



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Southeast Aquatic Section
2500 S. Main Street
Lamar, CO 81052
P 719.336.6607 | F 719.336.6623

DATE: February 2, 2022
TO: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership
FROM: Jim Ramsay & Paul Foutz, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Aquatic Biologists
RE: Support Letter for Riverside Restoration Initiative

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Southeast Aquatic Section staff would like to provide this letter in support of the proposed project sponsored by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, entitled: John Martin Reservoir Riverside Restoration Initiative. The project seeks to remove invasive tamarisk trees and shrubs and replace them with native willows, cottonwoods, cattails, and native forb species. In our professional opinion, Tamarisk infestation is harmful to native fish assemblages, and its removal will provide immediate benefits to the fishery. The Arkansas River, immediately below John Martin Dam, is home to numerous species of native fish, three of which are considered species of concern, or threatened and endangered (Suckermouth Minnow, Arkansas Darter, and Flathead Chub).

Tamarisk plants harm the aquatic ecosystem in numerous ways. As stout, sturdy plants, they armor and stabilize the riverbank. This tends to channelize the river, preventing natural meandering and movement of riverbeds. Tamarisk trees also tend to outcompete native riparian vegetation. The dense stands of mature tamarisk trees often “crowd out” all other forms of river bank shrubs. This thick vegetation can prevent sunlight penetration into the water, causing temperature differences and limiting natural aquatic plant growth. Tamarisk trees also have a high rate of evapotranspiration. Large amounts of water (that would be available as fish habitat if tamarisk trees were absent) are absorbed through the plants and released into the atmosphere. As the water table is lowered by the tamarisk trees, river flows become less secure, especially during periods of drought. Finally, soil salinity is increased in areas infested with tamarisk trees. This can be damaging to the river system, as water quality deteriorates for fresh-water fish as salt levels rise in the aquatic environment.

We fully support the implementation of this project and strongly desire to see similar projects progress in the future along additional reaches of the Arkansas River.

