

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2004 ANNUAL REPORT**

PROJECT NUMBER: PIP 12K (C-9, 113, 114)

I. Project Title: Public Involvement for Yampa River, Gunnison River and other Tributary Basins

II. Principal Investigator:

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III. Project Summary:

The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement management plans for the Yampa River and other significant tributaries of the Upper Colorado River Basin. The purpose of these management plans is to provide and/or protect instream flows and other habitat needed to maintain and recover the endangered fishes while water continues to be depleted for existing and foreseeable future human needs. Each plan serves as the basis for development of a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO). This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is intended to engage stakeholders in the planning process for the purpose of identifying and focusing significant issues for consideration in formulating and evaluating alternative actions. This PIP has the following objectives:

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basinwide management plan and PBO.
- To enhance an appreciation by the public and key stakeholders for the uniqueness of their basin, its value to the endangered fish and other native species.
- To enhance the image of the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Recovery Program as credible entities in the eyes of the public and key stakeholders.
- To increase support within water-user, scientific and environmental communities to effectively implement the management plans.

IV. Study Schedule:

Initial year: FY 2002
Final year: Ongoing

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:
VI.C. Plan and implement information and education and public involvement activities for all significant Recovery Program actions (e.g presentations, public meetings, public involvement training, etc.).

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2004 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tactic: Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed.

Status: The final *Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin* (Yampa Plan; Roehm 2004) and its accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) were completed in September 2004, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued in October 2004. Written and oral comments received from stakeholders and other interested parties in response to the October 2003 draft of the Yampa Plan were addressed in preparing the final documents. A draft PBO was completed in September 2004; the final PBO was completed in early FY 2005. Having satisfied both ESA and NEPA requirements, the Service intends to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the Colorado River Water Conservation District (River District) and the states of Colorado and Wyoming to implement the Yampa Plan.

The Recovery Program participated in meetings and conference calls related to development of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Aspinall Unit on the Gunnison River and reviewed the draft EIS for Flaming Gorge Dam on the Green River. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has taken the lead on public outreach efforts for these projects with limited participation by Recovery Program staff.

Tactic: Disseminate and/or present information about the Recovery Program to affected interest groups and stakeholders. Write and/or disseminate news releases, newsletter articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on the purpose, activities, accomplishments and status of basinwide planning processes, including NEPA/ESA compliance.

Status: In FY 2004, the stage of completion of the Yampa Plan did not warrant further outreach efforts other than to announce completion of the project. Reclamation is handling dissemination of information related to the draft Aspinall Unit EIS and Flaming Gorge Dam EIS.

Tactic: Investigate opportunities to educate school children about the local riverine ecosystem and its importance to the endangered fish through the River Watch program, Project WILD, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) at Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs.

Status: TNC's education specialist at Carpenter Ranch continued to work with local schools to educate students about endangered and nonnative fish issues and the Yampa River ecosystem.

Tactic: Attend relevant meetings of Yampa River Basin Partnership (YRBP), Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Water Congress, River District, Colorado Division of Wildlife Anglers' Roundtables, Statewide Water Supply Initiative and other stakeholder groups. Report on the status of planning processes and identify concerns. Address concerns in a timely and straightforward manner.

Status: Attended meetings of the Yampa River Basin Partnership, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District Board to provide progress reports on the Yampa Plan and PBO.

VII. Recommendations: The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with local stakeholders to ensure their needs and concerns are adequately addressed throughout the planning process. The Recovery Program should also support Reclamation's outreach efforts related to the development of EIS's for the Aspinall Unit and Flaming Gorge Dam operations.

VIII. Project Status: Ongoing

IX. FY 2004 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: \$1,000 (\$500 from FY 2003)
- B. Funds Expended: \$ -0-
- C. Difference: \$1,000 (carry forward to FY 2005)
- D. Percent of the FY 2004 work completed: 100%
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$.

X. Status of Data Submission (Where applicable): n/a

XI. Signed: Debbie Felker December 9, 2004
Information & Education Date
Coordinator