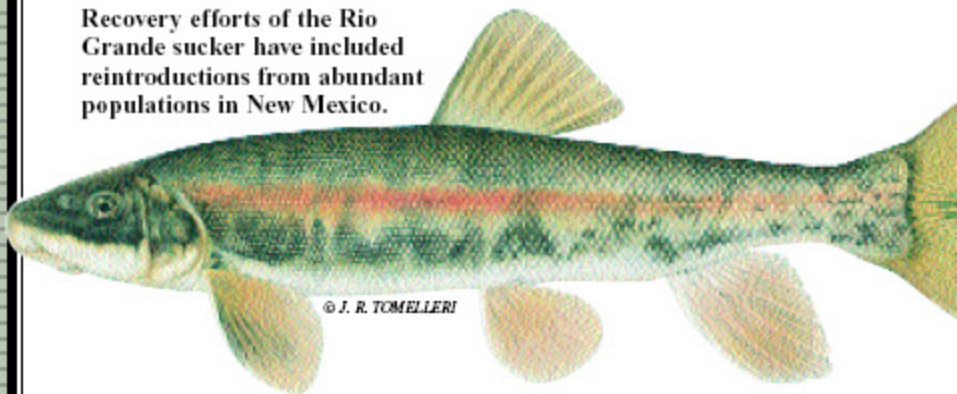


RIO GRANDE SUCKER

Catostomus plebeius (Endangered Colorado)

Recovery efforts of the Rio Grande sucker have included reintroductions from abundant populations in New Mexico.



THIS SMALL SUCKER SPECIES of the Rio Grande River basin was listed in Colorado in 1993 when it was discovered only one small population remained in Hot Creek on the state wildlife area. A recovery plan was developed for the Rio Grande sucker in 1994.

Adult Rio Grande suckers reach a length of 4-6 inches and are brown in coloration with black blotches and white or yellow underneath. The head of the Rio Grande sucker lacks scales and the body is finely scaled. During spawning in the spring, males display broad black and bright red lateral stripes and tubercles on the tail. The mouth is typically sucker-like with thick lips and is equipped with a well-developed cartilaginous ridge for scraping algae from rocks. Rio Grande suckers inhabit streams exclusively and prefer smaller streams with clear water, pools and riffles.

The Rio Grande sucker declined due to hybridization with non-native white sucker, predation from gamefish such as northern pike, largemouth bass and brown trout and land uses causing sedimentation and siltation in the gravel and rock stream bottoms necessary for feeding and spawning. Recovery actions have included reintroduction from abundant populations in New Mexico and removal of white sucker from the Hot Creek population. Seven additional populations have been started through transplants into suitable secure habitats in several small stream drainages in the Rio Grande basin. A hatchery broodstock is being developed at the John W. Mumma Native Aquatic Species Restoration Facility near Alamosa. These recovery efforts have been and continue to be a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Rio Grande Water Conservation District and private landowners.