

I. **Project Title:** FR-168 White River Management Plan

II. **Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number(s):** N/A

III. **Principal Investigator(s):**

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IV. **Abstract:** Provide and protect flows for endangered fish in the White River by assessing species needs, evaluating historic flows and projected future flows under future water development scenarios, updating flow recommendations, and developing a river management plan that establishes satisfactory offsets to the impacts associated with current and future flow depletions.

V. **Study Schedule:** 2012 – 2021

VI. **Relationship to RIPRAP:**

I. PROVIDE AND PROTECT INSTREAM FLOWS (HABITAT MANAGEMENT)

I.B.3. Develop and implement a White River Management Plan.

I.B.3.a. Conduct programmatic Section 7 and NEPA compliance on recovery actions and a level of future water demand.

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

Development of a White River Management Plan has progressed, including the completion of modeling scenarios to evaluate historic hydrology and future depletions. However the final plan is behind the original schedules anticipated in 2013 when this planning process was initiated. In FY2019, timing allowed for important basin water planning study efforts to mature, including: Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District's (RBWCD's) Wolf Creek Reservoir Preliminary Permitting Plan (originally scheduled for completion December 2019), and the Ute Uintah and Ouray Tribe's Water Development Plan (originally scheduled for completion in a similar timeframe). These efforts will assist in defining and characterizing future water development needs and options in the White River basin.

Major accomplishments in FY 2019 included:

- Coordination with the White River Planning Team through multiple teleconference meetings to:
 - Review the status of the RBWCD and Ute Tribe water development studies;
 - Begin determining amounts and categories of depletions associated with water development to be evaluated and potentially provided with Endangered Species Act compliance via a programmatic biological option for the White River basin;
 - Assist in the development of the Colorado Water Conservation Board's (CWCB) request for proposals for assistance in developing a White River Management Plan; and
 - Assist with the review of proposals and the selection of a preferred consultant.
- Substantial revisions made to the document '*Review of Fish Studies with Initial Flow Recommendations for Endangered Fishes of the White River, Colorado and Utah*', in response to comments received from Utah Division of Water Rights, the Nature Conservancy, the RBWCD, the CWCB, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Colorado River District, and a consultant representing the upper Colorado River basin water users. (A webinar was held in October 2019 to walk through and discuss these revisions.)
- CWCB development and dissemination of an RFP seeking contractors' assistance with the development of a White River Management Plan (June 2019); Review and evaluation of RFP responses by CWCB together with the White River Planning Team (with a final contractor selection made in October 2019).

VIII. **Additional noteworthy observations:**

A contractor was selected by the CWCB and members of the White River Planning Team to develop the White River Management Plan and to conduct associated National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance and documentation. The CWCB is in the process of finalizing the scope of work and contracting with the selected consultant.

IX. **Recommendations:** The Program Director's Office (PDO) should seek Management Committee approval of the draft *Interim Flow Recommendations* in early 2020. [Note: this was accomplished on 12/18/2019]. The CWCB and the White River Planning Team should proceed with development of the White River Management Plan and associated NEPA compliance in 2020. In early 2020, the White River Planning Team should seek consensus on an initial future depletion scenario to be modeled and evaluated by the consultant for purposes of developing that Plan.

X. **Project Status:**

In 2019, remaining FR-168 tasks and target dates were provisionally updated as shown in the following table.

**White River Management Plan and PBO
Draft Schedule of Tasks
December 2019**

Task	Tentative Schedule	Description	Responsibility
Develop current hydrology	Completed	Generate daily current flows by extending StateMod to the Watson gage; Re-state all flow statistics and daily hydrographs for the baseline; Consult with Utah on the extension of StateMod to the Green River to model future demands, including energy and tribal use, in Utah.	Contractor, working with planning team
Model selected future demand scenarios	Completed	Contractor models selected future demand scenarios (including storage for future demands) and identifies impacts on the preliminary flow targets. Additional modeling to support Management Plan development are currently being determined with assistance of the planning Team).	Contractor, Planning WRWG PDO, Team,
Develop future demand scenarios	Completed	PDO tabulates and reviews future demands in CO and UT, including scenarios and storage developed by the Yampa/White BRT for future demands. High and low scenarios that represent a range of reasonable future demands selected by the Planning Team in consultation with the WRWG and USFWS.	PDO, WRWG, USFWS, State of Colorado, State of Utah, Ute Mountain Tribe.
Determine future scenario for Management Plan	January 2020	Agree on current and future water demand scenario to be incorporated into White River Management Plan	PDO, White River Planning Team, and other basin interests
Finalize draft flow recommendations report	January 2020 (report approved by BC and WAC)	This document reviews studies documenting the use of the White River by endangered and other native fish. It provides interim	PDO and Recovery Program committees

	December 2019)	flow recommendations for the lower White River derived from a review of past studies, and an analysis of the current White River flow regime	
Future Water Demand Model Results Incorporation	Spring 2020	Orientation Meeting	Consulting Team and USFWS, CWCB, Planning Team
		Understand the current and future water demand scenarios as developed by Wilson Water Group and by the White River Planning Team.	Consulting Team and Wilson Water Group, with oversight from the Planning Team
		Incorporate modeling results, to be provided to consultant, into the Management Plan.	Consulting Team, working with Wilson Water Group, with oversight from the Planning Team
		Conduct a literature search and evaluate the implications of the latest climate research on relevant hydrology and habitat conditions.	Consulting Team, working with USFWS and CWCB
		Review the Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan Modeling Phase 3 Final Report, the Colorado Water Conservation Board's 2019 Technical Update to the Colorado Water Plan, and the Colorado River Water Availability Study to help inform an evaluation of climate change impacts.	
		Review and approve scenario analysis with future water demands and flow recommendations.	Planning Team, WRWG, and Wilson Water Group
Management Plan Development	Summer/Fall 2020	Write a draft Management Plan including a suite of recovery actions needed to offset depletion effects.	Consulting Team (Planning Team, working with USFWS, will review and comment on draft plan)
		Evaluate and recommend management actions for the Recovery Program, including	Consulting Team (Planning Team in coordination with

		developing a timeframe.	Recovery Program)
		Distribute draft Management Plan and conduct public meetings with public, Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable, Utah, and Ute Tribe, etc. to communicate content of the draft Management Plan; document results of public meetings and public input.	Consulting Team, working with USFWS
	Winter 2020-21	Based on public input, revise the draft plan for review by CWCB, PDO, Planning Team, and WRWG; following review, finalize Management Plan, including the biological assessment.	Consulting Team
NEPA Compliance	Summer/Fall 2020	Develop a draft cooperative agreement framework. Initiate NEPA compliance (USFWS drafts PBO concurrently)	Consulting Team
	Summer 2021?	Complete NEPA compliance (USFWS completes PBO, sign cooperative agreement)	Consulting Team
Project Management	2020-2021	Program Management	Consulting team coordinating with Planning Team and CWCB

The White River Planning Team currently consists of Tom Pitts for all water users, Tom Chart, Don Anderson and Tom Econopouly for the PDO, Michelle Garrison and Jojo La for the CWCB, James Greer for Utah Division of Water Rights, Nancy Smith and Jennifer Wellman for TNC, and Alden Vanden Brink, District Manager Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District, and Duane Moss for the Uintah/Ouray Ute Indian Tribe.

The White River Work Group now consists of the Yampa/White BRT, including the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District, the Uintah/Ouray Ute Indian Tribe, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Uintah Water Conservancy District, Utah Division of Water Resources.

The BC, WAC, and MC refer to, respectively, the Biology Committee, Water Acquisition Committee and Management Committee for the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

The PDO refers to the Program Directors Office, which runs the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program and is staffed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The USFWS refers to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is responsible for authoring the preliminary flow targets, the final draft flow recommendations report, and the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the White River Basin. The PDO will coordinate USFWS representation (e.g. USFWS personnel who serve as authors of the flow recommendations and / or personnel from Ecological Services (UT and CO)) and input throughout this process. In many instances the PDO will lead these USFWS tasks.

XI. FY 2019 Budget Status:

- A. Funds provided: The State legislature approved \$250K for the White River Plan from the Species Conservation Trust Fund (HB 13-1283). No Program funds are being provided.
- B. Funds Expended: \$48,402.50
- C. Difference: \$201,597.50
- D. Percent of the FY 2019 work completed: N/A
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: N/A

XII. Status of Data Submission: N/A

XIII. Signed:	<u>Don Anderson</u>	<u>12/19/2019</u>
	Principal Investigator	Date
Signed:	<u>Jojo La</u>	<u>12/19/2019</u>
	Principal Investigator	Date
Signed:	<u>Michelle Garrison</u>	<u>12/19/2019</u>
	Principal Investigator	Date
Signed:	<u>Tom Econopouly</u>	<u>12/19/2019</u>
	Principal Investigator	Date