

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Scoping Report

**Water Users' Commitment to Provide 10,825 acre-feet to the 15-Mile Reach of the Upper Colorado River
Great Plains Region, Eastern Colorado Area Office**



Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and our commitments to island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

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Executive Summary

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the effects of proposed contracts that would provide for permanent release of 10,825 acre-feet per year (ac-ft/yr) of water to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River. During the public scoping phase of the project, Reclamation sought input from the public and interested organizations and agencies. This report documents the results of the public scoping.

Reclamation engaged in a number of public scoping outreach activities to inform the public and solicit comments. Public scoping began October 28, 2009, when Reclamation placed newspaper advertisements regarding public scoping open houses in four local newspapers. Invitations to the open houses were emailed to known stakeholders. Two public scoping open houses were held in Basalt and Granby, Colorado on November 4 and 5, 2009, respectively, and were attended by about 35 people. Reclamation also conducted telephone interviews with federal, state, and local agencies to review their needs and concerns.

Every comment received during the three-week public scoping process was considered. These comments were grouped for consideration into relevant categories. Based on guidance for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), key issues were determined. The following key scoping issues will be considered in this EA along with other important issues:

- Surface Water Hydrology (rivers and streams) – Changes in the quantity and timing of flows in the Colorado River from the Redtop Valley Ditch headgate to the 15-Mile Reach, Redtop Valley Ditch, Stillwater and Willow creeks, Blue River, Fryingpan River, and Roaring Fork River
- Surface Water Hydrology (reservoirs) – Changes in levels of Ruedi Reservoir and release schedules for reservoirs that would provide 10825 water
- Ground Water Hydrology – Anticipated yield of Redtop Valley Ditch agricultural dry-up and changes in ground water accrual to Willow Creek
- Surface Water Quality – Effects on water quality, particularly in the Fryingpan River, Roaring Fork River, and Colorado River downstream of Glenwood Springs
- Reservoir Operations and Hydroelectric Generation – Effects on projected power production by the Ruedi and Green Mountain power plants
- Aquatic Life – Effects on game and nongame fish and macroinvertebrates in the Colorado River from the Redtop Valley Ditch headgate to the 15-Mile Reach, Stillwater and Willow creeks, Blue River, Fryingpan River, and Roaring Fork River; potential for spreading of zebra and quagga mussels or whirling disease from affected reservoirs

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- Wildlife and Vegetation – Effects on vegetation and habitat for deer, moose, elk, and greater sage grouse due to dry-up of irrigated land
- Wetlands, Flooding, and Riparian Resources – Effects on riparian communities due to changes in sediment transport, stream geomorphology, or recharge of alluvial aquifers along the Colorado River downstream of Granby Reservoir and along the Fryingpan River; potential for flooding along the Roaring Fork River near Basalt
- Socioeconomic and Land Use Resources – Effects on local economies due to changes in recreational resources such as angling, game populations, hunting, wildlife watching, and boating; effects on land use at the Miller-Hereford and E Diamond H ranches
- Recreation Resources – Effects on angling opportunities along the Fryingpan River; effects on angling and boating opportunities along the Colorado River; relationship to the Wild and Scenic River designation process; effects on shoreline fishing and boating opportunities at Ruedi Reservoir
- Cumulative Effects – Effects of the Proposed Action in conjunction with future Reclamation contracts, potential reduction of Xcel's Shoshone Power Plant call, and other water development projects
- Alternatives Analysis – Potential alternatives or changes or refinements to the Proposed Action
- Mitigation – Potential mitigation of significant adverse effects (after effects are analyzed)
- Other – Disclosing anticipated contract types, durations, and signatories; and describing authority for operation and administration of the Proposed Action

Introduction

Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the effects of proposed contracts that would provide for permanent release of 10,825 ac-ft/yr of water to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River. As a condition of a 1999 Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999), a group of east and west slope water users is committed to make releases of “10825 water” in late summer and fall in support of the recovery of endangered fish species in the 15-Mile Reach. The EA will document whether a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued for the proposed contracts.

Public involvement is a vital component of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is an important step in the development of the EA for the proposed 10825 project. The first phase of the public involvement process, also called “scoping,” is designed to help determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA, and helps Reclamation identify what issues the public feels are most important. During the public scoping phase of this project, Reclamation sought input from the public and interested organizations and agencies. This report documents the results of the public scoping process conducted between October 28 and November 18, 2009.

Proposed Project

The Proposed Action Alternative would use releases from Ruedi Reservoir and Granby Reservoir, and to a limited extent, storage in and releases from Green Mountain Reservoir when excess capacity were available, to provide 10,825 ac-ft/yr of water for the 15-Mile Reach. The following proposed contracts would allow water to be stored, released, and conveyed to meet the late summer and fall streamflow needs of the endangered fish:

- A contract for release of 5,412.5 ac-ft from Ruedi Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Fryingpan River
- An “if and when” contract for storage in and release from Green Mountain Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Blue River
- A municipal-recreation contract (or similar agreement) to protect 5,412.5 ac-ft during conveyance from Granby Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Colorado River, to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

Public Scoping Outreach Activities

Paid Advertisements

Reclamation placed advertisements inviting the public to scoping open houses in four local newspapers. These advertisements provided project background, open house information, and instructions for submitting comments (Appendix A) (Table 1).

Table 1. Paid Advertisements.

Newspaper	Publication Date
Aspen Times	Wednesday, October 28, 2009 Wednesday, November 4, 2009
(Glenwood Springs) Post-Independent	Wednesday, October 28, 2009 Wednesday, November 4, 2009
Sky-Hi News	Friday, October 30, 2009 Wednesday, November 4, 2009
Middle Park Times	Thursday, October 29, 2009 Thursday, November 5, 2009

Press Release

On October 27, 2009, Reclamation issued a press release to local and regional media outlets, including print newspapers, radio, television, and internet. The release announced the public scoping meetings and solicited participation in the scoping process (Appendix B).

Email Notices

Reclamation sent notices of the public scoping open houses and opportunity to provide scoping comments via e-mail to about 250 individuals, government offices, businesses, and media outlets in and around Granby, Kremmling, and Basalt, Colorado.

Public Scoping Open Houses

Reclamation held two public scoping open houses to solicit information and concerns about the proposed project from the public and interested agencies. Table 2 presents the location, date, venue, and time of each open house.

Table 2. Public Scoping Open Houses.

Open House Location	Venue	Date and Time
Basalt, CO	Basalt Middle School	November 4, 2009, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Granby, CO	The Inn at Silver Creek	November 5, 2009, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Each public scoping meeting was in an open house format. Attendees signed in at the door and were encouraged to peruse 11 informational posters (Appendix D), ask questions, and make comments. Representatives from Reclamation, Service, and Reclamation’s EA consulting team (MWH, Grand River Consulting, and ERO Resources) were present to answer questions. Comment cards were available for attendees to provide written comments.

There were 20 attendees at the Basalt open house and 15 attendees at the Granby open house. These counts reflect only those attendees that elected to sign in at the door. A few attendees elected not to sign in.

After the public scoping meetings, Reclamation posted the 11 informational posters and information on how to submit comments on its web site, <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/quarterly.cfm#ecao>.

Agency Scoping

Federal, state, and local agencies with a potential interest in the proposed project were contacted via telephone to review needs and concerns. Each agency was asked a general set of questions regarding the proposed project, and agency-specific questions, if appropriate. Agencies that participated in a scoping interview are identified in Table 3, and agency scoping invitations are presented in Appendix C. The Service declined additional consultation because the Service is a cooperating agency; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) declined further consultation because the Corps did not have a stake in the project; and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) declined a scoping interview because SHPO will be consulted through compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Table 3. Agency Consultation and Coordination.

Agency Consulted
Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)
Colorado State Engineer's Office, Division 5
Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
Grand County
Pitkin County
Ruedi Water and Power Authority
Town of Basalt
U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Western Area Power Administration (Western)

Cooperating Agencies

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.6, Reclamation has invited the Service to be a cooperating agency because of the Service's expertise with the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program. The Service has accepted the invitation, and was present to answer questions at the scoping open houses.

Native American Tribes Consultation

Reclamation consulted with Native American Tribes independently of the public and agencies scoping process. Reclamation initiated consultation with Native American Tribes through an invitation letter issued on November 16, 2009. Tribal comments will be summarized separately from this scoping report.

Scoping Results

Reclamation collected comments, questions, and concerns about the proposed contracts through public scoping open houses, agency contacts, letters, and email. Written comments were encouraged by providing comment cards at each public meeting. All comments were evaluated to determine specific issues or concerns. Each document was carefully and each substantive comment was sorted according to the following major categories:

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Reasonably Foreseeable Activities
- Surface Water Hydrology
- Surface Water Quality
- Reservoir Operations and Hydroelectric Generation

- Aquatic Life
- Wildlife and Vegetation
- Wetlands, Flooding, and Riparian Resources
- Socioeconomic and Land Use Resources
- Recreation Resources
- Other Resources or Topics
- Suggested Mitigation
- Comments about Process
- Suggested Information Sources

Source and Subject of Comments Received

Reclamation received 25 comment documents from members of the public, organizations, and federal, state, or local agencies. Oral agency comments were captured in meeting minutes.

Summary of Scoping Comments by Subject

Purpose and Need

One commenter was concerned that the east slope was getting credit for west slope water from the Redtop Valley Ditch.

Alternatives

One commenter felt that the Proposed Action was designed to meet the needs of Grand County, and felt that a project that released small amounts of water to the upper Roaring Fork River would be beneficial.

There was a request to develop an alternative with a pipeline or canal to deliver water from Ruedi Reservoir to downstream users. The purpose of this alternative would be to maintain the fishery and aesthetic value of the Fryingpan River and develop a more natural hydrograph.

There was a suggestion that construction of Placita Reservoir using historic storage rights on the upper Crystal River could contribute water for endangered fish needs by serving as an alternative source of water to Ruedi Reservoir or exchange vessel for Ruedi Reservoir. The project could also address seasonal low flows in the Crystal River. Similarly, there was a suggestion to obtain water from rivers other than the Fryingpan River. A commenter stated that providing the 10825 water should not be permitted to interfere with other water operations, including delivery of water for the endangered fish.

Reasonably Foreseeable Activities

There was concern about the cumulative effect of other Reclamation contracts. A commenter was concerned about future contract sales of water in Ruedi

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Reservoir, how they would cumulatively affect Fryingpan River and Ruedi Reservoir levels, and what proposed mitigation might be. Expiration of existing contracts for water from Ruedi Reservoir was identified as foreseeable.

There was also concern about the future of Xcel Energy's Shoshone Power Plant call and how it might affect obligations for endangered fish. If the call were off for an extended period it could be detrimental to fish at other times of the year when the proposed 10825 project would not result in releases.

Other water projects that could cumulatively affect the environment were identified as the Windy Gap Firming Project, Moffat Collection System Project, potential additional trans-mountain diversions to Denver, Northern Water, Southeastern Colorado, Aurora, or Colorado Springs, planned policies of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI), increased demand from the proposed Wolcott Reservoir, oil shale development, and other undefined future water development projects. The proposed Multi-Basin Water Supply Project (Yampa River project), Ruedi Reservoir pumpback project, "Around the Horn" alternative to Moffat Collection System Project, climate change, and effects of pine beetle kill were also suggested as reasonably foreseeable. Concern was expressed that other water projects would negate the intended effects of providing 10825 water for endangered fish recovery or that the 10825 water would be diverted by or be used as mitigation for other water projects.

Surface Water Hydrology

Commenters were concerned about high summer flows in the Fryingpan River due to releases from Ruedi Reservoir. Several commenters asked that the Fryingpan River flows be kept within an optimum range to support fly fishing, particularly by wading. Commenters provided optimum summertime flows for the Fryingpan River ranging from 200 to 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) or referenced streamflow recommendations developed by the Roaring Fork Conservancy. There was concern that Reclamation's adherence to operational guidelines or principles for the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project that flows in the Fryingpan River should stay below 250 cfs and that storage in Ruedi Reservoir should stay above 85,000 ac-ft through September 1 annually. Additionally, a commenter requested a side-by-side comparison of flow projections to the last 10 years of releases from Ruedi Reservoir. It was requested that the EA consider effects on winter releases to the Fryingpan River, with attention given to low flows and the potential for anchor ice and ice channel formation.

High flows in Seven Castles Creek every few years have caused debris discharge and flooding in the Fryingpan River. It was requested that the EA evaluate how the effects of the periodic debris flows on the Fryingpan River would change with the Proposed Action.

There was concern about the alteration of flow regimes downstream of Granby Reservoir outside the July to October period within which releases would be made

by the Proposed Action. Potential effects on spring flows were identified as a concern for multiple locations and some commenters questioned whether 10825 water not released in late summer or fall would be stored and released for enhancement of subsequent spring peak flows. Additionally, there was concern about loss of peak flows and effects on winter low flows in the upper Colorado River below Granby Reservoir, and their effect on fisheries. It was suggested that the EA consider effects of eliminating irrigation return flows that historically accrue to Willow Creek, and that operational measures could be incorporated to prevent effects on Willow Creek.

It was requested that the EA address what would happen if water could not be exchanged in to Green Mountain Reservoir, how frequently these exchanges would be made, and the appropriateness of Green Mountain Reservoir for the proposed storage. Another commenter asked that flows in the Blue River below Green Mountain Reservoir due to exchanging water from Granby Reservoir to Green Mountain Reservoir be evaluated. Existing supplies of endangered fish water and Green Mountain Reservoir Historic User Pool (HUP) releases were requested to be evaluated.

One commenter thought that the commitment of water from Redtop Valley Ditch to endangered fish should be perpetual – continuing even if the fish were no longer listed as threatened or endangered. Commenters also thought this water should bypass the Redtop Valley Ditch headgate to stay in the North Fork Colorado River and be conveyed downstream to Shadow Mountain Reservoir. Another commenter suggested structural modifications to the ditch to enable delivery of water to other shareholders while bypassing shares dedicated to 10825 water. A commenter suggested that the proposed agricultural dry-up would provide substantially less than the intended 5,412.5 ac-ft/yr of yield.

An analysis was requested of whether not utilizing releases from Wolford Mountain Reservoir in above average and wet years is supportable if, in above average years, the Service's target flows for the 15-Mile Reach still aren't being met. The existence of commitments to water releases for endangered fish in a Biological Opinion for Wolford Mountain Reservoir was noted.

There was a request to analyze release schedules for four different year types as in Section 4.5 of the 10825 Water Supply Study Phase 2 Report (Grand River Consulting 2009). The same commenter thought that use of the 10825 water should not detrimentally impact the volume of water from other reservoirs that contribute non-10825 water to the 15-Mile Reach in any given year type. Specifically, there was concern that exchange of water from Granby Reservoir to Green Mountain Reservoir might affect the volume and timing of releases of "surplus" water from the Green Mountain Reservoir HUP that already benefit endangered fish in the 15-Mile Reach. This commenter wanted to know why Section 4.2, Table 3 of Grand River Consulting (2009) was different from Section 4.2, Table 2 of the previous January 2008 draft. For the same document, there

was a question over whether operating principles #1 and #7, fixed schedules, and #6, proposal to store water in Green Mountain Reservoir for release the following spring, would most benefit the 15-Mile Reach.

Surface Water Quality

It was requested that direct and cumulative effects on water quality, temperature, and dilution flows be evaluated for the Colorado River downstream of Glenwood Springs. A comparison of projected water quality to that assumed in the 1999 PBO was requested. Concerns were expressed about potential effects on temperature within the Fryingpan River and lower Roaring Fork River.

Reservoir Operations and Hydroelectric Generation

A commenter requested an analysis of power production at the Ruedi Reservoir Power Plant under the Proposed Action in comparison to historic output. Another commenter was concerned that there could be a shift in the timing of power generation at Green Mountain Reservoir and that the shift could affect Western's revenue.

Aquatic Resources

Commenters requested analyses of potential effects on the lifecycle of fish within the Fryingpan River, including indicators such as algae, turbulence in the spring, scouring flows, habitat availability, and overtopping of riparian vegetation. Commenters felt that low winter flows on the Fryingpan River would interfere with food availability for fish, and that anchor ice in the Fryingpan River would affect macroinvertebrate populations. Another commenter asked for an evaluation of effects on temperature, *Mysis* exports, and growth of trout and macroinvertebrates downstream of Ruedi Reservoir. One commenter felt that releases of water from Ruedi Reservoir was beneficial to the fishery in the Colorado River below Glenwood Springs, and another commenter requested analyses of effects on a full range of fisheries, not only sport fisheries.

Commenters thought that the Proposed Action would help reduce water temperature and positively affect the coldwater fishery of the Colorado River between Windy Gap Reservoir and the Blue River. However, there was concern that releases of water from Granby Reservoir could have adverse effects on aquatic and riparian species, tubifex worms, silt transport, rainbow trout, macroinvertebrates, and temperature in the Colorado River downstream of Windy Gap Reservoir. There was also concern about zebra and quagga mussels in the west slope Colorado-Big Thompson Project reservoirs and that the Proposed Action could spread the mussels. If the mussels were to become established in the Colorado River, there was concern about subsequent effects on macroinvertebrates, particularly *Pteronarcys* spp. (stonefly species), and on downstream water diversion infrastructure. Whirling disease has been found at Windy Gap Reservoir, and there was concern that the Proposed Action could exacerbate the disease problem. It was noted that Stillwater Creek, which is intercepted by the Redtop Valley Ditch, is designated habitat for cutthroat trout.

Wildlife and Vegetation

Commenters were concerned about effects on upland vegetation, as well as greater sage grouse and big game, particularly winter range for deer, moose, and elk due to the proposed irrigation dry up. CDOW identified the dry-up area as elk severe winter range, as an elk winter concentration area, and an elk migration corridor. The area also is used by moose as winter range and as a concentration area. A portion of the Miller-Hereford Ranch has been identified as mule deer severe winter range and as a winter concentration area. Greater sage grouse overall range is within ½ mile of these proposed agricultural dry-up properties and grouse could potentially use the irrigated meadows for brood rearing and summer habitat.

A commenter was also concerned about cumulative effects on wildlife caused by future land development in the vicinity of the proposed agricultural dry-up. These effects may include change in the land's value as habitat and ability to maintain hunting opportunities for wildlife population management.

Wetlands, Flooding, and Riparian Resources

There was concern regarding effects on riparian communities due to changes in sediment transport, geomorphology, sub-irrigation, and recharge of alluvial aquifers downstream of Granby Reservoir. Potential effects on geomorphology and riparian habitat along the Fryingspan River were a concern. Another commenter was concerned about possible flood flows in the reach of the Roaring Fork River downstream from the Fryingspan River, which could cause property damage or harm residents of the town of Basalt.

Socioeconomics and Land Use

Commenters were concerned about economic effects of changes in recreational resources, particularly angling, game populations, hunting, wildlife watching, and boating. Potential effects on angling-supported businesses, such as outfitting, retail shops, lodging, and restaurants, particularly in the Fryingspan River, were also noted.

Another concern was the potential for releases from Green Mountain Reservoir to combine with storm flows and result in flooding and property damage. If Reclamation were held legally liable for property damage, settlement of lawsuits could affect rates for Western customers.

There was a request to consider conservation easements or other open space management measures for lands subject to agricultural dry-up. Concern was also expressed about the ability for those lands to be developed and whether Northern Water would retain ownership of any of the land.

Recreation Resources

Commenters were concerned about potential effects on fly fishing, particularly dry fly fishing, due to releases from Ruedi Reservoir. There was concern about maintenance of the Gold Medal trout waters designation of the Fryingspan River.

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Effects on boating and shoreline fishing (for Kokanee salmon in particular) at Ruedi Reservoir were a concern. Effects on boating at Ruedi Reservoir were requested to be presented by month and length of season. Changes to opportunities for float fishing in the Roaring Fork River due to inflows from the Fryingpan River was a concern.

Potential effects on water recreation in the Blue River downstream of Green Mountain Reservoir were a concern. A commenter also requested an evaluation of potential effects on rafting and kayaking in the upper Colorado River.

The BLM is evaluating the suitability of Colorado River and several of its tributaries within Colorado for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Blue River downstream of Green Mountain Reservoir and Colorado River through Glenwood Canyon, in particular, are under evaluation. Potential effects on Outstandingly Remarkable Values of eligible reaches should be examined.

Suggested Mitigation

It was suggested that flows in the Fryingpan River below Ruedi Reservoir should be monitored and adaptive management applied to maintain optimum levels for recreational uses and the local economy. Additionally, a protocol for timing of releases from Ruedi Reservoir in wet, dry, and average years was requested. Using the 10825 EA process to "memorialize" Fryingpan-Arkansas Project Operating Principles for operation of Ruedi Reservoir was requested. There was a request that additional releases from Ruedi Reservoir not be considered as mitigation for future projects. There was concern that previous shortages in Green Mountain Reservoir's HUP had resulted in additional releases of water from Ruedi Reservoir and that 10825 water should be subject to the same reductions that are applied to Ruedi Reservoir Round II contractors. Use of water from the Green Mountain Reservoir HUP, possibly with retimed releases, was suggested as a management option that would allow Ruedi releases to be spread out over the year, which would potentially reduce higher flows in the Fryingpan and the Blue River. One commenter felt that any future Reclamation contracts should be required to contribute flows for the endangered fish and compensate for trans-basin diversions. Concern was also expressed about whether there is potential for Ruedi Reservoir's contribution to endangered fish to be reopened in the future.

A commenter asked for releases in Grand County to be timed to maximize recreational benefits. Other commenters were concerned that zebra and quagga mussels could be spread from Colorado-Big Thompson Project reservoirs to the Colorado River and requested mitigation if that occurs.

Other Resources and Topics

There was concern about effects on irrigation structures below Granby Reservoir due to low flows, freezing, and algae clogging pumps. General environmental

effects in the Blue River below Green Mountain Reservoir were identified as a concern as were potential effects on aesthetic qualities of the Fryingpan River.

Commenters voiced support for legislation to allow extended repayment for Ruedi Reservoir. Some commenters suggested that retirement of Ruedi Reservoir's debt should be linked to resolving 10825 water supply issue or that providing the 10825 water should result in a ledger transfer toward the reservoir's repayment. A commenter suggested that the EA should investigate whether any changes in operation of the Colorado River would affect assumptions within the PBO.

Comments about Process

There was a request that the EA clearly document baseline hydrology in terms of assumptions, bypass requirements, and mitigation requirements for existing projects; clearly define what actions are considered in the cumulative effects analysis; and provide information about how the proposed contracts would satisfy compliance with any other provisions of the PBO. One commenter felt that the focus of the EA should be on the 15-Mile Reach and other endangered fish habitat from approximately Rifle, Colorado, to the Utah state line.

A commenter requested that the EA evaluate the maximum contract length allowed (40 years), and, if at the end of the initial contract period, if the fish are still listed as endangered or continued releases of 10825 water are needed to meet state law requirements, there should be a presumption of contract renewal for another contract period. The same commenter thought that the availability of 10825 water from Granby Reservoir should be independent from any legal difficulties that may arise due to the use of Redtop Valley Ditch water as proposed.

Two commenters had concerns about authority over the Proposed Action, and thought that the EA should specify which agency would be responsible for administering the Proposed Action and how authority for Ruedi Reservoir operations may be altered as a result of the Proposed Action. Another commenter thought that contract signatories should include Reclamation and municipalities below the 15-Mile Reach, and that the Service should be in control of 10825 water releases. Another commenter requested that Reclamation retain control of contractual and delivery activities out of Granby Reservoir. There was also concern about storage of 10825 water in an "if and when" account within the 100,000 ac-ft power pool of Green Mountain Reservoir. A commenter questioned whether Reclamation has the authority to enter into contracts committing Reclamation to release water stored in the power pool in amounts exceeding the capacity of the Green Mountain Power Plant turbines.

It was suggested that the town of Basalt and Colorado River Basin roundtable be contacted and invited to provide scoping comments. Two commenters requested notification of any contractual activity so that they could provide comments. One commenter requested to be a member of any group finalizing contracts for 10825 water.

Suggested Information Sources

Commenters identified additional sources of information, including:

- Roaring Fork Conservancy flow regime and fish lifecycle data
- Roaring Fork Conservancy, Fryingpan Valley Economic Study, June 21, 2002.
- Miller Ecological Consultants, Evaluation of Seven Castles Creek Sediment Inflow on the Fryingpan River, Prepared for Roaring Fork Conservancy, March 6, 2008
- Roaring Fork Conservancy, Ruedi Water and Power Authority, and Colorado River Water Conservation District: Ruedi Futures Study reports
- Ruedi Water and Power Authority and Roaring Fork Conservancy, State of the Roaring Fork Watershed, 2008
- Ruedi Water and Power Authority documents
- Miller Ecological Consultants, A Study of Macroinvertebrate Community Responses to Winter Flows on the Fryingpan River, Prepared for Roaring Fork Conservancy, September 10, 2006
- Matrix Design Group, Floodplain Information Report, Roaring Fork River, Prepared for Town of Basalt, Eagle and Pitkin Counties, Colorado. November 14, 2001
- CDOW aquatic resources data
- CDOW comments concerning angler recreation impacts related to Ruedi Reservoir operation submitted in December or early January 1999/2000
- Tetra Tech, Final Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report for Kremmling and Glenwood Springs Field Offices, Colorado, Prepared for U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, March 2007
- Hydrosphere Resource Consultants, Upper Colorado River Basin Study Phase II Final Report, Prepared for Grand County, Summit County, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Colorado Springs Utilities, Middle park Water Conservancy District, NWCCOG's Water Quality/Quantity Committee, May 29,
- Grand River Consulting, 10825 Water Supply Study Phase 2 Report, Selected Alternative for 10,825 Acre-Feet per Year of Water for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, April 17, 2009
- Windy Gap Firming Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Moffat Collection System Draft EIS
- Granby Reservoir release pattern data (provided orally by Grand County)
- June 2001 Municipal Recreation Agreement between the United States, Town of Palisade, City of Grand Junction, and City of Fruita (for contract signatories)
- Power rates and their relationship to outflow, head and power generation at Green Mountain Reservoir
- Forest plan for White River National Forest (U.S. Forest Service)
- 2006 Watershed Conservation Handbook (U.S. Forest Service)

Key Issues to be Considered in the EA Process

Reclamation considered every comment received during the public scoping process. These comments were grouped for consideration into relevant categories. Based on guidance for NEPA, key issues were determined. Key issues to be considered in this EA are the following:

- Surface Water Hydrology (rivers and streams) – Changes in the quantity and timing of flows in the Colorado River from the Redtop Valley Ditch headgate to the 15-Mile Reach, Redtop Valley Ditch, Stillwater and Willow creeks, Blue River, Fryingpan River, and Roaring Fork River
- Surface Water Hydrology (reservoirs) – Changes in levels of Ruedi Reservoir and definition of anticipated release schedules for reservoirs that would provide 10825 water
- Ground Water Hydrology – Anticipated yield of Redtop Valley Ditch agricultural dry-up and changes in ground water accrual to Willow Creek
- Surface Water Quality – Effects on general water quality, including temperature, particularly in the Fryingpan River, Roaring Fork River, and Colorado River downstream of Glenwood Springs
- Reservoir Operations and Hydroelectric Generation – Effects on projected power production by the Ruedi and Green Mountain power plants
- Aquatic Life – Effects on game and nongame fish and macroinvertebrates in the Colorado River from the Redtop Valley Ditch headgate to the 15-Mile Reach, Stillwater and Willow creeks, Blue River, Fryingpan River, and Roaring Fork River; potential for spreading of zebra and quagga mussels or whirling disease from affected reservoirs
- Wildlife and Vegetation – Effects on vegetation and habitat for deer, moose, elk, and greater sage grouse due to dry-up of irrigated land
- Wetlands, Flooding, and Riparian Resources – Effects on riparian communities due to changes in sediment transport, stream geomorphology, or recharge of alluvial aquifers along the Colorado River downstream of Granby Reservoir and along the Fryingpan River; potential for flooding along the Roaring Fork River near Basalt
- Socioeconomic and Land Use Resources – Effects on local economies due to changes in recreational resources such as angling, game populations, hunting, wildlife watching, and boating; effects on land use at the Miller-Hereford and E Diamond H ranches
- Recreation Resources – Effects on angling opportunities along the Fryingpan River; effects on angling and boating opportunities along the Colorado River; relationship to the Wild and Scenic River designation process; effects on shoreline fishing and boating opportunities at Ruedi Reservoir
- Cumulative Effects – Effects of the Proposed Action in conjunction with future Reclamation contracts, potential reduction of Xcel’s Shoshone Power Plant call, and other water development projects

Water Users' Commitment to Provide 10,825 Acre-Feet to the 15-Mile Reach of the Upper Colorado River

- Alternatives Analysis – Potential alternatives or changes or refinements to the Proposed Action
- Mitigation – Potential mitigation of significant adverse effects (after effects are analyzed)
- Other – Disclosing anticipated contract types, durations, and signatories; and describing authority for operation and administration of the Proposed Action

References

Grand River Consulting. 2009. 10825 Water Supply Study Phase 2 Report, Selected Alternative for 10,825 Acre-Feet per Year of Water for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Prepared for 10825 Water Supply Stakeholders. April 17.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). 1999. Final Programmatic Biological Opinion for Bureau of Reclamation's Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River above the Confluence with the Gunnison River. December.

Appendix A: Paid Advertisements



**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PROVIDING
10,825 ACRE-FEET/YEAR OF WATER FOR THE
UPPER COLORADO ENDANGERED FISH
RECOVERY PROGRAM**

Public Scoping Open Houses

The United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) announces two open houses to collect public scoping comments on a proposed project to provide 10,825 acre-feet/year of water for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. East and west slope water users are committed, as a condition of a 1999 Programmatic Biological Opinion, to make releases of 10,825 acre-feet/year of water to augment base flows in late-summer and fall in support of endangered fish species. Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the effects of proposed long-term contracts that would provide for delivery of 10,825 acre-feet/year of water to the 15-Mile Reach of the Upper Colorado River immediately upstream of the confluence with the Gunnison River.

East and west slope water users propose to provide this 10,825 acre-feet/year of water through storage of water in and release of water from Ruedi Reservoir, Lake Granby, and to a lesser extent, Green Mountain Reservoir.

Reclamation will describe and analyze the potential effects of the proposed alternative on environmental and human resources in an EA next year. Public scoping helps Reclamation identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the EA. This EA is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.



*For additional questions about the public open houses and scoping process,
please contact Kara Lamb at (970) 962-4326 or klamb@usbr.gov*

Appendix B: Press Release

Eastern Colorado Area Office
Loveland, CO

Media Contact: Kara Lamb, klamb@usbr.gov
(970) 962-4326

For Release on: October 27, 2009

Reclamation to Host Two Public Open Houses on Water for Endangered Fish

The Bureau of Reclamation is hosting two public open houses as part of the public scoping process for its Environmental Assessment (EA) of a proposed project to provide water from its reservoirs for endangered fish. Reclamation will be accepting public comments until November 18, 2009.

The first open house will be November 4 in Basalt, CO at the Basalt Middle School. The second open house will be November 5 in Granby, CO at the Inn at Silver Creek . Both open houses will run from 6-8 p.m.

At the request of east and west slope water users of the Colorado River, Reclamation is considering entering into three proposed long-term water contracts that would provide 10,825 acre-feet of water from Ruedi, Granby, and to a lesser extent, Green Mountain reservoirs to the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River – critical habitat already identified for the endangered fish.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Reclamation is preparing the EA to determine what effects might result from the three proposed contracts. Comments received from the public will help Reclamation identify the scope of the EA.

Comments must be submitted in writing via e-mail to 10825EA@mwhglobal.com, or by hard copy. Hard copy letters or comment cards will be accepted at the public open houses, but may also be mailed to: **Attn: 10825 EA**, MWH, 1110 Elkton Drive, Suite B, Colorado Springs, CO 80907. Comments must be received by November 18, 2009.

For additional questions about the public open houses and scoping process, please contact Kara Lamb at (970) 962-4326 or klamb@usbr.gov.

###

Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier in the United States, and the nation's second largest producer of hydroelectric power. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit our website at <http://www.usbr.gov>.



Appendix C: Email Notices

Lesley Siroky

From: Tracy Kosloff
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2009 10:41 AM
To: Jana_Mohrman@fws.gov; Patty_schradergelatt@fws.gov; Roy_Smith@blm.gov; gierard@wapa.gov; Rebecca.mitchell@state.co.us; Randy.Seaholm@state.co.us; Alan.Martellaro@state.co.us; Sheena.Duvol@chs.state.co.us; Kendall.Ross@state.co.us; fulcon@comcast.net; lcurran@co.grand.co.us; rachelrichards@comcast.net
Cc: William VanDerveer; Lesley Siroky; cronca@usbr.gov
Subject: Upper Colorado River 10825 EA - Agency Scoping

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of entering into three potential long-term water contracts. Reclamation has been requested by east and west slope water providers that divert from the Upper Colorado River Basin, to enter into these contracts that would allow releases of 10,825 acre-feet of water a year for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. The following proposed contracts, which comprise the 10825 federal actions, would each have a term of up to 40 years:

- A contract for release of 5,412.5 ac-ft from Ruedi Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Fryingpan River
- An “if and when” contract for storage in and release from Green Mountain Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Blue River
- A municipal-recreation contract (or similar agreement) to protect 5,412.5 ac-ft during conveyance from Granby Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Colorado River, to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

The purpose of the proposed 10825 contracts is to allow the water providers to fulfill a commitment described in the “1999 Final Programmatic Biological Opinion [PBO] for Bureau of Reclamation’s Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of the Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River Above the Confluence with the Gunnison River.” Pursuant to the PBO, the water users will permanently deliver 10,825 ac-ft of water to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River to augment baseflows in late-summer and early fall in support of the recovery of endangered fish species.

Additional background information and previous analyses on the 10825 project are available at:
<http://www.grandriver.us/10825/>.

MWH is a third-party contractor providing consulting services for the EA. In the next few days, MWH will contact you or an alternate contact at your agency, if provided, to schedule a conference call to discuss your concerns and comments about the proposed project and to determine the level of participation from your agency. If you do not wish to participate in an agency stakeholder interview, please respond to me via email or to the phone number below.

You are also welcome to attend the public scoping meetings. The first open house will be November 4 in Basalt, CO at the Basalt Middle School. The second open house will be November 5 in Granby, CO at the Inn at Silver Creek. Both open houses will run from 6-8 p.m.

If you have any questions or concerns that you like to discuss with Reclamation, please do not hesitate to contact Carlie Ronca, Reclamation at 970-962-4350 or via email at cronca@usbr.gov.

Thank you,

Tracy Kosloff, PE
Senior Engineer
MWH
1801 California St., 29th Floor

Denver, CO 80202
direct: 303-291-2122
mobile: 303-564-3903
tracy.kosloff@mwhglobal.com

Lesley Siroky

From: Tracy Kosloff
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2009 11:10 AM
To: nick.mezei@usace.army.mil
Cc: William VanDerveer; Lesley Siroky; Carlie Ronca (CRonca@usbr.gov)
Subject: Upper Colorado River 10825 EA - Agency Scoping

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of entering into three potential long-term water contracts. Reclamation has been requested by east and west slope water providers that divert from the Upper Colorado River Basin, to enter into these contracts that would allow releases of 10,825 acre-feet of water a year for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. The following proposed contracts, which comprise the 10825 federal actions, would each have a term of up to 40 years:

- A contract for release of 5,412.5 ac-ft from Ruedi Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Fryingpan River
- An “if and when” contract for storage in and release from Green Mountain Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Blue River
- A municipal-recreation contract (or similar agreement) to protect 5,412.5 ac-ft during conveyance from Granby Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Colorado River, to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

The purpose of the proposed 10825 contracts is to allow the water providers to fulfill a commitment described in the “1999 Final Programmatic Biological Opinion [PBO] for Bureau of Reclamation’s Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of the Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River Above the Confluence with the Gunnison River.” Pursuant to the PBO, the water users will permanently deliver 10,825 ac-ft of water to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River to augment baseflows in late-summer and early fall in support of the recovery of endangered fish species.

Additional background information and previous analyses on the 10825 project are available at:
<http://www.grandriver.us/10825/>.

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Thank you,

Tracy Kosloff, PE
Senior Engineer
MWH
1801 California St., 29th Floor
Denver, CO 80202
direct: 303-291-2122

mobile: 303-564-3903
tracy.kosloff@mwhglobal.com

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Appendix D: Open House Posters

Welcome

Public Scoping Open House

Water Users' Commitment to Provide 10,825 acre-feet to the 15-Mile Reach of the Upper Colorado River



Razorback Sucker



Colorado Pikeminnow



Bonytail Chub



Roundtail Chub

Illustration: CDOW

Environmental Assessment

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

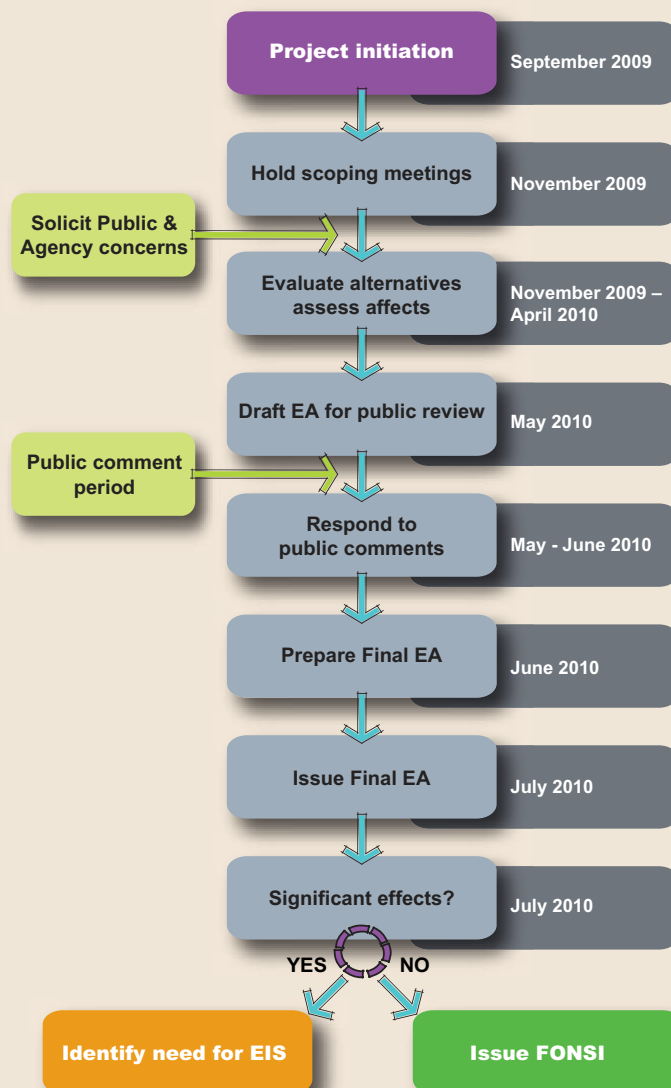
What NEPA does:

- Requires full disclosure about major actions taken by federal agencies and accompanying alternatives, impacts, and possible mitigation
- Requires that environmental concerns and impacts be evaluated during planning and decision making

What NEPA does NOT do:

- Decide which alternative to choose
- Prevent environmental impacts from occurring
- Prohibit any actions
- Justify a predetermined action

10825 Environmental Assessment Process

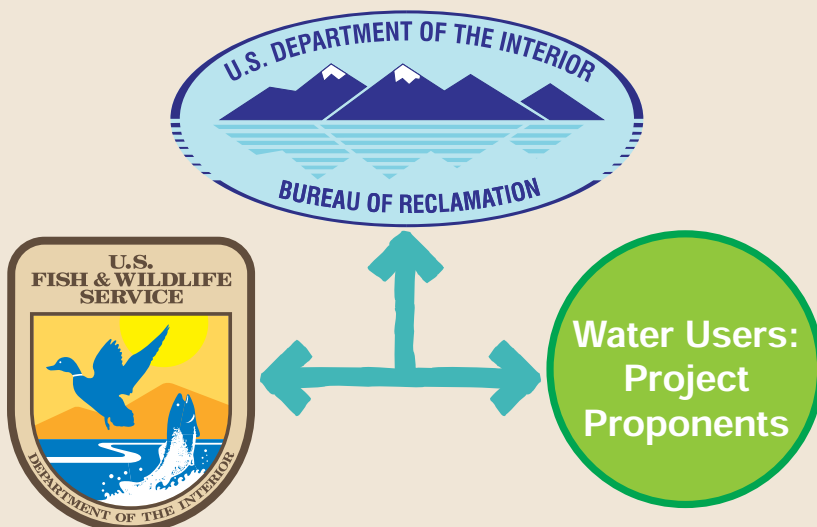


Participants

The Bureau of Reclamation (**Reclamation**) is the **lead federal agency**. The Water Users are requesting up to three long-term contracts from Reclamation to release 10,825 acre-feet of water per year to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (**Service**) is a **cooperating agency**. Because the Service is responsible for endangered fish recovery, the Service can offer special expertise when preparing the Environmental Assessment.

East and west slope **Water Users** are requesting contracts from Reclamation and are the **project proponents**.



Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed 10825 contracts is to allow water providers that divert from the Colorado River or its tributaries to fulfill a commitment described in the *1999 Final Programmatic Biological Opinion [PBO] for Bureau of Reclamation's Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of the Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River Above the Confluence with the Gunnison River*. Pursuant to the PBO, the water users will permanently deliver 10,825 acre-feet of water ("10825 water") to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River to augment baseflows in late-summer and early fall in support of the recovery of endangered fish species (Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub, and bonytail chub).



The 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

Proposed Action Alternative

The Water Users have requested the following contracts with Reclamation, each with a term of up to 40 years:

- A contract for release of 5,412.5 acre-feet/year from Ruedi Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Fryingpan River
- An “if and when” contract for storage in and release from Green Mountain Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Blue River
- A municipal-recreation contract (or similar agreement) to protect 5,412.5 acre-feet/year during conveyance from Granby Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Colorado River, to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

At Granby Reservoir, the source of the water would be historical irrigation water from the Redtop Valley Ditch, which currently irrigates 844 acres on the Miller-Hereford Ranch and E Diamond H Ranch. Water released from Granby Reservoir would sometimes be exchanged into Green Mountain Reservoir and released at a later time.



Granby Reservoir



Ruedi Reservoir



Green Mountain Reservoir

1999 Programmatic Biological Opinion

In 1999, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Programmatic Biological Opinion that addressed the effects on endangered fish species in the upper Colorado River from the following actions:

- The continuation of all of Reclamation's operations, including all existing and authorized depletions, in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River
- Reclamation's portion of 120,000 acre-feet/year of new depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River
- Actions undertaken by the Service, Reclamation, and the Western Area Power Administration in the funding and carrying out of recovery actions for the Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fish Species in the upper Colorado River Basin that affect the Colorado River from Rifle, Colorado, to Lake Powell, Utah, including the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River
- The continuation of all non-Federal existing depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River, and the non-Reclamation portion of 120,000 acre-feet/year of new depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River

Water Users' Commitment in the Programmatic Biological Opinion

- Release 10,825 acre-feet of water annually for the benefit of endangered fish species habitat in the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River near Grand Junction by augmenting late summer and fall baseflows
- Commitment for 10,825 acre-feet/year is divided equally between east and west slope water providers
- The water users will determine the existing or new facilities from which the water will be released and execute any necessary agreements by June 30, 2010 to supply the 10825 water on a permanent basis

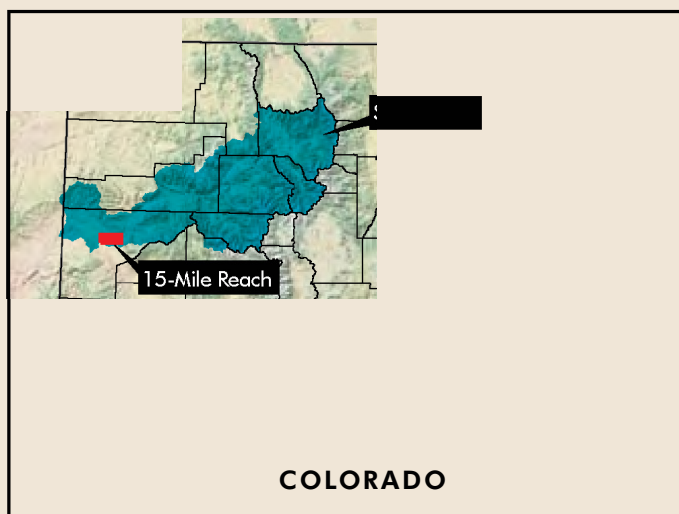


The 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

Importance of the 15-Mile Reach

(Colorado River from Gunnison River upstream for 15 miles)

- The 15-Mile Reach provides valuable spawning habitat for Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker
- The 15-Mile Reach provides an optimum balance between temperature and food availability for adult Colorado pikeminnow in the Colorado River
- The 15-Mile Reach provides an important refuge for endangered fishes should a catastrophic event cause a loss of populations in the Gunnison River or in the Colorado River below the Gunnison River confluence

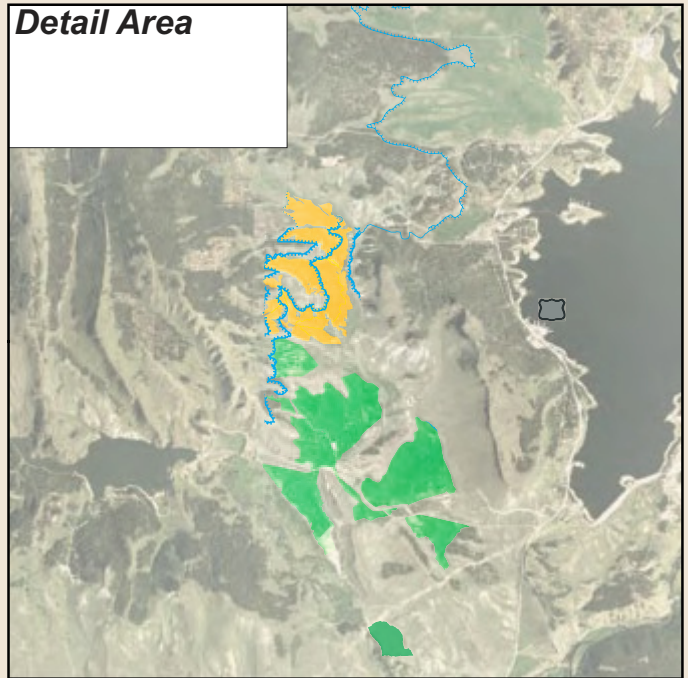
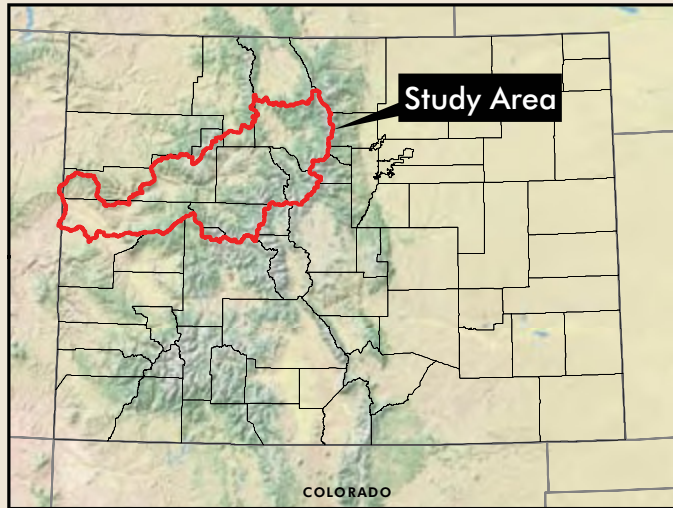


Razorback Sucker



Colorado Pikeminnow

General Study Area



Environmental Studies

Potentially affected resources will be evaluated and presented in the Environmental Assessment:

- Surface and Ground Water Hydrology and Quality
- Aquatic Resources
- Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Areas
- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Soil, Geology, Paleontology, and Farmland
- Cultural Resources
- Recreation Resources
- Socioeconomics and Land Use



Fryingpan River



Blue River below Green Mountain Reservoir

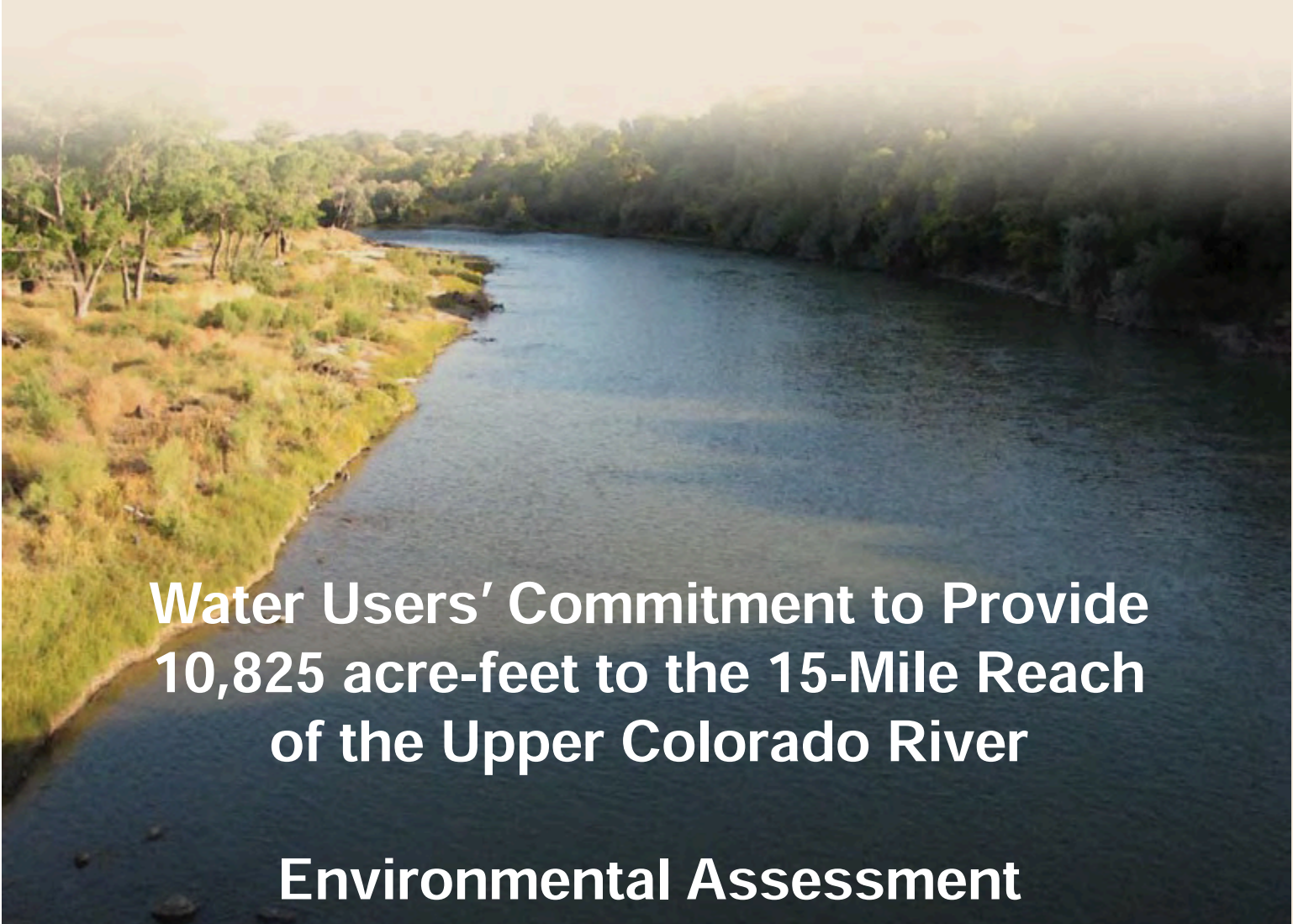


Redtop Valley Ditch at Stillwater Creek

Thank You for Your Participation

Comments Accepted

**Comment Cards and Contact
Information Available Here**

An aerial photograph of a wide river flowing through a lush, green landscape. The river is the central focus, winding through the scene. The banks are covered in dense vegetation, including trees and grass. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day, with some haze or mist in the distance.

**Water Users' Commitment to Provide
10,825 acre-feet to the 15-Mile Reach
of the Upper Colorado River**

Environmental Assessment