

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY 2019 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM  
PROJECT NUMBER: C-6 Easement

I. Project Title: Colorado River Wildlife Management Area Easement and Weed Monitoring and Management

II. Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number: R18PG00023

Project/Grant Period: Start date: 10/01/2017  
End date: 09/30/2021  
Reporting period end date: 09/30/2019  
Is this the final report? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

III. Principal Investigators:  
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IV. Abstract:  
The Colorado River Wildlife Management Area (CRWMA) easement program began in the late 1990's with the intent of acquiring flood easements on floodplains within the upper Colorado River system that would function as important habitat for the four Colorado River endangered fish species. The purpose of the easements is to allow floodplains to flood and function as naturally as possible. Easements were acquired through the 2000's and were turned over to the National Wildlife Refuge System for management by the Ouray and Browns Park National Wildlife Refuges, which are part of the Lower Green River NWR Complex (Complex). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not have an ownership interest in many of these easements. This project requires annual inspections and partnerships with the landowners and their land, which requires annual funding of about \$50,000. When and where possible the Complex will try to enhance these properties through partnerships and additional project funds. These funds are used for administration and enforcement of the easements to ensure that the landowners are abiding by the easement language.

V. Study Schedule: Annual, ongoing

VI. Relationship to RIPRAP:

-GREEN RIVER ACTION PLAN: MAINSTEM ACTIVITY II.  
RESTORE HABITAT  
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.

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-COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN: GUNNISON RIVER ACTIVITY II.  
RESTORE HABITAT

VII. Accomplishment of FY 2019 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

The Complex contacted landowners to prepare them for site inspections and reiterated easement obligations. Landowners were given the opportunity to inform the Complex of any potential issues within their easement. Easement sites were inspected via satellite imagery, ground transportation and on foot. We evaluated the easement areas and confirmed that there were no violations of easement conditions.

CRWMA work in FY 2019 was handled by permanent and term staff at Ouray and Browns Park NWRs.

Other accomplishments included:

- Updates to CRWMA easement monitoring notebook.
- Review of old easement files and maps to determine future information needs, especially as it relates to potential oil and gas development.
- Contacts with private landowners to investigate the possibility of habitat restoration efforts on additional parcels (invasive plant control, possible plantings of native riparian plants).
- Administrative maps and descriptions of the easements were reviewed.
- Participated in Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program (Recovery Program) and Flaming Gorge Technical Working group conference calls.
- Worked with Recovery Program staff to develop/revise new Scope of Work (revised format).
- Provided tour for PMB/OMB staff in cooperation with Ouray NFH and Recovery Program staff. Discussions centered on floodplain management, hatchery operations and cooperative efforts with internal and external partners.
- Worked with NPS staff to discuss details of the proposed Green River monitoring plan (evaluate channel & vegetation effects of Flaming Gorge experimental releases for endangered fish).
- Recruited and filled a term GS-6/7 Biological Technician to assist with CRWMA work.
- Continued communications with Recovery Program staff to facilitate refuge water management benefitting endangered fish species (ex. OCW rehab work).
- Monitored flood flows and redirected water to minimize damage to refuge infrastructure.
- Opened and closed structures to entrain larval RZBs within management units.

VIII. Additional noteworthy observations: N/A

IX. Recommendations:

In FY 2020 it is recommended this project continue to be funded in order to maintain the

