

Public Involvement Plan Proposed Scope of Work – FY 2001

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Project No.: PIP 12E (CAP-6)

Lead Agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Title of Proposal: Public involvement plan for the Floodplain Habitat Restoration Program

Strategies/Dates:

The goal of the Floodplain Habitat Restoration Program is "To restore or enhance natural floodplain function that supports recovery of endangered fishes in the upper Colorado River basin." Achieving this goal will require support and/or informed consent from potentially affected interests (PAI's). Informed consent is defined as "the grudging willingness of opponents to go along with a course of action to which they are actually opposed".

The goal of this public involvement plan is to achieve, at a minimum, informed consent from PAI's that have veto power. At a maximum, we hope to conduct our project in the open in well-informed communities that are willing to work with us as partners whenever possible. We also hope to generate support for the Recovery Program as a whole.

1. Coordination with Community Organizations

As scheduling allows, we meet with local government and private organizations on a regular basis as a proactive way to keep them informed, find out their concerns, and identify potential conflicts.

Initially, during the land acquisition planning efforts the Land Acquisition Coordinator gave presentations on the land acquisition/habitat restoration and the Recovery Program in general to all of the counties and most of the towns and cities at their regularly scheduled public meetings. In some cases, such as the Uintah County Commissioners, we met privately with public officials. Currently, we keep in contact with local government staff on a regular basis and meet on a formal basis with the governing bodies when there is a potential conflict, when there is a change in policy, or when we propose to acquire a lease or easement on their property. During FY2000 and FY2001, we will be making a special effort to contact Garfield

County, City of Rifle, Town of Parachute, and Town of DeBeque as we prepare to start acquiring easements in their areas. These may, or may not, result in public presentations.

Again as scheduling allows, the Land Acquisition Coordinator also meets on a regular basis with quasi-public organizations such as Legacy Committee (bimonthly) and the Intergovernmental Committee (quarterly) of the Riverfront Commission in Mesa County, the Unitah Duchesne Partners (quarterly), and the Intermountain Joint Venture Group (quarterly).

Presentations on an as needed basis have been given to water users, land trusts, Native American tribes, and conservation organizations. Acquisitions in Mesa County are coordinated with Mesa County Land Trust and acquisitions in Delta County are coordinated with Three Rivers Land Trust and Valley Land Conservancy. Presentations proposed for the last half of FY2000 and/or FY2001 are Grand Valley Audubon Society, Mesa County Board of Realtors, and Delta Audubon Society.

One note, these public appearances are focused on the issues of growout pond leases and land acquisition/habitat restoration with support for the Recovery Program as a whole. If questions are raised about other aspects of the Recovery Program they are referred to the appropriate coordinator.

Schedule: Contact organizations, schedule meetings and presentations (Ongoing)

2. Being a Participant Observer

The Land Acquisition Coordinator came on board in October 1997 to develop easement agreements with willing floodplain landowners. As part of the land acquisition activities, the Coordinator has (and will continue to) contacted many of the PAI's, learning about their values, priorities, needs, hopes, fears, concerns, etc., gaining insights to help address their issues, informing them about our program, and developing partnerships to achieve goals of mutual benefit. The Coordinator has directly contacted most of the private landowners along the Green River and some of the high priority landowners along the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers. Other private landowners are also contacted about growout pond leases.

A special effort was made in FY1998-FY1999 to directly contact landowners with significant potential habitat in Mesa County. We will also continue to develop partnerships with entities that own or have a direct relationship with the desired habitat.

Schedule: Coordinator will meet with landowners to acquire easements (Ongoing)

Coordinator will meet with PAI's to discuss issues (Ongoing)

3. Brainstorming Sessions and "Go-Betweens"

The Green River Resolutions Group, a group of key PAI's within the Uintah Basin of Utah, was organized in 1998. The group has met periodically to help identify and resolve issues, and to act as "go-betweens" for the Floodplain Habitat Restoration Program by carrying information in both directions between the Program and other PAI's. The group will continue to meet on an "as-needed" basis if/when issues threaten to impede progress towards endangered species recovery.

Also, the Land Acquisition Coordinator has held informal meetings with floodplain landowners, and will hold additional meetings when necessary to elicit support for land acquisition and to address issues as they arise.

Schedule: Green River Resolutions Group meetings (as needed when issues arise)

Floodplain Landowner meetings for Colorado, Green, and/or Gunnison Rivers (as needed when issues arise)

4. Newsletter Mailing List

Contacts will be encouraged to sign up for the newsletter. Information & Education Coordinator will provide sign up sheets to be distributed to the public.

Schedule: Ongoing

5. News media

Potential news stories will be identified and passed on to the Information and Education Coordinator

Schedule: Ongoing

Budget: FY-2001 \$0K

Note: Public involvement activities for the Floodplain Habitat Restoration Program and Land Acquisition will be funded from Land Acquisition and NEPA budgets.