

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY-2005 ANNUAL REPORT**

Project No.: PIP 12L

I. Project title: Communications/Public Involvement Plan for Nonnative Fish Management

II. Principal investigator:

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III. Project summary:

In 2005, the Recovery Program continued management actions to minimize or remove the threat of nonnative fishes to survival of the endangered fishes as described in the recovery goals. Efforts expanded from 2004 to include additional river sections, work crews and removal trips. From April through October, biologists worked in 565 miles of the Colorado, Yampa, Green, and Duschesne rivers in the states of Colorado and Utah. Depending on the river reach, they targeted smallmouth bass and/or northern pike for removal and relocation to area fishing ponds wherever appropriate and practical.

With the exception of Yampa Canyon, where effective removal has been demonstrated, channel catfish work was postponed until sampling efficiency can be improved. The Recovery Program prepared and implemented a comprehensive communications plan to raise public awareness of the purpose and nature of nonnative fish management.

In an effort to evaluate the success of past outreach efforts, the I & E Coordinator conducted phone interviews with 13 principal investigators and participating agency personnel, and compiled their comments into a summary report. This effort highlighted the important role these individuals play in implementing outreach efforts because these individuals have the most interaction with members of the public in areas where the work occurs. Recovery Program staff and members of the I&E Committee used the information they provided to develop and implement the strategic communication plan for FY 2005.

IV. Study Schedule:

Initial year: 2003

Final year: Duration of Recovery Program.

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:

**VI. INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR THE
ENDANGERED FISHES AND THE RECOVERY PROGRAM.**

Accomplishment of FY 2005 objectives and tasks:

Tactic: Maintain Action Planning Teams

Status: Three communication teams were formed in FY 2003 -- two for Colorado and one for Utah. The teams represent agencies conducting nonnative fish management actions. The Yampa River Basin Partnership is involved with the Action Planning Team for the Yampa River. The Recovery Program continues to provide team members with all written outreach materials and asks them to distribute them to the appropriate people in their respective organization.

The Nonnative Fish Coordinator provided weekly trip reports to agencies represented on the Action Planning Teams to make sure they had the most up-to-date information about field work activities in the event they received inquiries from the public or the news media.

Tactic: Develop and Promote Key Messages

Status: Key messages were developed and approved by Recovery Program partners and the action planning teams in FY 2003. These messages were reviewed for accuracy in FY 2005 and remain the basis of all communication.

Tactic: Maintain Active Communication with Members of Congress and Their Staffs (Local and D.C.) and Local Elected Officials

Status: A news release and updated questions/answers and fact sheets were prepared and distributed in advance of field activities to key members of congress, local sheriffs and county commissioners in communities where the majority of work occurred.

Tactic: Actively Seek News Media Coverage of Nonnative Fish Management Actions and Public Meetings

Status: A concerted effort was made to obtain news media coverage both before and during field activities.

Tactic: Identify and Seek Permission from Landowners to Access Their Property as Part of Recovery Actions
Status: Principal investigators sought permission on an as-needed basis.

Tactic: Establish Local Spokeperson(s)
Status: Key people from the Recovery Program and agencies conducting the field work were identified to address news media inquiries. Their names and contact information was provided on all fact sheets and in the question/answer handouts.

Tactic: Train Appropriate Staff/Volunteers Who Might Receive Questions from the Public and Congressional Staff
Status: The Recovery Program staff asked agencies involved with the nonnative fish management actions to make sure their staff and volunteers were briefed about the nature of the work and who to direct inquiries to. To the best of our knowledge, this took place.

Tactic: Participate in Angler Roundtables and/or Public Meetings
Status: Prior to the field season, Action Planning Team members were contacted to discuss whether or not the upcoming nonnative fish management efforts warranted hosting public meetings. Representatives polled unanimously agreed that the nature of the planned work had not changed significantly enough from the previous year to warrant hosting informational meetings. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources presented updated information at its Regional Advisory Council meetings before the field season began.

Tactic: Post Information on Agency Websites
Status: The Recovery Program posted a news release, questions/answers and fact sheets on its public website.

Tactic: Distribute Information to Fishing and River Guides/Sporting Goods Stores
Status: This did not occur in FY 2004, and was pursued in FY 2005. Action Planning Team members and principal investigators were asked their advice about the best way to provide information through sporting goods stores. Upon their recommendation, this strategy did not occur due to concerns about upsetting anglers who are opposed to this project. It was believed that other strategies mentioned in this plan would accomplish the goal of informing the public and other target audiences about planned actions. The Recovery Program produced a bookmark-size handout explaining the nature of the work and providing contact persons. This was distributed by park rangers in Dinosaur National Monument along with boat permits. Fish and Wildlife Service staff also distributed to boaters they met during the course of their work. Kevin Christopherson, with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, distributed information about the endangered fish, the Recovery Program, and nonnative fish management

to about 40 river guides with whom he met prior to the beginning of the work.

Tactic: Publish Articles in Agency Publications

Status: Information about nonnative fish management was included in the *Program Highlights 2004-2005* document and the Recovery Program's Winter 04 newsletter.

VII. Recommendations: In FY 2006, it is imperative that proactive communication efforts continue and that target audiences are well informed of nonnative fish management activities before they occur. The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with members of the Action Planning Teams and the principal investigators – both for advice on actions to occur and for help implementing the actions. The Recovery Program should continue to seek support from Recovery Program partner agencies to help with outreach efforts, particularly in the areas of publishing articles in agency publications, submitting guest editorials to newspapers as appropriate, and participating in any public meetings that may be held.

VIII. Project Status: On-track and ongoing.

IX. FY 05 Budget:

A. Funds provided: \$2,000

B. Funds Expended: \$ 100

C. Difference: \$1,900 (will carry forward to FY 2006)

D. Percent of FY 05 work completed and projected costs to complete: 100%, none

E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: Not applicable.

X. Status of Data Submission: Not applicable.

XI. Signed: Debbie Felker
Information & Education Coordinator

December 9, 2005
Date