Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin

March 20 - March 24, 1995

1995 Washington, D.C., briefing packet

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RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR THE ENDANGERED FISHES OF THE UPPER COLORADO

Requested FY 1996 Congressional action items

(Summarized version)

Recovery Program participants would like to make the following requests from Congress (details on each item are provided on following pages):

Fish and Wildlife Service budget

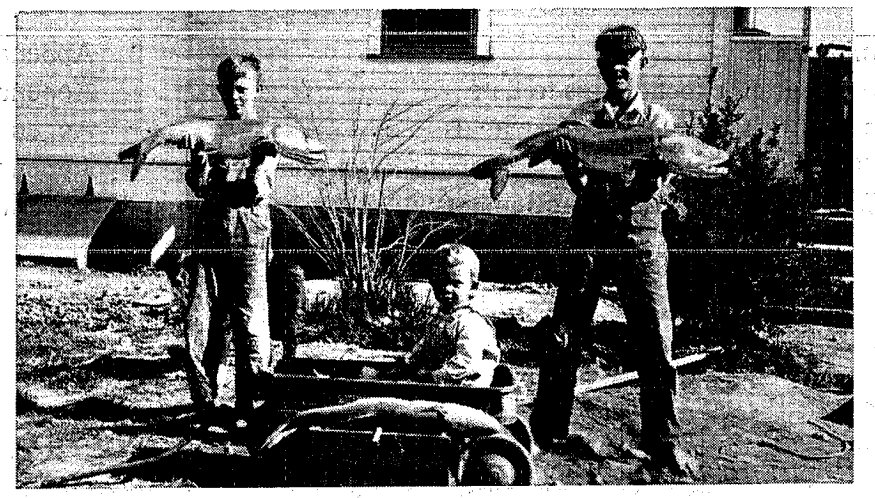
1. Support Fish and Wildlife Service funding for the Recovery Program.
   ($623,000 requested in "Recovery" funds)

2. Earmark Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds.
   ($200,000 requested for "Grants to States")

3. Support Fish and Wildlife Service funds for operation and maintenance of the Ouray Endangered Fish Facility.
   ($284,000 requested in "Fisheries Stewardship")

Bureau of Reclamation budget

4. Support Bureau of Reclamation funds for the Recovery Program.
   ($6,373,000 requested in "Construction Program" funds)



In the early 1900s, Colorado River Basin residents commonly caught and ate native Colorado River fish such as the squawfish pictured here.

Requested FY 1996 Congressional action items

(Detailed version)

Fish and Wildlife Service budget

1. **Support Fish and Wildlife Service funding for the Recovery Program. ($623,000 requested in "Recovery" funds)**

Recovery Program participants request Congressional support for the portion of the President's proposed FY 1996 budget that contains $623,000 of Endangered Species Recovery funds for the Service to participate in the Recovery Program.

Projects to be funded are:

- **Fish and Wildlife Service program management**: Funding covers Program Director's office staff salaries and expenses.

- **Interagency standardized monitoring program**: This supports Service participation in monitoring fish populations, a crucial element of the Recovery Program.

- **Propagation and non-native fish management**: This would fund Service coordination of hatchery development and expansion, genetics management and non-native fish control.

- **Aspinall Unit (Blue Mesa Dam) in-stream flow studies**: An analysis of the effects of flows on endangered fish habitat and food availability will be completed with these funds.

2. **Earmark Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds. ($200,000 requested for "Grants to States")**

Recovery Program participants request that $200,000 of Endangered Species Act Section 6 funds be earmarked for the Recovery Program *before* the Fish and Wildlife Service's allocation formula is applied to the Section 6 funds nationwide. (Congress earmarked these funds for the Recovery Program in FY 1992 through 1994.) Language would need to be included in the Interior appropriations bill specifying the requested earmark.

The allocation formula determines the amount of Section 6 funding to be given for the eight states in Region 6, based in Denver. In FY 1996, the Section 6 region-wide total is expected to be only $583,000. Unless the $200,000 is dedicated before the allocation formula is applied, the Service's ability to fund other high priority recovery efforts for theRegion's 71 other endangered species will suffer greatly.

Projects to be funded with the $200,000 in Grants to States are:

- **Interagency standardized monitoring program**: Funding will cover participation in this effort by the States of Colorado and Utah.

- **Upper Colorado River habitat suitability analysis**: This provides funding for research by the State of Colorado.

- **Aspinall Unit (Blue Mesa Reservoir) in-stream flow studies**: This provides funding of work by the States of Utah and Colorado on analyzing flow effects on larval endangered fish in the Gunnison and Colorado rivers.

3. **Support Fish and Wildlife Service funds for operation and maintenance of the Ouray Endangered Fish Facility.**
($284,000 requested in "Fisheries Stewardship")

Recovery Program participants request Congressional support for the portion of the President's budget that allocates $284,000 for operating Service hatchery facilities for endangered Colorado River fish.

Program participants further request that this funding remain earmarked for this purpose until it is no longer needed by the Recovery Program.

This funding is needed to maintain hatchery facilities holding captive endangered fish to support stocking, research, public education and "refuge" purposes. In FY 1994, Congress appropriated $970,000 to construct ponds at the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge and $220,000 to begin operations.

Wetlands and other flood plain habitats are considered critical to recovery of endangered Colorado River fish. These marshy areas also are used by ducks, geese, frogs, toads and other riparian wildlife.

Bureau of Reclamation budget

4. Support Bureau of Reclamation funds for the Recovery Program. ($6,373,000 requested in "Construction Program" funds)

Recovery Program participants request Congressional support for the $6,373,000 in Bureau of Reclamation Construction Program funds for the Recovery Program, which is included in the President's proposed FY 1996 budget. The funds would pay for water acquisition and capital construction projects to help recover endangered fish, including:

- **Fish passage**: Reclamation funds will rehabilitate water diversion structures and build fish ladders at several locations on the Yampa, Gunnison and Colorado rivers. These activities will benefit the migratory Colorado squawfish and razorback sucker by giving the fish access to more than 100 miles of historic habitat and by allowing unrestricted movement within their current range.

- **Water acquisition**: Reclamation will take the lead in evaluating opportunities to acquire water from existing Federal and private water projects to enhance habitat conditions for endangered fish. Water acquisition initiatives include:

  — Evaluating the feasibility of more efficiently operating irrigation projects in the Grand Valley, near Grand Junction, Colo., and dedicating the "saved" water to endangered fish.

  — Using water stored in several smaller Reclamation reservoirs to enhance late summer flows in the Colorado River.

  — Evaluating possibilities for coordinating Federal and private reservoir operations in the headwaters of the Colorado River to enhance spring peak flows in the Colorado.

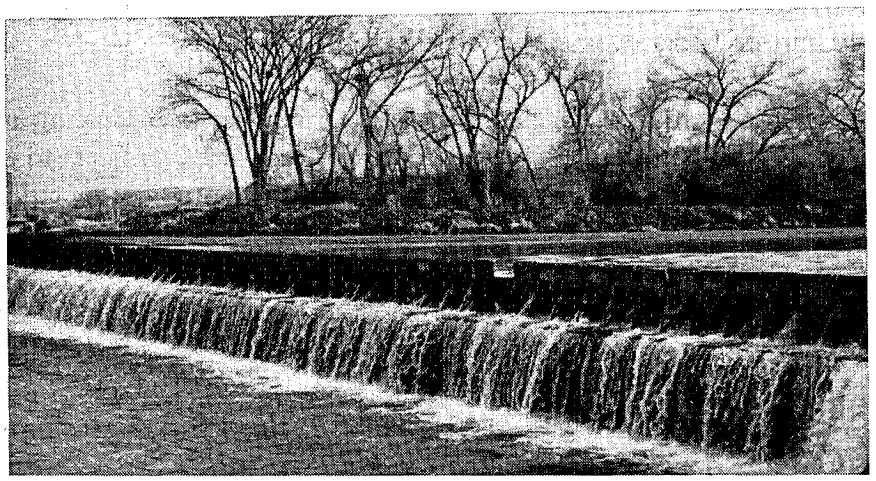
  — Evaluating the feasibility of enlarging Elkhead Reservoir in the Yampa River Basin in exchange for acquiring large in-stream flow rights on the Yampa.

- **Flood plain restoration**: Historically, flood plains throughout the Upper Colorado River Basin were inundated each year by spring runoff. But today much of the river has become channelized by levees, dikes, rip-rap and the invasion of the exotic plant, tamarisk, or salt cedar. Restoring these flood plains is thought to be especially important for the endangered razorback sucker and will benefit a variety of wetland-dependent wildlife. Several sites in Utah and Colorado are being evaluated in FY 1995 for potential acquisition, restoration and/or management. Funding is needed in FY 1996 to implement management and restoration plans at high priority sites.

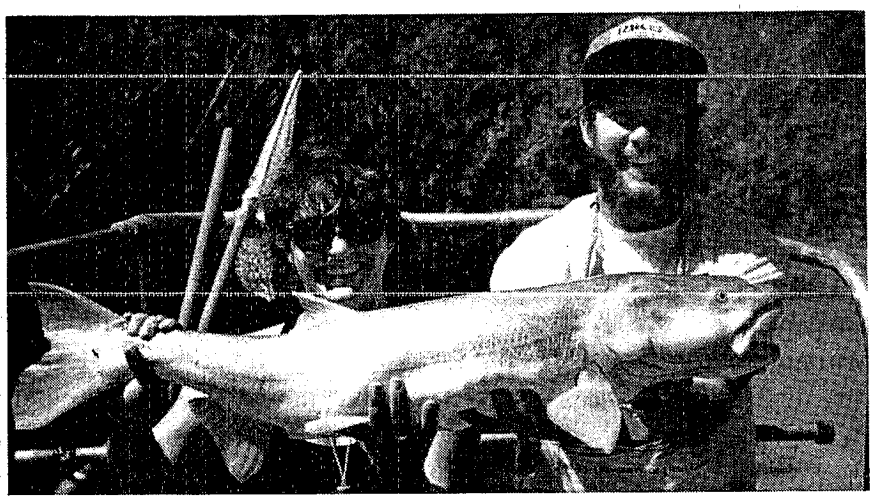
- **Endangered fish hatchery construction**: Current facilities are inadequate to meet anticipated needs. Additional hatchery and research facilities are required to prevent endangered fish from becoming extinct, maintain unique genetic resources, produce fish for appropriate stocking and reintroduction efforts and to provide a laboratory for endangered fish research.

Several actions are scheduled for FY 1995. A hatchery building and up to 18 endangered fish ponds will be completed at the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in Utah. Final hatchery design specifications will be completed for the site at Craig, Colo. Construction will start at Wahweap warmwater ponds in Utah.

Funding is for FY 1996 needed to continue construction at Ouray and Wahweap and to initiate construction at Craig.



A fish ladder around the Redlands Diversion Dam on the Gunnison River would allow endangered fish to access 50 miles of their historical habitat.



Biologists in Utah hold a 38-inch long Colorado squawfish captured during a research study. After weighing and measuring the fish, the researchers returned it to the river unharmed.

Recovery Program overview

The Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin is a 15-year, interagency partnership aimed at recovering the endangered Colorado squawfish, humpback chub, bonytail chub and razorback sucker while providing for future water development. The program was launched in 1988, when the Governors of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming; the Secretary of the Interior; and the Administrator of Western Area Power Administration signed a cooperative agreement initiating the program and committing each participant to implementing the program's elements.

Program participants are:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Western Area Power Administration
- State of Colorado
- State of Utah
- State of Wyoming
- Colorado Water Congress
- Utah Water Users Association
- Wyoming Water Development Association
- National Audubon Society
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Colorado Wildlife Federation
- Wyoming Wildlife Federation
- Colorado River Energy Distributors Association

The program has brought together a diverse group of public and private interests that has made significant strides toward endangered fish recovery. These are explained in more detail later, but here are a few highlights:

- The Bureau of Reclamation has improved endangered fish habitat by altering the timing of releases from Flaming Gorge and Blue Mesa reservoirs. The amount of water affected by these changes totals 2.5 million acre-feet each year.

- Construction is set to begin this spring on a fish ladder that will provide access to more than 50 miles of endangered fish habitat on the Gunnison River in southwestern Colorado.

- Hatchery ponds have been constructed in Colorado and Utah to aid in captive rearing of endangered fish.

- More than 195 water projects have been allowed to proceed in the upper Colorado River Basin, in compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

- Recovery Program actions have resulted in no water project-related litigation whatsoever.

In short, the program is succeeding in implementing the Endangered Species Act while also allowing for water resource development and complying with all State water laws. For all of these reasons, this has been called a "model program." Continued Congressional funding is needed if key recovery actions are to be completed.

Recovery Program elements

The following are the five elements of the Recovery Program:

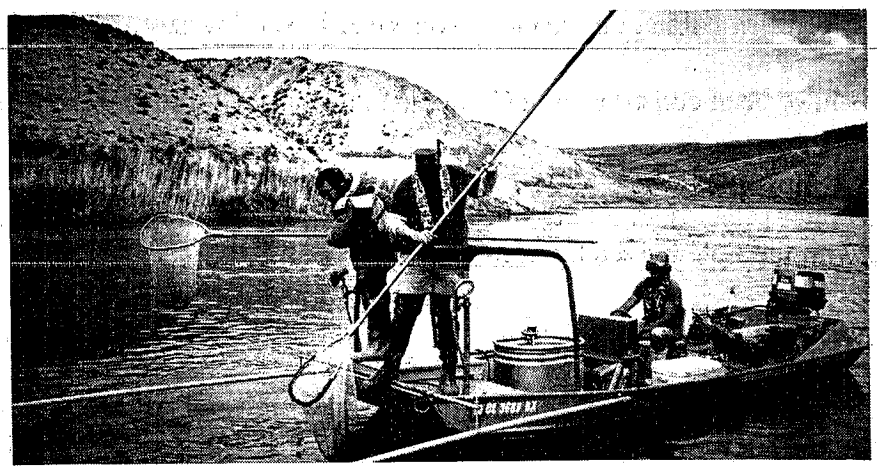
- **Habitat management**, which includes identifying and acquiring in-stream flows and changing operations of Federal dam to benefit endangered fish.

- **Habitat development**, which means restoring flood plain habitats and constructing fish passageways around dams and other barriers.

- **Native fish propagation**, which involves establishing methods and facilities for holding adult broodstock, which will prevent extinction and maintain genetic resources; developing grow-out ponds; conducting research to improve survival of endangered fish raised in captivity and stocked in the wild; and supporting appropriate stocking and reintroduction efforts.

- **Non-native species and sport-fishing**, which entails managing detrimental non-native fish species in critical habitat of endangered fish. This element also involves distributing information to anglers to reduce accidental taking of endangered fish.

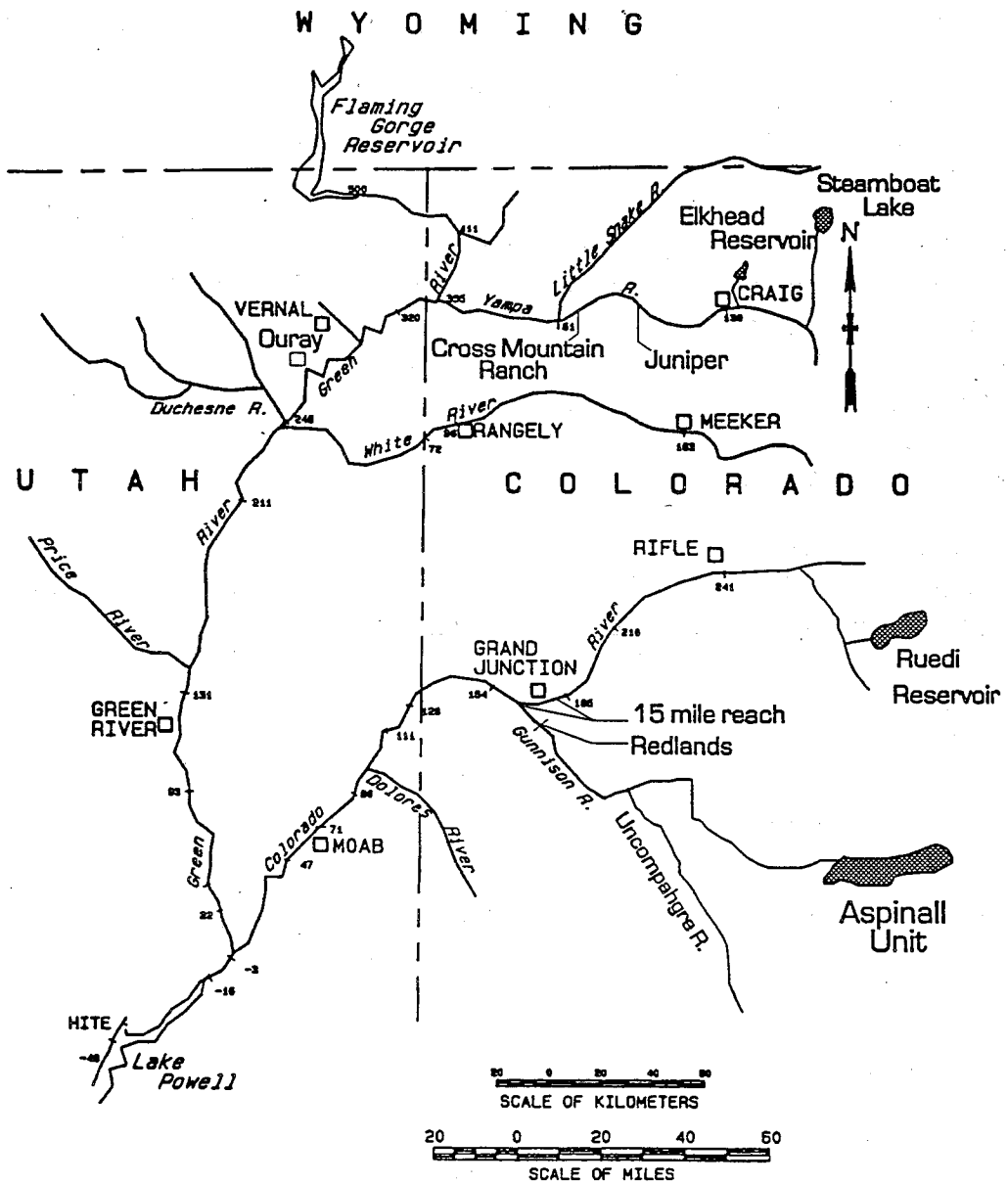
- **Research, monitoring and data management**, which is aimed at gaining a better understanding of what the fish need to survive, grow and reproduce in the wild. It includes maintaining data on the numbers, sizes and locations of endangered fish captured during research studies; monitoring endangered fish population trends; and making recommendations on river flows.



Researchers use 'electro-fishing' gear to allow them to capture and count endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The fish are weighed, measured, tagged and then released back into the wild.

Geographic scope

The Recovery Program covers the upper Colorado River and its tributaries in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.



Recovery Program accomplishments

Below are some of the Recovery Program's accomplishments over the last eight years:

- Bureau of Reclamation officials have helped improve endangered fish habitat by altering the timing of releases from Flaming Gorge and Blue Mesa reservoirs. These releases enhance river habitat conditions for the fish by providing higher spring flows and lower, more stable flows the rest of the year. The amount of water affected by these changes totals 2.5 million acre-feet each year.

- For the last five years, the Bureau of Reclamation has made 10,000 to 20,000 acre-feet of water from northwest Colorado's Ruedi Reservoir available annually for endangered fish.

- In 1991 and 1992, the program acquired 2,000 acre-feet of water from Steamboat Lake in northern Colorado. The reservoir releases have boosted flows in the Yampa River in late summer and early fall, when river flows can be especially low.

- The Colorado Water Conservation Board finalized a policy on in-stream flow appropriations for endangered fish. This policy allows flows to be protected while uncertainties are resolved about habitat needs and water availability.

- The Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado River Water Conservation District signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a water management and flow protection plan for the Yampa River Basin.

- The Colorado Water Conservation Board has filed for an in-stream flow right of 581 cubic feet per second for the "15-mile reach" of the Colorado River near Grand Junction, Colo. The state also filed to acquire 300 cfs of unclaimed irrigation return flows in this same stretch of river.

- The Utah State Engineer has set a new water rights policy for the Green River to protect releases from Flaming Gorge Reservoir for endangered fish.

- Recovery Program participants finalized an agreement clarifying how Section 7 consultations will be conducted on water depletion projects in the upper basin.

- The Service completed an internal Section 7 consultation that waives payment of the charge for projects that deplete less than 100 acre-feet of water per year.

- The Fish and Wildlife Service has been meeting with other Federal agencies to determine the need for reinitiation of Section 7 consultation on existing projects as a result of critical habitat listing.

- Since 1988, the Service has used Recovery Program accomplishments as a basis for issuing favorable biological opinions on more than 195 water projects in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming with a potential to deplete 186,000 acre-feet of water.

- The Fish and Wildlife Service and States of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming are developing procedures for stocking non-native fish in lakes and reservoirs in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The procedures will ensure that such stocking is consistent with endangered fish recovery.

- Limited numbers of the rarest Colorado River fish are being raised in hatcheries as broodstock. Last year, biologists transplanted 41 razorback suckers from a pond near Debeque, Colo., to their natural habitat in the Colorado and Gunnison rivers. The fact that only about 10 percent of these fish have survived demonstrates some of the challenges facing the Recovery Program.

- The Bureau of Reclamation constructed six two-tenths-acre "refuge" ponds for endangered fish on the Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area near Fruita, Colo., in 1992.

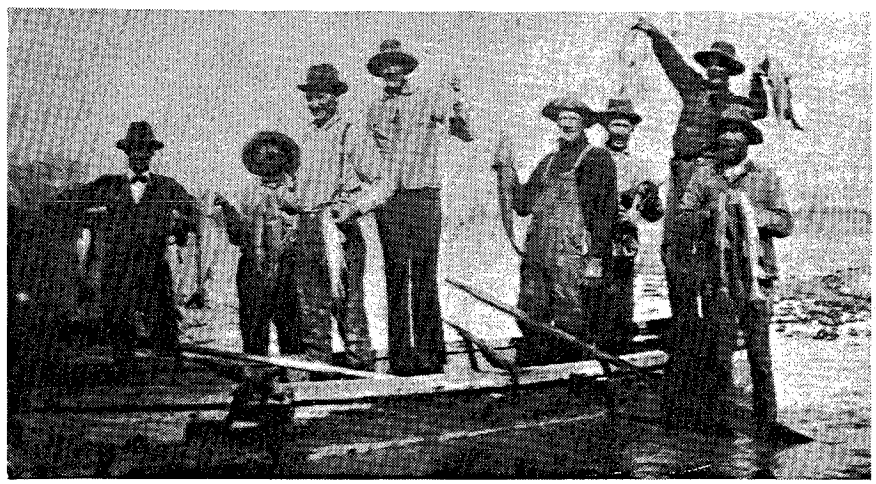
- On the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in northern Utah, a water supply and conditioning reservoir has been constructed and a total of 18 refuge ponds ranging in size from one-tenth acre to two-tenths acre have been constructed to hold endangered fish.

- Biologists completed an inventory of flood plain habitats for 870 miles of the Colorado, Green, Gunnison, Yampa and White rivers last year. This inventory has been used to identify sites that could be restored to provide additional habitat for endangered fish.

- A 234-acre wetland on the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge was restored in 1993. Researchers installed structures to control water levels and prevent large non-native fish from swimming in.

- Environmental compliance is under way and a final design completed for the fish ladder at Redlands Diversion Dam on the Gunnison River. Construction is scheduled to start in 1995 and be completed in 1996. This project will open up 50 miles of historical habitat to the fish.

- Federal and state biologists completed a comprehensive report summarizing the first seven years of the Interagency Standardized Monitoring Program, which tracks endangered fish populations.



Anglers proudly display their catch near Fruita, Colo., in the early 1900s. The now endangered Colorado squawfish once were common in the Colorado River Basin.

STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203-1792
Phone (303) 866-2471

Roy Romer
Governor

September 6, 1994

Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of Interior
Interior Building
1845 C St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Babbitt:

The Colorado River Endangered Fishes Recovery Implementation Program is now in its sixth year. As you are aware, this program is a cooperative venture designed to recover the endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River Basin and is a model for the nation. Parties to the program include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Western Area Power Administration, States of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, environmental organizations, water users, and power users. This program is in the process of recovering endangered fish species within the context of interstate compacts and state water law, while water development continues in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Cost sharing for this program is provided by power users, water users, and the states.

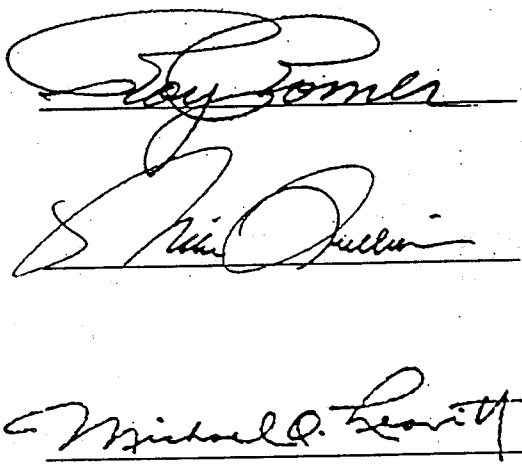
Beginning in fiscal year 94, the Recovery Program embarked upon implementation of a number of capital projects. These include fish passages, restoration of flooded bottomlands, modification of water management facilities to provide water for endangered fishes, coordinated reservoir operations, genetic refugia, and endangered fish augmentation facilities needed to recover the endangered fish. For fiscal year 95, you recommended an appropriation of $4.7 million for these projects as a budget item for U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Colorado Region.

The states, water users, and environmentalists associated with the Recovery Program have actively supported the appropriation of these funds by Congress, and have succeeded in having those appropriations included in the Department of the Interior budget passed by the House of Representatives. Since its inception, the Recovery Program has enjoyed bipartisan congressional support (see attached letters).

If the endangered fish of the Upper Colorado are to be recovered, it is essential that all parties, including the federal government, continue to honor the commitments for funding contained in the 1988 Recovery Implementation Plan agreement. For fiscal year 96, the program needs approximately $7.9 million in construction funds for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to continue the capital projects, and $1,184,000 for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ($824,000 in recovery funds and $360,000 for hatchery operation funds). Your support for this funding is essential. It is virtually impossible for our delegations to develop the support necessary for appropriations exceeding the level included in the Department of Interior budget request. We urge your support for inclusion of these funds in the fiscal year 96 administration request for appropriations.

We look forward to continuing this cooperative cost sharing effort and working with you to ensure and secure funding for this effort. We will continue to work with our congressional delegations to achieve bipartisan support and we certainly hope to enjoy your continued support in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Roy Romer, Governor
State of Colorado
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

Michael Sullivan, Governor
State of Wyoming
Capitol Building
200 W. 24th
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Mike Leavitt, Governor
State of Utah
210 State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Enclosures

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

FISH & WILDLIFE
ENHANCEMENT
JUN -8 94

May 27, 1994

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior and Related
Agencies
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

SUBJECT: Request for Support of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dear Chairman Byrd:

We are writing to request your support and assistance in ensuring continued funding for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This multi-state, multi-agency program is being implemented in the Upper Colorado River Basin with the objective of recovering four endangered fish species while water development proceeds in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. We also are requesting some additional funding for operation of facilities needed to support this important program. We have four requests:

1. That the Subcommittee support $624,000 for recovery funds for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that is included in the President's budget to meet its funding commitment to the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

2. That language be included in the Subcommittee's fiscal year 1995 appropriations legislation to indicate that Section 6 funds should be allocated to the Recovery Program before the Services' formula for allocating funds among the regions is applied. Currently, the money that is appropriated for the recovery of endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River is provided to the states of Utah and Colorado through Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. In Fiscal Year (FY) 1992 and FY 1993, the Subcommittee earmarked $200,000 pursuant to Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Without this specific clarification by the Subcommittee, USFWS would rely on its own formula for allocating Section 6 funds. If the formula were to be used, adequate funding would be available for only four species in an eight-state region. This would adversely affect not only species in Utah and Colorado, but also 69 species in the other six states in Region 6: Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

3. That the Subcommittee support $220,000 of Fisheries Stewardship funds identified in the President's FY 95 budget for the USFWS to operate the endangered fish propagation facilities at the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in Utah. This is the same amount that was appropriated in FY 94.

4. That the appropriation to the USFWS include an additional $191,000 of recovery funds for continued operation and maintenance of Recovery Program hatchery facilities. We request that specific language be included in the Subcommittee's FY 95 appropriations legislation to indicate that the recovery funds should be allocated to the Recovery Program before the USFWS formula for allocating funds among the Regions is applied. In FY 94, Congress appropriated $970,000 to expand the Ouray hatchery facility. In addition, several other facilities in Utah and Colorado are being used to preserve unique genetic stocks of the four endangered fishes. The current level of funding proposed in the President's budget ($220,000) is inadequate to operate and maintain these essential facilities.

To provide for the continued success of this multi-state, multi-agency program, we need your help again this year to ensure that USFWS is given adequate funds and direction on how to allocate its funds for recovery of the endangered fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin. We are thankful for your past support and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Bennett
U.S. Senator

Alan K. Simpson
U.S. Senator

Ben Nighthorse Campbell
U.S. Senator

Malcom Wallop
U.S. Senator

Orrin G. Hatch
U.S. Senator

FISH & WILDLIFE
ENHANCEMENT
JUN -8 94

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 27, 1994

The Honorable Bennett Johnston, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
SD-132
Washington D.C. 20510

SUBJECT: Request for Support of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dear Chairman Johnston:

We are writing to request your support for an appropriation in fiscal year 1995 of $4,715,000 to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) that would be specifically earmarked for activities associated with the recovery of four endangered fish species in the Upper Colorado River Basin. This amount is included in the Administration's proposed FY 95 budget for Reclamation under an item labeled "Construction - Endangered Species Recovery Implementation Program - Upper Colorado Region - Various" totaling $5.546 million, and which includes other items.

In Fiscal Year 1993, the Recovery Program initiated specific studies and actions in preparation for construction activities necessary to recover the endangered fish. These activities included restoration of fish passage to historical habitat, instream flow protection on the Yampa River including the enlargement of the existing Elkhead Reservoir, and water acquisition on the Colorado River, including re-operation of existing projects and modifications to existing projects. Activities also were initiated in 1993 on several fish habitat restoration projects, including flooded bottom lands and wetlands.

Pre-construction activities in all of these areas began in Fiscal Year 1994. The FY 95 funds we are requesting will enable these vital activities to continue and to be successfully implemented in subsequent fiscal years.

The Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program is a mutually supported program involving the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Area Power Administration, the states of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, environmental organizations, and water development interests.

This program, now in its sixth year of operation, has the objective of cooperatively recovering the four endangered fish while water development proceeds in compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In Fiscal Year 1988, Congress appropriated $1 million to this Program for the purpose of securing water for the endangered fish. These funds have been used to advance that purpose. Through FY 93, $240,000 from the previous appropriation was used, and $332,000 was used in FY 94. In FY 95 the remaining $428,000 will be used, in addition to the FY 95 appropriated funds.

We are most grateful for your support of this important multi-state, multi-agency program, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Bennett
U.S. Senator

Ben Nighthorse Campbell
U.S. Senator

Orrin G. Hatch
U.S. Senator

Alan K. Simpson
U.S. Senator

Malcom Wallop
U.S. Senator

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 1994

The Hon. Sidney Yates, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior and Related Agencies
B308, Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJECT: Request for Support of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dear Chairman Yates:

We are writing to request your support and assistance in insuring continued funding for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This multi-state, multi-agency program is being implemented in the Upper Colorado River Basin with the objective of recovering four endangered fish species while water development proceeds in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. We also are requesting some additional funding for operation of facilities needed to support this important program. We have three requests:

1. That the Subcommittee support the $624,000 of recovery funds to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified in the President's budget to meet its funding commitment to the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

2. That language be included in the Subcommittee's fiscal year 1995 appropriations legislation to indicate that the Section 6 funds should be allocated to the Recovery Program before the Services' formula for allocating funds among the Regions is applied. Currently, the money that is appropriated for the recovery of endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River is provided to the States of Utah and Colorado through Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. In fiscal year (FY) 1992 and FY 1993, the Subcommittee earmarked $200,000 pursuant to Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Without this specific clarification by the Subcommittee, USFWS would rely on its own formula for allocating Section 6 funds. If the formula were to be used, adequate funding would be available for only four species in an eight State region. This would adversely affect not only Utah and Colorado, but also 69 species in the other six states in Region 6: Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska.

3. That the appropriation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service include $191,000 of Fisheries Hatchery Operation and Maintenance Funds for the Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This is essential for continued operation and maintenance of facilities constructed to preserve unique genetic stocks of the four endangered fishes. Without this funding, the Recovery Program cannot continue to operate and maintain these essential facilities.

To provide for the continued success of this multi-State, multi-agency program, we need your help again this year to insure that USFWS is given adequate funds and direction on how to allocate its funds for recovery of the endangered fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin. We are thankful for your past support and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

1808-30-16

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 1994

The Honorable Tom Bevill, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
2362 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJECT: Request for Support of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dear Chairman Bevill:

We are writing to request your support for an appropriation in fiscal year 1995 of $4,715,000 to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) that would be specifically earmarked for activities associated with the recovery of four endangered fish species in the Upper Colorado River Basin. This amount is included in the Administration's proposed FY 95 budget for Reclamation under an item labeled "Construction - Endangered Species Recovery Implementation Program - Upper Colorado Region - Various" totaling $5.546 million, and which includes other items.

In fiscal year 1993, the Recovery Program initiated specific studies and actions in preparation for construction activities necessary to recover the endangered fish. These activities included restoration of fish passage to historic habitat, instream flow protection on the Yampa River including the enlargement of the existing Elkhead Reservoir, and water acquisition on the Colorado River, including re-operation of existing projects and modifications to existing projects. Activities were also initiated in 1993 on several fish habitat restoration projects, including flooded bottom lands and wetlands.

Pre-construction activities in all of these areas began in fiscal year 1994. The FY 95 funds we are requesting will enable these vital activities to continue and to be successfully implemented in subsequent fiscal years.

The Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program is a mutually supported program involving the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Area Power Administration, the States of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, environmental organizations, and water development interests. This program, now in its sixth year of operation, has the objective of cooperatively recovering the four endangered fish while water development proceeds in compliance with the

Endangered species Act of 1973. In fiscal year 1988, Congress appropriated $1.0 million to this program for the purpose of securing water for the endangered fish. These funds have been used to advance that purpose. Through FY 93, $240,000 from the previous appropriation was used, and $332,000 will be used in FY 94. In FY 95 we will use the remaining $428,000, in addition to the FY 95 appropriated funds.

We are most grateful for your support of this important multi-state, multi-agency program, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 1993

The Hon. Sidney Yates, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittees on
Interior and Related Agencies
B308, Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Subject : Request for Support of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Dear Chairman Yates:

We are writing to request your support and assistance in insuring continued funding for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This multi-state, multi-agency program is being implemented in the Upper Colorado River Basin with the objective of recovering four endangered fish species while water development proceeds in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. We are also requesting some additional funding for operation of facilities needed to support this important Program. We have three requests:

1. That the Subcommittee continue to appropriate and earmark $624,000 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to meet its funding commitment to the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This is the same amount that was included in the FY 93 appropriation. We request that the language in the appropriation bill state that the $624,000 shall be allocated to Region 6, FWS before the formula for allocating endangered species recovery funds is applied.

2. We request that the appropriation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for hatchery operation and maintenance include $389,000 for the Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This is essential for continued operation and maintenance of facilities constructed to preserve unique genetic stocks of the four endangered fishes. Without this funding, the Recovery Program cannot continue to operate and maintain these essential facilities.

3. In fiscal year (FY) 1992 and FY 1993, the Subcommittee earmarked $200,000 pursuant to Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. We request that similar language be included in the Subcommittee's fiscal year 1994 appropriations legislation to

insure the same results. Currently, the money that is appropriated for the recovery of endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River is provided to the States of Utah and Colorado through Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. Without the language included by the Subcommittee, USFWS would rely on its own formula for allocating Section 6 funds. If the formula were to be used, adequate funding would be available for only four species in an eight state region. This would adversely affect the States' participation in endangered species recovery efforts not only in Utah and Colorado, but also in the other six states in Region 6: Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska.

To insure the continued success of this multi-state, multi-agency program, we need your help again this year to insure that USFWS is given adequate funds and direction on how to allocate its funds for recovery of the endangered fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin. We are thankful for your past support and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Scott Wilson

Pat Allen

Dan Schaefer

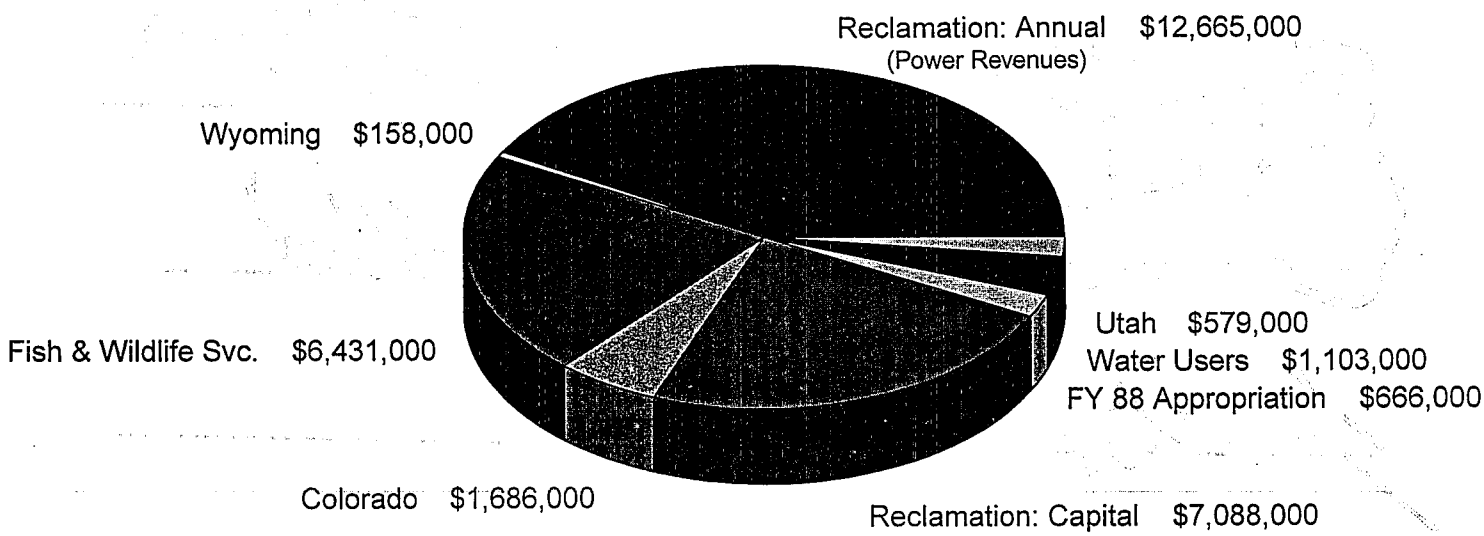
Wayne Allard

James V. Hansen

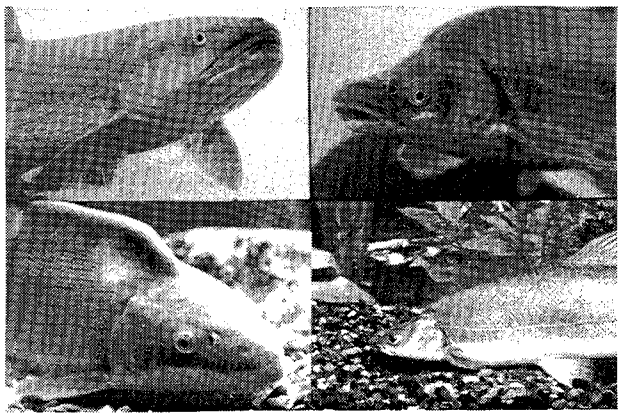
Recovery Program expenditures to date

FY 1989-1995

TOTAL = $30,376,000



Fish population status and recovery goals



Endangered Colorado River fish (clockwise from top left): Colorado squawfish, humpback chub, bonytail chub, razorback sucker.

Colorado squawfish

The largest numbers of Colorado squawfish in the Colorado River Basin are in the Green River. In fact, their numbers in this area actually may be rising. Elsewhere, Colorado squawfish populations are small. They may be declining in the Colorado River and appear stable in the Yampa. Recovery goals for this fish species are to establish naturally self-sustaining populations in the Green River and Colorado River subbasins.

Humpback chub

In the Green and Yampa rivers, humpback chub populations are very small. A population in the Colorado River near the Utah-Colorado State line is relatively large and appears healthy. Recovery goals are to establish five self-sustaining wild populations and protect their habitat. Primary recovery areas in the upper basin include: Black Rocks/Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River near the Colorado/Utah State line; the Yampa and Green rivers in Dinosaur National Monument; Gray and Desolation canyons in the Green River; and Cataract Canyon in the Colorado River.

Razorback sucker

Most razorbacks captured in recent years in the Green, Colorado and Yampa rivers are thought to be more than 20 years old. There is very little known "recruitment" of young fish into the adult population, meaning few young are surviving to adulthood. Razorback populations are considered critical. The first priority for the razorback is to prevent their extinction in the wild.

Bonytail chub

The bonytail chub is the most endangered of the four listed fish. The last confirmed sighting was in 1981 in the Colorado River near the Colorado-Utah state line. Captive populations of bonytail are being maintained at Dexter National Fish Hatchery in New Mexico and at the Horsethief State Wildlife Area in Colorado. As with the razorback, the primary recovery goal for the bonytail is to prevent extinction in the wild.

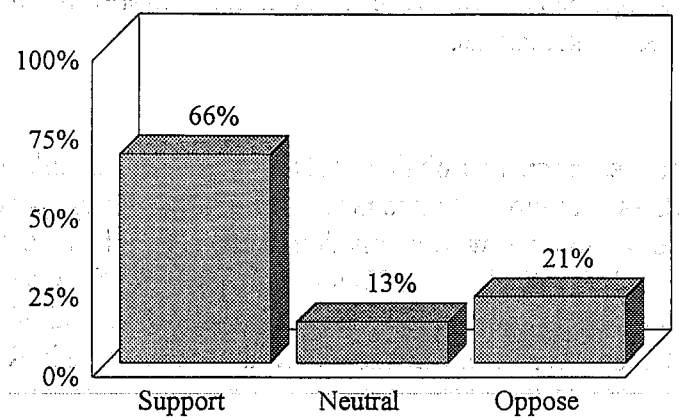
Public attitudes about endangered Colorado River fish

In 1994, Colorado State University researchers completed a telephone survey of residents of western Colorado and eastern Utah regarding their attitudes toward endangered fish. The study found that 66 percent of all respondents support efforts to recover endangered fish, as shown below. Within each of the four publics surveyed, 60 percent of elected officials, 61 percent of anglers, 70 percent of the general public and 82 percent of members of environmental organizations all stated they support efforts to recover endangered fish.

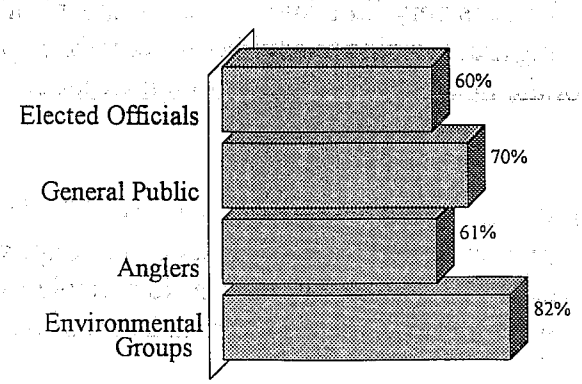
This same trend was found in several other questions on the survey. For example, 59 percent of respondents said their attitude toward preserving endangered fish was positive. Also, only 28 percent of respondents agreed with the statement "Endangered fish should not be recovered unless there is a direct benefit to humans."

(Researchers conducted telephone interviews with 304 members of the "general public," 300 anglers, 168 elected officials and 125 environmental group members. The confidence interval is ± 10 percent for the general public and angler samples; ± 2 percent for elected officials. A reliable estimate of the number of environmental organization members was not available, therefore a confidence interval could not be calculated for this group.)

Support for efforts to recover endangered fish



Support for efforts to recover endangered fish, by group (% indicating support)



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