

Change to Conservation Measure for the Bonytail  
Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program  
Program Decision Document PDD 11-003

### **Steering Committee Resolution**

The Steering Committee approves Reclamation's recommended changes to conservation measure BONY3 to:

***BONY3 – Bonytail augmentation program. The LCR MSCP will provide a level of funding to support implementation of a stocking/augmentation program for the bonytail providing for the stocking of up to 620,000 subadult bonytail (at least 300mm in length) into the designated critical habitat for the species in Reaches 2-3, and in Reaches 4 and 5 of the LCR. The figure of 620,000 fish is not a target number for the LCR but represents an assumption (see BONY1) used to define the extent of funding that would be available, with the understanding that the adaptive management process (see 5.12.2.2) would guide the actual stocking program. The elements of the augmentation program divide the conservation efforts into the three reaches with numbers for fish per year per reach:***

***3.3 When technology permits, implement an experimental augmentation of 4,000 subadult fish annually in the Parker-Imperial river reach (Reaches 4 and 5) for ten consecutive years within the 50-year program (40,000 total augmentation) and conduct intensive follow-up monitoring. These fish are additional to the annual augmentation listed in BONY 3.4.***

### **Current Conservation Measure**

#### 5.7.4.2 Conservation Measures (LCR MSCP 2004)

**BONY3 – Bonytail augmentation program.** The LCR MSCP will provide a level of funding to support implementation of a stocking/augmentation program for the bonytail providing for the stocking of up to 620,000 subadult bonytail (at least 300mm in length) into the designated critical habitat for the species in Reaches 2-3, and in Reaches 4 and 5 of the LCR. The figure of 620,000 fish is not a target number for the LCR but represents an assumption (see BONY1) used to define the extent of funding that would be available, with the understanding that the adaptive management process (see 5.12.2.2) would guide the actual stocking program. The elements of the augmentation program divide the conservation efforts into the three reaches with numbers for fish per year per reach:

3.3 When technology permits, implement an experimental augmentation of 8,000 subadult fish annually in the Parker-Imperial river reach (Reaches 4 and 5) for five consecutive years within the 50-year program (40,000 total augmentation) and conduct intensive follow-up monitoring. (HCP, pg 5-42)

## **Justification**

A total of 6425 bonytail were stocked into the LCR between Parker and Imperial Dams in 2006-2007, 1208 in the Parker Strip and 5217 in the river below Palo Verde Diversion Dam. Subsequent monitoring conducted between January 2006 and April 2008 contacted 177 fish (Schooley et al., 2008). After analysis of these data, a recommendation to suspend stocking of bonytail within the main stem LCR below Palo Verde Diversion Dam has been proposed to US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game. Studies will be conducted to further define past stocking success and to evaluate limited stocking within several backwaters that are occasionally connected to the main stem during times of high flow.

Production capabilities have been limited due to several issues not anticipated during LCR MSCP planning, including quagga mussel infestation of the LCR and the detection of largemouth bass virus at several National Fish Hatcheries. Studies are underway to determine management actions to alleviate these conditions.

Once survival studies have been concluded and production issues have been resolved, the experimental stocking call for in Conservation Measure BONY 3.3 will be initiated. Reclamation fish biologists have recommended that the time period for experimental augmentation be increased from 5 years to 10 years to allow identified research to be completed. Total fish stocked will remain unchanged.

## **Literature Cited**

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program. 2004. Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program: Volume II. Habitat Conservation Plan. Final. December 2004.

Schooley, J.D., B. R. Kesner, J. R. Campbell, J. M. Barkstedt, and P. C. Marsh. 2008. Survival of razorback sucker in the lower Colorado River, Final Report, January 2006 – April 2008. Arizona State University. 55 pp.