

UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT: 4

**Project Title**

Colorado Program Management

**Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number:**

N/A

**Project/Grant Period:**

Start date: 1988

End date: 2023

Reporting period end date: 9/30/2023

Is this the final report? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

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**Abstract:**

The Colorado Department of Natural Resources (CDNR), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) provide program management support through administration of aquatic wildlife, water resource management, and technical studies concerning Colorado as identified in the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP). This, as well as broader involvement in the implementation of the Recovery Program action plan, occurs through participation and preparation of specific task materials for the Implementation, Management, Biology, and Water Acquisition Committees. Significant activities include the development of interagency agreements, scopes of work, and reports, as well as integration of program research results and other new information for effective planning, guidance, status reviews, and issue resolution within the Program.

Program management tasks performed by CDNR, CPW, and CWCB met expectations. Colorado's participation in key Recovery Program projects and issues was adequately coordinated with Program participants as necessary. These programmatic oversight and administrative activities will continue until recovery and delisting of the fish species is achieved and the federal recovery program and process are disbanded in favor of coordinated conservation programs administered by the affected state wildlife agencies.

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### **Study Schedule:**

1998-Ongoing

### **Relationship to RIPRAP:**

#### General Recovery Program Support Action Plan – Program Management

- VII. Provide Program planning and support (Program Management)
- VII.A. Determine actions required for recovery
- VII.A.3. Update, refine, and prioritize recovery actions (RIPRAP) annually
- VII.A.7 Monitor and assess Recovery Program accomplishments annually
- VII.A.8 Develop biennial work plan to address priority needs
- VII.B. Actively participate in Recovery Program committees and secure funding for annual work plan and larger projects
- VII.C. Manage, direct, and coordinate Recovery Program activities

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

#### Project Segment VII, Tasks. All tasks status complete and ongoing:

- a. Prepare for, and attend Implementation, Management, Biology, Water Acquisition, and Information and Education Committee meetings and conference calls.
- b. Review, update, refine, and prioritize actions in the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP) annually.
- c. Review proposed new scopes of work, revised ongoing scopes of work, and recommend revisions to the annual work plan documents.
- d. Review draft final Program technical reports, strategic plans and studies, and incorporate recommendations into Program guidance and implementation.
- e. Coordinate documentation for transfer of funds to CPW for RIPRAP-sanctioned work.
- f. Coordinate RIPRAP-sanctioned field activities to conform to State scientific collection permit requirements.
- g. Attend annual Colorado River Research Review meeting.
- h. Coordinate among CPW, CWCB, and CDNR staff to identify issues, define positions, and solicit input on Recovery Program actions.
- i. Cooperate with and/or develop Memoranda of Understanding or Agreements as appropriate for provision of water for benefit of the endangered fish.
- j. Coordinate Colorado issues/concerns in Recovery Program as necessary with Attorney General's Office, Colorado Department of Natural Resources Divisions, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, water user groups, environmental groups, and other interested parties.
- k. Prepare scopes of work as required on various subjects, annual reports, and all associated revisions.

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- l. Respond to various requests and correspondence from Recovery Program participants and other private entities regarding the endangered fish and instream flow appropriations in Colorado.
- m. Prepare and present endangered fish issues to the Wildlife Commission and Water Conservation Board and at meetings or conference calls of other groups as necessary.
- n. Coordinate with other Recovery Program participants regarding various water issues, and review potential water rights for sale or lease; pursue acquisition of water and water rights where beneficial.
- p. Assist as appropriate in the development and implementation of Programmatic Biological Opinions.
- q. Perform water accounting as required by RIPRAP and Programmatic Biological Opinions.
- r. Perform water accounting as required by RIPRAP and Programmatic Biological Opinions.
- s. Opinions.

### Major Accomplishments and Deliverables of FY 2023:

- Worked with Program Partners to reach post-2023 funding agreement.
- Worked with program partners and congressional staff to draft Program Reauthorization bill language. Assisted congressional staff on getting bill introduced.
- Provided guidance for updates conducted on program's Environmental Assessment and Bluebook
- Extended program Cooperative Agreement through December 31, 2024
- Participated in 15-Mile Reach Flow Target updates group
- Leased and released 3,225 acre-feet (3,000 acre-feet from Ute Water Conservancy District and 225 acre-feet from Garfield County) of water from Ruedi Reservoir from the Ute Water Conservancy District for instream flow use and to preserve and improve the natural environment of the endangered fish in the 15-Mile Reach.
- Participated in flow coordination efforts in the Colorado and Yampa River basins, including participated on weekly phone calls to coordinate on the Green Mountain Reservoir Historic Users Pool and Elkhead flow releases to the Yampa River.
- Continued non-native fish management efforts including holding the annual Elkhead and Ridgway fishing tournaments.
- Provided funding and continued support for the development of a White River Management Plan including participating on the White River Planning Team and development of modeling efforts.

### **Recommendations:**

Program participants must continue to support the recovery and the delisting of the four endangered fish. We recommend continued support of Program Management, including support for congressional reauthorization of the program. Continued focus on post-2023 planning should be a priority of the Program and its participants.

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### **Project Status:**

On track and ongoing.

### **FY 2023 Budget Status**

Funds Provided: \$120,964

Funds Expended: \$120,964

Difference: \$0.00

Percent of the FY 2023 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100%

Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$0.00

### **Status of Data Submission**

(Where applicable): Not applicable

### **Signed:**

Kara Scheel, Principal Investigator  
12/11/2023

Harry Crockett, Principal Investigator  
12/11/2023