2021 STREAM MANAGEMENT PLANNING WORKSHOP

FLOW TARGETS AND FLOW RESTORATION OPPORTUNITIES

COLORADO WATER TRUST
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10/4/2021
COLORADO WATER TRUST

- Denver-based non-profit working **statewide** to restore flows to Colorado’s rivers in need

- Formed in **2001** to partner with Colorado’s Instream Flow Program and amplify its work, which began in **1973**

- Work with water users to put together **voluntary** transactions to benefit the environment

- Transactions are **flexible** - temporary or permanent, split-season, ATM

- Work within the prior appropriation system and **compensate** water users at fair-market value
Successfully completed 28 projects, adding over 45,000 acre-feet of water to over 588 miles of rivers and streams in Colorado. CWCB has 45 acquisition projects statewide.
Flow Targets and Restoration Tools
PROTECTION VS. RESTORATION

• **Flow protection tools:**
  • Instream flow appropriations
  • Recreational In-Channel Diversions

• **Flow restoration tools:**
  • Water rights transfers to instream flow
    • Temporary or permanent
  • Targeted/coordinated releases of stored water to downstream decreed uses
    • Hydropower generation, municipal use, RICD, industrial use, etc
  • Non-ISF water transaction tools
    • Ag to ag transfer
    • Temporary change of use
    • Water Conservation Programs
COLORADO’S INSTREAM FLOW PROGRAM

• Established in 1973 by Colorado General Assembly
• Housed at Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
• CWCB has exclusive authority to beneficial use of instream flow
• CWCB may appropriate water rights to preserve the natural environment to a reasonable degree
• CWCB may acquire water rights to preserve or improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree
COLORADO’S INSTREAM FLOW PROGRAM

Appropriations

• CWCB appropriates new junior water rights to preserve the natural environment
  • Limited to water available
  • Not “protectable” past senior diversions
  • Limited to minimum required for the natural environment

Acquisitions

• CWCB acquires senior water rights to preserve or improve the natural environment
  • Can restore flows where water may not be available for new appropriations (e.g. over-appropriated mainstem rivers)
  • Senior priority is maintained – requires administrative or water court approval
  • Can protect flows up to optimal levels
  • Flexible transaction tools – permanent, temporary
KEY INGREDIENTS

• Early engagement with stakeholders
  • Agricultural users
  • Industrial users
  • Municipal users
  • Environmental users
  • Water providers

• Defined in-channel need
  • Ecology/hydrology relationship
  • Species of concern
  • Recreational uses
  • Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Federal agencies, NGOs

• Understanding of what’s possible
  • CWCB, NGOs, consultants, attorneys, stakeholders
LOCATION

- Northwest Colorado
- Division 6
- Yampa River
FLOW PROTECTION

• Instream Flow Reach
• Recreational In-Channel Diversion

Yampa River
PROTECTION MECHANISM 1

INSTREAM FLOW APPROPRIATION

• 2001 priority
• Morrison Ck to Lake Catamount
• 5.4 miles
• 72.5 cfs (4/1-8/14)
• 47.5 cfs (8/15-3/31)
PROTECTION MECHANISM 2
RECREATIONAL IN-CHANNEL DIVERSION

- 2003 priority
- Charlie’s Hole, D-Hole downtown Steamboat

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f. Decreed Amounts. The Court finds that the City is entitled to an absolute water right at each of the two RICD structures comprising the Boating Park in the quantities set forth below, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>April 15-30</th>
<th>May 1-15</th>
<th>May 16-31</th>
<th>June 1-15</th>
<th>June 16-30</th>
<th>July 1-15</th>
<th>July 16-31</th>
<th>August 1-15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flows (cfs)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
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</table>
FLOW RESSTRUCTION

• Deliveries to:
  • Instream Flow Reach
  • Recreational In-Channel Diversion
  • Temperature Demand
  • Endangered Fish Recovery Program
RESTORATION MECHANISM 1

INSTREAM FLOW LOAN

• Temporary change of use
• Limits
  • 3-in-10 Loan*
  • No renewal*
  • ISF reach
• 2012, 2013, 2017

*new tool approved in 2020, now 5-in-10 years renewable twice, can preserve and improve
RESTORATION MECHANISM 2

RELEASES TO CITY OF STEAMBOAT

• Releases for non-consumptive use at wastewater plant or use at RICD
• Mitigation of high water temperatures
• 2015-2018, 2020-2021
RESTORATION MECHANISM 3

RELEASES TO CRAIG STATION

- Releases first used for hydropower production, can be used for other nonconsumptive uses
- 2012, 2021 (no deliveries)
RESTORATION MECHANISM 4

CWCB/RECOVERY PROGRAM - ELKHEAD

- Delivered to Green River confluence
- PBO flow targets
- 5000 AF permanent pool, 2000 AF short-term
- Annual releases varied based on hydrology and goals
RESTORATION MECHANISM 5

RIVER DISTRICT + TRI-STATE RELEASES - ELKHEAD

- Delivered through a portion of endangered fish reach then released to other uses
- 2020, 2021
More information on CWCB’s Instream Flow Program:
https://cwb.colorado.gov/focus-areas/ecosystem-health/instream-flow-program

More information on Water Trust tools:
http://coloradowatertrust.org/request-for-water

More information on Water Trust Yampa projects:
http://coloradowatertrust.org/yampa-river-story
Questions

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