



## United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COLORADO FIELD OFFICE/LAKEWOOD  
P.O. BOX 25486, DENVER FEDERAL CENTER  
DENVER, COLORADO 80225-0486

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
ES/CO: CDOT  
TAILS: 06E24000-2014-I-0201

FEB 3 2014

Jeff Peterson  
Colorado Department of Transportation  
4201 East Arkansas Avenue, Shumate Building  
Denver, Colorado 80222

Dear Mr. Peterson:

Based on the authority conferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Service reviewed your January 7, 2014, letter regarding replacing the Catamount Bridge located on Colorado River Road (Eagle County Road 301) near Burns, Eagle County, Colorado, and its potential effects on the endangered Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*) and the candidate Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). The new structure will be on a slightly different alignment and will be 36 feet wide and 234 feet long with three spans. Approximately 74 feet of each stream bank under the bridge will be protected with riprap. Work is expected to begin in the fall of 2014 and duration of construction activities is expected to be 7 – 12 months.

The project area is located at approximately 6,600 feet in elevation. It is bounded by Big Alkali Creek and Catamount Recreation Site and boat launch on the west and undeveloped land on the north, south, and east. Adjoining land is undeveloped railroad right-of-way. Surrounding vegetation is piñon pine-juniper uplands with scattered sage brush throughout. At the construction site, vegetation consists of willows, a few cottonwoods and other streamside shrubs and grasses. The bank is fairly devoid of mature vegetation and there is very little bank undercutting, backwaters, or riffles or eddies.

Best management practices include preventing excessive sediment and other contaminants from entering the river, reseeding temporarily disturbed areas with native species, avoiding in-stream work between February 1 and March 30 and also between July 1 and August 31 to minimize impacts to spawning fish, locating storage and staging areas in currently impacted areas, and fueling and maintaining equipment at least 100 feet from the river.

Although the Colorado River in the project vicinity possesses some characteristics of suitable Colorado pikeminnow habitat, the species does not occur this far upstream in the river and is not

expected to be present in the project area; therefore, any effects due to the project are expected to be discountable.

Topography in the project area is likely too steep and contains too little sage brush to be used by the Greater Sage-grouse. However, the area could occasionally be used for foraging, movement, or dispersal. Production habitat occurs approximately 0.5 miles away. Noise and human activity associated with project construction may cause some individuals to temporarily avoid the area.

Given your habitat and project descriptions, the Service finds the report acceptable and concurs with your determination that the impacts resulting from the proposed project are not likely to adversely affect the continued existence of the Colorado pikeminnow or to jeopardize the continued existence of the Greater Sage-grouse.

Finally, we encourage you to explore alternate methods to riprap to protect the streambank. CDOT has successfully used buried and vegetated riprap as well as bioengineered materials in conjunction with riprap to stabilize streambanks. These methods are more likely to result in a more stable and resilient streambank and riparian ecosystem than riprap alone.

Please note that should project plans change or if additional information regarding listed or proposed species becomes available, this determination may be reconsidered under the ESA. If the proposed project has not commenced within one year, please contact the Colorado Field Office to request an extension.

We appreciate your submitting this report to our office for review and comment. If the Service can be of further assistance, please contact Alison Deans Michael of my staff at (303) 236-4758.

Sincerely,



Susan C. Linner  
Colorado Field Supervisor

ec: CDOT, R3 (Mike Vanderhoof)  
Michael