



ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022



Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

Email: info@upcowildandscenic.com

Website: www.upcowildandscenic.com

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Photo on cover page – W&S Stakeholders at the annual field trip at Pumphouse Recreation Area.

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 – 2021 Hydrology

In W&S year 2021, from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, the total annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (09058000) was 448,309 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (09070500) was 845,594 acre feet. Consequently, streamflow at both gages was ranked in the “Driest 25%” category (see

Figure 1).

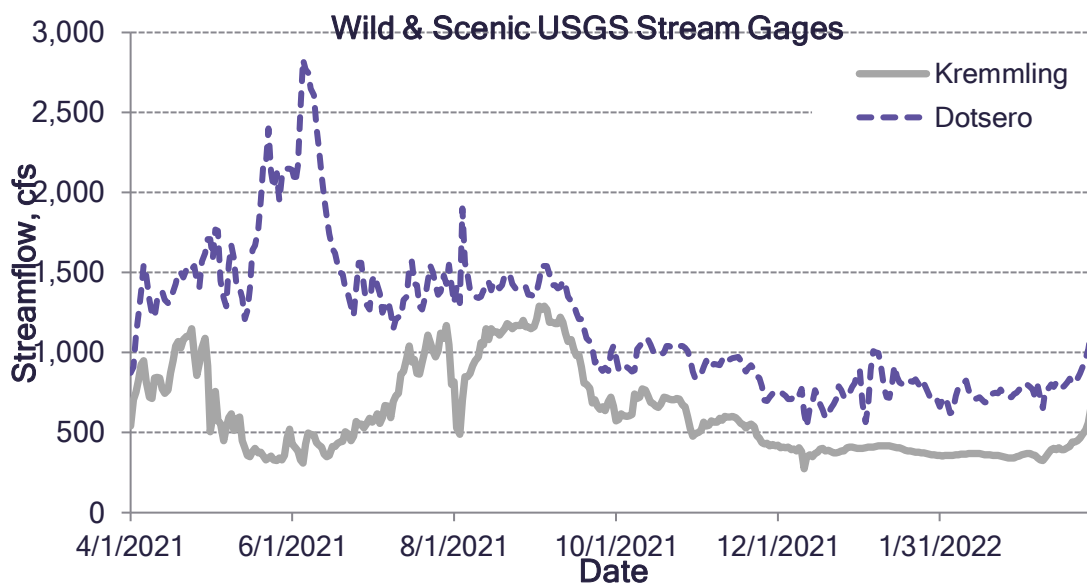


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic stream gages at Kremmling and Dotsero in 2021.

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 15-33 of the [SG Plan](#) and in the [2021 Annual Monitoring Report](#).

Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators

In 2021, Colorado Parks and Wildlife completed the minimum number of fish monitoring surveys at all three W&S sampling reaches (Radium, State Bridge, and Catamount). The 2021 fish monitoring surveys indicated that both quality trout and biomass exceeded the identified thresholds at all three W&S reaches. In 2021, the catch-per-unit-effort threshold is only established at Radium and 2021 data indicates that this ORV Indicator has been met 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 2021, the SG retained RRC Associates to conduct user intercept surveys at 7 locations. RRC collected and processed survey responses to evaluate the percentage values for the Not Likely to Return ORV Indicator. The 2021 survey responses provided sufficient data to set the final ORV Indicator percentage values for Segment 5 and 6 in the Driest year type. The percentage values were lower than the ORV Indicator value for all segments; therefore, there are no divergences in 2021.

Resource Guides

Recreational Floatboating

Flows were within range for boatable floatboating days with zero early-season boatable days. The [floatboating boatable days tool](#), which is populated by preliminary streamflow data at the Kremmling and Dotsero gages, is published on the W&S website.

Recreational Fishing

Desired fish species were observed except flannemouth sucker, bluehead sucker, and Colorado River cutthroat trout, which are not anticipated to be captured in every survey. The 2021 five-year rolling average seasonal flows for fishing was above the mid-point seasonal flow range for seasons 1, 2, and 3. For season 4, the five-year rolling average was below the mid-point. In 2021, streamflow never exceeded 2,500 cfs and the flushing flow was met for the 10-year period as it occurred in six

of the last ten years. In January 2022, the SG approved a Channel Maintenance Flow observational monitoring plan to better understand the effects that peak flows have on channel maintenance processes in W&S Segments 4 through 6.

Water temperature

Catamount exceeded the acute temperature standard in 2021. All sites within W&S segments exceeded the chronic temperature standards in 2021 and sites from Catamount downstream exceeded it for extended periods of time. Blue River above the Colorado River confluence exceeded the MWAT standard in May prior to the seasonal standard shift.

Water quality

The Resource Guides for water quality are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission water quality standards for recreation and aquatic life use. In August 2021, Colorado's Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters and Monitoring and Evaluation List (Regulation #93 – 5 CCR 1002-93) 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.

Macroinvertebrates

In 2021, macroinvertebrate populations were sampled per Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's most current guidelines on the Colorado River at five sites: Pumphouse, Radium, State Bridge, Above Catamount, Below Sweetwater¹. The Multi-Metric Index version 4 (MMI v4) was attained at all five sites. The macroinvertebrate populations were relatively healthy and MMI v4 scores were stable.

Major Accomplishment

The Channel Maintenance Flow workgroup, comprised of at least one representative from each of



the six Interest Groups, met weekly to prepare an observational monitoring plan. In June 2021, Stillwater Sciences submitted a [Technical Guidance for Observational Monitoring for Channel Maintenance Flows Along the Colorado River](#), which helped the workgroup to develop the observational monitoring plan. This observational monitoring plan was approved at the SG's January 2022 meeting.

¹ In 2022, the Stakeholder Group elected to change the name of the macroinvertebrate monitoring site to better correlate to its actual location and reduce confusion in relation to the stream temperature monitoring site.

Monitoring Committee

Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2021, 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 for the quality trout and biomass ORV Indicator for Recreational Fishing. In addition, W&S contracted with Timberline Aquatics to monitor for the macroinvertebrate

Resource Guide and Grand County Water Information Network (GCWIN) to deploy temperature loggers to evaluate water temperature. All other Resource Guides were monitored by Stakeholders. Details of the 2021 monitoring activities are provided in the [2021 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 2021 W&S Water Year is likely to be in the “Dry Typical” category at the Kremmling gage and the “Driest 25%” category at the Dotsero gage. No CROS occurred in 2021. The Shoshone Power Plant was off-line for much of the year and therefore the ShOP was implemented in April (4/5 thru 4/13), May (5/10 thru 5/13), and June and July (6/21 thru 7/10).

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

June 2021 saw exceptionally warm stream temperatures and low streamflow conditions at the Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero gages. The Cooperative Measures Committee met remotely several times to try to address these conditions in the Upper Colorado River. W&S Stakeholder water providers (River District, Denver Water, and Northern Water) responded to the river conditions by modifying their operations which resulted in increased flows in the Kremmling area of over 200 cfs. These operations included the Colorado River Water Conservation District making releases from Wolford Mountain Reservoir storage of an additional 50 cfs in addition to bypasses, Denver Water releasing 250 acre-feet from Williams Fork Reservoir as well as bypassing flows from the Fraser River Collection System and Northern Water bypassing the Denver Water bypasses plus an additional 50 cfs at Windy Gap.

Gore Fest

The SG continues to financially support Gore Fest, which was held August 28, 2021. Gore Fest was focused solely on Gore Race so attendance was slightly down from past years. 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 six times during this time period and at the August 2021 SG meeting decided to meet four times in the year instead of five. Jason Marks (East Slope Water Users Interest Group) is the SG Chair and Torie Jarvis (Local Government Interest Group) is the SG Vice-chair. In March 2022, Torie Jarvis became the SG Chair and Maria Pastore (East Slope Water Users Interest Group) became the SG Vice-Chair. The SG also reauthorized the Executive Committee for another year. In August 2021 the SG renewed the MOU with the BLM and USFS that documents the cooperation among the participants on implementation of the SG Plan. The administrative contract for Anna Drexler-Dreis was renewed. Rob Buirgy, our Coordinator for 13 years, retired and we sincerely thank him for his huge commitment to this process. 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 and Colorado River Water Conservation District were our fiscal agents. See the financial statement at the end of this report.



Goals For 2022 and 2023

Governance

The Stakeholder Group will conduct four meetings of the SG and any Special Meetings as needed. The standing committees (Executive, Monitoring, Finance, and Cooperative Measures) as well as the Channel Maintenance Flow workgroup will continue their respective efforts. The SG is planning a field trip on the Colorado River to view W&S segments 4 and 5 in June 2022.

The SG is in the planning stages of creating a corporate entity with nonprofit status to support the work of the SG. The Executive Committee plans to bring incorporation documents for SG review at the June 2022 meeting. Timing for incorporation will be approved by the SG at a later date.

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 outline the next steps for 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 that is expected to be resolved in 2022.

Monitoring

[The 2022 Monitoring Plan can be found on the W&S website.](#)

Temperature

The W&S-sponsored temperature monitoring program will continue through 2022, 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. In addition to the W&S temperature sites, time-series temperature data will be collected at three BLM temperature sites. Additional time-series data will be collected at three USGS sites located within W&S segments. The SG will contract with Lotic Hydrological to generate end-of season thermographs and temperature standards analyses for all nine W&S sites of interest.

The Monitoring Committee will evaluate stream temperature data weekly, with the objectives being:

- Identify periods of thermal stress on W&S segments
- Provide the Monitoring Committee and SG with timely data to make informed decisions
- Assess stream temperatures against Colorado's stream temperature and standard thresholds

RRC Associates Research Program



For 2022, the SG has approved a \$51,700 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 commercial data logs and 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 in 2023.

Channel Maintenance Flows

During 2022 the workgroup will continue to fine tune the observational monitoring plan. Three field trips on the Colorado River are scheduled for 2022. Two Request for Proposals will be published in early 2023 and drone surveys, cross-section channel surveys, and sediment sampling is anticipated to start during the fall of 2023.

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 2022 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting that April-July undepleted flows will fall into the 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 2022. 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 Woford Mountain Reservoir). Implementation of the Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP) continues to be in place for 2022 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 hosted a workshop in February 2022 to discuss the potential for and feasibility of an SG funded pool of water to be utilized in the W&S segments. This workshop covered topics such as potential sources of water, the mechanism for delivery, how such pool(s) would be managed and anticipated costs. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue this discussion in 2022.

March 31, 2022 Financial Statement

	2020 Interest Group Contributions	NWCCOG PO 2021 - 2248	CRWCD PO 2021- 2050	2021 Interest Group Contributions	NWCCOG PO 2022 - 2302	Total Active Funding and Contracts
Funding Sources	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 70,525.00	\$ 95,680.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 99,999.00	\$ 306,206.00
<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)
Applied against CRWCD CWCB PO 2021-2050						
PO 2021 - 2050 Pay Request #1, June 15, 2021			(24,485.94)			(24,485.94)
PO 2021 - 2050 Pay Request #2, July 27, 2021			(1,751.00)			(1,751.00)
PO 2021 - 2050 Pay Request #3, September 9, 2021			(2,232.53)			(2,232.53)
PO 2021 - 2050 Pay Request #4, November 3, 2021			(4,815.25)			(4,815.25)
PO 2021 - 2050 Pay Request #5, November 30, 2021			(41,017.18)			(41,017.18)
Applied against 2020 Interest Group dues						
Buirgy Consulting Invoice 1108 Sept 2020	(1,546.23)					(1,546.23)
GCWIN 2020 membership dues - paid 6/29/2020	(500.00)					(500.00)
Gore Festival 2021	(5,000.00)					(5,000.00)
Buirgy retirement gift	(350.00)					(350.00)
2021 Field Trip Expenses	(204.77)					(204.77)
Applied against 2021 Interest Group dues						
2021 Field Trip Expenses				(142.60)		(142.60)
Amounts applied against funding	(7,601.00)	(21,827.20)	(74,301.90)	(142.60)	-	(103,872.70)
Funding net of applied amounts	12,400.00	48,697.80	21,378.10	19,858.40	99,999.00	202,333.30
<i>Less total amounts incurred but not yet applied against funding:</i>						
Buirgy Consulting Invoice 1122 November 2021			(191.25)			(191.25)
Buirgy Consulting Invoice 1123 December 2021			(1,232.50)			(1,232.50)
Fountainhead Consulting 289 October 2021		(2,612.00)				(2,612.00)
Fountainhead Consulting 293 November 2021		(2,263.38)				(2,263.38)
Fountainhead Consulting 298 December 2021		(3,311.75)				(3,311.75)
Fountainhead Consulting 303 January 2022	(2,729.25)					(2,729.25)
Fountainhead Consulting 306 February 2022	(2,941.50)					(2,941.50)
Fountainhead Consulting 316 March 2022	(2,128.16)					(2,128.16)
Stillwater Sciences, October 22, 2021		(5,872.00)				(5,872.00)
GCWIN Invoice 180, November 2, 2021		(962.57)				(962.57)
GCWIN Invoice 197, February 1 2022		(962.57)		(525.00)		(1,487.57)
Lotic Hydrological Invoice 22.107, January 6, 2022				(600.00)		(600.00)
Timberline Aquatics Inv 852, March 2022	(570.00)	(13,310.00)				(13,880.00)
RRC Associates Inv 20041, March 31, 2022			(14,674.00)			(14,674.00)
Admin costs		(1,464.71)	(482.93)		-	(1,947.65)
Total Amounts Incurred but not yet applied against funding	(8,368.91)	(30,758.98)	(16,580.68)	(1,125.00)	-	(56,833.58)
Funding Available as of March 31, 2022	4,031.09	17,938.82	4,797.42	18,733.40	99,999.00	145,499.72