



ANNUAL REPORT

2020

Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Background</u>	1
<u>State of the River - 2020 Hydrology</u>	1
<u>Status of Provisional ORV Indicators & Resource Guides</u>	2
<u>2020 Accomplishments</u>	4
<u>ORV Indicators & Resource Guides</u>	4
<u>Monitoring Committee</u>	6
<u>Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures</u>	7
<u>Governance</u>	9
<u>Goals For 2021</u>	10
<u>Governance</u>	10
<u>Monitoring</u>	10
<u>Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures</u>	11
<u>MARCH 31, 2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT</u>	12

Photo on cover page taken by Rob Buirgy while collecting temperature data loggers in October 2020.

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 (SG Plan) to the BLM and USFS in February 2011. The SG subsequently submitted an updated SG 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 SG 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 included in the 2012 SG Plan were reviewed, refined, and finalized, the SG submitted the [final Amended & Restated SG Plan \(A&R SG Plan\)](#) 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 A&R SG Plan.

State of the River – 2020 Hydrology (see Figure 1)

In W&S year 2020, from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the total annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (U.S. Geological Survey gage Colorado River near Kremmling, CO, 09058000) was 605,620 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (U.S. Geological Survey Colorado River near Dotsero, CO, 09070500) was 1,116,298 acre feet. Consequently, streamflow at the Kremmling gage was ranked in the “Wet Typical” category and streamflow at the Dotsero gage was ranked in the “Dry Typical” category (see figure 1).

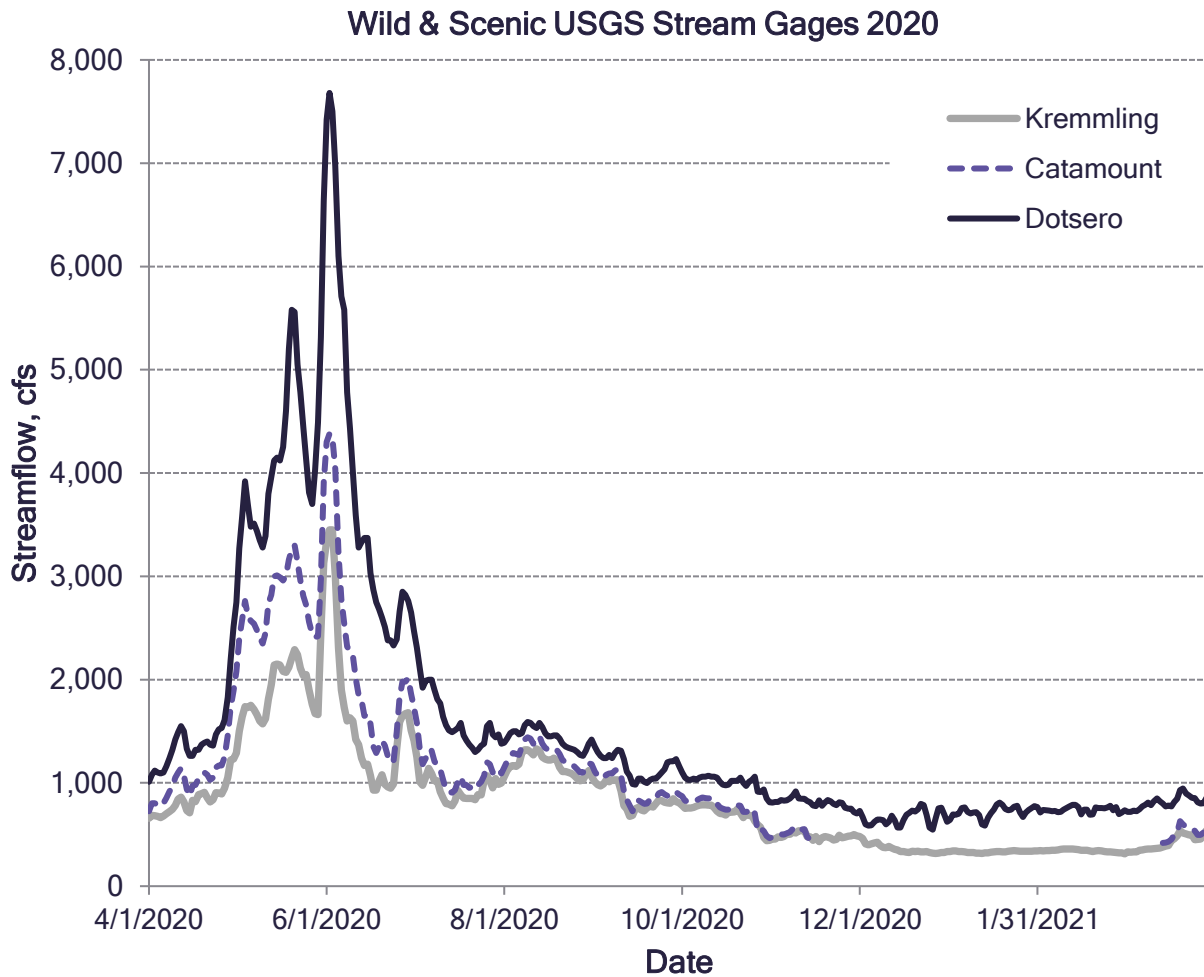


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic Stream Gages at Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero in 2020. This graph contains provisional data starting in fall of 2020; each gage has differing timeframes for the approved versus provisional data, see the [Annual Monitoring Report](#) for additional information. Provisional data is subject to revision by the USGS; however, values are not expected to change significantly.

Status of Provisional ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

The Monitoring Committee assembled or collected information to evaluate the ORV Indicators and review the Resource Guides. Due to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic, data related to Recreational Fishing and Floatboating ORV indicators was not collected by either CPW or RRC in 2020. [Please see the 2020 Annual Monitoring Report for more details.](#)

The SG monitored the Resource Guides to inform SG discussions. Resource Guides for usable floatboating days and seasonal flows for fishing were within range. Flows greater than the flushing flow of 2,500 cfs for three consecutive days at Kremmling occurred. No sites exceeded the acute Daily Maximum (DM) temperature standards in 2020. Three sites exceeded the chronic Maximum Weekly Average (MWAT) temperature standards in 2020:

Red Dirt (UPCO-RD), Dotsero (UPCO-DOT), and No Name (USGS 09071750). Blue River above the Colorado River confluence (BL-abvCOR) exceeded the MWAT standard in the last two weeks of May prior to the seasonal standard shift.

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 June 14, 2020 lists segments 4 - 7 as water quality impaired for temperature and segments 6-7 on the Monitoring and Evaluation List for Escherichia coli. Regulation 93 listings will always lag annual reporting by a few years due to the necessity of analyzing relevant data.

In August 2019, the SG approved a [long-term macroinvertebrate sampling and analysis protocol](#) that includes sampling for macroinvertebrates every other year starting in 2021, subject to funding. Accordingly, macroinvertebrate sampling did not occur in 2020.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the first half of 2020, the SG continued to focus most of its efforts on developing final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides for the A&R SG Plan. In June 2020, the A&R SG Plan was adopted by the USFS and BLM, a monumental achievement that was celebrated on Zoom due to COVID-19.

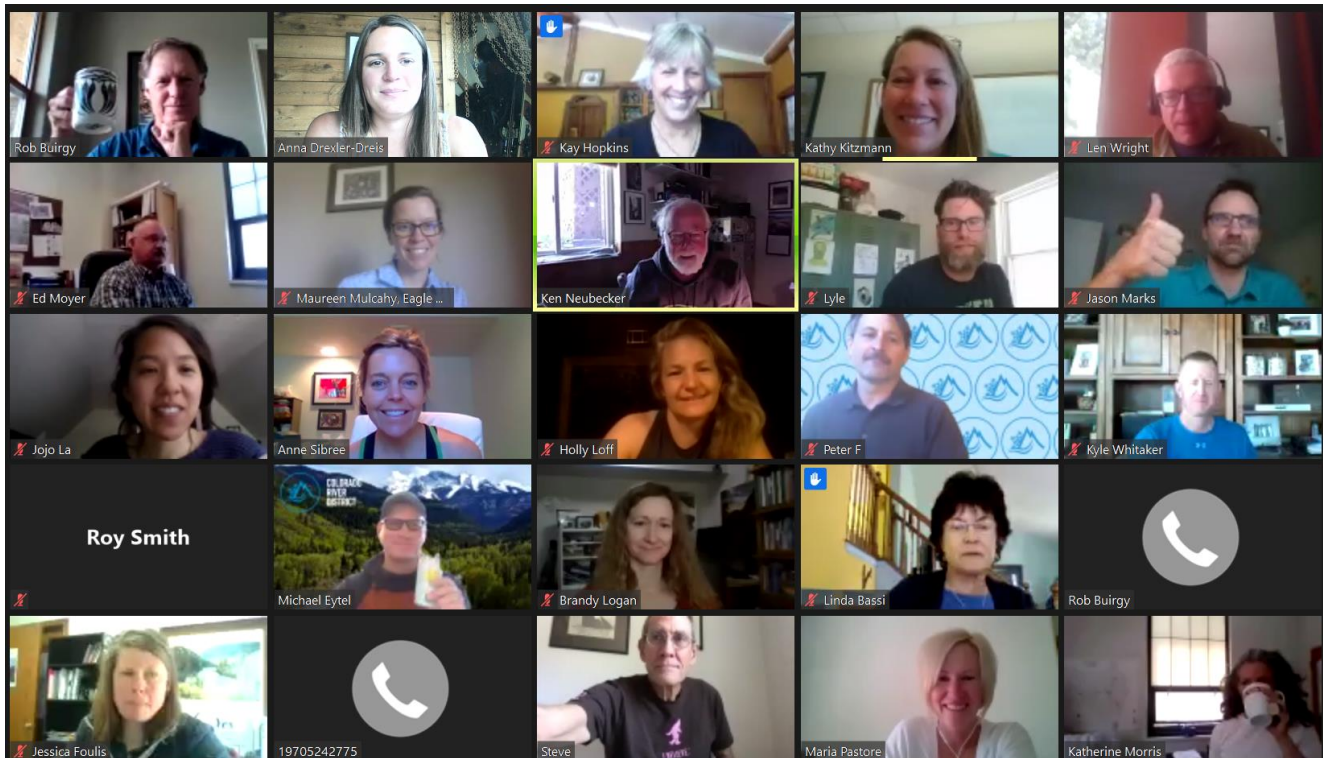


Figure 2: June 8, 2020 SG Meeting where the A&R SG Plan was endorsed by all participating stakeholders.

ORV Indicators & Resource Guides

The A&R 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 initially developed and negotiated 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 throughout the Provisional Period, the SG designated two Ad-Hoc Committees (AHC) in 2016, the Fishing AHC and Floatboating AHC, which continued to work on their respective tasks through the first half of 2020.

With all other ORV Indicators and Resource Guides finalized as we approached the end of the 5-year Provisional Period, the SG focused its efforts on channel maintenance flows in 2020. The SG worked hard to define observational monitoring for channel maintenance flows with special meetings and input from all six Interest Groups. A Request for Qualifications was advertised in 2020 for an independent contractor to develop an observational monitoring plan and Stillwater Sciences Inc. was selected to develop the observational monitoring plan.

The final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides can be found in the table below and detailed information on each ORV Indicator and Resource Guide can be found in pages 15-33 of the [A&R SG Plan](#):

ORV INDICATORS	RESOURCE GUIDES
<p>Recreational Fishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Trout & Biomass - Catch/Unit Effort 	<p>Recreational Fishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal Flows - Flushing Flows - Channel Maintenance Flows Monitoring Plan - Desired Species
<p>Recreational Floatboating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not Likely to Return 	<p>Recreational Floatboating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boatable Days - Early Season Boatable Days
	<p>Water Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water Quality Control Commission water quality standards
	<p>Temperature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water Quality Control Commission stream temperature water quality standards
	<p>Macroinvertebrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water Quality Control Commission aquatic life water quality standards

Monitoring Committee



Figure 3: Vehicle counter used by RRC Associates to collect data relating to the ORV Indicators.

Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2020, monitoring activities were conducted to better understand existing conditions and to support the development of final ORV Indicators and Resource Guides. Monitoring work included the Resource Guides for useable days, early season useable days, seasonal flows, flushing flows, water temperature, and water quality. Due to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic, data related to Recreational Fishing and Floatboating ORV indicators was not collected by either CPW or RRC in 2020.

In addition, the SG contracted with a number of entities to assist in evaluating data related to water temperature and assessments of recreational use data. A key goal of the SG is to collect a sufficient number of surveys in each Year Type to enable scientifically valid characterization of the visitor experience. [Details of the 2020 monitoring activities are provided in the 2020 Annual Monitoring Report.](#)

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

CROS and RIPRAP

Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) operated from May 29 - June 5, 2020. The CROS committee (Separate from W&S) worked to enhance 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. CROS combined releases ranged from approximately 375 to 1900 cfs with a total volume of approximately 19,000 acre-feet released to enhance the peak in the 15-Mile Reach. The timing of CROS releases in 2020 was able to enhance the peak by approximately 1,100 cfs to a peak flow of approximately 11,500 cfs on June 2nd. In summary, all of these CROS-enhanced flows were realized throughout the W&S segments.

Multiple W&S stakeholders participate in the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan (RIPRAP) component of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. During 2020 releases were made from Wolford Mountain Reservoir and Granby Reservoir as part of the RIPRAP for the benefit of the endangered fish in the 15-Mile Reach. Wolford Mountain Reservoir released 6,000 acre-feet during the period of July 20 - October 21 at rates between 10 and 75 cfs while Granby Reservoir released 5,412 acre-feet at rates between 20 and 40 cfs from July 19 - October 10. All of these releases occurred upstream of Kremmling, thereby providing benefits throughout the W&S segments.

A “Flushing Flow”, defined in the SG Plan as a daily average flow at or above 2,500 cfs at the Kremmling gage maintained for a minimum of three consecutive days was accomplished in 2020. The flow at the Kremmling gage exceeded 2,500 cfs during the period of May 31 - June 4. The flow at the Kremmling gage was enhanced during this period due to CROS releasing at rates between 375 and 1900 cfs during this time, without which Flushing Flows would not have been achieved.

This year, some relief was possible for low flows in the 15-Mile Reach during early spring (commonly referred to as the “April Hole”) due to an HUP Surplus declaration by the HUP Managing Entities in 2019 that led to carrying over a portion that surplus to 2020. Releases of HUP Surplus from Green Mountain Reservoir started on April 15 and continued through April 22 at a rate between 50-150 cfs. These releases also benefit all the W&S segments.

The HUP Managing Entities also declared a Surplus with the HUP allocation within Green Mountain Reservoir in 2020. Surplus deliveries commenced on October 14 and continued through October 25, allowing for release in excess of 2,394 acre-feet for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Species Recovery Program. Surplus releases from Green Mountain Reservoir ranged from 50 to 150 cfs during this time, all of which enhanced flows through the W&S segments.

ShOP

The Shoshone Outage Protocol Agreement (ShOP) is an agreement among water users, many of whom are also W&S stakeholders, to operate reservoirs at times when the Shoshone Powerplant is not operating in a manner that would mimic operations as if the powerplant was operational and exercising their senior water right. During 2020, due to multiple operational challenges at the Shoshone Powerplant, ShOP was implemented from March 1 - May 15, from July 23 - July 24, and from October 8 - November 6. The implementation of ShOP at the reservoirs upstream of the W&S segments by water users/W&S stakeholders, provided for water to be left in the river that otherwise would have been legally diverted and therefore increased the flow in the Colorado River throughout the W&S segments.

Administrative Exchanges

Denver Water and Reclamation exercised administrative exchanges between Williams Fork and Green Mountain Reservoirs during 2020. During the period from October 20 - October 22 releases were exchanged from Green Mountain Reservoir to Williams Fork Reservoir to allow for channel monitoring to occur. From October 23 - October 27, the reverse of the administrative exchange was operated for the balance of the exchange. This exchange was operated without affecting the flow in the W&S segments.

HUP Calls

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.

The Cooperative Measures Committee completed a summary of Tier 1 Long-Term Protection Measures and Tier 2 Cooperative Measures (the “Toolbox”). [The Toolbox is now available on the W&S SG website.](#)

Governance

In 2020, the SG held four quarterly meetings, the annual meeting in March, and three special meetings. The special meetings were to discuss and reach agreement on the final definition and intended use of Resource Guides in the A&R Plan, as well as to prepare and release the Request for Qualifications to select a consulting firm to develop a technical guidance document to help the SG develop Channel Maintenance Flow observational monitoring plan. Kathy Kitzmann (East Slope Water Users) remained chair and Mike Eytel (West Slope Water Users & Landowners) remained vice-chair until the June 2020 SG meeting, at which time Mike Eytel became chair and Jason Marks (East Slope Water Users) became vice-chair. The SG also reauthorized the Executive Committee for another year. Administrative contracts for Rob Buirgy and Anna Drexler-Dreis were renewed.

GOALS FOR 2021

Governance

The Stakeholder Group will conduct quarterly meetings of the SG, plus the annual meeting in March and any Special Meetings as needed. The standing committees (Executive, Monitoring, Finance, and Cooperative Measures) as well as any workgroups, will continue their respective efforts. Administration and coordination consultants will continue to support the efforts of the SG. The SG is hoping to plan a field trip on the Colorado River to celebrate our successes in late summer 2021!

Monitoring

RRC Associates Research Program

For 2021, the SG approved a \$54,500 work plan that builds on previous efforts, continues support for the SG and committees, and refines methods for warehousing and accessing data. Based on anticipated data needs, this plan includes the Angling and Floatboating Intercept surveys, User Group surveys, and Displacement surveys as well as processing the BLM's commercial data logs and vehicle counts.

Temperature

The W&S-sponsored temperature monitoring program will continue through 2021, which includes three time-series temperature loggers deployed at established study sites. The SG is a dues-paying member of GCWIN and will contract with GCWIN to administer the three W&S temperature sites during 2021. In addition to the W&S temperature sites, the BLM's Kremmling field office will provide temperature data from three sites and real-time temperature data will continue to be collected at three USGS sites located within W&S segments. The Monitoring Committee anticipates contracting with Lotic Hydrological to generate end-of season thermographs and temperature standards analyses 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 by Timberline Associates at five sites during off-years, starting in 2021.

Channel Maintenance Flow (CMF) Monitoring Plan Development and Implementation

Upon recommendation of the Monitoring Committee, the SG selected Stillwater Sciences Inc. as the consulting team to provide technical guidance to help the SG develop a CMF observational monitoring plan. Stillwater's deliverable will be presented during the June 2021 SG meeting.

Streamflow Monitoring

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).

[For the SG approved 2021 Monitoring Plan, click here.](#)

Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures

Early 2021 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting that April-July undepleted flows will fall into the driest to dry 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 potential problem areas and 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 2021. 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 2021 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.

MARCH 31, 2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

										March 31, 2021																					
IG Contributions										2020					2021					2022											
State Fiscal Year										FYE 6/30/2020					FYE 6/30/2021					FYE 6/30/2022					FYE 6/30/2023						
W&S Fiscal Year										FYE 3/31/2020					FYE 3/31/2021					FYE 3/31/2022					FYE 3/31/2023						
										1/1/20	4/1/20	7/1/20	10/1/20	1/1/21	4/1/21	7/1/21	10/1/21	1/1/22	4/1/22	7/1/22	10/1/22										
										2020 Interest Group Contributions		NWCCOG PO 2020 - 2241		NWCCOG PO 2021 - 2048		CRWCD PO 2021 - 2050		2021 Interest Group Contributions		Total Active Funding and Contracts		NOTES									
Funding Sources										\$ 20,001.00	\$ 99,908.00	\$ 70,525.00	\$ 95,680.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 306,115.00																
Amounts applied against funding										(2,046.23)	(49,743.80)	-	-	-	(51,790.03)																
Funding net of applied amounts										17,954.77	50,164.20	70,525.00	95,680.00	254,324.97																	
Total Amounts Incurred but not yet applied against funding										-	(35,437.50)	-	(18,569.10)	-	(54,006.60)																
Funding Available as of March 31, 2021										17,954.77	14,726.70	70,525.00	77,110.90	200,318.37																	
Less amounts budgeted but not yet incurred or applied against																				Column A = budgeted expenses. Columns G - I = adjusted budgeted amounts for the invoices received.											
Fountainhead April - Oct 2020 (budgeted @ \$4,000/mth)												(1,500.00)			(1,500.00)																
Buirgy Consulting Oct 2020 - March 2021 (budgeted @ \$3,273/mth)														(1,609.75)	(1,609.75)																
Fountainhead Nov 2020 - March 2021 (budgeted @ \$3,000/mth)												(3,610.00)			(3,610.00)																
Meeting Costs												-			-	Budgeted @ \$1,700/qtr & adjusted to \$0 on 12/2020 due to COVID															
Office expenses (budgeted @ \$125/qtr)												(62.00)			(62.00)																
W&S Stream Temperature O&M (GCWIN)												-			-	Budgeted @ \$1,952 & adjusted to \$0 on 12/2020 b/c will begin in 2021															
Channel Maintenance Flow monitoring plan development													(20,000.00)			(20,000.00)															
Other monitoring activities															-	\$35k requested in 2020 POs & adjusted to \$0 on 12/2020 b/c will not be spent in FY 2019-2020															
Admin costs												(258.60)	(1,000.00)	(48.29)	(1,306.89)																
Less total amounts budgeted but not yet invoiced or applied against funding										-	(5,430.60)	(21,000.00)	(1,658.04)	-	(28,088.64)																
Anticipated Funding Available as of March 31, 2021, reflecting budgeted expenses										\$ 17,954.77	\$ 9,296.10	\$ 49,525.00	\$ 75,452.86	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 172,229.73																

[Click here to view the 2020/2021 W&S Budget](#)

MARCH 31, 2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

										March 31, 2021																					
IG Contributions										2020					2021					2022											
State Fiscal Year										FYE 6/30/2020			FYE 6/30/2021			FYE 6/30/2022			FYE 6/30/2023												
W&S Fiscal Year										FYE 3/31/2020		FYE 3/31/2021			FYE 3/31/2022					FYE 3/31/2023											
										1/1/20	4/1/20	7/1/20	10/1/20	1/1/21	4/1/21	7/1/21	10/1/21	1/1/22	4/1/22	7/1/22	10/1/22										
										2020 Interest Group Contributions		NWCCOG PO 2020 - 2241		NWCCOG PO 2021 - 2048		CRWCD PO 2021 - 2050		2021 Interest Group Contributions		Total Active Funding and Contracts		NOTES									
Funding Sources										\$ 20,001.00	\$ 99,908.00	\$ 70,525.00	\$ 95,680.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 306,115.00																
Amounts applied against funding										(2,046.23)	(49,743.80)	-	-	-	(51,790.03)																
Funding net of applied amounts										17,954.77	50,164.20	70,525.00	95,680.00	254,324.97																	
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Office expenses (budgeted @ \$125/qtr)												(62.00)			(62.00)																
W&S Stream Temperature O&M (GCWIN)												-			-	Budgeted @ \$1,952 & adjusted to \$0 on 12/2020 b/c will begin in 2021															
Channel Maintenance Flow monitoring plan development													(20,000.00)			(20,000.00)															
Other monitoring activities															-	\$35k requested in 2020 POs & adjusted to \$0 on 12/2020 b/c will not be spent in FY 2019-2020															
Admin costs												(258.60)	(1,000.00)	(48.29)	(1,306.89)																
Less total amounts budgeted but not yet invoiced or applied against funding										-	(5,430.60)	(21,000.00)	(1,658.04)	-	(28,088.64)																
Anticipated Funding Available as of March 31, 2021, reflecting budgeted expenses										\$ 17,954.77	\$ 9,296.10	\$ 49,525.00	\$ 75,452.86	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 172,229.73																

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