



ANNUAL REPORT

2019

Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

Email: info@upcowildandscenic.com

Website: www.upcowildandscenic.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Background</u>	1
<u>State of the River - 2019 Hydrology</u>	1
<u>Status of Provisional ORV Indicators & Resource Guides</u>	2
<u>2019 Accomplishments</u>	4
<u>ORV Indicators & Resource Guides</u>	4
<u>Fishing Ad Hoc Committee</u>	5
<u>Floatboating Ad Hoc Committee</u>	6
<u>Monitoring Committee</u>	6
<u>Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures</u>	7
<u>Governance</u>	9
<u>Events</u>	9
<u>Goals For 2020</u>	10
<u>Governance</u>	10
<u>Monitoring</u>	10
<u>Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures</u>	12
<u>ORV Indicators & Resource Guides</u>	12
<u>MARCH 31, 2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENT</u>	14

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 2019 as well as the SG's goals for 2020. For more information, please visit our website at

www.upcowildandscenic.com.

State of the River – 2019 Hydrology (see Figure 1)

In W&S year 2019, from April 1, 2019 to March 1, 2020, the total annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (U.S. Geological Survey gage Colorado River near Kremmling, CO, 09058000) was 886,815 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (U.S. Geological Survey Colorado River near Dotsero, CO, 09070500) was 1,801,686 acre feet. Consequently, both of these segments are ranked in the "Wettest 25%" category (see figure 1).

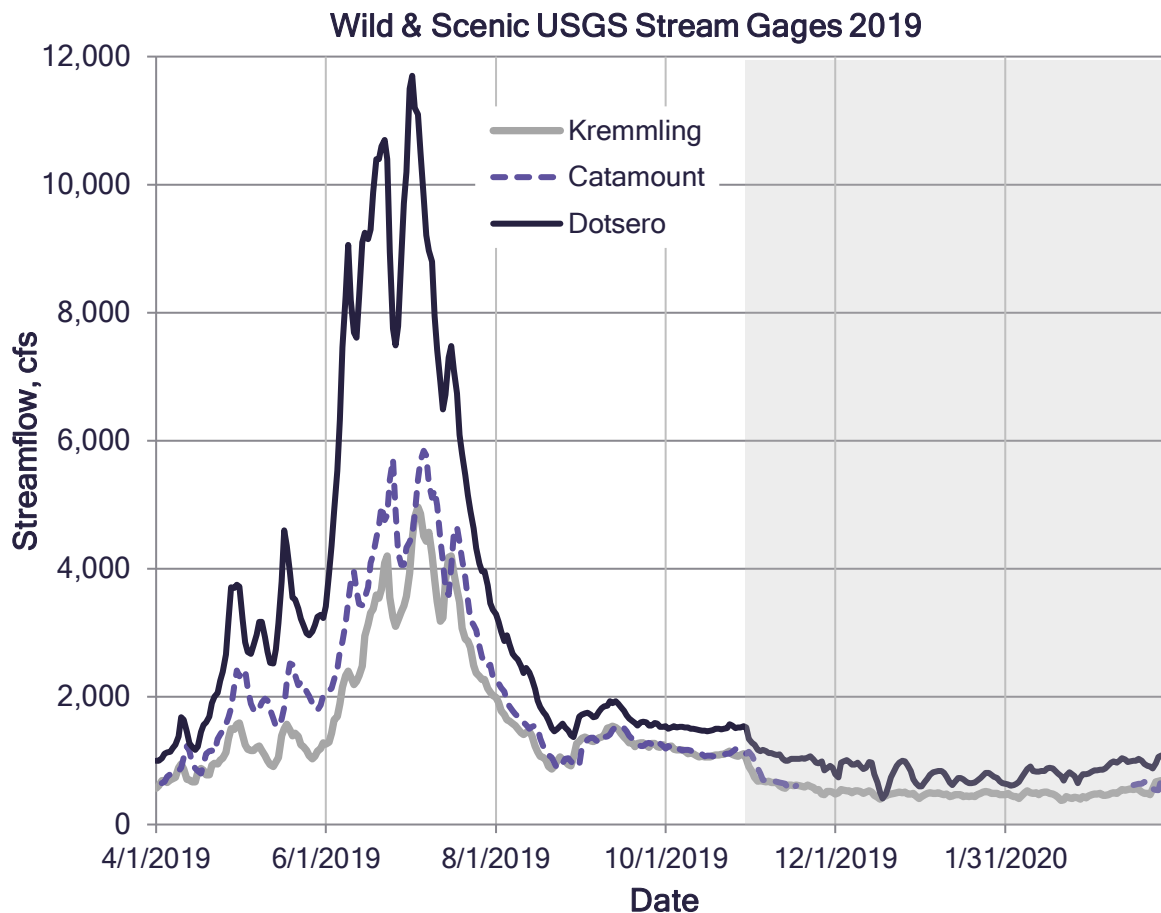


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic Stream Gages at Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero in 2019. This graph contains provisional data which is shown by the grey shading. Each gage has differing time-frames for the approved versus provisional data, see the [Annual Monitoring Report](#) for additional information. Provisional data is subject to revision by the USGS; however, values are not expected to change significantly.

Status of Provisional ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

Based on available data, the majority of the provisional ORV Indicators were met in the W&S segments in 2019. [Please see the full 2019 Annual Monitoring Report for more details.](#) The Quality Trout Fishing ORV Indicators (24 fish greater than 14 inches) were met at all three sites (Pumphouse, Radium and State Bridge). The Biomass Fishing ORV Indicator (90 pounds per acre) was only met at Radium. The Species Diversity Fishing ORV Indicator (14 species present) was not achieved at any sites.

The SG monitored the provisional Resource Guides in 2019 to inform SG discussions. Provisional Resource Guides for usable floatboating days and seasonal flows for fishing were within range. Flows greater than the provisional flushing flow of 2,000 cfs for three

consecutive days at Kremmling occurred. Daily Maximum (DM) and Maximum Weekly Average (MWAT) temperatures remained below standard exceedance thresholds at all sites.

The Resource Guides for water quality are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission 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 March 1, 2020 lists segments 4 - 7 as water quality impaired for *Escherichia coli*. Regulation 93 listings will always lag annual reporting by a few years due to the necessity of analyzing relevant data.

While not a Provisional Resource Guide, macroinvertebrates were sampled in the fall of 2019, and MMI scores for all sites indicated they were in attainment of currently applicable aquatic life use (Cold Water, Class I). The MMI scores were above the attainment thresholds for each site and did not decline more than 22 points from 2018.

2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2019, the SG continued to focus most of its efforts on developing final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides for the Amended & Restated SG Plan, which is scheduled for completion in June 2020. The SG's efforts in 2019 are more specifically described in the following sections.



Figure 2: Colorado River looking downstream from the Derby Junction lookout (Segment 6). Photo by Rob Buirgy.

ORV Indicators & 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 the task of identifying Final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides, 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 2019.

Both AHCs made big progress in 2019! At the March and June 2019 SG meetings, the SG voted to approve the Fishing AHC's final recommendations for the Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators (Quality Trout, Biomass and Catch-Per-Unit-Effort). At the August 2019 SG meeting, the SG voted to approve the Fishing AHC's final recommendation for the Seasonal Flow Resource Guide. The Floatboating AHC presented its proposed final recommendations for the ORV Indicator and Resource Guides at each of the SG meetings in 2019 and received and incorporated comments.

Fishing Ad Hoc Committee

Final recommendations for Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators were voted on and approved at the March and June 2019 SG meetings. With the heavy lifting concerning recommendations for ORV Indicators behind them, the Fishing AHC met regularly throughout 2019 to focus on recommendations for flow-related Resource Guides (Seasonal Flows, Flushing Flows, and Channel Maintenance Flows).

Regular updates on the preliminary recommendations for flow-related Resource Guides were presented at quarterly SG meetings throughout 2019. In 2019, significant progress was made on development of the Recreational Fishing Resource Guides, including:

- The Fishing AHC completed a thorough review of the provisional Seasonal Flow Resource Guide and how flows were established. At the August 2019 SG meeting, the Fishing AHC's recommendation on seasonal flows was voted on and approved.
- Flushing Flows: The USGS conducted two longitudinal studies that focused on Segments 5 and 6 above Red Dirt Creek that targeted flows between 2,000 and 2,500 cfs at the Kremmling gage as well as peak flows.
- The Fishing AHC continued to negotiate the inclusion of the Channel Maintenance Flow (CMF) Resource Guide and presented options for inclusion at several SG meetings. At the October 2019 SG meeting, the SG voted to support the Fishing AHC's recommendation that the SG commit to developing a long-term CMF monitoring plan within one year of SG adoption of the Amended & Restated SG Plan, and allowing a small working group to develop an RFP to hire a consultant to put together the monitoring plan.
- Water Quality, Temperature, and Macroinvertebrates: At the April 2019 Fishing AHC meeting, the AHC developed a consensus recommendation that the Water Quality Resource Guide include attainment of CDPHE's macroinvertebrate metrics as specified in the most current water quality standards for cold water aquatic life and recreation uses.
- A [long-term macroinvertebrate sampling and analysis protocol](#) was voted on and approved at the August 2019 SG meeting, which commits to sampling for macroinvertebrates every-other-year starting in 2021, subject to funding. Establishment of a long-term sampling and analysis protocol was deemed necessary to ensure replicability and consistency.

Floatboating Ad Hoc Committee

The Floatboating AHC met regularly during 2019. The committee continued to work on formulating a recommendation to develop the current provisional narrative Floatboating ORV Indicator with a more objective, data-driven assessment of visitor satisfaction to evaluate the existing range and quality of floatboating opportunities and set tolerances for the protection of those opportunities. The AHC also considered the inclusion of new data metrics when evaluating the ORV Indicator, looking at user-days data for both commercial and private use. Lastly, the committee developed a new Resource Guide for early-season boatable days (between May 15 and June 30).

Monitoring Committee

Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2019, 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 evaluation (via CPW biosurveys) of the provisional Fishing ORV Indicators for Quality Trout, Biomass, and Species Diversity, and the provisional Resource Guides for Usable Days, Seasonal Flows, Flushing Flows, Water Temperature, and Water Quality.



Figure 3: Photo of giant stonefly (Pteronarcys) collected during a benthic macroinvertebrate biomonitoring study conducted by Timberline Aquatics on W&S segments. Photo by Dave Rees.

In addition, the SG contracted with a number of entities to assist in evaluating data related to water temperature, conducting macroinvertebrate sampling and analysis (see Figure 3), and completing user intercept surveys and assessments of recreational use data. The SG also

contracted with the USGS for a flushing flow investigation using hydrophones to detect streambed sediment movement (see Figure 4). [Details of the 2019 monitoring activities are provided in the 2019 Annual Monitoring Report.](#)



Figure 4: USGS field work on June 6-7 and 18-19 2019. The W&S SG contracted with USGS to conduct a study using hydrophones to evaluate the adequacy of the provisional Flushing Flow Resource Guide. Photos by Rob Buirgy.

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

During 2019, the Cooperative Measures Committee [developed an online graph to illustrate river conditions](#), which will aid in discussions on Resource Guides and potential cooperative efforts on the Colorado River. A boatable-day tool, which is populated by preliminary gage data at the Kremmling and Dotsero gages, was developed and published to the Upper Colorado Wild and Scenic website. The tool provides a graphical representation and an automated summary of the number of boatable days for each opportunity category defined in the SG Plan. The committee has also been in the process of developing an automated tool to calculate year-to-date flow volumes and compare the volumes and projections to the Year Type volumes as defined in the SG Plan.

Representatives from the W&S Cooperative Measures Committee participated in State of the River / Historic User Pool (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 summarizing information from these calls, as well as forecasts, and streamflow and stream temperature graphs. This information was also discussed at numerous Cooperative Measures Committee meetings.

Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) operated from June 16 through June 23, 2019 this year. The committee worked to extend the peak flow in the Colorado River for fish that are protected under the Endangered Species Act. The primary objective of CROS is to enhance spring peak flows in a section of the Colorado River upstream of the confluence with the Gunnison River (“15-Mile Reach”) for the benefit of the humpback chub, razorback sucker, bonytail, and Colorado pikeminnow.

During the summer, representatives from the Cooperative Measures Committee were involved in discussions regarding operational flexibility within the Colorado River. In August, Reclamation, Northern Water, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Colorado River District coordinated “5412 operations” between Wolford Reservoir and Granby Reservoir. Water was released from Granby and stored in Wolford for later use in the 15-Mile Reach for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Species Recovery Program.

The HUP Managing Entities declared a Surplus with the HUP allocation within Green Mountain Reservoir. Surplus deliveries commenced on August 29th and continued through October 31st, allowing for release in excess of 50,000 acre-feet for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Species Recovery Program. Surplus releases from Green Mountain Reservoir ranged from 300 to 500 cfs during this time.

Denver Water and Reclamation exercised an exchange between Williams Fork and Green Mountain Reservoirs from August 29th through September 29th. From October 1st through November 24th, releases were made from Green Mountain while channel work was completed below Williams Fork.

Members of the Wild and Scenic Cooperative Measures Committee and the Boating Ad Hoc Committee worked with the HUP call participants on slight changes to flows in the Colorado River for a successful flushing flow study (Mid-June), Gore Canyon Race (August 24th), and macroinvertebrate sampling (Late-October).

The Cooperative Measures Committee continued to work on a summary of Tier 1 Long-Term Protection Measures and Tier 2 Cooperative Measures (the “Toolbox”). The summary will appear on the W&S SG website and is available in spreadsheet format.

Governance

In 2019, the SG held four quarterly meetings and the annual meeting in March. The SG appointed Kathy Kitzmann (East Slope Water Users Interest Group) as Chair and Mike Eytel (West Slope Water Users & Landowners) as Vice-Chair, both of whom served through June 2020. The SG also reauthorized the Executive Committee for another year. Throughout 2019 and into 2020, the SG discussed how Resource Guides should be used in the SG Plan. A Drafting Committee was formed, made up of one representative from each of the six Interest Groups to ensure completion of the Amended & Restated SG Plan by June 2020.

At the Annual Meeting in March, the W&S SG submitted a comment letter to the Kremmling Field Office regarding the Environmental Assessment for the Upper Colorado River Recreation Area Management Plan.

Events



Figure 5: W&S 2019 rafting field trip in Glenwood Canyon (below Segment 7). Photo by Hattie Johnson.

The SG supported the annual Gore Canyon Festival, which was held August 23-25 at Rancho del Rio and the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park. Stakeholders also participated in a raft trip from Grizzly Creek to Two Rivers in Glenwood Canyon with assistance from Defiance Rafting (see figure 5). An evening mixer was hosted at the River District Office in Glenwood Springs, where all of our successes were celebrated!

GOALS FOR 2020



Figure 6: Photo from 2019 field trip in Glenwood Canyon. Photo by Hattie Johnson.

Governance

The Stakeholder Group will conduct quarterly meetings of the SG, plus the annual meeting in March and any Special Meetings as called by the SG. The Executive, Monitoring, Finance, and Cooperative Measures Committees, as well as any workgroups, will continue their respective efforts. Administration and coordination consultants will continue to support the efforts of the SG.

Monitoring

RRC Research Program: For 2020, the SG initially approved RRC Associates' proposed work plan that included Angling and Floatboating field surveys, building on previous data collection and analysis efforts, continuing support for the SG and Committees, and refining methods for warehousing and accessing data. However, COVID-19 response measures resulted in changed visitor use patterns that were not representative of typical conditions. As a result, the Monitoring Committee recommended, and the SG approved, significant reductions in RRC's 2020 work plan, eliminating surveys and kiosks and reducing expectations for stakeholder support and data analysis.

Temperature: The W&S time-series temperature monitoring program will continue through 2020, including three temperature loggers deployed at established study sites. W&S temperature monitoring also includes data collected by BLM (COR-abvPump, COR-Rad) and USGS at the three gages located within W&S segments. In addition, a new temperature site

will be installed by BLM on the Blue River just upstream from the Colorado River confluence (Blue-AbvCOR). The SG will join the Grand County Water Information Network as a paid member to manage and store data from these sites. The SG anticipates contracting with Lotic Hydrological to generate thermographs, analyze the temperature standards, and write sections of the Annual Monitoring Report for all nine W&S sites of interest.

Macroinvertebrates: The SG has approved a [long-term plan to conduct macroinvertebrate monitoring](#) on a biennial basis. Monitoring will be conducted at five sites during off years starting in 2021.

Channel Maintenance Flow (CMF) Request for Proposal and Monitoring Plan Development: At the October 2019 SG meeting, the SG approved a commitment to develop a long-term CMF monitoring plan within one year of SG adoption of the Amended and Restated SG Plan. A small workgroup has been assembled for this effort and the SG may contract with an outside entity for assistance in developing this plan.

Streamflow Monitoring: The River District and the USGS cover the costs for real-time temperature data from the USGS stream gage 09058000 Colorado River near Kremmling. The Kremmling gage operates year-round. The BLM, USFS, and USGS will cover operations and maintenance costs for the USGS stream gage 09060799 Colorado River at Catamount Bridge in 2020. The Catamount gage operates for eight months annually (March 15 - November 15).

Other Monitoring Efforts: As per the SG Plan, the Monitoring Committee is charged with gathering data collected by others. Starting during the Pre-Provisional Period, the Monitoring Committee has maintained collaborative relationships with a host of entities who are actively monitoring parameters of interest to the SG. Some of these agencies include: USGS (hydrology, temperature, water quality above Glenwood), CPW (biosurveys, research projects), BLM (user data, commercial logs, traffic counters, temperature), and USFS (user data). Because this data serves an important role in informing SG decisions, the Monitoring Committee intends to maintain and expand relationships with other organizations collecting data in the W&S segments.

[For the SG approved 2020 Monitoring Plan, click here.](#)

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Early 2020 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting that April-July undepleted flows will fall into the Wet Typical category for the Kremmling gage location and Dry Typical category for the Dotsero gage location. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue to monitor flows and stream temperatures on a weekly basis and distribute that information to the W&S SG. 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 river conditions in the W&S Segments.

Long-term protection measures will continue to be in place for 2020. 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). Implementation of the Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP) commenced during the spring of 2020 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.

ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

ORV Indicators and Resource Guides for both Recreational Fishing and Floatboating will be finalized in 2020, prior to submittal of the Amended & Restated SG Plan to the federal agencies and final approval in June 2020.

In the early part of 2020, the Stakeholder Group discussed the use of Resource Guides and reached consensus on how Resource Guides are defined in the Amended & Restated Plan: :

The Resource Guides are not intended to be used as a test for SG Plan success, nor for use by permitting agencies or entities as the criterion for evaluating a project's effects on the ORVs. Accordingly, Resource Guides shall not be used by stakeholders as part of a case to elevate the SG Plan due to (1) an unresolved concern material to implementation of the SG Plan, (2) a Material Change in Circumstances, or (3) a Significant Risk of Impairment. Nor shall Resource Guides be used by stakeholders as evidence that such unresolved concerns, Material Changes, or a Significant Risk of Impairment do not exist. However, nothing in the SG Plan shall preclude or limit the

use for any purpose of any data, criteria, or standards regardless of whether such data, criteria, or standards have been used in the negotiation of the Resource Guides.¹

At the March 2020 Annual SG meeting and the April 2020 Special SG Meeting, the SG discussed the Amended & Restated SG Plan for submittal to the federal agencies. This included the previously-recommended Recreational Fishing and Recreational Floatboating ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. Final Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators were identified for Quality Trout & Biomass and Catch-Per-Unit-Effort. The “Not Likely To Return” ORV Indicator was identified for Recreational Floatboating, including annually considering available user-day data for commercial and private use. Final Recreational Fishing Resource Guides were identified for Seasonal Flows, Flushing Flows, Channel Maintenance Flows, and Desired Species. Final Recreational Floatboating Resource Guides were identified for Segments 4 - 6 Boatable Days, Segments 4 - 6 Early-Season Boatable Days, and Segment 7 Boatable Days. Resource Guides for Water Quality, Macroinvertebrates, and Temperature were also identified. The Amended & Restated SG Plan was submitted to the federal agencies for their review on April 24, 2020.

¹ “Data” refers to information that is collected using methods like surveys, collection, monitoring, and observation. “Criteria” as referred to herein refers to research-based scientific criteria or evidence independent of any use of such Criteria as Resource Guides. “Standards” refers to governmental, legislative or regulatory standards, such as water quality or water temperature standards, independent of any use of such Standards as Resource Guides.

MARCH 31, 2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

[illegible]