

Grand Junction
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Interior Region 7



Colorado River at Palisade, Colorado

Photo by J.J. Gross, Grand Junction, CO

Highlights - April, 2020

- **Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit (Ouray NFH-GVU)**
 - April Activities:
 - Razorback Sucker spawn a big success
 - Production Bonytail and Razorback Sucker moved to outdoor grow-out facility
 - Information: Timeline of a hatchery Razorback Sucker
- **Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO)**
 - Grand Junction FWCO March draft reports completed/reviewed
 - Grand Junction FWCO coordination with partners update

April, 2020

Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit

April Activities: Yearly Razorback Sucker spawning success



Ouray NFH-GVU had a successful spawn of Razorback Sucker at the Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility (HCNFF) in Fruita, Colorado. Ponds holding the 2014, 2015, and 2016 year-class Razorback Sucker broodstock were drained and fish, which are now four to six years old, were separated into various holding tanks. Their Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags were scanned to confirm the family genetic lineage and the fish were injected with a spawning stimulant (Human Chorionic Gonadotropin) for a period of three days to help induce reproduction. Crews then met on April 22 to spawn these endangered fish. Fifteen unique family lots were collected, which helps to preserve the genetic diversity of our future hatchery broodstock lineage as well as current production fish. An estimated total of 500,000 eggs were acquired and transported to the 24 Road indoor recirculating facility where they began to incubate in “McDonald style jars” for a period of 5-7 days (temperature dependent). April 28, they began to hatch with a final hatch rate of 63% equating to roughly 315,000 newly hatched Razorback Sucker larvae. These endangered fish will be stocked a year-and-a-half later (Fall 2021) and will be approximately 14”-16”. Their new residence will be in the Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan and Animas rivers which have had populations of these fish for over 5 million years. A large mature female Razorback Sucker may lay as many as 200,000 eggs.



Ouray NFH-GVU crew draining a pond at HCNFF that holds Razorback Sucker broodstock

A pond holding Razorback Sucker broodstock being drained and fish transported to the spawning building. (photo on top left).

Andrew Disch and Nathan Vargas scanning the Razorback Sucker broodstock for PIT tags and checking their family lineage (photo on bottom left).

Brian Scheer and Haden VanWinkle injecting a spawning stimulant into Razorback Sucker broodstock to help induce spawning (photo on bottom right).

Photos by USFWS staff



Andrew Disch and Nathan Vargas scanning Razorback Sucker broodstock for PIT tags to confirm family lineage



Brian Scheer and Haden VanWinkle injecting a spawning stimulant into Razorback Sucker broodstock

April, 2020

Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit

April Activities: Yearly Razorback Sucker Spawning success
(continued)

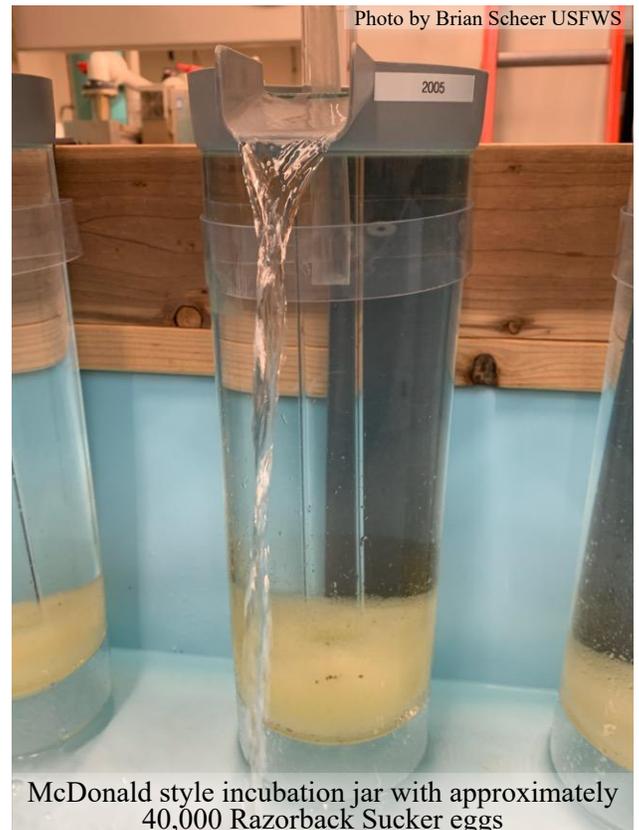
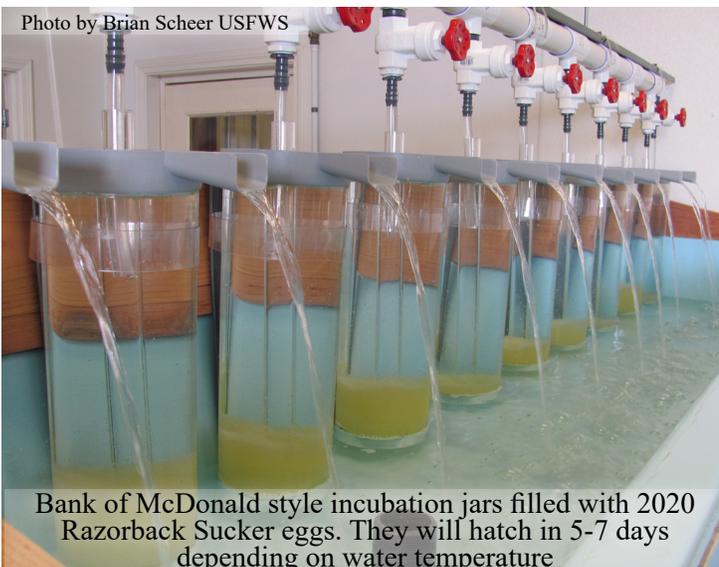
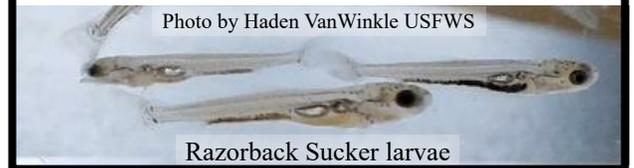


There are many ways to spawn a hatchery fish. Ouray NFH-GVU has great success expressing the eggs and milt directly into a Ziplock bag where fertilization occurs

(photos on top and middle left).

The bags of eggs are then transported to 24 Rd. Hatchery where they incubate for 5-7 days (dependent on water temperature) in McDonald style hatching jars before hatching, (photos on bottom left and right).

[*Click here to view a video of the spawning procedure at Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility*](#)



April, 2020

Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit

April Activities: Production Bonytail and Razorback Sucker moved from indoor facility to outdoor grow-out facility



Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit (Ouray NFH-GVU) staff moved the 2020 production Bonytail and Razorback Sucker (2019 year class) from the 24 Road indoor recirculating facility, to the Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility (HCNFF) outdoor grow-out pond facility for spring through fall, after which, they will be released into the Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan and Animas rivers.

When released into the wild, these endangered fish are roughly one-and-a-half years old and 10"-14". Ouray NFH-GVU will typically overwinter the fish in the 24 Road Hatchery facility, which is indoors, where they can continue feeding and growing in optimum controlled conditions. If left to over-winter in the HCNFF outdoor grow-out ponds, feeding and growth for these endangered animals would be minimal or non-existent due to the cold temperatures.



Photo by Brian Scheer USFWS



Photo by Andrew Disch USFWS

Haden VanWinkle gathering the 2020 production Bonytail at 24 Road Hatchery in Grand Junction, Colorado (photo top left), and preparing them for their transport to Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility in Fruita, Colorado (photos on right). These fish will be housed at HCNFF until being stocked into the Colorado River near Grand Junction in late spring/early summer.



Photo by Dale Ryden USFWS

Horsethief Canyon Native Fish Facility. Fruita, Colorado

April, 2020

Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit

Information: Timeline for a hatchery Razorback Sucker



Razorback Sucker grown at Ouray NFH-GVU are typically one-and-a-half years old before being deployed into the Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan and Animas rivers. In order to maximize growth of these endangered fish, captive Razorback Sucker stay outdoor for warmer months and indoors for colder months where temperatures can be manipulated. Here is a timeline of a hatchery Razorback Sucker grown at Ouray NFH-GVU. Photos by USFWS staff



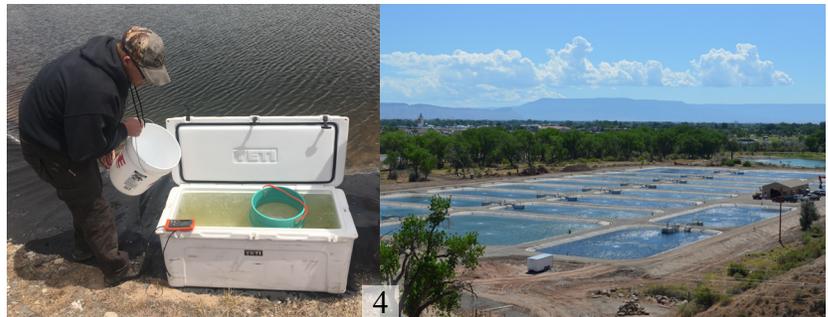
1 Captive Razorback Sucker broodstock are spawned in mid April when the photoperiod of the sun starts to lengthen and pond water temperatures starts to warm which naturally triggers a reproductive response.



2 After spawning at HCNFF, eggs are transported to the 24 Road indoor facility where they incubate for 5-7 days (depending on water temperature) until hatching.



3 Once hatched, the larval Razorback Sucker are held at the 24 Road Hatchery indoor facility until fish "swim up" and are actively feeding.



4 After the larval Razorback Sucker are actively up and feeding, they are transported to the HCNFF outdoor facility where they will be able to consume a natural, diverse planktonic diet, along with vitamin packed hatchery feed until late fall. The fish show very rapid growth during these warm months.



5 Once late fall comes, these half-year old fish are brought back indoors to the 24 Road Hatchery where they can feed and grow all winter long in a controlled environment.



6 Over winter and at the indoor facility, the rapidly growing Razorback Sucker get a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag inserted. Tagging occurs specifically during this time period as it gives hatchery staff an ample chance to monitor any incidental tagging mortality or slipped tags.

April, 2020

Ouray National Fish Hatchery, Grand Valley Unit

**Information: Timeline for a hatchery Razorback Sucker
(Continued)**



Once spring arises and pond temperatures warm up, the Razorback Sucker are transported back to HCNFF where they will stay, actively feeding, until being stocked out into the wild during late summer/fall.



Late summer/fall, these endangered fish are now 12"-16" long, a year-and-a-half old and very robust. The pond is drained, PIT tags are scanned and fish are measured before being gently loaded onto the fish transportation vehicle.



A crane lowers a water tank to gently move the fish from the pond kettle to the transportation vehicle. Every effort is taken to lower the stress of these animals before transportation begins.



The fish transportation truck is a large 4x4 vehicle that can generally drive right to waters edge. It has two 400 gallon insulated tanks with oxygenated water. Hatchery staff receive very specific guidance from biologists on where and when to deploy the animals to have the greatest benefit for their long-term survival.



Once at the stocking site on either the Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan or Animas rivers, these endangered fish are finally released into the wild. Their permanent internal PIT tag allows biologists to track them throughout their entire life, which might be 40 years or longer

March, 2020

*Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office:
Draft reports completed and/or reviewed*



**UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM FINAL DRAFT REPORT
EVALUATION**

PEER REVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES: Peer reviewers and technical committee members are responsible for providing primarily a scientific review of the report. Comments should be submitted electronically via this evaluation form directly to the principal investigator (PI), with a cc: to members of the appropriate technical committee(s) and interested parties and the appropriate coordinator in the Program Director's office. If you provide a marked-up draft in addition to your electronic comments, the mark-up only needs to go to the PI. However, please include all substantive comments on this electronically submitted evaluation form, so that those are available to the appropriate technical committee(s) and Program Director's office.

Thank you.

PEER REVIEWER CHECKLIST:

I received a copy of the report evaluation form.

I received a copy of the project's most recent approved scope of work.

I have addressed the questions on the report evaluation form.

I am sending comments electronically:

to the PI with copies:

to the appropriate coordinator in Program Director's office, and

to the appropriate technical committee(s) members and interested parties.

REPORT TITLE: Population Structure, Abundance and Recruitment of Colorado Pikeminnow of the Upper Colorado River, 1991-2015

AUTHORS: Darek S. Elverud, Douglas B. Osmundson and Gary C. White

PROJECT NUMBER: 127

RATING SUMMARY: (check one)

Accept Accept after minor revision Reconsider after major revision Reject

Reviewed by Travis Francis

**Overwinter survival and spatial distribution of the
wild Razorback Sucker in the San Juan River 2019**

Principal Investigator:

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San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program
Project No. 19b

Submitted by Benjamin Schleicher

Photo by Josh Terrell, Sacramento, CA

April, 2020

*Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office:
Coordination activities with partners*



4/21/2020:

Ouray NFH-GVU corresponded with School District 51 staff to coordinate a plan for turning on the new recirculating hatchery system at Palisade High School once the COVID-19 lock-down ends

4/22/2020:

FWCO biologists coordinated with two Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists regarding:

- 1) Creating migratory bird habitat at Connected Lakes State Park near the Colorado and Gunnison rivers confluence.
- 2) Gaining access to private land on the terminal end of Whitewater Creek to collect “3 Species” genetic data. Whitewater Creek is a tributary of the Gunnison River located near Whitewater, Colorado.

Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Staff



Project Leader - Dale Ryden
Administrative Officer - Vacant 36 months

Grand Junction FWCO Staff:

Fish Biologist - Darek Elverud
Fish Biologist - Travis Francis
Fish Biologist - Ben Schleicher
Biological Science Technician - Andrew Disch
Biological Science Technician - William Hilzer
Biological Science Technician - Tyler Sexton
Biological Science Technician - Tyler Trump
Biological Science Technician - Nathan Vargas
Biological Science Technician - Tyler Walton
Biological Science Technician - Vacant 11 months

Ouray National Fish Hatchery - Grand Valley Unit Staff:

Fish Biologist - Brian Scheer
Fish Biologist - Vacant 8 months
Biological Science Technician & Educational Outreach - Mike Gross
Biological Science Technician - Haden VanWinkle

Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office About Us



The Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Grand Junction, Colorado (Formerly known as Colorado River Fishery Project, aka CRFP) consists of both a field office (FWCO) and an endangered fish hatchery, known as the Ouray National Fish Hatchery-Grand Valley Unit.

The CRFP field office was established in 1979 to perform research and management actions aimed at helping recover four endangered fish species of the upper Colorado River basin: Razorback Sucker, Colorado Pikeminnow, Humpback Chub, and Bonytail.

Ouray NFH-GVU was established in 1992 as CRFP's endangered fish propagation center and currently produces over 20,000 endangered Bonytail and Razorback Sucker annually.

The Grand Junction Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office works in the Colorado, Gunnison, San Juan and Yampa rivers in Colorado, Utah and New Mexico, as well as in Lake Powell in Utah.

*Ouray National Fish Hatchery
Grand Valley Unit*

Current fish on station:

Razorback Sucker 11,800 (150mm-250mm)

Bonytail 10,300 (100mm-200mm)