

# UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2021 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: 9/30/2021

Is this the final report? No

## **Principal Investigator:**

Dave Speas, fish biologist

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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:**

2021-Ongoing

## **Relationship to RIPRAP:**

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

## **Accomplishment of FY 2021 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 during 2021*)

In FY21, 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, sufficient progress letters, flow request letters, and other issue papers pursuant to Task 1. We continued to participate in planning exercises for post-2023 capital and annual

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projects and funding 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 first smallmouth bass flow spike experiment in June 2021. We attended the Flaming Gorge Working Group (FGWG) virtual meetings (March 18, April 15 and August 12). We worked closely with dam managers to operate the Flaming Gorge Dam selective withdrawal system to meet Green River endangered fish water temperature objectives. In July 2021, we worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Program representatives to coordinate releases from Flaming Gorge Dam under provisions of the Drought Response Operating Agreement while also meeting ESA obligations.

We presented a paper on revisiting the Program's plan for rearing and stocking bonytail at the Annual Researcher's Meeting (virtual) in January 2021. We continued participation in several sub-groups 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 completed a proposal to reconfigure the bonytail stocking program considering emerging future hatchery space requirements which received Biology Committee approval. We attended Stewart Lake coordination meetings.

We created and distributed 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 prepared a presentation on Recovery Program accomplishments for the 2021 Desert Fishes Council annual meeting and internal news stories on the Flaming Gorge flow spike experiment and the Palisade High School razorback sucker hatchery.

We continued to work with the Recovery Program PDO coordinators, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 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. We coordinated a site visit to the Stirrup Wetland construction site on August 25 with BLM and Recovery Program coordinators. Construction is currently expected to conclude in spring of 2022. We also filed paperwork to establish an operation and maintenance agreement with BLM for their participation in spring Larval Trigger Study Plan operations.

Our participation in field activities consisted of a series of day trips in May and June 2021 to assist USFWS Grand Junction personnel with endangered fish sampling activities, and a trip to assist Colorado State University in their collection efforts in Lodore and Whirlpool canyons in September. We also assisted the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) with their efforts to retrieve entrained threatened and endangered fish from the Grand Valley canal system in Grand Junction, CO (November 2020).

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Task 2: Administer funding for Recovery Program projects.

Task 2 Accomplishments, Discussion, and Shortcomings: The Recovery Program FY21 work plan required us to create or modify several funding agreements between cooperators and Reclamation 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.

We identified non-Program funding (totaling about \$300,000) to cover PIT infrastructure operation and maintenance costs in FY22 and perhaps a portion of FY23. We reprogrammed unused funds obligated to CPW to cover their purchase of a fish exclusion net for Highline Reservoir, CO. We were able to identify and obligate over \$500K of unspent annual funds toward the Program Director's office to pre-fund their program management in 2022.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue this project in FY21 using staffing levels proposed in the FY22-23 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 2021 Budget Status**

Funds Provided: \$253,132

Funds Expended: \$253,132

Difference: \$0

Percent of the FY 2021 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

12/14/2021