

American Whitewater—Colorado Recreational Flow Project

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Colorado's outdoor recreation industry depends upon healthy watersheds and rivers. The Colorado Water Plan indicates that diminished water supply and climate change present a significant threat to the long-term viability of Colorado's water-based outdoor recreation economy. While some data exists to identify current recreational needs, the risks to this sector lack detail and quantification. This project seeks to identify those high priority reaches and recreation locations, plan for a way to address those current needs, and identify a process for quantifying future recreational water needs statewide. The projects' objectives are:

- Identify river segments, lakes, and/or reservoirs that provide important recreational value to people across Colorado
- Identify other important water-based recreation amenities, including ski areas and river corridor development
- Understand the issues that affect the public's opportunity to enjoy these recreational opportunities
- Quantify existing impacts and future risks from diminished streamflows and watershed yield,
- Identify opportunities to reduce those impacts and risks or provide improved flows.
- Identify water sharing opportunities for up to three high priority recreation locations

Who: American Whitewater (Project Lead), Western Water Partnerships and Wilson Water Group (Consultants). Project funders include the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Walton Family Foundation, the Mighty Arrow Family Foundation, and the LOR Foundation.

What: This project will consider many factors that affect water-based opportunities and use that data to support decisions that can maintain or improve conditions that allow for sustainable water-based recreation. This project will identify high priority river reaches and recreation locations, plan for a way to address current needs and identify a process for quantifying statewide future recreational water needs.

When: Over the next 18 months

Where: This effort will examine water-based recreation in all river basins throughout the State.

How: The team plans to use existing data such as flow preference, boatable days, user days, and existing recreational studies to identify high priority river reaches and water bodies. Other available data, such as economic impacts of river recreation, popular fishing reaches, public access locations, and local river amenity improvement plans will be used to identify high priority reaches and locations for flow enhancement for recreation. To ensure the team is utilizing the best available data, methods, and evaluation approaches, we will consult with a Technical Advisory Group comprised of the recreational representatives from each Basin Roundtable (BRT). The team also intends to interview subject matter experts from land and water managers, outdoor recreation representatives, and others to ensure we are capturing the important water-based recreational amenities. The team

will consult closely with local, state, a federal land, water, and wildlife managers, recreation industry groups, conservation, and recreation advocacy organizations.

Project Outcomes:

Create a state-wide Geodatabase identifying existing water-based recreational use, issues, and impacts,

Identify high priority recreation locations that are experiencing the impacts from reduced streamflow, and

Identify water sharing opportunities for up to three high priority recreation locations to be further developed in subsequent phases of this effort.

Next Steps (Phases 2 and 3):

After assembling and analyzing existing data, identifying high priority reaches and waterbodies, and scoping out several promising cooperative water sharing opportunities, the team proposes two additional phases described below.

Phase 2: Focused on moving those cooperative water sharing opportunities forward and filling data gaps needed to fully quantify risks to recreational water use. Some known gaps include lack of recreational flow needs, economic information, and public access issues.

Phase 3: Will use information collected in previous tasks to quantify risks to water-based recreation statewide.

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