

# UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT: 2

## **Project Title**

Reclamation Program Management

## **Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number:**

n/a

## **Project/Grant Period:**

Start date: n/a

End date: n/a

Reporting period end date: 9/30/2020

Is this the final report? No

## **Principal Investigator:**

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## **Abstract:**

Program management funds are used to provide Reclamation participation in general Recovery Program activities not covered by specific scopes of work. Examples of these types of activities include administration of “base” or annual project funding agreements (i.e., not inclusive of capital projects), work planning, monitoring project progress and performance, and other general program management and administration.

## **Study Schedule:**

2020-Ongoing

## **Relationship to RIPRAP:**

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan, Provide Program Planning and Support (Program Management), Task No. VII.

## **Accomplishment of FY 2020 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:**

Task 1: Work with Recovery Program participants to coordinate work plans (*Note: due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we participated remotely in meetings and program functions referenced below which took place after March 1, 2020*).

In FY20, Reclamation chaired the Biology Committee and participated in the Management, Implementation and Information/Education committees. We participated in RIPRAP revisions, review and completion of final reports, flow request letters, and other issue papers pursuant to Task 1. We continued to participate in planning exercises for post-2023 capital and annual projects and funding

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strategies. We provided technical reviews of most Recovery Program technical documents and projects (i.e., Colorado base flow study plan, 15-mile reach PBO, Colorado pikeminnow population estimates, etc.) as well as routine requirements pursuant to grant and interagency agreement monitoring.

We participated in the Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group and functioned as a liaison between the Recovery Program and Reclamation managers in implementing the 2006 ROD, which involved close coordination with Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to implement the Larval Trigger Study Plan (LTSP). We attended the Flaming Gorge Working Group (FGWG) virtual meetings (March 19, April 16 and August 20). We worked closely with dam managers to operate the Flaming Gorge Dam selective withdrawal system in order to meet Green River endangered fish water temperature objectives. We also coordinated with Recovery Program participants to collect, organize and interpret temperature data from the 2019 peak- and base-flow period in the Green and Yampa rivers for compliance with the 2005 biological opinion on Flaming Gorge Dam operations.

We presented two papers (Flaming Gorge release temperatures, Green River Canal fish screen) at the Annual Researcher's Meeting held in Durango, CO during January 2020. We attended several sub-group meetings dealing with Colorado pikeminnow broodstock development and augmentation, reintroductions of humpback chub to the Yampa River, and these two topics in relation to future hatchery space requirements and logistics. We began a proposal to reconfigure the bonytail stocking program considering emerging future hatchery space requirements. We attended Stewart Lake coordination meetings.

We assisted with distribution of press releases related to Recovery Program news and accomplishments and participated in Information/Education committee conference calls. We gathered Program-related articles from local (western slope of Colorado) news sources and participated in development of endangered fish videography.

We continued analysis on the utility of automated PIT data in recovery monitoring through Utah State University. This effort resulted in a publication on use of PIT data in development of fish population size estimates trends (Conner et al., 2020. Estimating population abundance with a mixture of physical capture and PIT tag antenna detection data. *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 77(7)).

We continued to work with the Recovery Program PDO coordinators, Bureau of Land Management and other cooperators to plan modification of the Stirrup Bottom wetland for installation of a water control structure and fish kettle. These modifications should allow for effective management of wetland filling and draining as part of the LTSP. Construction is currently expected to start in July of 2021.

Due to travel restrictions imposed by Reclamation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other concerns for health and safety, our participation in field activities was minimal in FY2020 except for a site visit in Debeque, CO to review a proposal for hatchery development (July 26).

Task 2: Administer funding for Recovery Program projects.

Task 2 Accomplishments, Discussion, and Shortcomings: The Recovery Program FY20 work plan required us to create or modify several funding agreements between cooperators and Reclamation

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pursuant to Task 2. Each agreement required multi-faceted administrative maintenance, including requests for federal assistance for Recovery Program-approved projects, justifications for federal assistance to Program partners, communication with Recovery Program Director's office on funding issues, preparation of determination and findings documents, review and approval of project budgets, requests for obligations to cover funding agreements, agreement or contract awards, maintenance of agreement and contract filing systems (including agreement instruments, invoices, and accruals), tracking of budgets, review and approval of invoices, performance of periodic site visits to monitor project performance, filing of advanced procurement reports, tracking project performance and status of deliverables, filing project monitoring reports, filing recipient performance reports, answering agreement inquiries from auditors, closeout and deobligation procedures, and other related tasks.

In FY20 we established a new five-year Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) grant (Colorado Natural Heritage Program, database management) and two new five-year interagency agreements, one each for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Grand Junction and Vernal Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices) and U.S. Geological Survey (Green River monitoring). The CESU grant with CNHP brings the overhead rate with that agency down from 31.3% to a negotiated rate of 17.5%.

We coordinated procurement and distribution of PIT tags, PIT antennas and supplies for use by program personnel in all field offices using a DOI-wide PIT contract with Biomark, Inc. We used non-Program funding to purchase PIT supplies and cover PIT infrastructure operation and maintenance in FY20 and about half of the PIT supplies for FY2021. Using non-program funds, also, we funded the Green River channel monitoring project conducted by National Park Service.

We reviewed Recovery Program capital projects and capital project O/M expenditures with a budget analyst from Reclamation's regional office and contract representatives in Reclamation's Western Colorado Area Office (Grand Junction, CO).

### **Additional noteworthy observations:**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Biology Committee met on a weekly basis from March through May 2020 to keep partners informed on impacts to projects, development of agency-specific plans for safely completing project requiring travel and work in close quarters, and evolving health and safety policies on the part of Federal, State and local jurisdictions as the pandemic progressed.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue this project in FY20 using staffing levels proposed in the FY20-21 scope of work as guidance
- Continue to evaluate and revise Reclamation's labor and funding requirements for program management support to the Recovery Program in future years.

### **Project Status:**

On track and ongoing.

### **FY 2020 Budget Status**

Funds Provided: \$248,168.45

Funds Expended: \$248,168.45

Difference: \$0

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Percent of the FY 2020 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100%  
Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$0

### **Status of Data Submission**

n/a

### **Signed:**

Dave Speas

Principal Investigator

11/20/2020