

Background

The Wild and Scenic Alternative Management Plan (SG Plan) was adopted by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on June 12, 2015 to protect the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) identified by BLM and USFS for the Colorado River from its confluence with the Blue River to near Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The plan was proposed by and is being implemented as a Wild and Scenic management alternative by a stakeholder group (SG) representing a broad range of interests, including east slope and west slope water users, local government, state interests, conservation/environmental/fishing, and float-boating. The SG Plan aims to protect all ORVs identified in the federal agencies' Eligibility Reports, while focusing on the water-related Recreational Fishing and Recreational Boating ORVs. The SG's intention is to "balance permanent protection of the ORVs, certainty for the stakeholders, water project yield, and flexibility for water users."

This report summarizes the SG activities in 2017 as well as the SG's goals for 2018. For more background information on the SG Plan, visit our website at www.upcowildandscenic.com.

State of the River

Understanding of 'existing conditions' in these stream reaches has improved dramatically since the SG's inception in 2008. Details of this growing body of information can be found in the SG's Annual Monitoring Reports.

2017 Hydrology (see figure 1)

In 2017, the total actual annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage was 790,729* acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage was 1,401,433* acre feet. Consequently, these two segments are ranked in the "Wettest 25%" and "Wet Typical" categories, respectively.

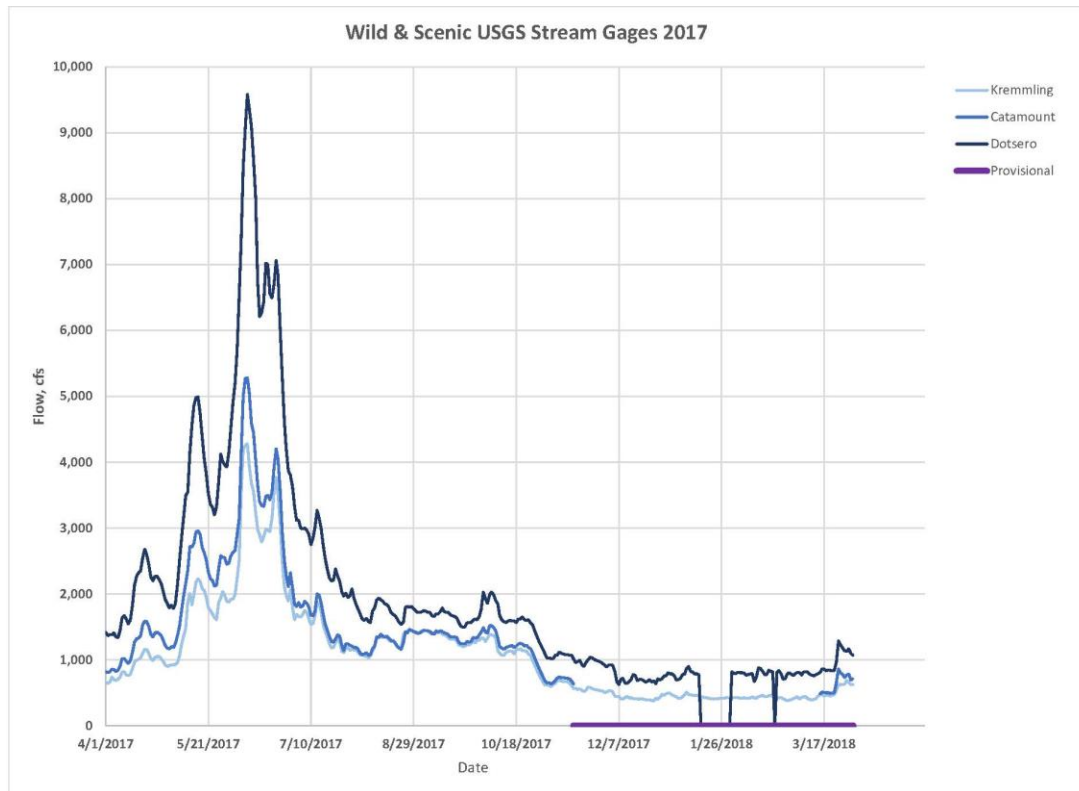


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic Stream Gages at Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero in 2017.

Status of Provisional ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

Based on available data, most of the SG Plan’s Provisional ORV Indicators and Resource Guides were met in 2017. However, Provisional ORV Indicators for biomass and species diversity were not met at the State Bridge site and the Provisional Resource Guide for mean daily average temperature was exceeded at the Catamount and No Name temperature sites.

2017 Accomplishments

In 2017, the SG continued to focus most of its efforts on the development and implementation of monitoring protocols to evaluate the status of the ORVs and on the development of final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. The SG also reached important consensus decisions with respect to ambiguous aspects of the plan. The SG’s efforts in 2017 are more specifically described in the following sections.

ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

The SG Plan uses two distinct tools - “ORV Indicators,” which are used to gage whether the range and quality of ORVs are being protected, and “Resource Guides,” which are used as a source of information to inform SG discussions regarding factors such as flow, temperature and water quality. The SG Plan, as adopted by BLM and the USFS, includes “Provisional” ORV Indicators and Resource Guides, developed through consensus of the SG based on information available at the time. The SG established a “Provisional Period” during which additional data is

to be gathered and “Final” ORV Indicators and Resource Guides are to be adopted. To assist in accomplishing this task, the SG designated two Ad-Hoc committees in 2016, the “Fishing AHC” and “Boating AHC”, which continued to work on their respective tasks throughout 2017.

Fishing Ad Hoc Committee: The Fishing AHC meet several times in 2017. The discussions focused primarily on the ORV Indicators for Quality Trout and Biomass. Currently there is sufficient field survey data to establish a Final ORV Indicator for Radium, but another three bio-survey sets, minimum, will be required to establish Final ORV Indicators for the State Bridge and Catamount sites. Discussions also progressed on the need to include macro-invertebrate sampling and analysis to adequately monitor the overall health of the fishery and river ecosystem. Progress was also made on the establishment of final CPUE indicators. The Fishing AHC also discussed reducing the listed species within the Biodiversity category and the possibility of taking that Indicator out and making it a Resource Guide.

Boating Ad Hoc Committee: The Boating AHC also met regularly during 2017. The AHC worked on formulating a recommendation to replace the current provisional narrative ORV Indicator with a more objective, data-driven assessment of visitor satisfaction to determine whether the existing range and quality of floatboating opportunities is protected and visitor expectations are being met. This will be presented to the SG for review and approval in 2018.

The Boating AHC also worked to develop approaches for (1) the proposed monitoring of other factors influencing recreation quality (such as level of crowding, water level, facilities, and scenery); and (2) the proposed incorporation of explicit procedures in the SG Plan’s annual planning schedule for timely review and GC consideration of survey results and data inputs on relevant factors.

During 2017, the Ad Hoc Floatboating Group also identified the list of outstanding issues that need to be addressed as part of developing proposals to refine the provisional Resource Guides for floatboating.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2017, monitoring activities were conducted to assist in better understanding ‘existing conditions’ and to support the development of Final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. Details of 2017 monitoring activities are provided in the 2017 Annual Monitoring Report, which can be downloaded from the SG’s website.

Highlights of the 2017 monitoring activities include: The SG gathered available hydrology and temperature data related to the W&S segments to support SG decisions, including the first full season of data generated at the new Catamount Bridge gage (USGS 09060799). Data on recreational fishing and floatboating use were collected by RRC Associates on behalf of the SG. The SG also acquired macroinvertebrate data from Grand County as part of the Learning by Doing Cooperative Effort at the Pumphouse reach for inclusion in the annual monitoring report.

2017 Annual Report

Long-term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

During 2017, members of the SG's Cooperative Measures Committee participated in weekly "Historic User Pool" (HUP) conference calls to provide real-time perspective on river conditions and the SG's responsibilities under the SG Plan. As a result, "Coordinated Reservoir Operations" (CROS) helped achieve higher peak flows than would have otherwise occurred, enhancing floatboating opportunities as defined in the SG Plan. In addition, reservoir releases were timed to prevent streamflow from exceeding desired flows for the annual Gore Canyon Festival in August.

Governance

In 2017, the SG held four quarterly meetings, plus the annual Governance Committee meeting in March. The Executive Committee was confirmed in early 2017 and convened regularly to provide assistance and advice to the GC.

Provisional Period - ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

Floatboating and Fishing Ad-Hoc Committees continued to meet on a regular basis to develop recommendations for Final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides.

SG MOU with Federal Agencies

The SG's Executive Committee drafted a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the BLM, Colorado River Valley Field Office and Kremmling Field Office and the USFS, Rocky Mountain Region, White River National Forest to document the cooperation among the SG and these agencies on implementation of the SG Alternative Management Plan. The full SG reviewed and discussed the draft MOU, after which the Executive Committee provided it to the BLM and USFS for review.

Events

The SG supported the annual Gore Canyon Festival, which was held August 25-27 at Rancho del Rio and the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at BLM's Pumphouse Recreation Site. With cooperation among the HUP participants and Gore Fest coordinators, streamflow was capped at 1,410 cfs during the initial stages of the event.

Goals for 2018

Governance

The Governance Committee will conduct quarterly meetings of the SG, plus the annual GC meeting in March. The standing Monitoring and Cooperative Measures Committees will continue their respective efforts, and the Finance Committee will convene before the end of 2018.

Poison Pill and Endowment Fund

2017 Annual Report

At the 2018 Annual meeting the creation of the Endowment Fund and appointment of a Trustee was postponed until after we get past the Poison Pill clause, subject to periodic review of the timing of the Poison Pill deadline. The Executive Committee was tasked with identifying the interim steps and proposed timeline for creation of the Endowment Fund, with the provision that the GC revisit this issue at least annually.

Provisional Period - ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

At the 2018 Annual meeting the GC approved an extension of time beyond June 12, 2018 for adopting final Floatboating Resource Guides in accordance with paragraph III.C.2 (SG Plan, pg. 17) up to the end of the provisional period on June 12, 2020, provided such guides are developed as soon as possible within that period and quarterly progress reports are given on their development. In addition, the Executive Committee was directed to adjust the deadlines set forth in Attachment B of the SG Plan to be consistent with the body of the Plan and to adjust the deadline to June 12, 2020, conforming to the end of the provisional period.

The Ad-Hoc Committees will develop a plan to meet the 5-year deadline and present said plan for approval by the GC at the June 2018 meeting.

SG MOU with Federal Agencies

After reviewing and incorporating revisions to the draft MOU requested by USFS and BLM, the Executive Committee will bring the MOU to the SG at its June 2018 meeting for approval of a resolution authorizing the Chair of the SG to execute the MOU and send it to the federal agencies for signatures.

Monitoring

The SG's stream temperature monitoring program will be reinstated at all three sites. In addition, two BLM temperature data loggers and three real-time USGS stream gages will be located within the W&S segments.

RRC Associates will complete a \$58,500 work plan that builds on previous efforts and refines methods for warehousing and accessing data. RRC's team will continue to support the SG's committees by providing access to the SG's full set of data and responding to requests for specific analyses of available data. In addition, RRC's 2018 work program will include field intercept surveys to gather experiential data from anglers and boaters.

The Monitoring Committee will work closely with each ad-hoc committee to address data gaps and develop recommendations related to stream temperature exceedances, substrate monitoring, and information regarding flushing flows and channel maintenance flows. In addition, the committee will coordinate the SG's macroinvertebrate monitoring strategy as a necessary component of the Water Quality Resource Guide for the Fishing ORV.

Long-term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Early 2018 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting April-July undepleted flows will fall into the lower range of the Dry Typical Year category. Such conditions

suggest that low flows and high stream temperatures might be expected in 2018. The Cooperative Measures Committee will monitor flows and stream temperatures on a weekly basis and distribute that information to keep the Wild and Scenic SG aware of those conditions. The group will use this information to identify potentially serious problem areas and also look for opportunities to address such situations. As an example, the group will monitor the State of the River/CROS operations as well as the HUP operations to look for opportunities to benefit W&S values.

Long-term protection measures will continue to be in place for 2018. The Upper Colorado Endangered Species Program fish pools that affect the Wild and Scenic segments will be in place, e.g. the 5412.5 pool in Granby Reservoir and the fish pool in Wolford Reservoir. Also, due to the dry conditions in the Grand Valley in early 2018, about 3,000 af of the 2017 HUP surplus pool remaining was available and released from Green Mountain Reservoir prior to May 1st, an operation that benefitted the W&S segments. Other Tier 1 measures are in place such as the CWCB instream flow rights, senior water rights operations, and water deliveries from upstream reservoirs through the W&S segments.

ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

The Floatboating and Fishing Ad-Hoc Committees will lead discussions of their respective draft recommendations for Final ORV Indicators during the SG's 2nd quarterly meeting in June, with final recommendations slated for GC approval before the end of the year.

Events

The SG will host their annual reception, followed by a float trip from Radium Recreation Site to State Bridge Landing, as part of the 2nd quarterly meeting in June. During the float trip, representatives from BLM and Eagle County will discuss BLM's management priorities and proposed changes. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) will provide a presentation on river otters during the reception. The SG will continue to support the Gore Canyon Festival in August.

Financial Report

2017 Operating Income

Interest group dues	\$ 20,000
<u>CWCB Wild & Scenic Rivers Fund</u>	<u>\$ 99,455</u>
Total Income	\$119,455

2017 Operating Expenses

Administration & meeting expenses	\$ 67,860
Technical support	\$ 30,000
<u>Events (Gore Fest)</u>	<u>\$ 5,000</u>
Total Expenses	\$102,860