

UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2022 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: 9/30/2022

Is this the final report? No

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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: Ongoing

Relationship to RIPRAP:

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

Accomplishment of FY 2022 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Task 1: Work with Recovery Program participants to coordinate work plans

In FY22, Reclamation participated in the Biology, 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 projects and funding strategies. We provided technical reviews of most Recovery Program technical documents and projects (i.e., draft Colorado pikeminnow recovery plan and implementation strategy, draft suspended sediment report, razorback population estimates using PIT data, etc.). We worked with the Program Director’s

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Office to discuss streamlining scopes of work and annual reports while ensuring Reclamation receives the necessary information for grant and contract reporting.

We participated in the Flaming Gorge Technical Working Group to implement the 2006 ROD, which involved close coordination with Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In 2022, a moderately dry year, the three elements of the Recovery Program's flow request letter (larval-triggered spring peak, second smallmouth bass flow spike experiment, and elevated base flows for pikeminnow larvae) were implemented successfully, thanks in part to inclusion of extra water volumes released under the auspices of the Drought Response Operating Agreement (DROA). We attended the Flaming Gorge Working Group (FGWG) virtual meetings (March 17, April 19). We worked closely with dam managers to operate the Flaming Gorge Dam selective withdrawal system to meet Green River endangered fish water temperature objectives.

We presented a paper on use of floodplain wetlands for endangered fish rearing (with updates on new renovations at the Stirrup Bottom wetland) the Annual Researcher's Meeting (virtual) in January 2022. We continued participation in several sub-groups dealing with development of Audubon Wetland for endangered fish rearing purposes, Colorado pikeminnow broodstock development and augmentation, reintroductions of humpback chub to the Yampa River, and the latter two topics in relation to future hatchery space requirements and logistics. We began a manuscript on bonytail stocking success in coordination with the Program database manager and investigators from Utah State University. 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 which included Recovery Program accomplishments for the 2022 Desert Fishes Council annual meeting.

We 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 2021). As a response to their labor shortages, we assisted the USFWS Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO; Vernal, UT) with their White River bass removal trips (May 2-6, June 1-3). We also assisted Vernal FWCO office in their efforts to collect pikeminnow young-of-year during the last week of September 2022. We coordinated with Program Partner field offices to ensure their PIT equipment and supply needs were being met.

Task 2: Administer funding for Recovery Program projects. Accomplishments, Discussion, and Shortcomings

The Recovery Program FY22 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

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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 placed two orders for PIT equipment and supplies in 2022, one in March 2022 (submersible batteries for the Vernal USFWS office) and a much larger order in August 2022 (210,000 pre-loaded PIT tags, several scanners, four submersibles and tagging equipment). The August PIT order was made using unspent Program funds (about \$500,000), which were available late in the fiscal year due to two factors: 1) the USFWS Lakewood Office funding for FY22 was obligated late in the previous fiscal year, freeing up funds for other purposes in FY22; and 2) owing to delays in FY22 Program funds, Reclamation covered its participation in fall and winter of 2021-22 using non-Program funds. The PIT equipment and supplies purchased in FY22 should cover much of the Program's needs for the next few years.

In May of 2022, we became aware of the availability of funding for Program capital projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which had been passed by Congress in December of 2021. Funding for improvements at Wahweap State Fish Hatchery and the Randlett Unit of Ouray National Fish Hatchery (about \$1M each) as well as expansion of the Program's PIT monitoring capabilities (about \$800K) will be made available in FY23. In FY22 we worked with managers at the two hatcheries to develop scopes of work for improvements and worked with field office biologists to identify placement for new PIT antennas. Reclamation's Provo Area Office Environmental Division agreed to conduct NEPA and other permitting for the work at Wahweap and possibly the PIT project, although additional support for the latter may be needed.

Recommendations:

- Continue this project in FY23 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 2022 Budget Status

Funds Provided: \$252,774

Funds Expended: about \$252,774

Difference: 0

Percent of the FY 2022 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100%

Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$0

Status of Data Submission

n/a

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Signed:

Dave Speas

Principal Investigator

12/6/2022