

DRAFT INSTREAM FLOW RECOMMENDATION – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Mr. Rob Viehl
Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman Street, Room 721
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Mr. Viehl:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is writing this letter to formally communicate its recommendation for an instream flow water right on Coon Creek, located in Water Division 5.

Location and Land Status. Coon Creek originates on the north side of Grand Mesa, approximately eight miles south of Molina. The reach that is the subject of this recommendation begins at the outlet of Coon Creek Reservoir No. 4 and extends downstream to the headgate of the Southside Canal, a distance of approximately 3.75 miles. The BLM manages approximately 0.25 miles of this reach, while 2.0 miles are managed by the U.S. Forest Service and 1.5 miles are on private lands.

Biological Summary. Coon Creek is a cold-water, high gradient stream. The stream is confined by bedrock in most locations. The stream generally has medium-sized substrate, ranging from gravels to small boulders. The stream has abundance of pools and runs but riffle habitat is limited. The existing pools are sufficient for overwintering fish.

Fisheries surveys have revealed a self-sustaining population of cutthroat trout and brook trout. Intensive macro-invertebrate surveys have not been conducted, but spot samples have revealed abundant stonefly.

The riparian community is comprised of aspen, alder, and various willow species. The riparian community is in very good condition and provides abundant shading and cover for fish habitat.

R2Cross Analysis. The BLM collected the following R2Cross data from Coon Creek:

Cross Section Date	Discharge Rate	Top Width	Winter Flow Recommendation (meets 2 of 3 hydraulic criteria)	Summer Flow Recommendation (meets 3 of 3 hydraulic criteria)
06/09/2021 #1	1.25 cfs	12.38 feet	0.67 cfs	Out of range
06/09/2021 #2	1.09 cfs	8.65 feet	0.99 cfs	1.83 cfs
Averages:			0.83 cfs	1.83 cfs

BLM's analysis of this data indicates that the following flows are needed to protect the fishery and natural environment to a reasonable degree.

1.80 cubic feet per second is recommended during the warm weather portion of the year, from April 1 to October 31. This recommendation is driven by the average depth criteria. Coon Creek is very steep and has limited usable habitat, so

it is important to protect a flow rate that makes a high percentage of this habitat available to the fish population while they are completing critical life history functions during the warm weather months.

0.80 cubic feet per second is recommended during the cold weather period from November 1 to March 31. This recommendation is driven by the average velocity criteria. This flow rate should prevent pools from freezing, allowing the fish population to successfully overwinter.

Water Availability. The BLM recommends relying upon three sources of data for water availability analysis. Streamstats should be consulted to derive an estimate of natural water availability based upon watershed characteristics. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey operated a gage on Coon Creek from 1937 to 1943. The only flow data collected were monthly volumetric totals, but this data can provide a general estimate of water availability if the monthly volumes are divided into average daily flow rates. Finally, diversion records for the Southside Canal should be consulted to confirm flows available during the irrigation season.

The BLM is aware of one water right within the proposed instream flow reach:

McGeogh Ditch – 3.52 cfs, absolute

The BLM is aware of the following surface water rights on upstream tributaries to Coon Creek:

Jewell Hydropower Diversion – 0.4 cf, absolute

Saddle Ditch – 4.34 cfs, absolute

Baal Pipeline – 0.1476 cfs, absolute

The BLM also aware of storage water rights located upstream as follows:

Coon Reservoir No. 1 – 413.66 acre-feet (includes 0.62 acre feet transferred from Coon Reservoir No. 1.

Coon Reservoir No. 2 – 195.0 acre-feet

Coon Reservoir No. 4 – 201.) acre-feet

Relationship to Land Management Plans. BLM's land use plan calls for Coon Creek to be managed to maintain, restore, or improve riparian conditions, such that proper functioning conditions are achieved. It also specifies that instream flow appropriations will be pursued on fishery streams to ensure sufficient flows rates for fisheries protection. Appropriation of an instream flow water right would assist BLM in long-term management of riparian and fishery values.

Data sheets, R2Cross output, fishery survey information, and photographs of the cross section were included with BLM's draft recommendation in February 2022. We thank both Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Water Conservation Board for their cooperation in this effort.

If you have any questions regarding our instream flow recommendation, please contact Roy Smith at 303-239-3940.

Sincerely,

Alan Bittner
Deputy State Director
Resources and Fire

Cc:

Greg Wolfgang, Grand Junction Field Office
Kevin Hyatt, Grand Junction Field Office
Greg Larson, Upper Colorado River District Office