

**Testimony of
Terry Sullivan for The Nature Conservancy
Regarding H.R. 2288 to Extend the Base Funding for the
Upper Colorado River and San Juan River Basin
Endangered Fish Recovery Programs**

**Before the
Water and Power Subcommittee
House Natural Resources Committee
Washington D.C.
September 22, 2009**

My name is Terry Sullivan, senior policy adviser for water resources at The Nature Conservancy, and I am here today to express the strong support of the Conservancy, and its close conservation group partner, the Western Resource Advocates, for the passage of H.R. 2288. Our organization is a long-standing member of the Management Committee for the Upper Colorado Program and a more recent addition to the Coordination Committee for the San Juan Program. We work with Western Resource Advocates, a member of the Implementation Committee for the Upper Colorado Program, and a host of state, federal, tribal, and water user partners to ensure the success of these programs in recovering the federally listed, warm-water, native fish species that depend on the Colorado River system. You have received a letter of support for H.R. 2288 from the directors for the Conservancy and Western Resource Advocates on these recovery programs.

We are participants in these programs because they support the recovery of endangered, native fish in the Upper Colorado River Basin through improved management of federal dams (like Flaming Gorge, Aspinall and Navajo), river and floodplain habitat restoration, active native fish stocking, and the control of non-native fish species. These programs have recovery goals that provide objective, measurable criteria for downlisting and delisting the species, including numeric population goals and a set of specific recovery activities. These goals allow the programs to monitor progress towards achieving recovery, to assess the effectiveness of management actions, and to adjust recovery efforts through adaptive management.

The collaborative programs for endangered fish recovery enable water development and management to take place in the Upper Basin in compliance with both the Endangered Species Act and interstate compacts and state water laws. The programs also provide ESA compliance for continued operation of federal water and power projects in the Upper Basin. They have been supported by the governors of all four states and consecutive Secretaries of the Interior and for Energy. These governors and federal agencies have just extended the cooperative agreements on these programs through the same period for which this base funding would be extended by H.R. 2288.

Currently, these programs are nearing the end of a capital construction phase, in which there has been significant non-federal cost sharing. Although important capital projects remain especially for the San Juan Program, rigorous adaptive management is now needed to fully utilize these significant and shared capital investments. Through this approach, program managers will work to assess the effectiveness of the on-going fish habitat and population management actions, and

to adjust these actions to ensure continued progress towards the recovery goals. Extension of the base funding for the recovery programs from the federal hydropower revenues generated in the Upper Basin is critical. This base funding, which is also cost-shared, will be cut by almost 40% starting next year without the passage of H.R. 2288. We greatly fear that such a cut would undo these programs and our chances for endangered fish recovery and orderly water management in the Upper Basin.

By some measures these listed fish species are still dangerously close to extinction and are completely absent from river reaches where they were once abundant. The outcome of recovery is by no means ensured by the very significant investments and extensive cooperation to date. We must remain steadfast in this next phase of adaptive management towards their recovery and therefore strongly urge the adoption of H.R. 2288.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony to the Water and Power Subcommittee.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 14 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 83 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

Western Resource Advocates is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the Interior West's land, air, and water. With more than 29 employees and offices in Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada, we promote river restoration and water conservation, advocate for a clean and sustainable energy future, and protect public lands for future generations. We meet our goals in collaboration with other environmental and community groups, and by developing solutions appropriate to the environmental, economic and cultural framework of this region.