



ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024



Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

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Table of Contents

- Background _____ 1
- State of the River - 2023 Hydrology _____ 2
- Status of ORV Indicators & Resource Guides _____ 2
 - Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators.....3
 - Recreational Floatboating ORV Indicator3
 - Resource Guides3
- Monitoring Committee _____ 5
- Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures _____ 5
 - Historic User Pool (HUP).....5
 - Coordinated Reservoir Operations (CROS) & Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP).....6
 - Monitoring of stream temperatures and streamflow.....6
 - Gore Fest.....6
- Governance _____ 7
- Goals For Next Year _____ 7
 - Governance7
 - Monitoring7
 - Long-Term Protection Measures & Cooperative Measures8
- March 31, 2024 Financial Statement _____ 10

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 – 2023 Hydrology

In W&S year 2023, from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, the total annual flow volume at the Kremmling gage (09058000) was 828631 acre feet and the total volume at the Dotsero gage (09070500) was 1,582,131 acre feet. Consequently, streamflow both at the Kremmling gage and the Dotsero gages were in the “Wettest 25%” category.

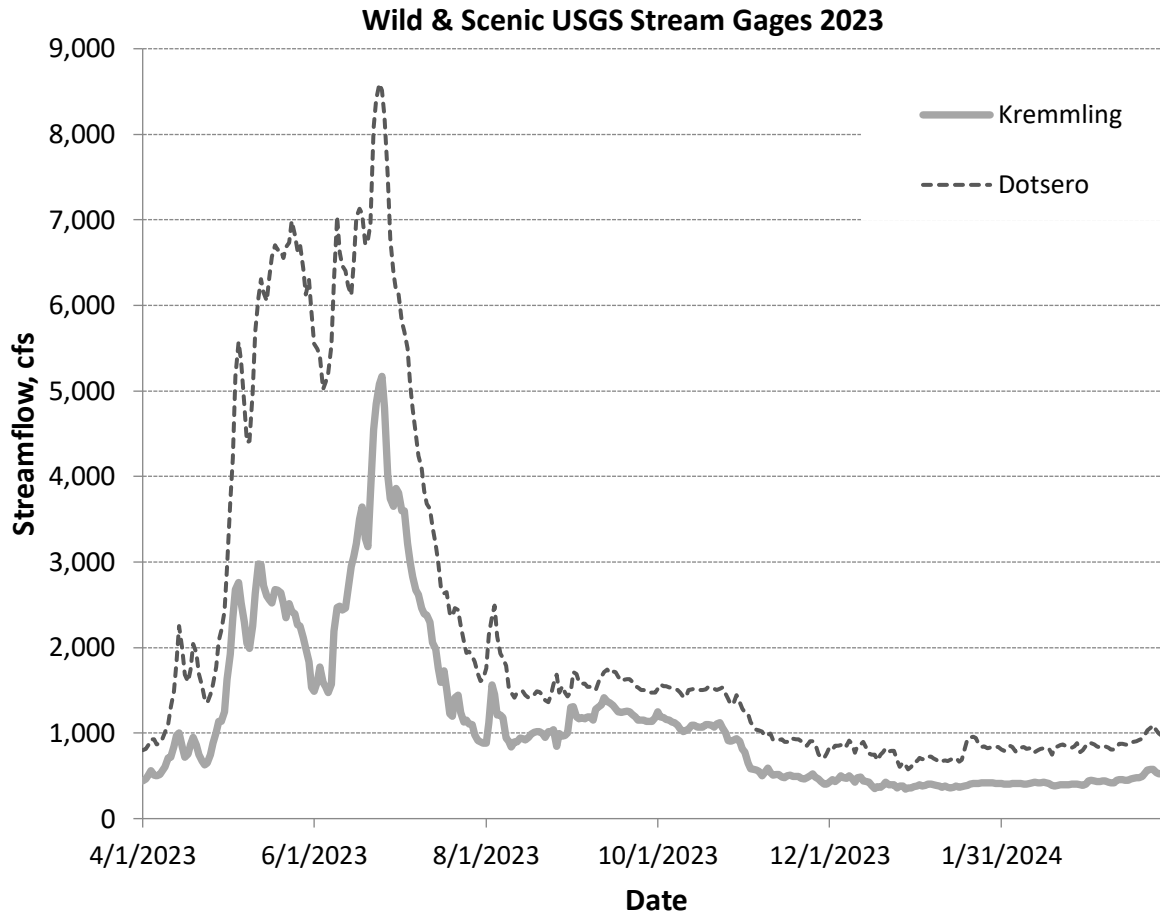


Figure 1: Wild and Scenic stream gages at Kremmling and Dotsero in 2023.

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 15-34 of the [SG Plan](#) and in the [2023 Annual Monitoring Report](#).

Recreational Fishing ORV Indicators

In 2023, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) completed annual biosurveys at Radium and Catamount. State Bridge and Lyons Gulch are scheduled to be surveyed in 2024. Lyons Gulch is a CPW monitoring location but is not an ORV Indicator location identified in the SG Plan. The 2023 biomonitoring surveys indicated that both quality trout and biomass exceeded the identified thresholds at both Radium and Catamount.



As of 2023, the catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) ORV Indicator threshold is only established at Radium. In 2023, the CPUE for Radium was above the established threshold. In 2022, CPUE was lower than the established threshold at Radium. As per the SG Plan, the ORV Indicator threshold for CPUE is not met if the threshold at a given location falls below the value in any three out of five years. As such, the W&S SG will continue to track the CPUE ORV Indicator threshold results 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 2023, the SG retained RRC Associates to conduct user intercept surveys. RRC collected and processed survey responses to evaluate the percentage values for the Not Likely to Return ORV Indicator. The 2023 survey responses indicated there were no divergences from the ORV Indicator values for Not Likely to Return in Segments 5, 6, and 7.

Resource Guides

Recreational Floatboating

Resource Guides for Recreational Floatboating are based on assessing the number of boatable days at different opportunity levels based on the year type. The Boatable days for Segments 4-6 were within or above the range for all opportunity levels in a Wettest 25% year type. The boatable days for Segment 7 were within or above the range for all opportunity levels in a Wettest 25% year type.

Early season (May 15-June 30) boatable days are identified as important for commercial boating opportunities, with a desired flow of at or above 860 cfs at the Kremmling gage. The early season boatable days were above the range.

Recreational Fishing

Calculations of the seasonal average flow and rolling 5-year flows are based on daily mean discharge at the Kremmling gage. The 2023 5-year rolling average is above the mid-point seasonal flow range for Seasons 1, 2, and 3. For Season 4, the 5-year rolling average is below the mid-point. The Resource Guide for flushing flows is defined as, “A daily average flow at or above 2,500 cfs at the Kremmling gage maintained for a minimum of three consecutive days in 50% of the years over a 10-year rolling period, beginning with the period April 1, 2011 through March 31, 2022.” In 2023, there were 41 days with flows greater than 2,500 cfs at the Kremmling gage. Flushing flows were achieved 70% of the years over the 10-year rolling average.

Desired species are tracked at Radium, State Bridge, and Catamount through the annual CPW fish monitoring surveys. Bluehead suckers, flannelmouth suckers, and Colorado River cutthroat trout are native species that are considered rare and are not anticipated to be detected annually. In 2023, CPW reported the presence of brown trout, rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, speckled dace, sculpin, and cutthroat trout.

Channel Maintenance Flows

The [Channel Maintenance Flow Observational Monitoring Plan](#) was developed in 2021. 2023 marked the first year of data collection. Matrix Design Group was hired to perform Drone-Based Aerial Imagery/Photogrammetry and Ecological Resource Consultants, Inc. was hired to perform Cross-Sectional Channel Surveys and Substrate Measures. SG members collected general observer notes and repeated photo points in the fall of 2023 as well. See the [2023 Annual Monitoring Report](#) for more details on channel maintenance flow monitoring.



Water temperature

The Resource Guides for water temperature are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission’s stream temperature water quality standards. Based on comparison to State standards all sites from Catamount downstream exceeded the chronic (MWAT) temperature standards at least once in 2023. Sites from Dotsero downstream exceeded it for extended time periods. The lower Blue River above the Colorado River confluence faces regular temperature concerns during the late spring shoulder season in May.

Water quality

The Resource Guides for water quality are the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission’s 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 September

14, 2023, lists Segments COUCUC03_C (578 Road Bridge to Gore Canyon), COUCUC03_D (Gore Canyon to Derby Creek), and COUCUC03_E (Derby Creek to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River) are identified as impaired for temperature (From 578 Road Bridge to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River; W&S Segments 4 – 7) with a high priority designation. Segment COUCUC03_E is on the Monitoring & Evaluation list for E. coli.

Macroinvertebrates

The Resource Guides for macroinvertebrates includes sampling every other year and utilizes the Colorado WQCC aquatic life standards for water quality. Timberline Aquatics collected samples at five sites in segments from Pumphouse to below Sweetwater. In 2023, the multi-metric index (MMI) scores for all sites indicated there were in attainment of currently applicable aquatic life use (Cold Water, Class I). In the full [2023 biomonitoring report](#), a range of other useful metrics are reported, including density, taxa richness, EPT taxa, Giant Stonefly density, percent EPT taxa excluding *Baetidae*, and percent *Chironomidae*.

Monitoring Committee



Monitoring is an essential component of the SG Plan. During 2023, 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 the quality trout and biomass ORV Indicator for Recreational Fishing.

Timberline Aquatics collected macroinvertebrate data. In addition, W&S contracted with Grand County Water Information Network to deploy temperature loggers to evaluate water temperature. All other Resource Guides were monitored by Stakeholders. Details of the 2023 monitoring activities are provided in the [2023 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 2023 W&S Water Year was in the “Wet Typical” category at the Kremmling gage and the “Wet Typical” category at the Dotsero gage. No CROS occurred in 2023. The Shoshone Power Plant was off-line for much of the year for maintenance and rockfall mitigation and therefore the Shoshone Outage Protocol (ShOP) was implemented during the following periods: 2/28/2023 through 4/9/2023, 8/11/2023 through 3/18/2024, and 3/23/2024 through 4/2/2024.

Monitoring of stream temperatures and streamflow

Unlike during the summers of 2021 and 2022, stream temperatures in 2023 were low and generally remained below chronic and acute standards at Kremmling, Catamount, and Dotsero. However, two temperature exceedances did occur in 2023, at the Colorado River near Dotsero, CO gage (USGS 09070500) and at the Colorado River above Glenwood Springs, CO gage (USGS 09071750) stations. The Cooperative Measures Committee did meet several times during this summer of 2023 to monitor conditions in the Wild & Scenic segments.

During August and September of 2023, Denver Water conducted a Voluntary Pilot Project (“VPP”) on the North Fork and Middle Fork of Ranch Creek during which additional water was bypassed from their collection system to determine whether the increased streamflow may result in the reduction of stream temperature. Data demonstrated that there is a statistically significant relationship between increased streamflow and downstream stream temperature (temperature decreased when bypasses were increased from 0 to 4 cfs) and this information will help inform future Cooperative Measures, particularly regarding releases from a potential future SG-funded pool of water.

Gore Fest

The SG continues to financially support Gore Fest. The 2023 event was held on August 25-26, 2023, with SG sponsorship of \$5,000. The Gore Race event of the festival did not take place due to continued insurance concerns and no cooperative measures related to the festival were required. 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 five times during this time period, which included a special meeting in June 2023 to discuss establishment of an endowment fund. Maria Pastore (East Slope Water Users) is the SG Chair and Hattie Johnson (Recreational Floatboating) is the SG Vice-Chair. In March 2024, Maria Pastore became the SG Vice-Chair and Hattie Johnson became the SG Chair and the Executive Committee was reauthorized for another year. The SG continued discussions regarding creation of the endowment fund and selected the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado as the manager.

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 was the fiscal agent. See the financial statement at the end of this report.



Goals For Next Year

Governance

The Stakeholder Group will conduct four meetings of the SG and Special Meetings as needed. The standing committees will continue their respective efforts.

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 SG will discuss the appropriate uses of 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.

Monitoring

[The 2024 Monitoring Plan can be found on the W&S website at upcowildandscenic.com.](https://www.upcowildandscenic.com)

Temperature

The W&S-sponsored temperature monitoring program will continue, which includes three time-series temperature loggers deployed at established study sites. The SG is a dues-paying member of Grand County Water Information Network (GCWIN) and will contract with GCWIN to administer

the three W&S temperature sites. The SG plans to continue water temperature analysis of these sites, two USGS sites, and two BLM sites.

Recreational Fishing and Floatboating ORV Indicators



For 2024, the SG has approved a \$66,500 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, displacement and user group surveys, as well as processing the BLM's 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 (Pumphouse, Radium, State Bridge, Above Catamount, and Below Sweetwater) next in 2025.

Channel Maintenance Flows

In 2024, the data gathered in 2023 will be comprehensively reviewed and analyzed. In addition, if a flushing flow occurs during runoff, the SG will collect general observer notes and repeated photo points in the fall.

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 2024 streamflow forecasts for the upper Colorado River are predicting that April-July undepleted flows will fall into the Wet Typical category for the Kremmling and Dotsero gage locations. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue to monitor flows and stream temperatures on a weekly basis and distribute that information to W&S SG. The Committee will use this information to identify potential problem areas and look for opportunities to address such concerns or enhance flows. 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. There is a high likelihood that CROs will occur in spring of 2024.

Long-term protection measures will continue to be in place for 2024. 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 2024 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 continues to discuss the potential for and feasibility of an SG funded pool of water to be utilized in the W&S segments. The Committee has initiated communication with the Bureau of Reclamation specifically regarding a potential contract in Green Mountain Reservoir, the elements and duration of a contract, the mechanism for delivery, how such a pool would be managed and the anticipated costs. The Cooperative Measures Committee will continue this discussion in 2024.

March 31, 2024 Financial Statement

	2021 Interest Group Contributions	2022 Interest Group Contributions	2023 Interest Group Contributions	NWCCOG PO 2024-3099	NWCCOG PO 2023 - 3909	NWCCOG PO 2024 - 2479	Total Active Funding and Contracts
Funding Sources	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 20,001.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 10,495.26	\$ 83,760.00	\$ 91,841.00	\$ 325,545.01
<i>Less total amounts applied against the funding:</i>							
Applied against NWCCOG CWCB PO 2022-2302							
PO 2022 - 2302 Pay Request #1, January 9, 2023							(42,723.12)
PO 2022 - 2302 Pay Request #2, July 6, 2023							(36,723.63)
Applied against NWCCOG CWCB PO 2023-3909							
PO 2023 - 3909 Pay Request #1, December 31, 2023					(38,606.09)		(38,606.09)
Applied against NWCCOG CWCB PO 2024-2479							
PO 2024 - 2479 Pay Request #1, December 31, 2023						(26,843.92)	(26,843.92)
Applied against 2021 Interest Group dues							
2021 Field Trip Expenses	(650.81)						(650.81)
Fountainhead Consulting 321 April 2022 & CMF field trip #1	(297.34)						(297.34)
GCWIN Invoice 197, February 1 2022	(525.00)						(525.00)
Lotic Hydrological Invoice 22.107, January 6, 2022	(600.00)						(600.00)
CMF field trip #1 expenses	(580.15)						(580.15)
Gore Festival 2022, Invoice 5435	(968.91)						(968.91)
Incorporation / Endowment support	(762.00)						(762.00)
Gore Fest	(5,000.00)						(5,000.00)
Fountainhead Consulting, September - December 2023	(3,436.27)	(685.24)					(4,121.51)
Fountainhead Consulting 457, March 2024	(648.10)						(648.10)
GCWIN Invoice, October - November	(1,960.42)						(1,960.42)
Lotic Hydrological, invoice 24.003, March 1, 2024	(800.00)						(800.00)
Timberline Aquatics, Invoice 990, March 31, 2024	(3,772.00)						(3,772.00)
Applied against 2022 Interest Group dues							
RRC Invoice 20104, June 20, 2022		(3,842.31)					(3,842.31)
Fountainhead Consulting, October - December		(4,181.43)					(4,181.43)
Fountainhead Consulting 414, July and August 2023		(627.72)					(627.72)
ERC, September - November		(10,000.00)					(10,000.00)
Matrix Design Group Invoice 41143, October 20, 2023		(664.30)					(664.30)
Amounts applied against funding	(20,001.00)	(20,001.00)	-	-	(38,606.09)	(26,843.92)	(184,234.46)
Funding net of applied amounts	-	-	20,000.00	10,495.26	45,153.91	64,997.08	141,310.55
<i>Less total amounts incurred but not yet applied against funding:</i>							
Fountainhead Consulting, January - February 2024						(4,869.20)	(4,869.20)
Fountainhead Consulting 457, March 2024				(2,739.73)			(2,739.73)
Matrix Design Group, October - December 2023					(22,354.46)		(22,354.46)
Matrix Design Group Invoice 42228, February 23, 2024						(14,025.50)	(14,025.50)
ERC Invoice 14776, November 30, 2023							-
ERC Invoice 14921, December 31, 2023					(822.99)		(822.99)
ERC Invoice 15192, March 5, 2024						(11,917.50)	(11,917.50)
ERC Invoice 15261, March 25, 2023						(10,727.00)	(10,727.00)
RRC invoice 20714, February 20, 2024						(17,965.00)	(17,965.00)
RRC invoice 20761, March 28, 2024				(1,940.00)			(1,940.00)
Timberline Aquatics, Invoice 990, March 31, 2024					(8,570.22)	(2,397.78)	(10,968.00)
Admin costs				(233.99)	(1,587.38)	(3,095.10)	(4,916.47)
Total Amounts Incurred but not yet applied against funding	-	-	-	(4,913.72)	(33,335.05)	(64,997.08)	(4,916.47)
Funding Available as of March 31, 2024	-	-	20,000.00	5,581.54	11,818.86	0.00	136,394.08