

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

Scoping Report Summary

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
- 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