Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced he approved a cooperative agreement to activate the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program for the recovery of endangered squawfish "Although the actual effort to bring about recovery of the squawfish in the San Juan Basin has been underway for nearly two years, the completion of this document provides us with the blueprint for future," Lujan said. "This is an important step toward achieving our goal of recovery for the endangered fish while responding to the water needs of the tribes and non-Indian water users." The recovery implementation program is required under an agreement signed a year ago which allows initial portions of the Animas-La Plata Project to be constructed while the recovery program seeks to improve habitat for the endangered fish.

Negotiations leading the agreement began in May 1990 after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued an opinion that the Animas-La Plata Project would jeopardize the squawfish in the San Juan River. · In signing the cooperative agreement, Lujan also noted that the Animas-La Plata Project is central to the 1988 Colorado Ute Indian water rights settlement. "We have come a long way in resolving water rights disputes between Indians and non-Indians, in resolving cost-sharing on the Animas-La Plata Project, and now in resolving the potential conflict between an endangered species and water resource development," Lujan said. "The main reason for this progress is the willingness of people to work together toward a fair solution. We can all be proud of the partnerships which have developed between the federal and state governments and the tribes and their non-Indian neighbors.

The cooperative agreement has been distributed to other signatories, including the involved states and Indian tribes, for their final approval.