

Steamboat Springs Stream Management Plan — Proposed Scope of Work

Grantee and Fiscal Agent: City of Steamboat Springs

Contact: Kelly Romero-Heaney; Water Resources Manager, City of Steamboat Springs

Target Project Kick-Off Date: November 15, 2016

Target Date for Final Report: March 15, 2018

Total Budget: \$104,875

Project Cost & Funding Sources:

CWCB Watershed Restoration Grant: _____ \$51,875

City of Steamboat Springs: _____ \$15,000 (Cash)

_____ \$12,000 (In-Kind)

Routt County (Proposed) _____ **\$5,000**

Yampa/White/Green BRT (Proposed) _____ \$21,000

Introduction and Background

As the last remaining wild free flowing river in the Colorado River Basin and one of the last free flowing rivers in the Western United States, the Yampa River is a natural asset for the Steamboat Springs community and Colorado alike. To protect this asset, the City of Steamboat Springs proposes to develop a Stream Management Plan for the Yampa River through Steamboat Springs to include the reach from the Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area to the Steamboat Springs Waste Water Treatment Plant.

As the Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable's Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) and Colorado's Water Plan point out, the link between water quality and water supply is inseverable. As the Yampa River Basin experienced back to back years of drought in 2012 and 2013, employing flow management strategies to meet the non-consumptive needs, such as storage releases from Stagecoach Reservoir, helped to mitigate the potential environmental impacts to our river. But a long-term strategy for supplying non-consumptive needs of the Yampa River has yet to be secured.

Therefore, the City is proposing to develop a Stream Management Plan that engages its community and acts upon the guidance of the 2003 Yampa River Management Plan, the State of the Watershed Report, and the Yampa/White/Green's Basin Implementation Plan. By assessing water quality, aquatic life, and channel morphology, we can refine flow targets that are data-based and that fit within the context water rights administration. Warming temperatures have emerged as water quality concern and this reach of the river has been placed on the State's 303d Impaired Waterbody List for temperature. Temperature and the concern that nutrients, channel geometry, invasive species and over-use by recreation are putting our unique

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waterbody at risk are evidence that our community must collaborate on a Stream Management Plan that advises how to prevent our river from crossing a threshold that cannot be reversed.

Objectives

This project to develop a Stream Management Plan has the objectives of protection of a natural resource, engagement and buy-in from stakeholders, and creation of clearly defined prioritized projects for moving forward. Our steps to achieve these objectives are:

- 1) Convene a project team
- 2) Develop a Stream Management Plan capable of identifying a preferred target flow, a baseflow that is needed to support temperature, water quality, and aquatic life for the Yampa River from the Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area to the Steamboat Springs Wastewater Treatment Facility.
- 3) Engage diverse stakeholders to inform and drive decisions on how best to accomplish the primary objective.
- 4) Review existing water quality data from USGS stations and other sources located within the subwatershed to disseminate information, identify trends, and understand shortfalls within existing data and infrastructure.
- 5) Analyze and review selected components of the Steamboat Springs' water rights portfolio to determine source, quantity, and location of right and determine how to apply water for river health benefits.
- 6) Quantify historic wetland and riparian habitat and compare to water quantity and quality to help prioritize restorations and protections.
- 7) Review water quantity and quality data to determine most strategic locations for stream and wetland enhancement, restoration, creation that may help address stream temperature, water quality, and aquatic life goals.
- 8) Develop and deliver and final report.

TASKS

Task 1 – Convene a Project Team, Refine Objectives, Contract a Project Manager

Description of Task: A Project Team will form to operate as a steering committee that refines objectives and that engages throughout the life of the project. The City will hire a Project Manager to develop and implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, to coordinate and facilitate meetings, to track project milestones, to review existing reports and literature (with the support of the Project Team), to compile Technical Summaries and stakeholder input, and to generate implementation scenarios within the Final Report.

Method/Procedure: Kelly Romero-Heaney, the City's Water Resources Manager, will lead the Project Team of representatives from the City's Parks & Community Services Division, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the Colorado Water Trust, and the Project Manager. Other Project Team members may be identified as a component of this task. The Project Team will meet to refine the objectives. The City will incorporate these objectives into a Scope of Work or RFP and will follow its contracts & procurement processes.

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Deliverable: A Project Team kick-off meeting and a refined Scope of Work or RFP for a Project Manager. An executed contract with a Project Manager.

Task 2 –Develop and Implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Description of Task: Input from diverse stakeholders will be crucial to successfully developing a SMP that is implementable due to substantial public support from engaged groups. The Project Team will convene general stakeholder meetings with topic-specific stakeholder meetings occurring as warranted to capture their insights, concerns, and needs and to adapt the plan to address stakeholder input to the greatest extent possible. The Project Team will identify potential stakeholders, and to develop a Stakeholder Engagement & Communications Plan.

Method/Procedure: The Project Team will identify potential stakeholders and determine whether targeted or general outreach is appropriate for each entity. The Project Manager will then develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The Project Team will use the Stakeholder Engagement Plan to establish regular meetings with stakeholders, including at least two public meetings for the general public to have input on the SMP. Communication will be conducted via email blasts, personal calls, and notification in the newspaper. Potential stakeholders may include but are not limited to:

- Division 6 Engineer, Erin Light
- Upper Yampa Watershed Group
- Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District
- Ducks Unlimited
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Trout Unlimited
- Yampa Valley Flyfishers (Local TU Chapter)
- Colorado Water Trust
- Tri-State Generation
- Xcel
- Community Agricultural Alliance
- CSU Extension
- Routt County Conservation District
- Yampa Valley Land Trust
- Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable
- Routt County Environmental Health Department
- The Nature Conservancy
- Friends of the Yampa
- Flyfishing Businesses
- Mount Werner Water
- City of Steamboat Springs WWTF Manager
- CDPHE
- USGS
- NRCS
- US Forest Service
- US Fish & Wildlife
- Town of Hayden
- City of Steamboat City Council
- Routt County Board of Commissioners
- Yampatika
- River Watch
- Ranchers & Farmers
- Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp
- Yampa Valley Sustainability Council
- Town of Milner
- Yampa River Legacy Partners
- Tubing & Rafting Companies
- Steamboat Chamber of Commerce
- City of Steamboat Planning Department
- Routt County Planning Department
- CDOT
- CWCB
- Interested Community Members
- American Rivers
- American Whitewater

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Deliverable: A Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Meeting minutes.

Task 3 – Evaluate Existing Reports & Water Quality/Habitat Data; Identify Data Gaps

Description of Task: Numerous studies, such as the 2003 Yampa River Management Plan, have been conducted on this reach of the Yampa River. The Project Team will review existing reports to determine which information is useful, capable of providing solid baseline information on water temperature and aquatic life, and to assure the SMP is working in conjunction with other previous plans. Using review of USGS station data, CDSN, Yampa River Monitoring Data 2004/2005 and other information sources, the team will determine a baseline for measuring future success in meeting stream health and water quality targets. Information will also be used to identify data and expertise gaps and to determine where additional monitoring should occur.

Method/Procedure: The Project Team will review and compile information. The Project Team will review existing databases (USGS and CDSN) and will reach out to specific stakeholders to compile other data sources. The Project Team will determine the best water quality and habitat monitoring sites based on completeness of historic data and locations where stream improvements due to flow regimen and restoration changes may be evaluated.

Deliverable: Technical Summary to be used as addendum to interim and final reports. A Technical Summary of baseline conditions, stream health and water quality targets, and data gaps. Following review and comprehension of existing reports and data, the Project Team will identify shortfalls within the team's expertise and seek either in-kind or contracted expertise. Potential contractors may include fisheries biologists, fluvial geomorphologists, and data analysts. Additional contracts are beyond the scope of this grant and will be funded through other sources.

Task 4—Identification of Water Quality Targets and a Preferred Target Flow

Description of Task: The Project Team will identify Water Quality Targets and a *Preferred Target Flows* that support stream health parameters, such as temperature and aquatic life. Data analysis will inform the development of a discharge vs. temperature curve. It is anticipated that R2CROSS or some other method to identify aquatic life flow needs will be performed to refine the *Preferred Target Flow*.

Method/Procedure: The Project Team will synthesize the outcomes from Task #4 and stakeholder engagement to identify water quality and stream health targets. The Project Manager with the support of the Project Team will analyze stream health-flow relationships, such as temperature vs. discharge, to identify flow targets. In-kind expertise will be utilized to conduct R2CROSS or other aquatic life flow needs assessments.

Deliverable: A Technical Summary identifying the *Preferred Target Flow*.

Task 5 – Water Rights Research

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Description of Task: The Colorado Water Trust will perform analysis of portions of the Steamboat Springs water rights portfolio including source, quantity, and location of application.

Method/Procedure: The CWT has already conducted significant review of Steamboat water rights, and will continue to provide that expertise. Note that components of this analysis must remain confidential due to the legal nature of water rights. It is anticipated that CWT will provide two versions of the Technical Summary—the first, a summary to be made publicly available, the second a more detailed yet privileged summary that will guide various scenarios aimed at meeting *Preferred Target Flows*. This is a necessary step to protect the City’s water rights portfolio and to ensure the long-term viability of the community’s drinking water supplies.

Deliverable: Two versions of a Technical Summary (one confidential and the other to be included as an addendum to the Final Report) of opportunities identified to help meet the *Preferred Target Flow*.

Task 6 – Habitat Improvement, Protection, and Wetland Recharge

Description of Task: Wetland habitat provides many functions to improve life functions for wildlife, fish, water quantity and quality, and flood attenuation. The Project Team will explore existing data and perform stakeholder interviews to determine the potential for wetlands to aid in water quality issues such as temperature, assess river base flow augmentation through wetland aquifer recharge, and study current threats to flood attenuation.

Method/Procedure: The Project Team will review water quantity and quality data to determine most strategic locations for wetland enhancement, restoration, creation that may help address stream temperature and aquatic life goals. The Project Team will review historic wetland locations using National Wetland Inventory Maps and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program’s Assessment of Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Routt County (1996). Also, the Project Team will perform rudimentary wetland evaluations to determine function and some desktop review to determine aquifer and soil characteristics conducive to river augmentation.

Deliverable: A Technical Summary will be developed for inclusion in interim and final reports.

Tasks 7 – Final Report

Description of Task: Completion of a Final Report

Method/Procedure: The Project Manager will compile Technical Summaries and stakeholder input to generate a Final Report with targets and implementation scenarios. The Project Team and other interested stakeholders will review draft versions of the report. The Final Report will be presented at a public stakeholder meeting.

Deliverable: Final Report & Presentation.