



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

CITATION

COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION AWARD

UPPER COLORADO RIVER ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAM

In recognition of extensive collaboration in management of water resources for wildlife conservation and human needs by the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

In recent decades, development of water resources has been a subject of enormous conflict in the Upper Colorado River Basin. From 1977 through 1981, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued Endangered Species Act “jeopardy biological opinions” for all water projects in the Upper Basin, finding that any depletion of water would harm endangered fish species. In light of water conflicts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service formed a coordinating committee in 1984 to identify means to recover endangered fish species and allow needed water development. This initial effort at working together precipitated an extensive collaborative undertaking, culminating in January 1988 with formation of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Actions to recover endangered fish species under the Program include: managing nonnative fishes, constructing fish passages, fish screens, and habitat improvements; enhancing instream flows; stocking; monitoring; and research. These actions provide a reasonable and prudent alternative to “jeopardy biological opinions” for water depletions in the Upper Basin, while working in concert with interstate water compacts, State water and wildlife laws, and tribal rights. The Recovery Program reached a milestone in 2006 with completion of the Elkhead Dam and Reservoir Enlargement Project in northwest Colorado, which provides additional storage capacity for human and endangered species needs. The Program is now a nationally recognized model for resolving endangered species and water resource conflicts. All parties, including water users, power users, States, environmental organizations, and Federal agencies, have committed substantial resources to a basinwide, collaborative conservation partnership effectively working to recover endangered fish while meeting human water resource use and development needs. For its history of successful stakeholder collaboration resolving seemingly intractable water use conflicts, the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program is granted the Cooperative Conservation Award of the Department of the Interior.



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