

Statement for the Record
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
House Committee on Natural Resources,
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
On

**H.R. 4596, Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery
Programs Reauthorization Act of 2023**
July 27, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Interior's views on H.R. 4596, Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act of 2023.

**H.R. 4596, Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery
Programs Reauthorization Act of 2023**

This bill would extend authority for the Upper Colorado River and San Juan River Basin endangered fish recovery implementation programs (recovery programs). Reclamation supports and urges reauthorization of these important and successful recovery programs. Reauthorization of the recovery programs provides certainty for the programs and ensures current and future water development in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

For more than 30 years, the recovery programs have been a model of Endangered Species Act (ESA) implementation. The recovery programs' goals are to protect and recover federally listed fishes (Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub, and bonytail) found only in the Colorado River basin while water development proceeds according to federal and state laws, interstate compacts, Supreme Court decrees, and federal trust responsibility to Tribes. The recovery programs' actions provide ESA compliance for more than 2,500 federal, Tribal, and non-federal water projects which deliver more than 3.69 million acre-feet of water for agricultural, industrial, Tribal, and municipal uses. The recovery programs facilitate delivery from Flaming Gorge, Navajo, and Aspinall Unit reservoirs of the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) which collectively have more than 6.6 million acre-feet of storage capacity, as well as depletions of a few acre-feet or less by small, individual, projects in the four Upper Basin states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

When the recovery programs were initiated in 1988 and 1992, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that the trajectory of all four listed species was toward extinction. The implementation of these recovery programs has not only prevented extinctions, but substantially improved the prospect for recovering the listed fish while simultaneously providing timely implementation of water delivery and hydropower projects. The recovery programs have contributed to the downlisting of the humpback chub from endangered to threatened in 2021. The razorback sucker is being recommended for downlisting based on reestablishment of adult populations across the Colorado River basin and increasing signs of natural recruitment.

Participants in the recovery programs include the Upper Basin states; federal agencies, including the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Area Power Administration, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs; American

Indian Tribes including the Navajo Nation, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Southern Ute Tribe, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; water users; power users; and environmental organizations.

Similar to other recovery and conservation programs outside of the Upper Colorado River Basin which have cost-share between Federal and non-Federal sources, these two recovery programs have historically been supported from a variety of funding sources, including cash and in-kind contributions by states, water users, and power customers, as well as hydropower revenues and federal appropriations. Shared contributions from program participants are essential for the continued success of the recovery programs.

Recovery program activities are implemented through a combination of annual base funding and capital project expenditures. Annual base funding supports recurring expenses for staff time, facility operations and maintenance, field activities, monitoring and data collection, data analysis and management, public outreach, committee meetings, and general administrative support. Capital funding supports major infrastructure improvements implemented at reservoirs, canals, diversion dams, and floodplains across the basin.

Reclamation supports this bill and urges extended re-authorization of P.L. 106-392 as the continued recovery of endangered and threatened species is essential to Reclamation's mission. The continued success of the recovery programs to ensure the recovery of threatened and endangered fish will provide certainty and allow for continued operation and future water development in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department on the legislation before the Subcommittee today.