



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Michelle Garrison, Interstate, Federal & Water Information Section

DATE: July 21, 2016

AGENDA ITEM: 19. White River PBO Update (informational item)

The Upper Colorado River Recovery Program (Recovery Program) is a cooperative partnership between the states of Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, Federal agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and National Park Service (NPS), water users, environmental groups and power interests. The goal of the Recovery Program is to recover four species of endangered fish in the Upper Colorado River basin while allowing water use and development to occur. The program provides Environmental Species Act compliance for over 1200 water projects in Colorado and over 2000 projects throughout the basin. Actions of the program include instream flow identification and protection, habitat restoration, nonnative fish management, propagation and stocking, research and monitoring, and information and education.

Programmatic Biological Opinions (PBOs) help the Recovery Program serve as the reasonable and prudent alternative and allows streamlined Section 7 consultation for water users within Colorado. The White River basin is the only basin in western Colorado without a completed PBO. The Recovery Program intends to develop a White River Management Plan to be used as the basis for a PBO. The CWCB is providing support from the Species Conservation Trust Fund for consulting work to facilitate the process, including modeling of the basin and drafting of the River Management Plan.

Flow recommendations from the USFWS are typically completed prior to the initiation of an EIS or River Management Plan and PBO process. For the White River basin, flow recommendations have been investigated but never finalized. Therefore analysis and completion of the flow recommendations will occur as part of the River Management Plan development.

A technical team from the Recovery Program has been meeting to discuss the flow recommendation analysis. The team has also drafted a scope of work for the consulting assistance, and the CWCB will begin the process for selection and contracting. The project will begin in 2016 and is anticipated to be completed in 2018.

The Yampa/White/Green Basin Roundtable recently received a grant to perform additional modeling to support basin plan implementation. Both efforts will examine existing and future demands and the flow recommendations. Meetings are being held to ensure that the two efforts remain coordinated and compatible, and leverage efficiencies where possible. Coordinating the two efforts should decrease total time and expense, and produce results that are compatible and more useful for basin stakeholders.

