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April 10, 2023

Attn: Julie Stahl, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program
44 Union Blvd., #120
Lakewood, Co 80228-1807

NMERT-2467

RE: Initiation of 5-year Status Review for Colorado Pikeminnow

Director Stahl:

The Department appreciates the opportunity to submit information for the 5-year review of the status of Colorado Pikeminnow *Ptychocheilus lucius*. The following provides updated information on the current status of the species in the San Juan River to assist the Service with this review.

Since the last 5-year status review for Colorado Pikeminnow in 2016, the Department has continued to serve on the Biology Committee (BC) for the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRIP) which has implemented multiple conservation actions that have directly benefited the recovery of the species.

In partnership with the Service and the SJRIP BC, the Department developed the Alternative Strategies for Stocking Colorado Pikeminnow in the San Juan River Basin. The Alternative Strategies were developed as an adaptive management plan to balance the risks and uncertainties associated with different stocking strategies for the species in the San Juan River Basin while ensuring that the recommended stocking strategy moves the Colorado Pikeminnow population in the San Juan River Basin towards recovery in a timely manner. The recommended alternative to stock only age-1 Colorado Pikeminnow tagged with passive integrated transponder tags in the San Juan River Basin was implemented in 2021.

The Department has also continued to conduct annual monitoring for juvenile Colorado Pikeminnow in the San Juan River. The Department has documented wild recruitment of age-0 Colorado Pikeminnow in 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020. The recruitment of wild age-1 Colorado Pikeminnow was also documented in 2022.

The Department, in partnership with American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers, also detected 22 Colorado Pikeminnow in the San Juan River between the Hogback Diversion and Bloomfield, NM while surveying for Razorback Sucker using mobile passive integrated transponder tag antennas.

This section of the river is not often sampled and the documented presence of Colorado Pikeminnow in this area will further the current knowledge of the species in the San Juan River and also help to inform future conservation actions.

Included with this letter are all of our reports from 2016 – 2022 concerning conservation actions and monitoring that the Department completed related to Colorado Pikeminnow.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the 5-year status review for Colorado Pikeminnow. We look forward to the continued participation with the Service for this species. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Matthew Zeigler, Colorado River Basin Native Fish Supervisor at (505) 412-3090 or matthew.zeigler@dgf.nm.us.

Sincerely,

Kirk A. Patten
Chief, Fisheries Management Division