

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2017 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM
PROJECT NUMBER: 3

- I. Project Title:
- II. Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number(s):
R11PG40023
Project/Grant Period: Start date: 9/16/2011
End date: 9/30/2016
Reporting period end date: 9/30/16
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: 303/236-9885. FAX: 303/236-8739. 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 FY17 accomplishments include: continued work on the humpback chub species status assessment (expected conclusion late 2017/early 2018); work with Program partners to implement the [Larval Trigger Study Plan](#) and convene the Green River Evaluation and Assessment Team (GREAT) to evaluate efficacy of the Green River Flow Recommendations under the 2006 ROD; continued work with state partners to implement the [Upper Colorado River Basin nonnative and Invasive Aquatic Species Prevention and Control Strategy](#); refinement of the web-based [Species Tagging, Research and Monitoring System \(STReaMS\)](#) by our newly-hired database manager; accelerated and expanded outreach efforts; and completion of the second Report to Congress.
- 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 2017 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: Don Anderson for instream flow protection and fish passages/screens;; Kevin McAbee for nonnative fish management; Tom Czaplá for propagation/genetics and research & monitoring; Julie Stahli for database management; and 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 2017 included:

- Maintaining critical flows and operating fish screens and passages.
- Managing flows in the 15-Mile Reach via Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS), another CWCB/Ute Water Conservancy District temporary lease of Ute Water water from Ruedi Reservoir; and significant progress on Orchard Mesa Irrigation District (OMID) irrigation efficiency project.
- 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. Similar managed wetlands have recently been configured and are operating at Johnson and Sheppard bottoms on the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge.
- Continued work with the “GREAT” 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 to achieve the Program’s spring and base flow targets for the Gunnison River. Monitoring to evaluate effects of Aspinall operation as per the [Aspinall Study Plan](#) is ongoing.

Recovery Program participants provided cost-share using “Section 7” funds to install an automated gate in the Maybell Canal as part of a canal improvement project that included installation of a measuring flume at the canal headgate and check structures in the canal. Cost share funds were provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board through the Native Species Trust fund. These canal automations improve measuring and shepherding water released

from Elkhead Reservoir to improve fish habitat. The check structures will result in more efficient operation, reduction of tail water at the end of the ditch, and will increase flows in the lower Yampa River to benefit endangered fish.

- Recovery Program representatives and Reclamation met with the Green River Canal Company Board and agreed on a concept for fish exclusion. Weir wall and fish screen construction are scheduled for winter of 2018/2019.
- Program partners continued to implement [Upper Colorado River Basin Nonnative and Invasive Aquatic Species Prevention and Control Strategy](#). Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) conducted incentivized harvest tournaments at Elkhead and Ridgway reservoirs to enlist public support with removal of smallmouth bass and northern pike. Also at Elkhead Reservoir, CPW, CWCB, and the Recovery Program installed a spillway net on September 2016, which performed well through the 2017 runoff. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) replaced illegally introduced walleye at Red Fleet Reservoir with sterile walleye and maintained a temporary escapement screen. UDWR has contained walleye and smallmouth bass escaping via the spillway at Starvation Reservoir. A temporary barrier was installed in 2015. A permanent downstream screen in the stilling basin is planned for construction in fall of 2018.
- 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.
- Refinement of the web-based [Species Tagging, Research and Monitoring System \(STReAMS\)](#) with the hiring of a Database Manager in the Program Director's Office
- Continued work on Colorado pikeminnow population viability analysis.
- Nearing completion of humpback chub species status assessment.
- Continued work on razorback sucker species status assessment.
- Accelerated and expanded outreach efforts, including:
 - Developing a “Your Water – Your Fish – Your Future” message to be shared by the Program's water user partners in bill inserts, newsletters, and websites.
 - Extensive field visits to promote understanding and awareness of the endangered fish in communities in western Colorado and eastern Utah.
 - Working with the Children's Nature Museum to complete their permanent aquarium display of the endangered fishes at their new location in a mall in Grand Junction, Colorado (now receiving several thousand visitors a month). Continued planning with Palisade High School and FWS hatchery personnel for an aquaculture facility that will raise endangered fish in a river ecology class.
 - Coordinating production of 40 4' x 3' signs for installation along the Green and Colorado rivers in Utah to encourage anglers to release native fish and “catch and keep” detrimental invasive, nonnative species.
 - Producing new and attractive educational materials, including temporary tattoos, trading cards, lapel pins, paper and vinyl stickers, and “catch & keep” boat beverage holders for anglers.

- Completion of the second [Report to Congress](#).
2. Conducted Program planning and evaluation:
 - a. Reviewed and updated the RIPRAP and documented changes (including adding requested "2023 focus"); submitted recommended RIPRAP revisions to the technical, Management, and Implementation committees for review; published final, revised [RIPRAP](#) (with progress information included) to web.
 - b. Modified 2016-2017 biennial work plan as needed, drafted/revised/finalized FY18-19 work plan, and posted [scopes of work](#) to web.
 - c. Requested, revised as needed, and posted FY 2016 [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 2016, the Program had provided Endangered Species Act Compliance for more than 2,100 water projects which can deplete more than 2.86 million af of water from the upper basin.
 - f.
 3. Monitored the FY 2017 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 2018 annual agency contributions and depletion charge increases based on the 2015 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](#), continuing the 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 [CWCB LaserFische website](#) (but need to bring up to date with reports from recent years).
 - h. Continued to maintain the fws-coloriver electronic mailing list for Program participants. Electronic list improved and moved to a shared Google Sheet in FY17.
 - i. Continued to revise and maintain [Program website](#), but at a minimal level due to staff shortages. This improved in FY 17 with assistance from the Database Manager.
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](#) (new, abbreviated version) and worked with Recovery Program participants and Service to finalize. Implemented 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 and Service conference calls. Assisted with PDO-led outreach efforts (in addition to leading numerous outreach activities/visits).

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 & SSA for Colorado pikeminnow; and 4) Hire replacement to take Angela Kantola's place (retiring).

X. Project Status: On track and ongoing.

XI. FY 2017 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 FY18-19 funding for this and some other Service projects that will cover overall Program FY 18-19 budget shortfall.
- D. Percent of the FY 2017 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 11/14/17
Principal Investigator Date