

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY-2006 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 2006, 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 2005 to include additional river sections and removal trips. Biologists worked on 740 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 appropriate area fishing ponds.

Channel catfish research occurred only in Yampa Canyon, where removal efforts have previously been effective. As in the past, the Recovery Program prepared and implemented a comprehensive communications plan to raise public awareness of the purpose and nature of nonnative fish management. The plan was reviewed at the Biology Committee meeting on April 6 in Grand Junction. Members of the I & E Committee participated in this meeting.

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.

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2006 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

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 was involved with the Action Planning Team for the Yampa River. These teams have not been convened to meet in person since FY 2003, however 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. In addition, the Recovery Program asked team members to provide feedback re: public reaction to nonnative fish management actions.

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 and updated for accuracy in FY 2006 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. A lengthy article about work in the Yampa River appeared in the Steamboat Pilot/Today. Short articles appeared in various publications announcing facts from the news release. An article also appeared following a public meeting held in Craig on August 6.

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 were 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. The nonnative fish coordinator attended an Area 6 CDOW meeting in June in Meeker where this issue was discussed.
- Tactic: Participate in Angler Roundtables and/or Public Meetings
Status: The Colorado Division of Wildlife worked with the Recovery Program to host a public meeting in Craig, Colorado. The meeting was held August 7 at the Holiday Inn. About 24 members of the public attended. The meeting format included presentations from Recovery Program partners who explained why their respective organization supports nonnative fish management action. The audience was courteous and respectful to presenters. Most of the comments and questions related to when sportfishing would resume at Elkhead Reservoir and if trout would become a focus of research efforts.
- 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 in FY 2005 or FY 2006 due to concerns about upsetting anglers who opposed 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.

Tactic: Work with Bureau of Land Management and Dinosaur National Monument staff to prepare appropriate materials that explain this project for inclusion with boat permit distribution.

Status: The Recovery Program continued to work with Dinosaur National Monument staff to distribute a bookmark-size handout with boat permits. The handout explains the nature of the work and provides contact information. Fish and Wildlife Service and monument staff report improved relationships with boaters as a result of this effort. This effort did not occur with BLM staff and should be pursued in FY 2007.

Tactic: Publish Articles in Agency Publications

Status: Information about nonnative fish management was included in the *Program Highlights 2005-2006* document and the Recovery Program's Winter 05 newsletter.

VII. Recommendations: In FY 2007, proactive communication efforts should continue in an effort to ensure that target audiences are well informed of nonnative fish management activities before they occur. The Recovery Program should continue active communication with members of the Action Planning Teams. The Recovery Program should continue to seek feedback from principal investigators to try to gauge public reaction of research efforts and to identify ways to improve communication with target audiences. The Recovery Program should continue to seek support from Recovery Program partner agencies to help with outreach efforts, particularly in the areas of participating in public meetings and publishing articles in agency publications. Contact should be made with the BLM re: including communication materials with boat permits. Public meetings should be held as needed.

VIII. Project Status: On-track and ongoing.

IX. FY 06 Budget:

- A. Funds provided: \$2,000
- B. Funds Expended: \$2,000
- C. Difference: \$ - 0-
- D. Percent of FY 06 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

January 5, 2007
Date