

I. **Project Title:** FR-168 White River Management Plan

II. **Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number(s):** N/A

III. **Principal Investigator(s):**

Don Anderson
P.O. Box 25486, DFC,
Denver, CO 80225-0486
Phone: (303) 236-9883
Donald_Anderson@fws.gov

Tom Econopouly
P.O. Box 25486, DFC,
Denver, CO 80225-0486
Phone: (303) 236-4484
Thomas_Econopouly@fws.gov

Michelle Garrison
1313 Sherman Street, Rm 721
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303) 866-3441, x 3213
michelle.garrison@state.co.us

Jojo La
1313 Sherman Street, Rm 721
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303) 866-3441, x 3233
jojo.la@state.co.us

IV. **Abstract:** Provide and protect flows for endangered fish in the White River by assessing species needs, evaluating historic flows and projected future flows under future waterdevelopment scenarios, updating flow recommendations, and consulting on a river management plan that establishes satisfactory offsets to the impacts of current and future flow depletions.

V. **Study Schedule:** 2012 – 2021

VI. **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.

VII. **Accomplishment of FY 2018 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings:**

The schedule and tasks have been updated as follows. Completed tasks are flagged in **green**, and tasks that are near completion in **orange**:

SEQUENCING AND ROLES FOR UPDATE AND FINALIZATION OF ENDANGERED FISH FLOW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE IN MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROGRAMMATIC BIOLOGICAL OPINION FOR THE WHITE RIVER BASIN IN COLORADO AND UTAH (September 5, 2017)

This proposal applies the program protocol and responds to the requests for clarification of the roles of the PDO, the modeling contractor, the program committees, the White River Work Group (WRWG), the White River Planning Team, and the USFWS in the update, review and approval of the flow recommendations

Estimated completion dates	WHO	WHAT
<p>Oct-17 through Jul-18</p> <p><i>Concurrent activities; greater detail provided in cells to right.</i></p>	Contractor	<p>Develop Current Hydrology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate daily current flows by extending StateMod to the Watson gage (completed) • Re-state all flow statistics and daily hydrographs for the baseline (completed) • Consult with Utah on the extension of StateMod to the Green River to model future demands, including energy and tribal use, in Utah (completed) <p>(overall task completed October 2017)</p>
	PDO, USFWS, Planning Team, WRWG	<p>Develop Future Demand Scenarios.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO will tabulate and review future demands in CO and UT, including scenarios and storage developed by the Yampa/White BRT for future demands. High and low scenarios that represent a range of reasonable future demands will be selected by the Planning Team in consultation with the WRWG and USFWS (completed for Colorado; awaiting Ute’s demand scenarios) <p>(task for Colorado completed July 2018)</p>
	PDO in concert with Flow Rec authors, Planning Teams	<p>Specify Preliminary High Flow Targets (using current daily flows from StateMod) (Agreed on high flows)</p> <p>State Preliminary Baseflow Targets (using current daily flows from StateMod) (On Jan 10, 2017, the Planning Teams agreed that variable length baseflows will be used)</p> <p>Review and resolve comments on July 2011 draft flow recommendations report, including the topics prepared by TNC for the 12-10-2012 workshop. (Planning Team agreed Nov 28, 2017 this task has been addressed)</p> <p>(overall task completed November 2017)</p>

Estimated completion dates	WHO	WHAT
Aug-18	Contractor, PDO, Planning Team, WRWG	<p>Model Future Demands and Identify Impacts on Preliminary Flow Targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The contractor will model the selected future demand scenarios (including storage for future demands) and identify impacts on the preliminary flow targets. (completed for the initial Planning Team reviews and draft flow recommendations update; additional modeling to support Management Plan development are currently being determined with assistance of the planning Team) PDO and Planning Team will keep WRWG apprised of the impacts on the preliminary flow targets. The WRWG will coordinate any concerns / comments through their Recovery Program representative (ongoing)
Aug 18	USFWS, BC, WAC, MC, PDO, Planning Team, WRWG, Contractor	<p>Finalize Draft Flow Recommendations Report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate into draft flow recommendations report the current hydrology and flow statistics and hydrographs developed by contractor. (completed) USFWS will update the draft flow recommendations report after considering the impact of future demands and new storage on the preliminary flow targets (completed) and responding to independent peer review (ongoing) USFWS will seek approval of a final draft flow recommendations report, first, from the BC and WAC and then the MC (from an implementation perspective) before issuing a final report. (a webinar is planned in early 2019 to review USFWS's proposed responses to comments received on the draft flow recommendations) PDO and Planning Team will keep WRWG apprised of any significant changes to the preliminary flow targets (ongoing) The WRWG will coordinate any concerns / comments through their Recovery Program representative (ongoing)
Aug-18	Contractor, WRWG, Planning Team	<p>Wilson Water finalizes technical report for appendix to flow recommendations report. Technical report documents methods, assumptions, etc. used in StateMod development (completed)</p>

Estimated completion dates	WHO	WHAT
TBD	PDO, USFWS, Planning Team, WRWG	<p>Non-Flow Management Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDO and USFWS will develop non-flow management actions to improve endangered fish populations in the White River and identify how such actions (in addition to the final flow recommendations) will offset the flow impacts from agreed upon amount of future water development. • We expect the USFWS will seek input from the BC, WAC, or MC on how these non-flow management actions will offset the depletion effects to the endangered fish populations. • PDO and Planning Team will keep WRWG apprised of these non-flow management actions. The WRWG will coordinate any concerns / comments through their Recovery Program representative. • These activities should be accomplished in concert with finalization of the flow recommendations.
Jun-2019	PDO, USFWS	Finalize Flow Recommendations Report (if agreed to by Management Committee) after receiving comments and committees' approval (ongoing)
Aug-2020	PDO, USFWS, WRWG	<p>Draft <u>White River Management Plan</u>, with all other roles and sequencing to be specified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft Cooperative Agreement also will be provided with the draft Plan • Service should start drafting a programmatic biological opinion (PBO) through this timeframe as well. <p>We expect limited involvement from WRWG at this point.</p>
May-2021	USFWS	Perform and complete <u>NEPA analysis</u> on the proposed actions in the White River Management Plan (assumes a 'skinny EA' level of analysis)
Aug-2021	WRWG and USFWS	Sign a <u>Cooperative Agreement (CA)</u> to implement the Management Plan. Service signature constitutes the federal action that causes the PBO (the PBO should be well underway by this point in time).
TBD	USFWS	Complete PBO

The Planning Team currently consists of Tom Pitts for all water users, Tom Chart, Don Anderson and Tom Econopouly for the PDO, Michelle Garrison and Jojo La for the CWCB, James Greer for Utah Division of Water Rights, Meg White and Nancy Smith for TNC, and Alden Vanden Brink, District Manager Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District, and Duane Moss for the Uintah/Ouray Ute Indian Tribe.

The White River Work Group now consists of the Yampa/White BRT, including the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District, the Uintah/Ouray Ute Indian Tribe, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Uintah Water Conservancy District, Utah Division of Water Resources.

The BC, WAC, and MC refer to, respectively, the Biology Committee, Water Acquisition Committee and Management Committee for the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

The PDO refers to the Program Directors Office, which runs the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program and is staffed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The USFWS refers to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is responsible for authoring the preliminary flow targets, the final draft flow recommendations report, and the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the White River Basin. The PDO will coordinate USFWS representation (e.g. USFWS personnel who serve as authors of the flow recommendations and / or personnel from Ecological Services (UT and CO)) and input throughout this process. In many instances the PDO will lead these USFWS tasks.

VIII. Additional noteworthy observations:

The Yampa/White/Green round table hired Wilson Water Group (WWG) to convert the StateMod to a daily step model, and WWG has worked closely with the Work Group and Planning Group to evaluate historic hydrology, possible flow targets for endangered fish considering historic flows, and the likely impacts of various development scenarios. The Planning Team has assisted in the review of possible future development scenarios and the development of draft flow recommendations for the lower White River. The Planning Team also assisted USFWS and CWCB with the development of a draft outline for the White River Management Plan and a draft RFP to hire a consultant to begin work on drafting such a Plan. CWCB is in the process of finalizing that RFP in order to select a consultant for this work in 2019.

IX. Recommendations: USFWS should develop a revised draft of the White River flow recommendations in early FY2019 and seek Management Committee guidance on appropriate additional action needed to finalize those recommendations. Discussions should continue with the Planning Team on appropriate next steps/timing for the development of a White River Management Plan, and identification of additional water development scenarios to be modeled for purposes of developing that Plan.

X. Project Status: A variety of potential future demand scenarios have been analyzed by Wilson Water Group and reviewed by the Planning Team, including the likely impacts of certain future scenarios on specified flow targets. USFWS updated the draft flow recommendations report, addressing deficiencies identified in the current draft and incorporating the recent biologic, geomorphic, and hydrologic information. This draft document (“Review of Fish Studies and Flow Recommendations for Endangered Fishes of the White River, Colorado and Utah”) was distributed to the Recovery Program’s Biology Committee, the Water Acquisition Committee, and the White River Planning Team on September 10, 2018 for technical review and comments. USFWS plans to hold an online webinar in early 2019 to walk through the Service’s proposed responses to the various comments received on that document.

XI. FY 2018 Budget Status:

A. Funds provided: 7/13/2013 The State legislature approved \$250K for the White River Plan from the Species Conservation Trust Fund (HB 13-1283). No

Program funds are being provided.

- B. Funds Expended: \$45,582.50
- C. Difference: \$204,417.50
- D. Percent of the FY 2018 work completed: N/A
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: N/A

XII. **Status of Data Submission:** N/A

- XIII. Signed: Don Anderson 12/31/2018
Principal Investigator Date

- Signed: Jojo La 12/21/2018
Principal Investigator Date

- Signed: Michelle Garrison 12/18/2018
Principal Investigator Date

- Signed: Tom Econopouly 12/18/2018
Principal Investigator Date