



River Protection Workgroup Information Sheet (July 2015)

Background, Membership and Funding: Organized in late 2006 by the Southwestern Water Conservation District and the San Juan Citizens Alliance, a River Protection Workgroup Steering Committee planned a community process to involve the public in developing measures to protect the natural values of selected streams in the region while allowing water development to continue. Entities participating in the River Protection Workgroup Steering Committee include:

- Colorado Department of Natural Resources (Divisions of Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA)
- San Juan Public Lands Center (USFS)
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Staff from the local offices of U.S. Senator Michael Bennet, U.S. Senator Cory Gardner Udall and U.S. Representative Scott Tipton
- The Wilderness Society
- Trout Unlimited

Note: The Colorado Division of Water Resources serves in a technical advisory capacity.

The River Protection Workgroup project was formed as an outgrowth of discussions among various regional water planning and resource-protection organizations where a need became apparent for a collaborative process to select long-term, reliable, federal & state and/or other measures to protect the identified values of regional streams. Funding is from in-kind donations from many of the entities involved as well as grants from SJCA, SWCD, Trout Unlimited, CWCB, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, The Wilderness Society, and the National Forest Foundation.

Activities: From 2006 to 2013, the River Protection Steering Committee designed and then carried out Local Workgroups on these streams: Hermosa Creek; the San Juan River - East and West Forks; portions of the upper Animas River; Piedra River - Middle and East Forks; the Pine River; and Vallecito Creek. Each of the Workgroups has completed reports and those documents are at the Web site (go to the buttons on the left). (over)

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Local Workgroup participants were asked to attend and contribute to facilitated meetings to share information, including stream protections already in place. They were asked to reach an understanding of available protection "tools" and develop plans for the future through consensus. The goal of the local Workgroup process was to engage a diversity of people in collaboratively striking a balance between the protection of natural resources and suitable water development. A wide range of "tools" was considered in the Workgroup's deliberations, including, but not limited to, the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act ("WSR"). The success for each Workgroup was defined as: a) implementation and completion of a collaborative community process that includes diverse stakeholders; and b) establishment of agreements (or a range of opinions) regarding future action(s) or a determination that current stream protections are adequate to protect priority values. **Each Workgroup produced a report agreed to by consensus and those reports were widely disseminated to policy and decision makers, and to the Workgroup members. Each of them can be found on the opening page of the RPW's Web site. At the buttons on the left, all of the documents from each Workgroup can be found (handouts, minutes, maps, etc.)**

Next Phase: The Regional Discussion:

When the five Workgroups finished, Phase II started in October of 2013 and the RPW Steering Committee started what is known as the "Regional Discussion." This phase, still underway, is utilizing the five Workgroups' reports and values statements to craft a proposed, draft "regional package" of river and stream protections that...

- Allows water development to continue
- Protects ALL values -- human and ecological
- Includes a suite of tools: Federal and State
- Includes alternatives to WSR for some segments, retaining suitability on some segments and the full designation of 1 WSR (Hermosa Creek)
- Will require support to move forward

The interests considered in the regional package include:

- ✓ Taking care of and protecting values
- ✓ Durable and permanent protections
- ✓ Protecting existing water rights and the ability to develop water
- ✓ To be successful and to show results to various constituents and groups
- ✓ Maintaining healthy water quality
- ✓ Maintaining ecological systems
- ✓ Maintaining healthy watersheds and forest health
- ✓ Limiting conflict between state and federal laws
- ✓ Following through on forest plan decisions regarding ORVs
- ✓ Ecological, social and economic balance
- ✓ Pragmatic on-the-ground solutions
- ✓ A level of conservation that is "sellable"
- ✓ A product that is clear and requires implementation, not perceived as a government over-reach
- ✓ Maintaining agricultural viability including grazing
- ✓ Economic viability (timber, mining, outfitting, recreation)
- ✓ Consideration of the value statements from the five Workgroups

The current framework (July 2015) for the Regional Discussion includes:

Federal Legislation:

- Removing WSR suitability on some stream segments
- Retaining WSR suitability on some stream segments
 - Designating 1 segment a WSR
- Using a suite of tools for Alternatives (Mineral Withdrawals, No New Major Impoundments while allowing diversion and water development)

State Tools:

- Instream Flow
 - Pursuing a designation of "Outstanding Waters"
- Submitting a grant to the CWCB to study surface and ground water sources for the Iron Fens (a unique plant/bog community in the Animas Basin)

Once a draft, proposed federal bill is crafted, it will be widely vetted with the Workgroups, key stakeholders, counties and the public. Broad support is necessary for anything to move forward.

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Note: For each Workgroup, meeting handouts, maps, final reports, etc. are on the Web site:
(click on the left side).

Web site: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection>