

UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT: 168

**Project Title**

White River Management Plan

**Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number:**

N/A

**Project/Grant Period:**

Start date: 2012

End date: 2022

Reporting period end date: 09/30/2020

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

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**Abstract:**

The White River Management Plan will characterize current and reasonably foreseeable future water use within the basin and its possible impacts to endangered fish, including impacts to endangered fish life stages and habitat in the White and Green River basins. The Management Plan will help identify necessary Recovery Program activities in the White and Green River basins that will provide Endangered Species Act compliance for water depletion impacts in the basin. The Management Plan will include a programmatic biological assessment to provide the basis for development of a Programmatic Biological Opinion by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The purpose of this project is to provide and protect flows for endangered fish in the White River by assessing species needs, evaluating historic flows and projected future flows under future water development scenarios, updating flow recommendations, and consulting on a river management plan that establishes satisfactory offsets to the impacts of current and future flow depletions.

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**Study Schedule:**

Initial: 2012

Final Year: 2022

**Relationship to RIPRAP:**

I. Provide and protect instream flows (habitat management)

I.B.3. Develop and implement a White River Management Plan

I.B.3.a. Conduct programmatic Section 7 and NEPA compliance on recovery actions and a level of future water demand.

**Accomplishment of FY 2020 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:**

Date	Task	Responsibility	Status
Oct. 2017	Develop current hydrology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate daily current flows by extending StateMod to the Watson U.S. Geological Survey streamgage in Utah.</li> <li>• Re-state all flow statistics and daily hydrographs for the baseline hydrology.</li> <li>• Consult with Utah on the extension of StateMod to the Green River to model future demands, including energy and tribal use, in Utah.</li> </ul>	Contractor	Complete
Jul. 2018	Develop future demand scenarios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tabulate and review future demands in Colorado and Utah including scenarios and storage developed by the Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable for future demands. Select high and low demand scenarios that represent a range of reasonable future demands.</li> </ul>	White River Planning Team*, Program Director's Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, White River Working Group**	Complete, except for Ute Indian Tribe demand scenarios
Nov. 2017	Develop flow recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify preliminary high flow targets (using current daily flows from StateMod).</li> <li>• State preliminary baseflow targets (using current daily flows from StateMod). Variable length baseflows will be used.</li> <li>• Review and resolve comments on July 2011 draft flow recommendations report.</li> </ul>	Program Director's Office, Flow Recommendations Technical Team, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**	Complete
Aug. 2018	Model future demands and identify impacts on preliminary flow targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct initial modeling of the selected future demand scenarios (including storage for future demands) and identify impacts on the preliminary flow targets.</li> </ul>	Contractor, Program Director's Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**	Complete

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Date	Task	Responsibility	Status
Aug. 2018 – Dec. 2019	<p>Finalize flow recommendations report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate current hydrology, flow statistics, and hydrographs into flow recommendations.</li> <li>• Update (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) the draft flow recommendations report after considering the impact of future demands and new storage on the preliminary flow targets and respond to independent peer review.</li> <li>• Seek (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) approval of a final draft flow recommendations report by the Biology Committee, Water Acquisition Committee, and Management Committee.</li> <li>• Finalize technical report for appendix to flow recommendations report to document methods, assumptions, etc. used in StateMod development.</li> <li>• Finalize and approve interim flow recommendations report.</li> </ul>	<p>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Program Director’s Office, Biology Committee, Water Acquisition Committee, Management Committee, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**, Contractor</p>	<p>Complete</p>
Spring. 2020 – Winter 2020	<p>Develop and model future depletion scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop possible White River Future Depletions scenarios (new depletions to be eligible for streamlined Section 7 Consultations) based on reasonably foreseeable water demands in the basin.</li> <li>• Model future depletion scenarios and compare with interim flow recommendations.</li> <li>• Review and approve depletion scenario analysis with future water demands and flow recommendation.</li> </ul>	<p>Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**, Contractor</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
Aug. 2020	<p>Conduct modeling on the Green River:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategy for assessing impacts of future White River Water Development on the Lower Green River in Utah for the White River Management Plan.</li> <li>• Conduct, review, and approve modeling for the Green River.</li> </ul>	<p>Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
Spring. 2020 – Winter 2020	<p>Address and model climate change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a literature review and evaluate the implications of the latest climate research on relevant hydrology and habitat conditions.</li> <li>• Model reasonably foreseeable climate change effects on hydrology, water demands, and compare with interim flow recommendations.</li> </ul>	<p>Contractor, Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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Date	Task	Responsibility	Status
Spring. 2020 – Spring 2020	<p>Develop management actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop management actions to improve endangered fish populations in the White River and identify how such actions will offset the flow impacts from agreed upon amount of future water development.</li> <li>• Seek input from members of the Biology Committee, Water Acquisition Committee, and Management Committee on how these management actions will offset the depletion effects to the endangered fish populations.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Contractor, Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**	Ongoing
Spring. 2020 – Winter 2021	<p>Develop White River Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a draft Management Plan, including a suite of recovery actions needed to offset depletion effects.</li> <li>• Evaluate and recommend management actions, including developing a timeframe for implementation</li> <li>• Distribute draft Management Plan and conduct public meetings with public, Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable, Utah, and Ute Tribe, etc. to communicate content of the draft Management Plan. Document results of public meetings and public input. Based on public input, revise the draft plan for review.</li> <li>• Finalize Management Plan and biological assessment.</li> </ul>	Contractor, Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**	Ongoing
Spring. 2020 – Summer 2022	<p>Complete Environmental Compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a draft cooperative agreement framework.</li> <li>• Complete NEPA analysis and compliance.</li> <li>• Complete Section 7 Consultation.</li> </ul>	Contractor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Program Director’s Office, White River Planning Team*, White River Working Group**	Not complete
2022	Sign a Cooperative Agreement to implement the Management Plan.	Signatories	Not complete
2022	Complete Programmatic Biological Opinion.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Not complete

\* The White River Planning Team consists the Upper Colorado River basin water users; Program Director’s Office; Colorado Water Conservation Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Division of Water Rights; The Nature Conservancy; Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District; and the Ute Indian Tribe.

\*\* The White River Workgroup consists of the Yampa/White Basin Round Table, including Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah/Ouray Reservation, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Uintah Water Conservancy District, and Utah Division of Water Resources.

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### **Additional noteworthy observations:**

- The development of the White River Management Plan is following rigorous technical protocols and methods with up-to-date modeling and data.
- The White River basin is currently the focus of a *White River Integrated Water Initiative* led by the White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts (to “promote a healthy river that ensures a vibrant agricultural community and maintains healthy fisheries while protecting water rights, quantity, and quality with respect for the local customs, cultures, and property rights”, <https://www.whiterivercd.com/white-river-integrated-water-initiative.html>), and a *White River Partnership* coordinated by RiversEdge West (“committed to restoring healthy riparian areas along the White River in Colorado and Utah”, <https://riversedgewest.org/white-river-partnership>). Opportunities to productively collaborate with these efforts should be considered in the development of the White River Management Plan.

### **Recommendations:**

The development of the White River Management Plan and programmatic biological opinion should proceed as planned according to the specified target dates.

### **Project Status:**

On track and ongoing.

### **FY 2020 Budget Status**

Funds Provided: The Colorado General Assembly approved \$250,000 of funding for the White River Management Plan through the Species Conservation Trust Fund (House Bill 13-1283). No Program funds are being provided. An additional \$46,000 was provided through the Species Conservation Trust Fund for modeling. The total funds provided for this project are \$296,000.

Funds Expended: \$89,089.80

Difference: \$206,910.20

Percent of the FY 2020 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 30%

Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$0.00

### **Status of Data Submission**

Not applicable

### **Signed:**

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11/30/2020

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