

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY-2004 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 2004, the Recovery Program conducted its second year of an experimental effort to identify management actions to minimize or remove the threat of nonnative fishes to survival of the endangered fishes as described in the recovery goals. The project spanned 480 miles of rivers in two states and targeted smallmouth bass and northern pike for removal. Where appropriate and practical, biologists transferred fish from the river to local ponds and reservoirs that were publicly accessible to anglers. Although channel catfish were included in last year's research effort, capture methods proved inadequate for effective removal. With the exception of Yampa Canyon where effective removal has been demonstrated, channel catfish 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.

**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 2004 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 State of Utah developed and implemented its own communications plan to assist with outreach efforts.

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 2004 and remain the basis of all communication. In spring 2004, Recovery Program partners adopted a nonnative fish management policy. This policy covers many issues, including communication. It states that, “Recovery Program partners agree to support and actively participate in public communication and involvement.” In reference to the nonnative fish management communication plan, the policy further states that, “Implementation of this plan will assure that the public understands what is being done and why, and has confidence that the process is driven by science and is clear, open, and honest.”

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. One page of this year’s *Program Highlights* briefing book was dedicated to this subject and Program Partners discussed this topic with members of Congress and their staff in Washington, D.C., during their annual briefing trip in March. CDOW Biologist Tom Nesler delivered a powerpoint presentation at the Congressional Staff Appreciation luncheon held during that trip. A follow-up letter was sent from Bob Muth to key members of Congress with copies of two news articles that had appeared on this issue.

- Tactic: Actively Seek News Media Coverage of Nonnative Fish Management Actions and Public Meetings  
Status: The State of Utah and the I&E Coordinator made a concerted effort to obtain news media coverage both before and during field activities. Reporters were invited to accompany biologists as they performed the work. A reporter from *The Craig Daily Press* accompanied a Fish & Wildlife Service crew on the Yampa River. This resulted in a positive front-page article in that paper. *The Denver Post* Outdoor Writer Charlie Meyers wrote a less favorable column. After the column appeared, the I&E coordinator made a follow-up phone call and invited him to go out on the river with biologists next year. For the most part, news media coverage was accurate, fair and balanced. Proactive efforts for more coverage will continue.
- 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.
- Tactic: Train Appropriate Staff/Volunteers Who Might Receive Questions from the Public and Congressional Staff  
Status: To the best of our knowledge, agencies provided questions/answers and fact sheets to staff.
- 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. In addition, catfish removal, which generated the most public concern in 2003, was postponed in 2004. The decision was made not to hold public meetings in Colorado, but to actively pursue news media stories and to notify elected officials as stated previously. 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, however, it will be pursued for FY 2005. Action Planning Team members will be asked for recommendations on more local outlets to provide informational materials for the public regarding nonnative fish management activities. This may include providing more information to the Action Planning Team members themselves, or providing something to guides and sporting goods stores.

Tactic: Publish Articles in Agency Publications

Status: The Recovery Program's Winter 04 newsletter featured an article written by Kim Giffin of the Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch highlighting work that occurred on the Yampa River. A sidebar story addressed the entire project.

**VII.** Recommendations: In FY 2005, it is imperative that proactive communication efforts continue and that target audiences are well informed of nonnative fish management activities before they take place. The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with members of the Action Planning Teams – 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 04 Budget:

- A. Funds provided: \$5,000
- B. Funds Expended: \$ -0-
- C. Difference: \$5,000 (will carry forward to FY 2005)
- D. Percent of FY 04 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 2, 2004  
Date