY 2015 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

A. Program Director & Staff

1. Directed and coordinated implementation of recovery efforts as described in the RIPRAP and the Biennial Work Plan in the areas of: a) instream flow protection b) habitat restoration and nonnative fish management; c) propagation/genetics and research, monitoring, and data management; and d) information, education, and public involvement. Program coordinators are: Vacant (vice-Tom Chart) for instream flow protection and floodplain restoration/management (with Jana Mohrman coordinating hydrology-related issues and fish passages and screens); Kevin McAbee for nonnative fish management; Tom Czapl for propagation/genetics, research, monitoring, and data management; and (as of March 2015) Melanie Fischer for information, education, and public involvement.

Maintained tracking system of Program reports and due dates to ensure timely accomplishment of Program objectives.

Significant Program accomplishments/activities in 2015 included:

- Maintaining critical flows and operating fish screens and passages.
- Augmenting late summer flows in the Yampa River using releases from [Elkhead Reservoir](#).
- Continued operation of Flaming Gorge Dam under the Biological Opinion and ROD and [Study Plan to Examine the Effects of Using Larval Razorback Sucker Occurrence in the Green River as a Trigger for Flaming Gorge Dam Peak Releases](#) to meet spring flow targets and recommended base flow temperatures in Reach 1 and at the confluence with the Yampa River and to provide floodplain connection in Reach 2 of the Green River coincident with the presence of wild-produced larval razorback sucker. Larval trigger operations have proven very successful providing habitat for the managed Stewart Lake wetland. A similar managed wetland was configured in 2015 at Johnson Bottom on the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge.
- Convened a team to evaluate and revise as needed Muth et al. 2000 – the Green River Flow and Temperature Recommendations.
- Operation of the Aspinall Unit on the Gunnison River under Aspinall EIS and ROD. Monitoring to evaluate effects of Aspinall operation as per the [Aspinall Study Plan](#) is ongoing.
- Continued augmentation of Colorado River flows. In late August, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Ute Water Conservancy District signed a temporary lease to use up to 12,000 af of water in Ruedi Reservoir to further augment base flows in the 15-Mile Reach.
- Program partners continued to implement [Upper Colorado River Basin Nonnative and Invasive Aquatic Species Prevention and Control Strategy](#). Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) hosted a smallmouth bass tournament at Ridgway State Park which removed 2,036 of this invasive species. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) worked with anglers to revise the

lake management plan for Red Fleet Reservoir, then successfully removed the illegally-introduced walleye population there through rotenone treatment, and then began restocking the reservoir with compatible sportfish. At Elkhead Reservoir, CPW is working with Program stakeholders and the local community to install a net over the spillway, implement liberalized harvest regulations for smallmouth bass, and revise the lake management plan.

- Continued in-river nonnative fish removal efforts over 600+ miles of river.
- Continued good hatchery production and numbers of stocked bonytail and razorback sucker with almost all stocking goals met or exceeded.
- Completed revised integrated stocking plan.
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) continued developing the web-based [Species Tagging, Research and Monitoring System \(STReAMS\)](#).
- Produced an agency draft Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan in December 2014. Convened two webinars (April and May, 2015) to solicit stakeholder comment on the draft plan. As result, the Service and stakeholders agreed to place revision of the plan on hold pending population viability analysis.
- Designated a recovery team for revising the humpback chub recovery plan.
- Initiated a Species Status Review for razorback sucker.

2. Conducted Program planning and evaluation:

a. Reviewed and updated the RIPRAP and documented changes; submitted recommended RIPRAP revisions to the technical, Management, and Implementation committees for review; published final, revised [RIPRAP](#) (with progress information included) to web.

b. Completed 2016-2017 biennial work plan as needed and posted revised [scopes of work](#) to web.

c. Requested, revised as needed, and posted FY 2014 [project accomplishment reports](#) to the web.

d. Continued to implement peer review to ensure the technical and scientific integrity of Recovery Program activities.

e. Provided updates of [depletion consultations](#). Through December 2014, the Program has provided Endangered Species Act Compliance for more than 2,000 water projects which can deplete more than 2.85 million af of water from the upper basin.

f.

3. Monitored the FY 2015 Recovery Program annual budget and modified as necessary.

a. Developed annual funding table.

b. Monitored payment and expenditure of Section 7 funds in the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation account.

- d. Calculated FY 2016 annual agency contributions and depletion charge increases based on the 2014 CPI.
 - e. Assisted with preparations for non-Federal Program participants' Recovery Program trip to Washington, D.C. to brief key people in the Department of the Interior, the Office of Management and Budget, national environmental groups, Congressional delegations, and authorizing and appropriation committees. Prepared [Program Highlights briefing book](#), adding a feature "centerfold" highlighting the challenge of nonnative fish management.
4. Provided staff assistance to the [Implementation](#) and [Management](#) committees:
- a. Prepared and distributed agendas and related documents in coordination with committee chairs. Arranged meetings and conference calls. Continued using web conferencing where applicable.
 - b. Prepared and promptly distributed concise, accurate meeting summaries. Took notes at [Biology Committee meetings](#) and promptly provided drafts meeting summaries to the Committee chair. Coordinated presentations at Annual Researchers Meeting.
 - c. Maintained Recovery Program administrative record (primarily on [web](#)).
 - d. Provided staff assistance to committees as needed.
 - e. Recovery Program committee and related activities publicized on the Program listserv and posted on [Program web pages](#).
 - f. Attended Implementation, Management, and technical committee meetings.
 - g. Maintained Recovery Program [technical report library](#) and database. Library documents also served on [CWCBLaserFische website](#) (but need to bring up to date with reports from last five years).
 - h. Continued to maintain the fws-coloriver electronic mailing list for Program participants.
 - i. Continued to revise and maintain [Program website](#), but at a minimal level due to staff shortages. This should be rectified in FY 16 now that the Program Director's office has hired a new AO and has a full-time Information & Education Coordinator.
5. Directed and coordinated Service activities related to the Recovery Program.
- a. Recovery plan revision and species' status assessments underway.
 - b. Administered funding for Service Recovery Program activities.

- c. Conducted monthly Service conference call.
- d. Coordinated with and provided staff support to Service management on Recovery Program activities and issues. Drafted basis for [annual Sufficient Progress memo](#) and worked with Recovery Program participants and Service to finalize. Recommended process to maintain Program sufficient progress review while reducing workload of formal Service "sufficient progress" memo from annual to biennial.
- e. Provided annual Recovery Data Call information.

B. Fish and Wildlife Service

- 1. Provided technical expertise and recommendations to the Biology Committee as requested.
- 2. Participated in Biology Committee meetings.

VIII. Additional noteworthy observations: N/A.

IX. Recommendations: 1) Continue work with partners on review of Flaming Gorge flow recommendations; 2) continue emphasis on aggressive nonnative fish management, especially in preventing new introductions; 3) complete species status assessments (SSAs) for razorback sucker and humpback chub and PVA or SSA for Colorado pikeminnow; and 4) Hire database manager in 2016.

X. Project Status: On track and ongoing.

XI. FY 2015 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: \$1,102,617
- B. Funds Expended: In review.
- C. Difference: In review, but enough carry-over funds identified to allow reduction in FY16 funding for this project that will cover overall Program FY16 & 17 budget shortfall.
- D. Percent of the FY 2015 work completed, and projected costs to complete: All work completed.
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: N/A.

XII. Status of Data Submission (Where applicable): N/A

XIII. Signed: Thomas E. Chart 11/24/15
Principal Investigator Date