



**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:** March 18-19, 2015 Board Meeting

**AGENDA ITEM:** 7. Wild and Scenic Rivers Update

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**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 (UCRW&S) Group; and 3) the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group (LDPWG). Updates on these processes are set forth below.

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

**Discussion:**

Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group Update

The 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 the Records of Decision (RODs) due out in May 2015. The joint BLM and USFS's Final Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Report (Suitability Report) was released with each of the BLM's RMP/EIS documents. The USFS White River National Forest also issued a Draft ROD for adoption of the Suitability Report on April 7, 2014. The USFS White River National Forest final ROD will be issued concurrently with the Colorado River Valley Field Office's ROD.

The Upper Colorado River Wild and Scenic Stakeholder Group (Stakeholder Group) held its regular meeting on January 13, 2015 in Summit County and its next regular meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2015 at the same location. The Stakeholder Group meeting included discussions on the 2015 budget, the 2015 monitoring plan proposal, finances, and updates by the various workgroups and interest groups. The Stakeholder group approved its 2015 planning



calendar. Additional information on the UCRW&S Group can be found at <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 February 5 and 25, 2015 in Durango, CO with its next meeting anticipated to be held in mid-April 2015 in the same location. The Steering Committee is currently engaged in negotiations and development of consensus approaches for the protection of the five rivers, and specifically related outstanding remarkable values (ORVs) in the San Juan River basin, while protecting the ability of water users within Colorado to fully use its compact entitlements. Currently, there is an existing proposal by Trout Unlimited and an alternate proposal by the Wilderness Society and the San Juan Citizen's Alliance. The steering committee appointed a small group that will meet regularly in an attempt work out the differences between the two proposals. Both of the outstanding proposals include combinations of removal of suitability, Wild and Scenic designation, and the maintenance of suitability within the five watersheds of the San Juan Basin. Additional information on the RPW can be found at: <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 proposed 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. The Legislative Subcommittee is currently briefing key stakeholder groups and individuals. In March 2015, the draft Congressional bill will be circulated so that stakeholders can then review and give input on actual legislative language. Several key stakeholders intend to conduct a legal review of the framework and bill. The Legislative Subcommittee will take all the input received and adjust the proposed NCA package as necessary. Alongside this effort, the Implementation Team, a multi-party group formed to work on improving the status of the native fish in the context of available water supplies, is currently drafting a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This MOA enables the team to operate within a more formalized structure which will be necessary to implement the legislation specifically related to the topics of flows and native fish. 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>.

Tres Rios Resource Management Plan Update

The BLM Tres Rios Field Office Land and Resource Management Plan ("Tres Rios RMP") has been the subject of discussion with this Board in connection with stakeholder concerns about several Dolores River issues. Colorado's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), CWCB and CPW have been involved in stakeholder discussions with the BLM and USFS about the Tres Rios RMP and the USFS San Juan National Forest Plan. BLM personnel also have been in contact with the Southwestern Water Conservation District, Dolores Water Conservancy District, and

tribal stakeholders to discuss their concerns. On February 27, 2015, the BLM announced the availability of its Record of Decision on the Tres Rios RMP. In the final RMP, among other things, the BLM: (1) changed (from the proposed RMP) "standards" for maintaining aquatic ecosystems to "guidelines," and added language stating that BLM will work with the CWCB to identify ways to meet the guidelines; and (2) acknowledged the work of stakeholder groups such as the River Protection Workgroup, the Dolores River Dialogue and the Lower Dolores Plan Working Group and confirmed that under appropriate environmental review and plan modification processes, the BLM can consider and pursue alternative management direction that may be recommended by other entities such as these stakeholder groups. Roy Smith of the BLM will update the Board on this RMP and other BLM issues at this Board meeting. The Record of Decision and RMP can be found

at: [http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/sjplc/land\\_use\\_planning.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/sjplc/land_use_planning.html).