

FY-2004/05 SCOPE OF WORK for:
Public Involvement Plan for Yampa, Gunnison,
and other tributary basins

Project #: PIP 12K (C-9, 113, 114)

Lead Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Submitted by: Gerry Roehm
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 25486, DFC
Denver CO 80225
Phone: (303) 969-7322 x272
Fax: (303) 969-7327
E-mail: gerry_roehm@fws.gov

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Category:

- Ongoing project
- Ongoing-revised project
- Requested new project
- Unsolicited proposal

Expected Funding Source:

- Annual funds
- Capital funds
- Other

I. Title of proposal:

Coordinate public involvement during development and implementation of management plans and Programmatic Biological Opinions for the Yampa River Basin, Gunnison River Basin, and other tributary basins, as necessary and appropriate.

II. Relationship to RIPRAP:

General Recovery Program Support Action Plan:

I.D.1.c. Conduct appropriate Section 7 and NEPA compliance to implement tributary management plans

VI.C. Plan and implement information and education and public involvement activities for all significant Recovery Program actions

Green River Action Plan: Yampa and Little Snake Rivers

I.A.2. Develop and implement Yampa River management plan

I.A.3.a. Implement public involvement plan

Colorado River Action Plan: Gunnison River

I.A. Identify fish habitat and flow needs.

II. Study Background/Rationale and Hypotheses:

Tyus and Saunders (2001) ranked tributaries throughout the Upper Colorado River Basin according to their contributions or potential contributions to the recovery of the four endangered fish species of the Upper Colorado River Basin. The “tributary” Colorado River (upstream from the Gunnison River confluence) already is covered under an existing programmatic biological opinion (PBO; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999); the “tributary” Green River (upstream from the Yampa River confluence) is covered under an existing biological opinion for Flaming Gorge Dam, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to re-operate the reservoir for the purpose of achieving the Service’s flow recommendations. A management plans and PBO currently is under development for the Yampa River Basin (# C-9); a PBO also is being considered for the Gunnison River Basin (# 113). Of the remaining tributaries, the White and Dolores rivers are ranked by Tyus and Saunders as making the greatest contribution or potential contribution to recovery. Other tributaries under evaluation include the Duchesne, Price and San Rafael. The evaluation is to determine which, if any, are not adequately covered under existing biological opinions and whether it would be appropriate to adopt a programmatic approach for these basins, as well (# 114).

IV. Study Goals, Objectives, End Product

Goal: The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) for each significant tributary of the Upper Colorado River Basin that is not adequately covered under existing biological opinion(s). For this purpose, one or more management plans may be developed, as deemed necessary by the Recovery Program, to provide and/or protect instream flows and other habitat needed to maintain and recover the endangered fishes while allowing for water to be depleted for existing and future human needs. Each plan would serve as the basis for a PBO for the specific tributary basin(s) for which the plan was developed. This public involvement plan (PIP) is intended to engage stakeholders in the planning process for the purpose of identifying and focusing significant issues for consideration in formulating and evaluating alternative actions and assessing environmental impacts. This PIP has the following objectives:

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basin-wide management plan, if necessary, and PBO.
- To enhance an appreciation by the public and key stakeholders for the uniqueness of their basin, its value to the endangered fish and other native species.
- To enhance the image of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recovery Program as credible entities in the eyes of the public and key stakeholders.
- To increase support within water-user, scientific and environmental communities to effectively implement the management plans.

V. Study Area:

The area covered by this PIP is the Yampa River Basin in Colorado and Wyoming, the Gunnison River Basin in Colorado, the White and Dolores river basins in Colorado and Utah, and other tributary basins (e.g., Duchesne, Price, San Rafael) in Utah as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Recovery Program.

VI. Task Description and Schedule:

General:

- Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with ESA and NEPA requirements, if applicable. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed (ongoing).
- Disseminate and/or present information about the Recovery Program to affected interest groups and stakeholders. Write and/or disseminate news releases, newsletter articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on the purpose, activities, accomplishments and status of basin-wide planning processes, including NEPA/ESA compliance (ongoing).
- Investigate opportunities to educate school children about the local riverine ecosystem and its importance to the endangered fish through the River Watch program, Project WILD, The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs (ongoing).
- Conduct public meetings to provide information to and obtain input from the public. Incorporate public input when formulating and evaluating alternative actions (ongoing).
- Attend relevant meetings of county commissioners, city councils, water conservancy districts, and other stakeholder groups. Report on the status of planning processes and identify concerns. Address concerns in a timely and straightforward manner (ongoing).

Specific:

Yampa River Basin

- Work with local stakeholders to formulate a management plan and PBO for the Yampa River Basin (ongoing).
- Conduct public scoping meetings and solicit public input in compliance with the NEPA for an environmental assessment (EA) to address the impacts of implementing a management plan for the Yampa River (October 2001 – January 2002).

- Publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register for the draft plan and EA (July 2003). Conduct public meetings within a 30-day public comment period.
- Issue a final EA considering comments received during the 30-day public comment period (August – September 2003).

Gunnison River Basin (schedule to be determined)

- Work with State of Colorado, Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) and local stakeholders to identify and quantify future depletions from the Gunnison River Basin to meet human needs.
- Identify the federal action that will serve as the basis for a BO or basin-wide PBO. [The likely federal action is that of the Bureau in modifying its operation of Aspinall Unit dams to meet FWS flow recommendations. The Bureau would prepare an EA and/or EIS for its action, for which a separate PIP would be prepared by the Bureau.]
- Participate in NEPA scoping meetings of the Bureau.
- Coordinate with and assist Bureau in preparing a Biological Assessment for the purpose of initiating formal inter-agency ESA Section 7 consultation.
- Coordinate with and assist FWS in developing and reviewing BO/PBO.

Tributary Basins (schedule to be determined)

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basin-wide management plan, if necessary, and PBO.
- Identify tributaries for which management plan(s) and PBO(s) are necessary and appropriate, based on a lack of adequate coverage for depletions under one or more existing BO(s).
- Work with local stakeholders to estimate water depletions, develop management plan(s), as necessary and appropriate and assist in developing PBO(s) for tributary basins.
- Conduct NEPA scoping meeting(s).
- Prepare a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the tributary management plan(s), considering public scoping input; publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register for draft plan(s)/EA. Schedule public meetings within 30-day comment period.
- Prepare and issue a final EA for the plan following a 30-day public comment period.

- Coordinate with and assist FWS in developing and reviewing PBO.
- Finalize tributary management plan(s) and PBO(s); develop and execute Cooperative Agreement(s) between FWS, Colorado and/or Utah, Bureau, and others as appropriate to implement plan(s).

VII. FY-2004 work

Deliverables:

Notice(s) of Availability; press releases; advertisements

Budget:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>	
Salary/travel	\$ 0	(see Program Management)
Advertising	\$ 0	
Public meetings	\$ 0	(See PIP-12)
Printing and copying	<u>\$1,000</u>	
Total	\$1,000	(\$500 carry forward from FY 03)

FY-2005 work

Deliverables:

Notice(s) of Availability; press releases; advertisements

Budget:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Cost</u>	
Salary/travel	\$ 0	(see Program Management)
Advertising	\$3,000	
Public meetings	\$ 0	(See PIP-12)
Printing and copying	<u>\$1,000</u>	
Total	\$4,000	

VIII. Budget summary:

FY-2004	\$1,000
FY-2005	<u>\$4,000</u>
Total	\$5,000

IX. Reviewers:

Bob Muth, Angela Kantola, Debbie Felker