



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Ted Kowalski, Chief, Interstate, Federal & Water Information Section
Linda Bassi, Chief, Stream & Lake Protection Section
Suzanne Sellers, Interstate, Federal & Water Information Section

DATE: November 19-20, 2014 Board Meeting

AGENDA ITEM: 13. Wild and Scenic Rivers Alternatives Update

Background: The CWCB staff continues to work with stakeholder groups to develop resource protection methods that could serve as alternatives to federal determinations by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") or U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") that certain river segments are "suitable" for designation under the Wild and Scenic River Act. There are currently three stakeholder groups that are continuing to work on Wild and Scenic protections: 1) the San Juan River basin group (separated into five different basins) ("River Protection Workgroup" or "RPW"); 2) the Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group ("UCRW&S"); and 3) the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group ("LDPWG"). Updates on these processes are set forth below.

Additionally, CWCB staff would like to make the Board aware of a citizen's proposal to designate the Crystal River as Wild and Scenic. More information is provided below.

Staff recommendation: This item is informational only, with no Board action requested.

Discussion

Upper Colorado Stakeholder Group Update

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kremmling Field Office's Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released on March 21, 2014 and the Colorado River Valley Field Office's Proposed RMP/Final EIS was released on March 24, 2014 with both Records of Decision (RODs) on hold indefinitely. The joint BLM and US Forest Service (USFS) Final Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Report (Suitability Report) was released with each of the BLM's RMP/EISs. The USFS White River National Forest also issued a Draft ROD for adoption of the Suitability Report on April 7, 2014.

The Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group (Stakeholder Group) held its regular meeting on October 24, 2014 in Summit County and its next regular meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2015 at the same location. The Stakeholder Group meeting included a presentation on the 2014 survey results and commercial data analysis by RCC and a presentation on historical commercial floatboating visitation data by the Front Range Water Council. The Stakeholder Group meeting also included discussions on provisional period



planning, finances, and updates by the various workgroups and interest groups. CWCB Director James Eklund recently approved the UCRW&S Group's proposal seeking additional monies from the Wild and Scenic Alternatives Fund to support its ongoing work. For more information, see the following link: <http://www.upcowildandscenic.com>.

River Protection Workgroup Update (various sub-basins of the San Juan River)

The River Protection Workgroup (RPW) Steering Committee held regular meetings on August 28 and October 1, 2014 with its next meeting yet to be scheduled. The Steering Committee is currently engaged in negotiations and development of consensus approaches for the protection of the five rivers and specific outstanding remarkable values (ORVs) in the San Juan River basin. At the meetings, the group discussed the existing proposal by Trout Unlimited and the alternate proposal by the Wilderness Society and the San Juan Citizen's Alliance. The group indentified areas of agreement between the two proposals and topics that require more discussions. Both of the outstanding proposals include combinations of removal of suitability, wild and scenic designation and maintaining suitability within the five watersheds of the San Juan Basin. The Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act (HR1839) made it through the House committee and is waiting for a floor vote in the lame-duck session. The bill is anticipated to be on the docket when the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee holds its next voting session on November 13, 2014. Several changes were imposed by the House committee, creating two different versions of the bill. For more information, see the following link: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection>.

Lower Dolores Plan Working Group Update

On September 6, 2014, the Legislative Subcommittee of the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group reached a key milestone in the National Conservation Area legislative proposal process by completing a legislative principles document. The document lays out the framework for the federal legislation that would establish the National Conservation Area (from below McPhee Dam to Bedrock) and remove the finding of Wild and Scenic suitability from the Dolores River, among other things. Local stakeholders are reviewing the document and working on providing comments to the Subcommittee. The Group anticipates briefing the CWCB on this document at a future CWCB meeting. Additional information on the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group can be found at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/drd/meetings.asp>.

Wild and Scenic River Proposal for the Crystal River

A group of Crystal Valley residents (Dorothea Farris, Bill Jochems and Chuck Ogilby) are working on a proposal to designate 39 miles of the Crystal River within the White River National Forest as Wild and Scenic. The proposed designated reaches would extend from the headwaters (both the north and south branches) of the Crystal River down to just above the Sweet Jessup canal diversion. Although these reaches of the Crystal River were found to be eligible by the United States Forest Service (USFS) in 1982 and 2002, the USFS has no plans to perform a suitability study until its next plan revision, which is 7 to 10 years out. Nonetheless, the Aspen Times indicates that the group of Crystal Valley residents are preparing a formal "suitability" study. This suitability study is being performed independent of the USFS. It anticipated that the suitability study would be used to support federal legislation seeking Wild and Scenic designation of the Crystal River.

