

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHANGES FROM THE OCTOBER 2001 DRAFT OF THE YAMPA RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

The July 2003 draft of the *Management Plan for Endangered Fishes in the Yampa River Basin* reflects changes that were made in content and organization from the previous October 2001 draft. The current draft has been reorganized, in part, to respond to comments received on the October 2001 draft. In addition, a draft environmental assessment (EA) was completed and appended to the Management Plan. Significant changes are highlighted below by section and subsection.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Hydrologic Setting and **Geographic Scope** were combined into a single section called **Setting**. The **Regulatory Background** section was deleted, but most of its elements were retained in other sections: most of the Endangered Species Act write-up was moved to **Purpose and Need**, whereas narratives regarding the National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Water Act were moved to **Legal and institutional constraints**, a new section under **Evaluation of Alternatives**. On the other hand, some of the narrative and graphs pertaining to historic hydrology were moved from **Evaluation of Alternatives** to **Setting**. **Species Status and Current Distribution**, **Critical Habitat** and **Recovery Goals** were consolidated into a single section, by species, and shortened.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Under **Provide and Protect Instream Flows**, two new non-structural augmentation water supply alternatives were added to the 11 structural alternatives described in the October 2001 draft plan. These are Supply Interruption Contracts (Alternative 2) and Instream Flow Water Rights (Alternative 3) both of which would supply 100% of the instream flow augmentation demand. Supply Interruption Contracts include water conservation measures to minimize impacts to agriculture and make more water available to lease. The remaining 11 structural alternatives are unchanged from the October 2001 draft, except they were renumbered following the addition of the two new alternatives and the proposed action (PA), with the simpler, single-source alternatives placed ahead of multiple-source alternatives. For easy reference, old and new alternative numbers are tabulated below.

| Management Plan Version | Augmentation Water Supply Alternatives, by number | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------|---|----|----|-----------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----|----|
| | Non-structural | | | Single-source | | | | Multiple-source | | | | | | | |
| July 2003 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | PA |
| October 2001 | 1 | – | – | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | “C” | – |

Based on reviewer comments, some of the figures and tables in this section were revised to make them more comprehensible. Tables 23 and 27, for example, are much improved over the previous versions (Tables 22 and 27, respectively, in the October 2001 document). Numerical values and color-coding were replaced with histograms based on frequencies of volumes drawn, graphically differentiating the alternatives operationally and with respect to peak-flow impacts.

Many of the comments received fall under the heading of **Legal and institutional constraints**, for which a separate subsection was added to the **Evaluation of alternatives** section to elucidate and address these comments. Cost estimates were revised pursuant to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation recent comparison of Steamboat Lake lease costs versus Elkhead construction costs. Table 28 summarizes the preliminary evaluation of the water supply alternatives against six different criteria, including **Legal and institutional constraints**. Most of the assigned point values were based on empirical data (i.e., ability to meet base-flow needs; cost estimates; and impacts to parks and recreation, agriculture, and peak flows); legal and institutional constraints were more subjective. Subjective weighting factors also were applied to the various criteria, based on their perceived importance. In November 2002, members of the Yampa PBO Workgroup were given the opportunity to review the legal and institutional constraints and weighting factors to ensure that they were reasonable and appropriate.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An environmental assessment (EA) was not included in the October 2001 draft of the Management Plan. Because much of the information regarding the affected environment and proposed action is already in the Management Plan, it does not need to be reiterated in the EA. Therefore, to minimize redundancy with the Management Plan, the EA was appended to and cites the plan, as appropriate. The EA identifies a “preferred alternative” for the augmentation water supply element, which along with the other proposed actions (e.g., Nonnative Fish Control) will serve as the basis for an intra-Service consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The **Evaluation of alternatives** section in the Management Plan serves the same purpose in the EA. However, additional analyses of peak-flow impacts can be found in Appendix G.

APPENDICES

Several new appendices have been added since the October 2001 draft. The following table relates the appendices to the October 2001 draft with those of the July 2003 draft.

| Appendix (abridged title) | July 2003 | October 2001 |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Section 7 Consultation, Sufficient Progress & Historic Projects Agreement | A | A |
| Cooperative Agreement to implement the management plan | B | – |
| Technical memoranda from Colorado and Wyoming | C | B |
| Consensus statement | – | C |
| Revised flow recommendations | D | – |
| Summary of public scoping meetings | E | – |
| Summary of written comments | F | – |
| Evaluation of peak-flow impacts | G | – |
| List of threatened and endangered species for the Yampa River | H | – |