

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 (W&S) 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 floatboating. 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 Floatboating 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's activities in 2018 as well as the SG's goals for 2019. For more information, please visit our website at www.upcowildandscenic.com.

State of the River

2018 Hydrology (see figure 1)

In 2018, the total actual annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (U.S. Geological Survey gage Colorado River near Kremmling, CO, 09058000) was 515,400 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (U.S. Geological Survey Colorado River near Dotsero, CO, 09070500) was 948,963 acre feet. Consequently, these two segments are ranked in the "Dry Typical" and Driest 25% categories, respectively (see figure 1).

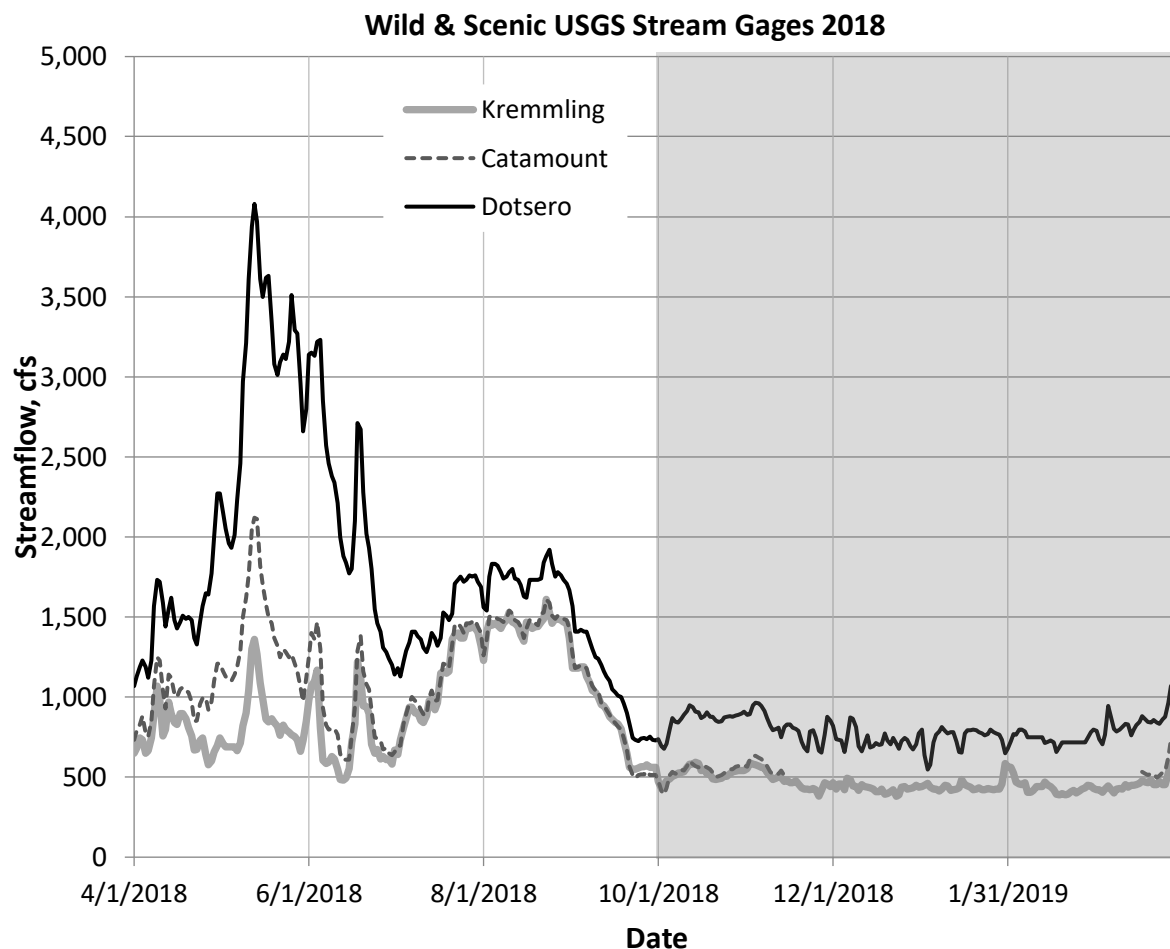


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic Stream Gages at Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero in 2018. This graph contains provisional data which is shown by the grey shading. Each gage has differing time-frames for the approved versus provisional data, see the Annual Monitoring Report for additional information. Provisional data is subject to revision by the USGS; however, values are not expected to change significantly.

Status of Provisional ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

Based on available data, the majority of the provisional ORV Indicators were met in the W&S segments in 2018. However, three provisional Fishing ORV Indicators were not met at the Catamount site. Trout Quality was 21 fish over 14" per acre, versus the provisional ORV Indicator of 24 fish over 14" per acre. Biomass was 56 pounds per acre, versus the provisional ORV Indicator of 90 pounds per acre. Species diversity was ten species collected, versus the provisional ORV Indicator of 14 species.

Resource Guides include additional metrics that may be used to inform SG discussion. The number of useable floatboating days was within range for all segments and all opportunity levels in 2018.

In 2018, instream temperatures were measured that were potentially outside of the provisional Resource Guide range. During 2018, potential Maximum Weekly Average (MWAT) temperature

standard exceedances occurred in the lower W&S SG segments downstream from State Bridge at the Catamount, Red Dirt, and No Name monitoring sites during the months of July and August. The frequency and magnitude of these potential exceedances increased in the downstream direction, with the highest number occurring at the No Name site. A complete analysis per Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) 2018 Section 303(d) listing methodology and Policy Statement 06-1 has not been conducted to determine if any of the potential exceedances would be excluded due to high air temperature, low flow, or shoulder season excursions. Daily Max (DM) observations attained standards at all sites.

2018 Accomplishments

In 2018, the SG continued to focus most of its efforts on developing final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides to be included in the final SG Plan, which is scheduled for completion in June 2020. The SG's efforts in 2018 are more specifically described in the following sections.

ORV Indicators and Resource Guides

The SG Plan uses two tools: ORV Indicators, which are used to gauge whether the range and quality of ORVs are being protected; and Resource Guides, which are used to inform SG discussions regarding factors such as flow, temperature, and water quality. The provisional ORV Indicators and Resource Guides were developed through consensus of the SG based on information available at the time. To assist in accomplishing this task, the SG designated two Ad-Hoc Committees (AHC) in 2016, the Fishing AHC and Floatboating AHC, which continued to work on their respective tasks throughout 2018.

In 2018, the SG determined that the SG Plan does not preclude a decision on a case-by-case basis to adopt final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides that are dependent on additional input pursuant to a specified and approved process. The Governance Committee (GC) also agreed that the final Resource Guides for Water Quality and Temperature will change as CDPHE's Water Quality Regulation 33 is changed and revised.

Fishing Ad Hoc Committee: The Fishing AHC met regularly throughout 2018 and made significant progress in developing final ORV Indicators for Recreational Fishing (Quality Trout, Biomass, and Catch-Per-Unit Effort). They presented draft recommendations for final ORV Indicators at the June 2018 SG meeting. Comments received from the SG were considered and incorporated. The final Fishing AHC recommendations for the Recreational Fishery ORV Indicators were approved at the March 27, 2019 SG annual meeting, with the exception of the confidence interval for the CPUE ORV Indicator, for which the Fishing AHC is working on a recommendation.

The committee made significant progress toward refining and finalizing flow-related Resource Guides identified in the SG Plan, including:

- **Seasonal Flows:** The committee initiated an extensive review of how the provisional Seasonal Flow values were established. Updates were presented to the SG in the latter

half of 2018, with the goal of making a final recommendation at the August 2019 SG meeting.

- **Flushing Flows:** The SG published a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a 2019 Flushing Flow study and considered the committee’s recommendation to move forward with a proposal that uses hydrophones to continuously record bedload movement in riffles.
- **Channel Maintenance Flows:** The committee continued to discuss the extent to which channel maintenance flows will be incorporated in the Plan. The SG held a special meeting in October 2018 to discuss inclusion of Channel Maintenance Flows in the SG Plan. The committee will continue to address Channel Maintenance Flows throughout 2019, with the goal of making a final recommendation in the latter half of 2019.

Floatboating Ad Hoc Committee: The Floatboating AHC met regularly during 2018. The committee continues to work 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 are protected and visitor expectations are being met.

The SG supported implementation of a trial run of the committee’s proposed Data Review Group to review and report on the results of 2018 data relative to the provisional Floatboating ORV Indicator. Per direction from the SG, the Floatboating AHC served as the Data Review Group. This Data Review Group met several times in 2018 to review data provided by RRC Associates, and developed a summary memorandum including recommendations for 2019, which was provided to the SG at the 2019 Annual Meeting in March.

Monitoring Committee

Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2018, monitoring activities were conducted to assist in better understanding existing conditions and to support the development of Final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. Monitoring work included collection and assessment of data related to hydrology, fish biosurveys, macroinvertebrates, and temperature. The SG contracted with consultants to collect intercept surveys, other recreational use data, and macroinvertebrate and substrate data. Colorado Parks and Wildlife provided the results of their annual biosurveys in the W&S stream reaches. The SG also initiated RFP processes for temperature and flushing flow investigations that will be completed in 2019 and early 2020. Details of 2018 monitoring activities are provided in the 2018 Annual Monitoring Report, which can be downloaded from the SG’s website (www.upcowildandscenic.com).

Long-term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

During 2018, members of the Cooperative Measures Committee participated in weekly river operations meetings, including State of the River and Green Mountain Reservoir “Historic User Pool” (HUP) conference calls to follow river conditions and operational changes and convey the SG’s responsibilities and requests under the SG Plan. Weekly e-mails were sent out to the committee and, at times, the full SG to update participants of streamflows, water temperature,

weather and precipitation forecasts and anticipated changes in operations that would affect river conditions. The addition of the USGS gage at Catamount enabled the committee to regularly monitor air and water temperatures within W&S Segment 6. Participation in the HUP calls also allowed for coordination to ensure adequate flows for the annual Gore Festival in August.

Below average snowpack and dry conditions in 2018 did not allow for Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) to occur. Dry conditions persisted during the month of June, creating low flows and high-temperature concerns on the Colorado River. The committee received a request concerning the low flows and elevated water temperatures in early June. Denver Water, Northern Water, and the River District were able to make operational changes to increase the flows in the river. A similar request was made later in June, but water user operations and other circumstances did not allow for changes to be made to satisfy the request for increased flows.

To prepare for planned maintenance, the River District released approximately 210 cfs of additional releases from Wolford Reservoir from mid-July until September. The additional release helped maintain higher flows and lower water temperatures in the Colorado River in the W&S segments.

Grand County elected to pump 1,000 acre-feet of Windy Gap water into Granby Reservoir during June for release later in the summer and fall. Grand County and the River District coordinated with the Division of Water Resources and downstream water users to secure a contract to release this water for diversion and use in the Grand Valley, pursuant to the requirements of the Windy Gap Decree. This water increased the flows through the W&S segments during the late summer and fall.

During the late summer and early fall, reservoir releases from Wolford Reservoir and Granby Reservoir were made as part of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. While these releases were not made at the request of the SG, and instead were intended for enhancement of flows in the 15-mile Reach in the Grand Valley, they have the anticipated ancillary benefits (as defined Long-Term Protection measures) of increased flows and lower water temperatures in the W&S segments.

Members of the Cooperative Measures Committee communicated with various water users to facilitate cooperative flow management efforts. Examples included operational changes at facilities, modifications to the timing, location, and magnitude of reservoir releases, and coordination with facility managers to minimize flow disruptions in the W&S segments.

In addition to coordinating with water users, recreational users and regulatory agencies, the committee also implemented a process to address questions, concerns and requests from stakeholders and the general public, with a commitment to respond promptly and consistently.

Governance

In 2018, the SG held four quarterly meetings, one Special Meeting, and the annual meeting in March. The Executive Committee was confirmed and convened regularly to provide assistance and advice to the SG.

At the Annual 2018 meeting, the Executive Committee was directed by the SG to adjust the deadlines in Attachment B of the SG Plan to be consistent with the body of the Plan. The SG approved to extend the deadline for adopting final Floatboating Resource Guides to the end of the provisional period on June 12, 2020, in accordance with paragraph III.C.2 (SG Plan, pg. 17). This extension was necessary in order to allow adequate time for discussions related to the use of the Platte and Colorado Simulation Model (PACSM) modeled hydrology and regarding the Floatboating season for Final Resource Guides under the SG Plan. In June 2018, the SG approved the adjusted deadlines to Attachment B of the SG Plan.

The SG approved postponing the establishment of an Endowment Fund until after the SG gets past the Poison Pill clause with the requirement that the Finance Committee be convened in 2018. The Finance Committee charter was approved in late 2018 and has met monthly to assist with monthly finance reporting and to develop the W&S Budget.

Events

The SG supported the annual Gore Canyon Festival, which was held August 24-26 at Rancho del Rio and the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park. Stakeholders also participated in a raft trip from Radium to State Bridge with assistance from AVA Rafting. Presentations by BLM and Eagle County provided details and an opportunity for discussion regarding BLM's Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) management priorities and proposed changes.

Goals for 2019

Governance

The Governance Committee will conduct quarterly meetings of the SG, plus the annual meeting in March. The Stakeholder Group, Executive, Monitoring, Finance, Cooperative Measures Committees, and Fishing and Floatboating AHCs, will continue their respective efforts. Updated charters for each of these committees were adopted by the SG at the 2019 annual meeting.

Poison Pill and Endowment Fund

At the August 28, 2019 or October 23, 2019 SG meeting, the Finance Committee will prepare and deliver an educational presentation on the basics of establishing Endowment Funds to the SG. Periodic review of the timing of the poison pill deadline will continue to occur in 2019. At the August 28, 2019 SG meeting, the East Slope Water Users and Local Government Interest Groups will give a presentation on permitting and mitigations in relation to Windy Gap Firing Project and Moffat Collection System Project.

Monitoring

The SG's stream temperature monitoring program will continue at the same three sites that have been monitored in previous years. The SG has contracted with Lotic Hydrological to conduct an inventory and summary of temperature influences and existing data.

RRC Associates will complete their approved 2019 work plan, which 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 will conduct field intercept surveys to gather experiential data from anglers and boaters.

The SG has contracted with the U.S. Geological Survey to perform a flushing flow study. This study is designed to determine whether the provisional Flushing Flow Resource Guide performs the functions defined by flushing flows (e.g., mobilizing gravel in riffles). Results of this study are anticipated in early 2020, which will aid the SG in making decisions about the final Flushing Flow Resource Guide. The Monitoring Committee will work closely with all study teams and assist with reporting to the SG.

The SG has earmarked funds for potential additional investigations or studies related to macro-invertebrates. The Fishing AHC met in April 2019 to discuss long term macroinvertebrate monitoring.

Long-term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Early 2019 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting April-July undepleted flows will fall into the Wet Typical category for both the Kremmling and Dotsero locations. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue to monitor flows and stream temperatures on a weekly basis and distribute that information to keep the W&S SG aware of those conditions. The committee will use this information to identify potentially serious problem areas and also look for opportunities to address such situations. 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 W&S values.

Long-term protection measures will continue to be in place for 2019. 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 in Wolford Reservoir). Other Tier 1 measures are in place, such as the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) instream flow rights, senior water rights operations, and water deliveries from upstream reservoirs through the W&S segments.

ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

The final Fishing AHC recommendations for the Recreational Fishery ORV Indicators were approved at the March 27, 2019 GC annual meeting, with the exception of the confidence interval for the CPUE ORV Indicator, for which the Fishing AHC is working on a recommendation. In addition, the committee recommended removing Species Diversity as an ORV Indicator and instead including Desired Species as a Resource Guide.

The Fishing AHC will present their recommendations for refining the Resource Guides for seasonal flows and flushing flows, and they will continue to study the extent to which channel maintenance flows will be incorporated in the Plan.

The Floatboating AHC will continue to receive comments from the SG on ORV Indicators in 2019 and will present a recommendation for final ORV Indicators in early 2020. The Floatboating AHC will also present preliminary recommendations for final Resource Guides to the SG in 2019. The results and recommendations of the trial run from the Data Review Group were presented during the SG's 2019 Annual Meeting in March.

2018 Financial Report

IG Contributions	2017				2018				2019	
State Fiscal Year	FYE 6/30/2017		FYE 6/30/2018				FYE 6/30/2019			
W&S Fiscal Year	FYE 3/31/2017		FYE 3/31/2018				FYE 3/31/2019			
	1/1/17	4/1/17	7/1/17	10/1/17	1/1/18	4/1/18	7/1/18	10/1/18	1/1/19	4/1/19
					FISCAL YEAR APRIL 1, 2017 - MARCH 31, 2018					
					2017 Interest Group Contributions	Northern Water PO 2017 - 1083⁽¹⁾	2018 Interest Group Contributions	Northern Water PO 2018 - 0704⁽²⁾	Totals Fiscal Year April 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018	
SOURCES OF FUNDS										
Revenue sources carried forward from prior year (March 31, 2017)					\$ 5,575	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,575	
New sources of revenue					-	99,454	20,001	99,810	219,265	
Funds available					5,575	99,454	20,001	99,810	224,840	
EXPENDITURES AND COMMITMENTS										
Administration and meeting expenses					(575)	(69,454)	(12,571)	(26,603)	(109,203)	
Technical support (RRC)						(30,000)		(10,000)	(40,000)	
Events (Gore Fest)					(5,000)			(5,000)	(10,000)	
Expenditures and commitments					(5,575)	(99,454)	(12,571)	(41,603)	(159,203)	
BALANCE REMAINING (as of March 31, 2018)					\$ 0	\$ (0)	\$ 7,430	\$ 58,207	\$ 65,637	

⁽¹⁾ PO approved June 2017.

⁽²⁾ PO approved February 2018.