



ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023



Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

Email: info@upcowildandscenic.com

Website: www.upcowildandscenic.com

Table of Contents

- Background _____ 1
- State of the River – 2022 Hydrology _____ 2
- Status of ORV Indicators & Resource Guides _____ 2
 - Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators..... 2
 - Recreational Floatboating ORV Indicator 3
 - Resource Guides 3
- Monitoring Committee _____ 5
- Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures _____ 5
 - Historic User Pool (HUP)..... 5
 - Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) & Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP) 5
 - Modification of reservoir operations in response to warm stream temperatures and low streamflow..... 6
 - Gore Fest..... 6
- Governance _____ 6
- Goals For Next Year _____ 6
 - Governance 6
 - Monitoring 7
 - Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures 8
- March 31, 2023 Financial Statement _____ 9

Background

The Stakeholder Group (SG) has been working since 2008 to develop and implement an alternative management plan that protects the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) identified on the mainstem of the Colorado River from Gore Canyon to the lower portion of Glenwood Canyon. The SG's intention is to balance permanent protection of the ORVs, certainty for the stakeholders, water project yield, and flexibility for water users.



The SG submitted the Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group Alternative Management Plan to the BLM and USFS in February 2011. The SG subsequently submitted an updated plan, endorsed by all the stakeholders, and provided consensus comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statements in January 2012. In June 2015, after a year-long planning and analysis effort, the BLM and USFS released Records of Decision that approved Revised Resource Management

Plans, which included the updated plan, for the BLM Kremmling and Colorado River Valley field offices, and for a section of the Colorado River within the White River National Forest.

Following a five-year Provisional Period, in which provisional ORV Indicators and Resource Guides were reviewed, refined, and finalized, the SG submitted the [Amended & Restated SG Plan \(SG Plan\)](#) to the BLM and USFS on June 8, 2020. This was again endorsed by all participating stakeholders. After more than 10 years of cooperative effort, the BLM and USFS formally accepted the SG Plan.

State of the River – 2022 Hydrology

In W&S year 2022, from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, the total annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (09058000) was 534,756 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (09070500) was 1,058,663 acre feet. Consequently, streamflow at the Kremmling gage was ranked in the “Wet Typical” category and at the Dotsero gage it was ranked in the “Dry Typical” category (see

Figure 1).

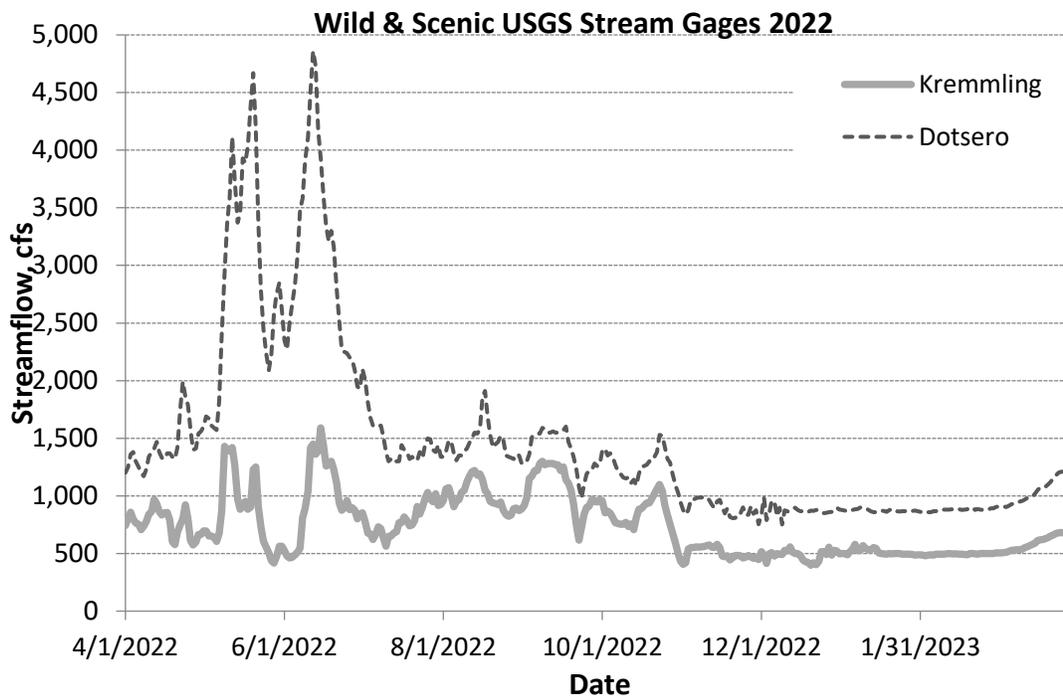


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic stream gages at Kremmling and Dotsero in 2022.

Status of ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

ORV Indicators were met for all established thresholds

The SG Plan uses two distinct tools – “ORV Indicators” (characterizing the range and quality of the ORVs), which will be used to gauge whether the ORVs are being protected; and “Resource Guides” (reflecting ranges for factors such as flow, temperature, and water quality) that will be used as a source of information among others to inform SG discussions under the SG Plan. Detailed information on the ORV Indicators and Resource Guides can be found in pages 15-34 of the [SG Plan](#) and in the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report.

Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators

In 2022, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) completed annual biosurveys at State Bridge and Lyons Gulch. Lyons Gulch is a CPW monitoring location but is not an ORV Indicator location identified in the SG Plan. CPW plans to conduct biosurveys at Radium and Catamount sites in 2023. The 2022

fish monitoring surveys indicated that both quality trout and biomass exceeded the identified thresholds at State Bridge.



As of 2022, the catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) ORV Indicator threshold was only established at Radium. In 2022, the CPUE for Radium fell below the established threshold and discussions with CPW indicate that the lower catch rate at Radium could be attributed to high turbidity related to upstream wildfires. As per the SG Plan, the ORV Indicator threshold for CPUE is not met if the threshold at a given location falls below the value in any three out of five years. As such, the W&S SG will continue to track the CPUE ORV Indicator threshold results at Radium.

Recreational Floatboating ORV Indicator

The A&R SG Plan evaluates the Recreational Floatboating ORV in Segments 5, 6, and 7 based on the “Not Likely to Return” ORV Indicator. This indicator uses visitor intercept survey responses to the question “Based on your experience today, how likely would you be to return to this section of river.” Responses of “0% - will not return” and “25% - unlikely” are combined to determine the percent of people that are not likely to return. Divergences occur when annual percentage values are greater than the ORV Indicator percentage values. Failure to meet the ORV Indicator occurs when divergences exist in any three of the last five consecutive years. The [A&R SG Plan](#) (Section III.B.2) provides details on the Recreational Floatboating ORV Indicator metric.

In 2022, the SG retained RRC Associates to conduct user intercept surveys. RRC collected and processed survey responses to evaluate the percentage values for the Not Likely to Return ORV Indicator. The 2022 survey responses provided sufficient data to set the final ORV Indicator percentage values for Segment 5 Wet Typical year type. There were no divergences from the ORV Indicator values for Not Likely to Return in Segment 7, and there were no divergences from the interim ORV Indicator values (which are only used for informational purposes and not used to evaluate if the Not Likely to Return ORV Indicator is met or not met) in Segments 5 and 6, therefore there are no divergences in 2022.

Resource Guides

Recreational Floatboating

Resource Guides for Recreational Floatboating are based on assessing the number of boatable days at different opportunity levels based on the year type. The Boatable days for Segments 4-6 were within range for boatable days in a Wet Typical year type. The number of Boatable days for the 1,300 – 4,000 opportunity were below range. The boatable days for Segment 7 was within range for all opportunity categories in a Dry Typical year type.

Recreational Fishing

Calculations of the seasonal average flow and rolling 5-year flows are based on daily mean discharge at the Kremmling gage. The 2022 5-year rolling average is above the mid-point seasonal flow range for Seasons 1, 2, and 3. For Season 4, the 5-year rolling average is below the mid-point.

The Resource Guide for flushing flows is defined as, “A daily average flow at or above 2,500 cfs at the Kremmling gage maintained for a minimum of three consecutive days in 50% of the years over a 10-year rolling period, beginning with the period April 1, 2011 through March 31, 2022.” The instantaneous peak of 1,650 cfs occurred on June 14, 2022. The flushing flow streamflow and duration of occurred in 60% of years based on the 10-year rolling average.

Desired species are tracked at Radium, State Bridge, and Catamount through the annual CPW fish monitoring surveys. Bluehead suckers, flannelmouth suckers, and Colorado River cutthroat trout are native species that are considered rare and are not anticipated to be detected annually. In 2022, CPW reported the presence of brown trout, rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, and mottled sculpin at State Bridge.

Channel Maintenance Flows

The [Channel Maintenance Flow Observational Monitoring Plan](#) was developed in 2021. In 2022, the methodologies, monitoring sites’ locations, and costs were refined. Additionally, two Request for Proposals were released for Drone-Based Aerial Imagery/Photogrammetry, and Cross-Sectional Channel Surveys and Substrate Measures. The W&S SG will hire an outside expert by summer 2023 and monitoring activities will start in the fall of 2023.



Water temperature

The Resource Guides for water temperature are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission’s stream temperature water quality standards. Based on comparison to State standards all sites within the W&S segments exceeded the chronic (MWAT) temperature standards in 2022. All sites from State Bridge downstream exceeded it for one or multiple weeks. The lower Blue River above the Colorado River confluence had a notable period of MWAT standard exceedances in May prior to the shift to summer standards. Temperature concerns existed for local fisheries on all segments of W&S, with voluntary closure requests from CPW on various combinations of segments between Kremmling and Glenwood Canyon in effect from July 15 through August 24. Air temperatures reached 90 degrees F during several periods in June, July, and August.

Water quality

The Resource Guides for water quality are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission’s water quality standards for recreation and aquatic life use. Colorado’s Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters and Monitoring and Evaluation List (Regulation #93 – 5 CCR 1002-93), effective August 14, 2021, lists Segments COUCUC03_C (578 Road Bridge to Gore Canyon), COUCUC03_D (Gore Canyon

to Derby Creek), and COUCUC03_E (Derby Creek to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River) are identified as impaired for temperature (From 578 Road Bridge to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River; W&S Segments 4 – 7) with a high priority designation. Segment COUCUC03_E is on the Monitoring & Evaluation list for E. coli.

Monitoring Committee



Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2022, monitoring activities were conducted to better understand existing conditions and to evaluate ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. The SG contracted with RRC Associates to collect data on the ORV Indicators for Recreational Floatboating (not likely to return) and Recreational Fishing (catch-per-unit-effort). Colorado Parks and Wildlife conducted fish surveys to evaluate the quality trout and biomass ORV Indicator for Recreational Fishing. In

addition, W&S contracted with Grand County Water Information Network to deploy temperature loggers to evaluate water temperature. Monitoring for macroinvertebrates occurs on a biennial basis and will be completed again in 2023. All other Resource Guides were monitored by Stakeholders. Details of the 2022 monitoring activities are provided in the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report.

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Historic User Pool (HUP)

Representatives from the Cooperative Measures Committee participated in HUP weekly calls between March and October to provide input on operations being discussed on the Colorado River. Those representatives provided updates to the Cooperative Measures Committee.

Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) & Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP)

The 2022 W&S Water Year was in the “Wet Typical” category at the Kremmling gage and the “Dry Typical” category at the Dotsero gage. No CROS occurred in 2022. The Shoshone Power Plant was off-line for much of the year and therefore the ShOP was implemented in April (4/4 through 4/19), July (7/8 through 7/20) October and November (10/24 through 11/4), and February through April (2/28 through 4/10).

Modification of reservoir operations in response to warm stream temperatures and low streamflow

July 2022 saw exceptionally warm stream temperatures and low streamflow conditions at the Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero gages. Colorado Parks and Wildlife enacted mandatory and voluntary fishing closures on reaches in the Upper Colorado River. The Cooperative Measures Committee met remotely several times to try to address these conditions in the Upper Colorado River. The Colorado River Water Conservation District responded to the river conditions by releasing 200 acre feet of water from Wolford Reservoir. Later in August, Denver Water bypassed 200 acre-feet in the Fraser River basin.

Gore Fest

The SG continues to financially support Gore Fest. The 2022 event was held on August 27 though was limited to the downriver SUP race and freestyle events. The Class V Gore Race did not occur due to insurance issues. Each year, the event brings together Colorado paddlers to celebrate the end of another Colorado boating season. The event also celebrates the Grand County Recreational In-Channel Diversion whitewater park project that was a huge success for many W&S stakeholders and especially for those who recreate on the Upper Colorado River.

Governance

The SG met five times during this time period, which includes a special meeting in September 2022 as well as two in-person meetings in Kremmling, CO and Frisco, CO. Torie Jarvis (Local Government Interest Group) is the SG Chair and Maria Pastore (East Slope Water Users) is the SG Vice-Chair. In March 2023, Maria Pastore became the SG Chair and Hattie Johnson (Recreational Floatboating) became the SG Vice-Chair and the Executive Committee was reauthorized for another year. The SG continued discussions regarding creating a corporate entity with nonprofit status to support the work of the SG. The Executive Committee brought incorporation documents for SG review and approval at the January 2023 SG meeting. The timing of incorporation will be approved at a later date.



Funding for the W&S SG is provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board Wild & Scenic Rivers Fund and Interest Group dues. During this year, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments was the fiscal agent. See the financial statement at the end of this report.

Goals For Next Year

Governance

The Stakeholder Group will conduct four meetings of the SG and Special Meetings as needed. The standing committees as well as the Channel Maintenance Flow workgroup will continue their respective efforts.

Per the SG Plan, the SG will seek to create an endowment fund with a corpus of at least \$1.5 million. The SG's intent is to preserve the corpus of the fund and use the annual yield for protecting and enhancing ORVs. Denver Water, Northern Water, Municipal Subdistrict, and the River District are committed to providing funding. It is the goal of the SG that each member makes a financial contribution to the endowment fund, in an amount that takes into consideration each member's financial ability to contribute. During this next year, the Finance Committee will continue to make progress towards creating the endowment fund.

Money will be committed to the Endowment Fund within one year of issuance of acceptable permits for Denver Water's Moffat Collection System Project and Northern Water Municipal Subdistrict's Windy Gap Firing Project. An acceptable permit for Windy Gap Firing Project has been issued and the Municipal Subdistrict has committed to making the required contribution to the Endowment Fund once such fund is established. Although Denver Water has resolved the 1041 permit with Boulder County, there is one outstanding lawsuit.

Monitoring

[The 2023 Monitoring Plan can be found on the W&S website at upcowildandscenic.com.](https://www.upcowildandscenic.com)

Temperature

The W&S-sponsored temperature monitoring program will continue, which includes three time-series temperature loggers deployed at established study sites. The SG is a dues-paying member of Grand County Water Information Network (GCWIN) and will contract with GCWIN to administer the three W&S temperature sites.

Recreational Fishing and Floatboating ORV Indicators



For 2023, the SG has approved a \$53,700 work plan that builds on previous efforts, continues support for the SG and committees, and refines methods for warehousing and accessing data. This work plan includes Fishing and Floatboating Intercept Surveys as well as processing the BLM's vehicle counts.

Macroinvertebrates

The SG has approved a [long-term plan to conduct macroinvertebrate monitoring](#) on a biennial basis. Consistent with this long-term plan, the SG will conduct macroinvertebrate sampling at five sites (Pumphouse, Radium, State Bridge, Above Catamount, and Below Sweetwater) in 2023.

Channel Maintenance Flows

During 2023 the workgroup will start collecting data per the Channel Maintenance Flow Observational Monitoring Plan. General observer notes and repeated photo points will be completed by the SG. Drone-based aerial imagery/photogrammetry, cross-sectional channel surveys, and substrate measures will be conducted by outside consultants.

Streamflow

The River District and the USGS cover operations and maintenance (O&M) costs for the USGS stream gage 09058000 Colorado River near Kremmling. The Kremmling gage operates year-round. The BLM, White River National Forest, and USGS cover O&M costs for the USGS stream gage 09060799 Colorado River at Catamount Bridge. The Catamount gage operates for eight months annually (March 15 – November 15).

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Early 2023 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting that April-July undepleted flows will fall into the Wet Typical category for the Kremmling and Dotsero gage locations. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue to monitor flows and stream temperatures on a weekly basis and distribute that information to W&S SG. The Committee will use this information to identify potential problem areas and look for opportunities to address such concerns or enhance flows. As an example, the Committee will monitor the State of the River/CROS operations as well as the HUP operations to look for opportunities to benefit river conditions in the W&S segments.

Long-term protection measures will continue to be in place for 2023. The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program fish pool releases that affect the W&S segments will be in place (e.g. the 5412.5 acre-foot pool in Granby Reservoir and 6,000 acre-foot pool in Wolford Mountain Reservoir). Implementation of the Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP) continues to be in place for 2023 and will be implemented as needed throughout the year. Other Tier 1 measures are in place, such as the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) instream flow water rights, senior water rights operations, and water deliveries from upstream reservoirs through the W&S segments.

In response to recommendations in the September 2021 BLM and USFS Annual Effectiveness Review, the Cooperative Measures Committee continues to discuss the potential for and feasibility of an SG funded pool of water to be utilized in the W&S segments. The Committee has initiated discussions specifically regarding a potential contract in Green Mountain Reservoir, the elements and duration of a contract, the mechanism for delivery, how such a pool would be managed and the anticipated costs. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue this discussion in 2023.

March 31, 2023 Financial Statement

	NWCCOG PO 2021 - 2248	2021 Interest Group Contributions	NWCCOG PO 2022 - 2302	2022 Interest Group Contributions	Total Active Funding and Contracts
Funding Sources	\$ 70,525.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 99,999.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 210,526.00
<i>Less total amounts applied against the funding:</i>					
Applied against NWCCOG CWCB PO 2021 - 2248					
PO 2021 - 2248 Pay Request #1, May 20, 2021	(5,941.95)				(5,941.95)
PO 2021 - 2248 Pay Request #2, October 20, 2021	(15,885.25)				(15,885.25)
PO 2021 - 2248 Pay Request #3, May 9, 2022	(30,758.98)				(30,758.98)
PO 2021 - 2248 Pay Request #4, January 9, 2023	(17,938.82)				(17,938.82)
Applied against NWCCOG CWCB PO 2022-2302					
PO 2022 - 2302 Pay Request #1, January 9, 2023			(42,723.12)		(42,723.12)
Applied against 2021 Interest Group dues					
2021 Field Trip Expenses		(650.81)			(650.81)
Fountainhead Consulting 321 April 2022 & CMF field trip #1		(297.34)			(297.34)
GCWIN Invoice 197, February 1 2022		(525.00)			(525.00)
Lotic Hydrological Invoice 22.107, January 6, 2022		(600.00)			(600.00)
CMF field trip #1 expenses		(580.15)			(580.15)
Gore Festival 2022, Invoice 5435		(968.91)			(968.91)
Incorporation / Endowment support		(762.00)			(762.00)
Applied against 2022 Interest Group dues					
RRC Invoice 20104, June 20, 2022				(3,842.31)	(3,842.31)
Amounts applied against funding	(70,525.00)	(4,384.21)	(42,723.12)	(3,842.31)	(121,474.64)
Funding net of applied amounts	-	15,616.79	57,275.88	16,158.69	89,051.36
<i>Less total amounts incurred but not yet applied against funding:</i>					
Fountainhead Consulting 375 January 2023			(2,959.50)		(2,959.50)
Fountainhead Consulting 382 February 2023			(3,224.50)		(3,224.50)
Fountainhead Consulting 388, March 2023			(3,328.18)		(3,328.18)
RRC Invoice 20322, February 23, 2023			(13,305.00)		(13,305.00)
RRC Invoice 20376			(2,710.00)		(2,710.00)
GCWIN Invoice 245, February 7, 2023, 2023 membership dues			(552.00)		(552.00)
Lotic Hydrological Invoice 23.122, February 14, 2023			(700.00)		(700.00)
Admin costs	-		(1,338.96)		(1,338.96)
Total Amounts Incurred but not yet applied against funding	-	-	(28,118.14)		(28,118.14)
Funding Available as of March 31, 2023	-	15,616.79	29,157.74	16,158.69	60,933.22