



COLORADO

Colorado Water  
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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# Coordination on Administration of Instream Flow Water Rights in Division 4

Stream and Lake Protection Section, Colorado Water Conservation Board

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Photo credit: Frank Kugel

The CWCB is responsible for the appropriation, acquisition, protection and monitoring of instream flow (ISF) and natural lake level water rights to preserve and improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree. The CWCB protects the state's ISF water rights by enforcing terms and conditions contained in decrees, stipulations and agreements. The agency also monitors streamflow conditions to ensure that ISF water rights are being met and administered within the state's prior appropriation system.

Regardless of the type of water right, administration is not always an easy feat. In July 2016, Tom Rozman, District 59 Lead Water Commissioner, informed the CWCB staff that Mt. Crested Butte Water and Sanitation District would be draining Meridian Lake Park Reservoir to improve the spillway and operation of the outlet works for the dam. The reservoir is located upstream of the Town of Crested Butte. Due to Tom's proactive action, there was time to discuss administrative scenarios for the Washington Gulch and Slate River ISF water rights during the upcoming period that the Reservoir would be drained and using pumps to bypass inflow.

During September's dry conditions, these discussions bore fruit. CWCB placed a call on the Slate River after receiving a low flow alert and a call from the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District confirming that flows were low on the River and augmentation water was available for release. Tom coordinated with the District on making augmentation releases that needed to pass through Meridian Lake Park Reservoir in a manner that delivered water to the short Slate River ISF water right reach and did not overwhelm the pumps keeping the construction area dry. Without his up-front efforts, approaches to administration would not have been as well vetted, and the process probably would not have gone as smoothly. The CWCB appreciates the Division of Water Resources Division 4 staff's communication and coordination on ISF water rights administration, as well as UGWCD's communication and efforts to provide augmentation water to help alleviate low flows.