

UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT: 12

Project Title

Information, Education and Outreach Program

Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number:

R18PG40023

Project/Grant Period:

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Is this the final report? Yes _____ No X

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Abstract:

The Outreach Program works in close coordination with the Outreach Committee and uses a variety of methods to inform targeted audiences about threatened and endangered fishes in the upper Colorado River basin and the work of the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Recovery Programs. In FY23 the Outreach Program was expanded and restructured according to three primary pillars that work together to advance recovery goals: Public Awareness, Community Engagement, and Stakeholder Involvement. The Upper Colorado Program was established in 1988 and has been responsible for the creation of a variety of outreach documents and promotional products. These include the *Swimming Upstream* Field Report, *Program Highlights* booklet, annual *Program Highlights Briefing Document* communicating the status of both Recovery Programs, *Nonnative Fish Impact* booklet detailing the impact of nonnative fish in the basin, fish-themed magnets, pins, key chains, stickers, tattoos, trading and greeting cards, rulers, interpretive exhibits, and a website. The Outreach Program takes a proactive approach to working with the news media, sharing success stories, and conducts public meetings and special events as needed. The Upper Colorado and San Juan River Programs work together to coordinate outreach efforts and share costs when possible.

Study Schedule:

1988-Ongoing

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Relationship to RIPRAP:

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:

- VI. Increase public awareness and support for threatened and endangered fishes and the Recovery Programs.
- VI.B. Train Recovery Program managers and researchers in media relations.
- VI.C. Plan and implement information and education activities for all significant Recovery Program actions, such as presentations, public meetings, public involvement training.
- VI.D. Promote technical publication of study results.
- VI.E. Produce, distribute, and evaluate information and education products such as the field report, briefing book, rulers, trading and greeting cards, paper and vinyl fish stickers and brochure; manage media relations including contacting reporters, producing news releases and fact sheets.
- VI.F. Participate in development and circulation of educational exhibits about the Recovery Programs and threatened and endangered fishes.
- VI.G. Maintain Recovery Program technical library and library web page.

Accomplishment of FY 2023 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Strategy: Outreach Committee to develop strategic public involvement plans for program and related activities and to evaluate and alter plans as needed.

Status: The Outreach Committee continued to implement a strategic communication plan that serves as an umbrella for all Outreach Program activities. Individual projects that require public involvement are subsets of this plan. The Committee convenes three to four times every year and outreach activities are planned and discussed during these calls.

Strategy: Outreach Committee and Outreach Coordinator to meet with each public involvement plan principal investigator as needed to monitor progress and provide technical assistance when appropriate.

Status: Outreach Committee members actively participated in outreach activities (including staffing exhibits) and communicated regularly with the Outreach Coordinator. In FY23 working groups were formed to focus on success stories, social media, and outreach events.

Strategy: Offer to pay public involvement training tuition costs for up to three key Recovery Program participants.

Status: No one participated in this training in FY23.

Strategy: Produce and distribute publications and other educational materials.

Status: Consistent with the recommendations of Program staff and partners, the *Swimming Upstream* Field Report was discontinued as the program prioritizes online content in an increasingly digital world.

The annual *Program Highlights Briefing Document* was updated and produced in a digital format for both the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Recovery Programs and

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continues to help promote the two programs. Historically this document is used by nonfederal partners to brief congressional staff and agency directorates.

Both Recovery Programs continued to distribute a variety of educational materials to diverse audiences including educators, students, program partners, boaters, anglers, and members of the public. These include fish-themed rulers, magnets, trading cards, key chains, pins, paper and vinyl stickers, and temporary tattoos.

Strategy: Proactively seek news media coverage.

Status: The Recovery Programs continued to proactively seek news media coverage to support recovery efforts. In FY23, a Success Stories Working Group was formed to increase visibility of the Recovery Programs by developing and sharing success stories. Media coverage was generated throughout the year by the 50-year anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, success of managed wetlands, publishing of a final Recovery Plan for Colorado Pikeminnow, Palisade High School Fish Hatchery, and the Recovery Programs reauthorization process.

Strategy: Actively participate in local community groups.

Status: A representative of the Recovery Programs attended meetings and maintained active communication with local groups, including the Aspinall Operations Group, the Roaring Fork Conservancy, the Flaming Gorge Working Group, the Duchesne Working Group, the Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable, and the Integrated Biological Assessment Team for the Duchesne Basin.

Strategy: Maintain and promote a public website.

Status: The Recovery Programs maintain a public website: ColoradoRiverRecovery.org. In FY23 Program staff implemented site improvements and continued to update content.

Strategy: Strategically identify opportunities to reach target audiences through participation in special events and public meetings.

Status: The Recovery Program supplied razorback sucker to the Palisade High School Fish Hatchery in Palisade, Colorado where students culture the rare fish in an on-campus fish hatchery before tagging and releasing them into the Colorado River. The Recovery Program also provided threatened and endangered fish for the Eureka McConnell Science Museum in Grand Junction, Colorado, and the Persigo Wash Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fruita, Colorado for permanent educational display aquariums. Thousands of students, professionals and various Colorado River stakeholders visit these permanent display aquariums annually.

In addition, the Recovery Program provided razorback sucker for five western Colorado K-12 schools for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Razorback in the Classroom aquariums. Numerous classes visited and learned about these fish before they were released into the Colorado River by students. Further, numerous hatchery tours were provided to interested groups and individuals at Ouray National Fish Hatchery units in Grand Junction, Colorado and Randlett, Utah.

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Progress continued in FY23 on the development of a new high school hatchery in Vernal, Utah which will be housed in a school building. The Recovery Program committed approximately \$30,000 to install hatchery equipment and contracts were awarded for this purpose. The hatchery is being modeled after the Palisade High School Hatchery and will support career and technical education programming for students.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources office in Vernal, Utah visited 4th grade classrooms in the Uinta Basin to provide native fish education and Recovery Program outreach materials.

In FY23 Ouray National Fish Hatchery Grand Valley Unit staff participated in several activities including the Palisade Homecoming Parade (7 October 2022), Palisade Old Fashioned Christmas Parade of Lights (2 December 2022) and the Grand Junction Parade of Lights (3 December 2022) - passing out thousands of outreach items. They also attended Palisade High School Career Day (January 20, 2023), Audubon Ponds Tour and presentation (28 April 2023), Palisade High School Fish Hatchery Fish Release (9 May 2023), Ute Water Western Colorado Children's Water Festival in Grand Junction, Colorado (15-16 May 2023), Rocky Mountain Elementary Welcome Tunnel in Grand Junction, Colorado (11 August 2023), the Yampa Youth Water Festival in Hayden, Colorado (27 September 2023), and provided floats for the Palisade Homecoming Parade (29 September 2023).

Recovery Program staff participated in a variety of events including the Utah Water Users Association Workshop, the Colorado River Water Users Association Conference, the Colorado Water Congress Annual Convention, the Utah State University-Uinta Basin Student Research Symposium, Endangered Species Day at the Denver Downtown Aquarium, the Colorado River District Annual Water Seminar, the Yampa River Awareness Project, the Water Education Colorado Yampa-White Basin Tour, and several school and classroom visits.

Strategy: Coordinate production and installation of interpretive signs and exhibits.
Status: In FY23 new hatchery signs were installed at Ouray National Fish Hatchery, in Grand Junction, Colorado. In addition, informational plaques about the threatened and endangered fishes were installed at the Persigo Wash Wastewater Treatment Plant display tank in Fruita, Colorado.

Strategy: Integrate certain outreach projects with the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program.
Status: The Recovery Programs each have a freestanding exhibit that includes information about the programs and are displayed at various events. The *Program Highlights* booklet, and *Program Highlights Briefing Document* communicate the status of both programs. Communication and coordination between the two programs continued throughout FY23 and was a focal point during Outreach Committee meetings.

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Strategy: Coordinate messages with all agencies involved with recovery of threatened and endangered fishes.

Status: A concerted effort is made to ensure consistent messaging around threatened and endangered upper Colorado River basin fishes. A communication plan that was developed in 2001 guides this effort.

Recommendations:

- Develop new guidance for the Outreach Program to inform the Recovery Action Plan.
- Work with partners to increase the Recovery Programs' presence on social media.

Project Status:

On track and ongoing.

FY 2023 Budget Status

Funds Provided: \$70,708

Funds Expended: \$70,708

Difference: -0-

Percent of the FY23 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100%

Status of Data Submission

Signed:

Shannon Nelson

Principal Investigator

01/08/2024