



**COLORADO**

**Colorado Water Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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**TO:** Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

**FROM:** Robert Viehl, Chief  
Stream and Lake Protection Section

**DATE:** May 19, 2021

**AGENDA ITEM: 6. Final Action on Uncontested 2021 Instream Flow Appropriation in Water Divisions 1 and 4**

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff requests that the Board make the following determinations and take the following actions on each of the appropriations identified in Table 1. The information necessary to support these determinations is contained in this memo, the recommendation letters and documentation submitted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA), and in staff’s oral and written presentations provided at the January 25, 2021 Board meeting.

- (1) Determine, pursuant to section 37-92-102(3), C.R.S. (2021), that for each ISF appropriation identified in Table 1:
  - (a) There is a natural environment that can be preserved to a reasonable degree with the recommended water rights, if granted;
  - (b) The natural environment will be preserved to a reasonable degree by the water available for the recommended appropriations; and
  - (c) Such natural environment can exist without material injury to water rights.
- (2) Pursuant to ISF Rule 5f., establish January 25, 2021 as the appropriation date for these water rights.
- (3) Request staff to work with the Attorney General’s office to file applications for these water rights in water court by the end of the calendar year.

Table 1.

Div	Stream	Watershed	County	Length (miles)	Upper Terminus	Lower Terminus	Flow Rate, cfs/Timing
1	Dry Gulch	Clear Creek	Clear Creek	2.83	headwaters	confluence Clear Creek	0.67 (01/01 - 04/30) 5.4 (05/01 - 07/31) 2 (08/01 - 09/30) 0.85 (10/01 - 12/31)
1	North Fork Little Thompson River	Big Thompson	Larimer	3.77	confluence Hell Canyon Creek	confluence Little Thompson River	5 (04/25 - 06/10) 2 (06/11 - 06/30)
1	Redstone Creek	Big Thompson	Larimer	16.3	headwaters	confluence Buckhorn Creek	6.2 (05/01 - 06/15)
4	Elk Creek	East-Taylor	Gunnison	2.66	headwaters	confluence Coal Creek	0.2 (08/16 - 04/30) 1.5 (05/01 - 07/10) 0.65 (07/11 - 08/15)



**Background:**

On January 25, 2021, the CWCB formed its intent to appropriate instream flow (ISF) water rights on four stream segments in Water Divisions 1 and 4 that were not contested. CPW and HCCA recommended these streams for inclusion into the CWCB's Instream Flow and Natural Lake Level Program. Pursuant to ISF Rule 5h., the four uncontested stream segments described in Table 1 are being recommended to the Board for Final Action.

**Technical Investigations**

The Board was provided detailed information regarding all field data, studies, and analyses for each stream segment at its January 25, 2021 Board meeting. A brief overview of the analyses is provided below.

**Natural Environment Studies**

The recommending entities conducted field surveys on these streams and found natural environments that can be preserved to a reasonable degree. To quantify the resources and to evaluate instream flow requirements, the recommenders collected biologic and hydraulic data and analyzed the data. CWCB staff reviewed all analyses and prepared recommendations for the amount of water necessary to preserve the natural environment to a reasonable degree for each of the streams.

**Water Availability Studies**

The CWCB staff conducted evaluations of water availability for these streams. To determine the amount of water physically available for the Board's appropriations, staff analyzed available USGS gage records, streamflow models, and CWCB gaging and streamflow measurements records. In addition, staff analyzed existing water rights and consulted with the Division Engineer's Office in each water division to identify any potential water availability problems. Staff used this information to develop a hydrograph showing the amount of water available for each of the recommendations. Based upon its analysis, staff has determined that water is available for appropriation on each stream to preserve the natural environment to a reasonable degree without limiting or foreclosing the exercise of existing water rights.

**Relevant Instream Flow Rules**

5f. Date of Appropriation. The Board may select an appropriation date that may be no earlier than the date the Board declares its intent to appropriate. The Board may declare its intent to appropriate when it concludes that it has received sufficient information that reasonably supports the findings required in Rule 5i.

5h. Final Board Action on an ISF Recommendation. The Board may take final action on any uncontested Staff Recommendation(s) at the May Board meeting or any Board meeting thereafter. If a Notice to Contest has been filed, the Board shall proceed under Rule 5j-5q.

5i. Required Findings. Before initiating a water right filing to confirm its appropriation, the Board must make the following determinations:

(1) Natural Environment. That there is a natural environment that can be preserved to a reasonable degree with the Board's water right if granted.

(2) Water Availability. That the natural environment will be preserved to a reasonable degree by the water available for the appropriation to be made.

(3) Material Injury. That such environment can exist without material injury to water rights.

These determinations shall be subject to judicial review in the water court application and decree proceedings initiated by the Board, based on the Board's administrative record and utilizing the criteria of section 24-4-106(6) and (7), C.R.S. (2021).