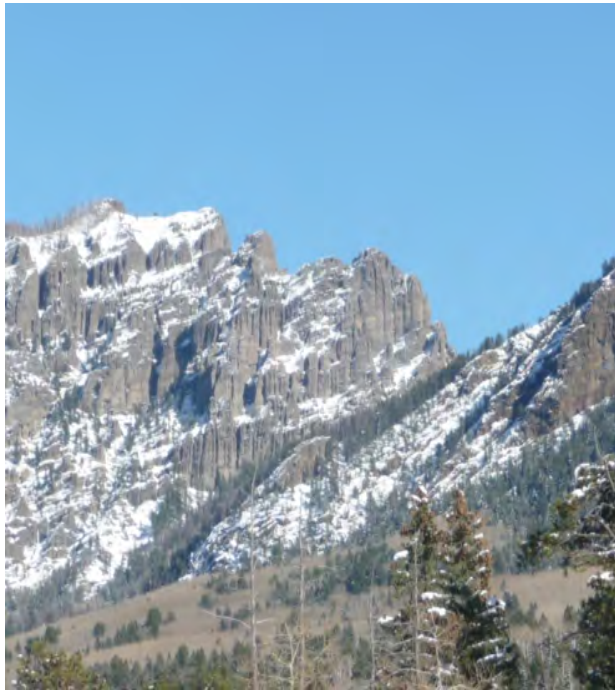


2013

River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River



Final Report
July 2013

**An initiative of the River
Protection Workgroup**

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



Involving the public in protecting the natural values of selected streams while allowing water development to continue

The River Protection Workgroup (RPW) project was formed as an outgrowth of discussions starting in 2006 among various regional water planning and resource protection organizations where a need became apparent for a collaborative process to select long-term, reliable, federal and/or state and/or other measures to protect the identified values of regional streams while allowing water development to continue. A project steering committee formed and then met for over a year to design the process model, get organized and begin to work at the community level for the following five river/stream segments: Hermosa Creek, upper Animas River, upper San Juan River, Vallecito Creek and the upper Pine River, and the upper Piedra River. The first step for each river and stream segment was to organize a meeting at the community level to see if there was interest in forming a public workgroup – one that would entail learning, discussions and issuing a final report of findings, agreements and conclusions. The River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra kicked off in October of 2011 and concluded its work in June 2013. Each of the RPW Workgroups' reports can be found on the project website along with meeting notes, handouts, maps, and more: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/> For more information, please refer to Attachment A which gives detailed information including the next step which is a "Regional Discussion."



**River Protection Workgroup Basin Area
& Rivers of Interest**

Website:

<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/>
(click on "River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River" on the left side)

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Jimbo Buickerood, San Juan Citizens Alliance
(970-259-3583 or jimbo@sanjuancitizens.org

A note of thanks is extended to Jim Mimiaga, meeting recorder, as well as Kathy Sherer and Jane Maxson, project assistants. Also, the San Juan RC&D and the Dolores Water Conservancy District are thanked for serving as the fiscal agents for this project.

THANK YOU!

The River Protection Workgroup Steering Committee would like to thank the Colorado Water Conservation Board for its support, funding and technical assistance, as well as all other funders and contributors.

The following members of the River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River are thanked for their time, interest and work. The Workgroup was made up of people who represented various groups or interests and also comprised of individuals who brought their own perspectives to the group and did not represent a formal entity.

Terra Anderson	Coy Ross
Ray Ball	Troy Ross
Mark Bracich	Mike Reid
Sharon Bracich	Suzanne Sellers
Jimbo Buickerood	Tripp Shawver
Bob Case	Shelley Silbert
Wanda Cason	Buck Skillen
Cindy Dozier	Cynthia Toner
Steve Fearn	John Taylor
Bob Formwalt	Jean Taylor
Preston Goetzke	Susan Thompson
David Guilliams	Cynthia Toner
Randy Halls	Vilma Valdez
Pete Kasper	Doug Vanderlouw
Bob Kleckner	Chuck Wanner
Rob Lindner	Bev Warburton
Casey Lynch	Stan Whinnery
Darlene Marcus	Jim White
Wendy	Bruce Whitehead
McDermott	Mely Whiting
Ann Oliver	Michael Whiting
Mike Remke	Jeff Widen
Warren Rider	



*Members of the Piedra River Protection Workgroup,
following our June 2013 meeting.*

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First Box, Piedra Main Stem

Area of Focus

The area of focus that the Workgroup discussed over its 19-month span of meetings includes the main stem of the Piedra river (above US Highway 160), the East and Middle Forks of the Piedra, Weminuche Creek and Williams Creek. Please find a detailed, 14-page “Information Sheet” in Attachment B, which covers values, a description of the area, river protections currently in place, water information, foreseeable economic development, and numerous other issues.

The area spans three counties – Archuleta County in the southern portion, Hinsdale in the northern portion, and Mineral County in the eastern portion and includes both public and private land. This system of rivers and creeks helps define a region with a rich history of agricultural use and an increasingly popular area for recreationists with many interests including world-class rafting and kayaking, angling, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, mountain biking and off-highway vehicle travel.

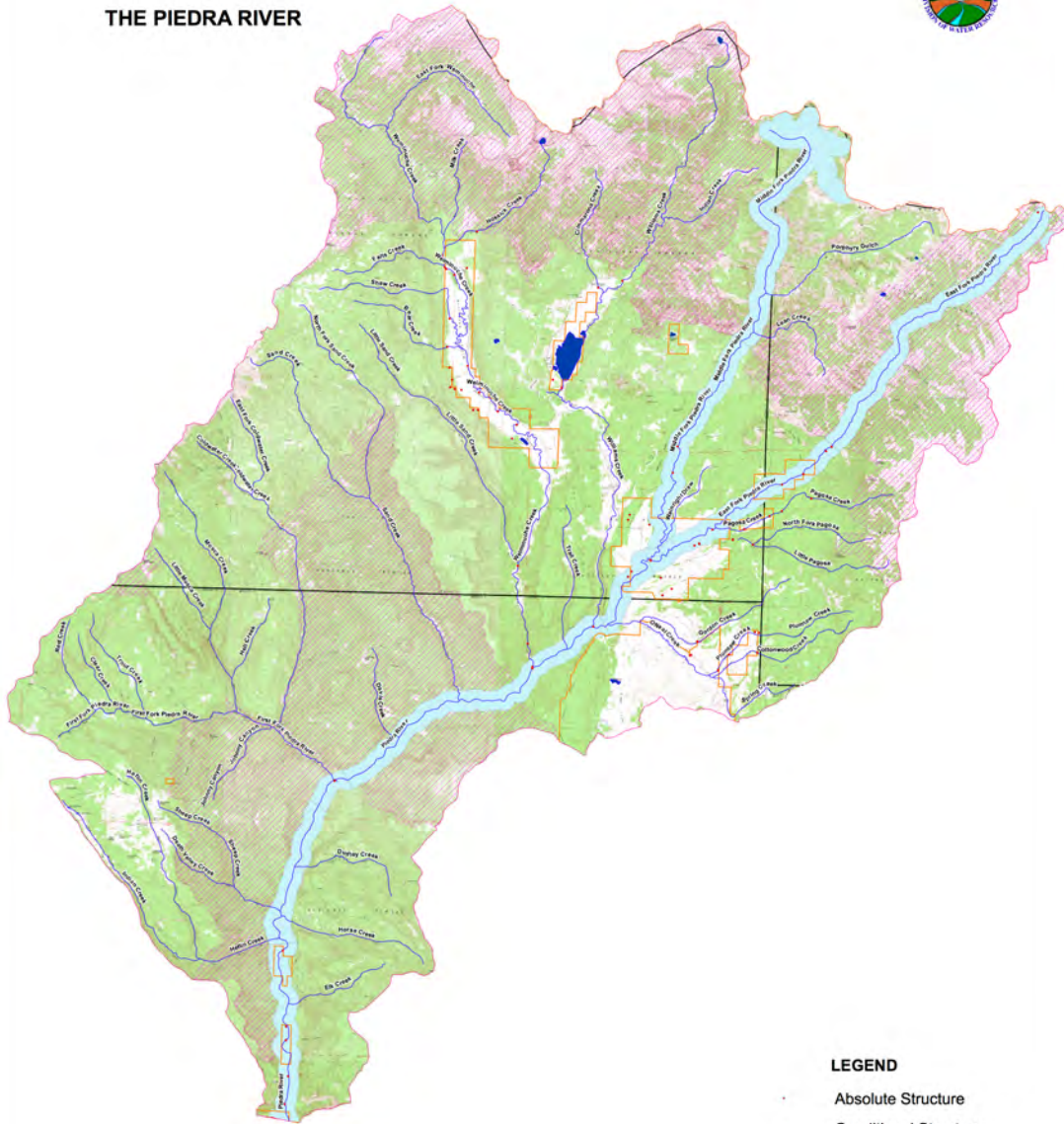
The *San Juan Public Lands (USFS/BLM) 2007 Draft Land Management Plan* found 3 river segments totaling 50.12 miles in the Piedra Watershed above Highway 160 to be “Preliminarily Suitable” for the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) status. The Workgroup discussed this tool at length in its meetings. More details and information about this particular river protection tool can be found in this report, in the minutes, and on the Web site. This river protection tool is one of numerous tools discussed.



Hiking, fishing and rafting in the Piedra canyon

RIVER PROTECTION WORKGROUP

**MIDDLE AND EAST FORKS OF
THE PIEDRA RIVER**



LEGEND

- Absolute Structure
- Conditional Structure
- Highways
- Rivers
- USFS Boundary
- Wilderness
- County Boundary

0 1 2 3 4
Miles



Executive Summary

The River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River met 19 times from October of 2011 to July of 2013. In addition to a vast amount of printed material, the group gleaned information from area residents who have made a living in this area for generations, numerous presenters and two field trips. Through these means, all five segments (Piedra main stem, East and Middle forks, Weminuche and Williams creeks) shown on page 6 were studied in detail. The group focused on values (what people care about), current protections in place, and brainstormed a list of ideas for future protections. Through these in-depth discussions, the group arrived at numerous conclusions and findings. **These findings, including areas of consensus, are more fully detailed in the underlined statements on pages 21-23, and are summarized below:**

**Below is a package of consensus items related to future legislation to create a Special Management Area surrounding the Piedra Area and including the contiguous Colorado Roadless Areas:*

✓ Preserve the existing character of the area;

✓ Prohibit any new major impoundments on the main stem, above highway 160, on East Fork or Middle Fork of the Piedra River, on Weminuche Creek, or on Williams Creek (downstream from 1/4 mile below the dam). The northern boundary of the main stem is identified as 100 yards above the USFS Road 631 bridge;

✓ Mineral withdrawal on federal lands, including locatable, saleable (i.e., sand and gravel) and leasable (i.e., oil and gas) resources; and

✓ Remove Wild & Scenic Rivers Act eligibility and suitability in the basin.

** See pages 22-23 for more detail on this package.*

Other areas of consensus:

✓ Consensus that there was at need for additional State in-stream flows was eliminated, as a result of the additional protections that would be in place with the creation of a SMA.

✓ The group reached consensus that it would focus on preserving the health of the Piedra River watershed as a whole.

✓ The group reached consensus that agricultural diversion structures and decreed water rights were a value that should be protected. Also, the group acknowledged the importance of protecting the ability of landowners, farmers and ranchers to continue agricultural practices.

✓ The group agreed that encouraging cooperation with water right holders and water districts to help maintain minimum flows in the stream and avoid dewatering is a worthwhile effort.

This report summarizes the work of the Piedra River Workgroup, a diverse and committed group of individuals with varied backgrounds and interests. The spectrum of values, interests, and ideas for the future of the area of focus is reflected herein.



Members of the Piedra Workgroup on field trips (left - Weminuche valley, right - First box)

Getting Started

The River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River kicked off in the fall of 2011 as part of a regional effort called the River Protection Workgroup (RPW). More information about the RPW and the model the Workgroup used can be found in Attachment A. Over 35 people attended the first meeting which kicked off in October in Pagosa Springs. Following the initial meeting, roughly 25-30 people attended each of the following 18 meetings which were all publicized and open to the public.

Extensive outreach was conducted to invite groups and individuals to the process. At the first meeting, the group was asked who they felt needed to be invited and those individuals and groups were then contacted prior to the next meeting. For each meeting, public service announcements were sent to area radio stations and were placed in Archuleta and La Plata County newspapers. In addition, notices were sent to the email tree and also placed on the project website.

The Workgroup received several documents in the beginning for orientation and education purposes including a Glossary of Water Terms and Agencies, a beginning list of river and stream protection tools, and information on the regional RPW effort.

This report does not attempt to document each entity or participant's specific concerns; detailed comments made by members; details about protections tools or ideas that were not agreed to; or extensive details about each river protection tool discussed. Rather, this report sums up the process and focuses on values, ideas and agreements. A professional recorder took meeting notes, which were reviewed and approved following each meeting. In addition, summaries were made available in hard copy at each meeting, were sent via email to participants following each meeting and placed on the project website along with all other relevant project documents: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/summaries.htm>. In order to gain a thorough understanding of the Workgroup's deliberations, please read the meeting summaries, all of which are currently available on the website.

Process

The group was informed in the first meetings of the suggested “RPW Workgroup process.” There was agreement to use this process and it is described in Attachment A. This general three-phased process framework, developed by the RPW Steering Committee, was utilized. The group added steps to these phases as it went along:

Phase I

- Introductions
- Agreement on process and a determination if there is interest in proceeding
- Decision to proceed
- Information: “Information Sheet” developed, field trip, speakers, handouts on a Glossary of Water Terms and Glossary of Water Agencies, handouts on the River Protection Workgroup project and the model, and other information as requested by the group

Phase II

- Discussion of important values to protect (see Values Statement below)
- Generating options, including understanding tools (speakers, handouts, research by staff of public land or water agencies)
- Discussion of options (pros/cons, what people like/don’t like, accessing affected stakeholders, understanding opportunities, concerns and ideas)

Phase III

- Continue discussion of options
- Reach conclusions for the future and develop agreements and findings, identify areas of agreement and where there is a “range of opinion”
- Define action plan(s), if any, next steps, and make plans for dissemination of a group report.

Ground rules identified by and agreed to by group include:

- One conversation at a time, no side conversations
- Be a good listener first, then ask questions later - seek to understand
- Asking clarifying questions, if you don’t understand
- Focus on issues, not people
- Keep an open mind
- Don’t be afraid to share your views

The following set of process principles were used and announced at each meeting as well as displayed:

- ✓ Anyone with an interest is a stakeholder and has a seat at the table
- ✓ Respectful dialogue

- ✓ Solutions that meet the needs of a diversity of interests
- ✓ Everyone's opinion counts, even if you do not agree
- ✓ Use of accurate facts and information
- ✓ Lots of interaction – consensus – collaboration – possible negotiations
- ✓ Fair, open, transparent process
- ✓ Available tools and data

At every meeting, because there were often new people, the process was explained.

Decision-making is by consensus, which is defined as:

- Includes steps to ensure that all views are heard and considered
- Recognizes that differences of opinion are natural and expected
- Group makes a good faith effort to reach a decision that everyone can support

This report outlines agreements the group made, as well as key areas where there was a range of viewpoints but no consensus.

Education and Invited Speakers

After agreeing that launching an effort such as this one had sufficient interest and support, the Workgroup was formed and began the learning process. Starting in the fall of 2011, speakers were invited to talk about various topics including:

- “Water 101” by Bruce Whitehead of the Southwestern Water Conservation District:
http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/animas/pdf/Animas-RPWG-Water-101_10-27-11.pdf
- Various river and stream protection tools that accompanied a 14-page handout given to the group by the River Protection Workgroup Steering Committee
<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/importantDocuments.htm>
- John Taylor gave a short presentation of the regions' geologic history and rock layers dating back hundreds of millions of years. The presentation was accompanied by a handout, which is available at <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/importantDocuments.htm>
- Ray Ball, Hinsdale Planning commissioner and Workgroup member, discussed the Hinsdale County Upper Piedra District planning regulations. The plan is designated to implement the Hinsdale Upper Piedra Comprehensive Plan by preserving the natural character of the Upper Piedra and accommodating agricultural-related uses along with low-density residential development. For more information, click on the land-use tab on the following website: www.hinsdalecountycolorado.us (see Section 2.5).

Field trips in our focus area:

- On November 9, 2011, approximately 18 Workgroup members participated in a driving tour up Piedra road to Williams Reservoir and to the southern end of the Weminuche Creek valley. The group learned a great deal about history, geology, diversions and recreational attractions and amenities of the area.

- On September 17th, 2012, eleven working group members, including an outfitter, participated in a second tour that followed the Piedra river for 3.5 miles north to a bluff overlooking Second Box Canyon on the main stem.



John Taylor provides a geology lesson at Williams Reservoir on our first tour.

As the group deliberated and issues were studied in-depth, more information was provided as per their request:

- Ros Wu, recreation specialist with the San Juan National Forest, discussed current recreation trends in the Piedra area, as well as plans being considered to manage recreation.
- Mark Bracic, local outfitter and Workgroup member, reported on trends in commercial outfitting in the past 10+ years.
- Mike Reid, Parks & Wildlife, reported on the current management plan for Williams Reservoir.
- Aran Johnson, a biologist with the Southern Ute Wildlife Department, gave a report on ungulate migration corridors within the Piedra River watershed.
- Steve Fearn, a Director with the Southwestern Water Conservation District, presented information on identified potential dam sites in our focus area, as researched by CWCB. The presentation is available at:
<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/pdf/CWCB-presentation-to-Piedra-River-RPW.pdf>.
- Suzanne Sellers, a water engineer with the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), prepared a presentation on the hydrograph of the river, which was presented by Steve Fearn, Southwestern Water Conservation District. She also provided information on the water rights associated with the hydrograph. She was answering the basic question: *How much water is pulled through the canyon (Main Stem) due to existing water rights?*
- Paul Blackman, with the Forest Service, gave a presentation comparing the different regulations of the Piedra Area and the adjacent Colorado Roadless Areas.
- Stan Winnery, Hinsdale County Commissioner and Bruce Whitehead, Southwestern Water Conservation District, gave a presentation on the latest data for shortages predicted within the Colorado River Basin. The full report can be found at www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/crbstudy/report1.html
- Several handouts were prepared by either contract staff or staff from the Pagosa Ranger District of the USFS, the Colorado Division of Water Resources and the Colorado Water Conservation Board. Topics included the overall “condition” of the watershed; rare plants in the area; preferred alternatives in the draft San Juan National Forest Plan; SWSI-identified

storage sites (Statewide Water Supply Initiative); stream classifications and water quality standards; known water rights in the focus area; questions related specifically to Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR); information on conservation easements; wildlife; water rights; Colorado Roadless Rule; Piedra Area enacting legislation and map; Special Management Areas; and the area's hydrograph.

- Jim White, aquatic biologist, presented on river health as related to the fishery.
- Ivan Gregory, Forest Service, gave a presentation on the regulations related to the Colorado Roadless Rule, including Tier I and Tier II restrictions.
- Paul Blackman, Forest Service, gave a presentation comparing the different regulations of the Piedra Area and the adjacent Colorado Roadless Areas.

Handouts and/or Power Points from all of the presentations given to the Workgroup are available on the Web site: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/handouts.htm> and also at: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/resourceDocuments.htm>. If you cannot find something, please email the facilitator.

Values and Information Sheet

The next step was completing a Values Statement and an extensive "Information Sheet." These steps took a number of meetings. The purpose of the Values Statement was to document all the things people care about or "value." The statement below is a summation of everyone's values without prioritizing or placing emphasis.



Fishing in the First Box



Cattle drive along the Main

*VALUES STATEMENT for the Area of Focus**

The area being studied by the River Protection Workgroup for the Piedra River and watershed, located above Highway 160, is quite distinctive and attracts a high volume of visitors including local and regional residents and tourists. This relatively remote area offers a unique blend of wide open scenic alpine terrain and narrow, winding canyons.

There exists a rich and very alive history and culture of farming and ranching in the area. There is a strong desire amongst local residents to protect the relatively undeveloped character of the area and the sense of “real people making a real living.”

At this time, there is a perception that there is a relatively healthy balance between protections and uses. There is a desire to maintain the current water rights in order to allow for the continuation of productive farming and ranching activities. This is balanced with a desire to make sure there is enough available water to maintain and protect the significant natural and recreational values that are present. There is a value placed on keeping the main stem of the Piedra free from impoundments. A land use plan that is in place and numerous large-tract conservation easements are viewed as positive steps toward protecting values while allowing certain uses to continue.

Maintaining an accessible road for residents is important, though there is a perception that significant road improvements would increase visitation in a way that could threaten the natural and agricultural values.

The numerous non-commercial and commercial recreational opportunities are valued not only for their capacity to allow residents to make a living (commercial outfitting, lodging, boating, hunting, fishing) but also because of access to the significant natural beauty, be it high up in the Weminuche Wilderness or in the tight canyons of a free-flowing river.

The natural values are numerous, including the presence of rare plant and animal communities and a wide diversity of flora and fauna. The geology of the area is unique and quite spectacular. The watershed is viewed as relatively healthy and intact. There is a wildness and mystique about this area that elicits a strong desire to protect its natural values.

Hinsdale County is a “right to farm and ranch” county. There are numerous opportunities for earning a living though farming and ranching, as well as commercial outfitting, boating, hunting and fishing, and the potential for reinvigorating forest product development. Again, striking a balance between maintaining these opportunities, while balancing usage to protect the values that allow individuals to make a living, is important.

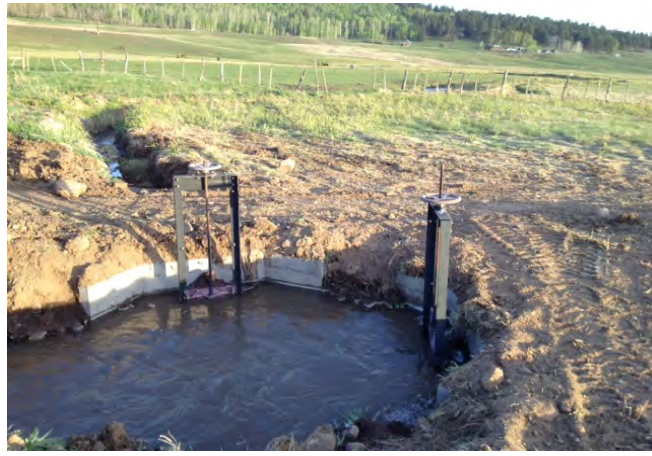
*Approved by the Piedra Workgroup: 3/12/12

Information Sheet

The “Information Sheet” can be found in its entirety as Attachment B. The Piedra River and the upper tributaries make up a complex river system with a variety of users, stakeholders, water rights, economic development, ecological, leisure, and recreational activities and processes occurring. The Workgroup reviewed the document, which was written and updated on numerous occasions by contract staff. The document was accepted by consensus by the group as a whole in its final iteration on 5/8/12.



Frozen waterfall on the Main Stem



Diversion box off of Piedra Falls

Segment-by-Segment Work, and Workgroup Findings and Conclusions

The segments discussed in great detail include:

- ✓ Middle Fork of the Piedra*
- ✓ East Fork of the Piedra*
- ✓ Weminuche Creek
- ✓ Williams Creek
- ✓ Main Stem of the Piedra (north of Highway 160 to the confluence of East and Middle Forks)*

Please refer to the map on page 6

*The entire main stem of the Piedra, north of Highway 160 to the confluence of East and Middle Forks, the entirety of Middle Fork from the confluence to the headwaters and the East Fork from the headwaters to the wilderness boundary (a total of 50.12 miles) is being considered by the USFS and BLM in their Draft Land Management Plan as “suitable” for Wild and Scenic River status. Please refer to the “Information Sheet” in Attachment B for more information.

Next, the group began to formulate their findings, conclusions and agreements. This took about 10 meetings. They did this by developing and then working through a process where all the specific segments were discussed in great detail and then ideas for the future were listed and debated. For each segment, the group reviewed or brainstormed: a) the specific values for that area or stretch of river/creek; b) threats to those values; c) existing protection tools; d) new ideas for protection; and d) agreements or areas where a range of opinion(s) were noted. In addition, the group discussed whether the current protections were viewed as adequate to protect the values. The exercise was a method of getting to the question of whether additional tools were needed to protect the values on any of the river segments. The group was reminded that they agreed to take a watershed approach in identifying areas that needed protection or had adequate protection.

The following is a summary of the group’s deliberations by segment. A wide range of views were expressed. **Areas of consensus agreement are reflected using underlining.**

Middle Fork

Values identified by the Workgroup – Middle Fork

- Under new Forest Plan, area would go from a 7e management level to a level 5
- Water quality is considered good below Wilderness boundary and outstanding within Wilderness Area
- Excellent cold water fishery, contains cutthroat hybrids, good natural barrier on Porphyry Creek that helps preserve more pure genetic strains
- Biomass control and logging contracts in the works for this area
- Remote area limits recreation impacts; no developed recreation trails except game trails
- Lynx habitat within the Wilderness boundary
- No developed recreation trail

USFS Identified Values - Middle Fork Piedra River

- Scenery: Not described.
- **Recreation:** Not described
- **Geology:** In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America

Protections in place – Middle Fork

- Upper reaches have Wilderness protection
- Protected within the Hinsdale County Upper Piedra District plan
- A section of Roadless area near the Middle Fork just southeast of Wilderness Area
- In-stream flow rights from confluence with Porphyry Gulch to confluence with the East Fork of the Piedra River (11cfs)
- Middle Fork passes through a group of holdings under the Notch Ranch conservation easement
- San Juan National Forest Plan
- Wild & Scenic River suitability

Threats identified by the group – Middle Fork

- Development
- Increased visitation
- Increased number of trails
- Not enough local control
- Federal reserved water rights
- Increased water rights
- Decreased water right
- Dams

Ideas for Protection identified by group – Middle Fork

- Wild & Scenic designation
- Improved irrigation techniques
- Additional in-stream flows

East Fork**Values identified by the Workgroup – East Fork**

- Difficult access, no trail system
- Pure Colorado cutthroat population found in upper section within Wilderness Area, waterfalls are a natural barrier to help preserve pure genetic strain
- Portion of Piedra Forks Ranch conservation easement drains into East Fork
- Certain deed restrictions on private land restricting ridge top construction

- Good water quality
- Historic values
- Wildlife: Bighorn Sheep, river otters, conservation population of Colorado cutthroat, big game
- Grazing allotments
- Water rights
- Ability to make a living
- Outstandingly Remarkable Values, as identified by Forest Service

USFS Identified Values - East Fork Piedra River in Wilderness

- **Scenery:** There are impressive waterfalls along the stream
- **Recreation:** Not described
- **Fish:** One of 12 sites within the San Juan National Forest that contain genetically pure strains of Colorado River cutthroat trout - the East Fork of the Piedra was selected as one of the two best pure cutthroat fisheries in the San Juan watershed
- **Geology:** In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America

Protections in place – East Fork

- Upper sections are protected by Wilderness designation
- In-stream Flows between the confluence with Deadman Creek and the confluence with the Middle Fork of the Piedra River (10 cfs)
- Section of Roadless Area between Wilderness and private land
- Included in Hinsdale County Upper Piedra Plan
- Winter road closures are a form of protection
- No trail system
- San Juan National Forest Plan
- Wild & Scenic River suitability

Threats identified by the group – East Fork

- Development
- Increase in water rights
- Decrease in water rights
- Section dries up during dry years
- Trans-mountain diversion
- Dams
- Not enough local control
- Federal reserve water right

Ideas for Protection identified by group – East Fork

- Improved irrigation techniques
- Additional in-stream flows
- Cooperative management of water

Williams Creek

(It was noted that Williams Creek is not listed as suitable for Wild and Scenic River status, but the Workgroup decided to discuss because it is within the Piedra watershed)

Values identified by the Workgroup – Williams Creek

- Recreation, dispersed camping, five developed campgrounds
- Major trailheads to Continental Divide
- Commercial outfitting
- Grazing
- Timber harvest
- Wildlife: bald eagle, moose, osprey, river otter, bighorn sheep, possible boreal toad.
- Williams Creek Reservoir managed for fishery and agriculture by Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Excellent fishery
- Grazing allotment
- Gold Panning
- Ability to make a living

USFS- or BLM-Identified Values: None

This segment has not been found suitable for WSR so there are no values identified by the USFS or BLM in their Draft Land Management Plan.

Protections in place – Williams Creek

- In-stream flow from Indian Creek confluence to confluence with Piedra River (14 cfs)
- Roadless Area
- County land-use plans that protect land from overdevelopment
- Research Natural Area within drainage
- Protections in state wildlife area at Williams Reservoir
- Conservation easements

Threats identified by the group – Williams Creek

- Development
- Increase in visitation
- Change in San Juan Forest plan
- Change in County land use plans
- Dams
- Increase in water rights
- Decrease in water rights
- Marmots in Williams Reservoir (earthen dam)
- Beetle kill at Williams Reservoir
- More developed camping at Williams Reservoir
- More erosion into reservoir from beetle kill
- Not enough local control

Ideas for Protection identified by group – Williams Creek

- Improved irrigation techniques
- Additional in-stream flows
- No new major impoundments

Weminuche Creek

(It was noted that Weminuche Creek is not listed as suitable for Wild and Scenic River status, but the

Workgroup decided to discuss it because it is within the Piedra watershed).

Values identified by the Workgroup – Weminuche Creek

- Limited public access except for bridge - primitive trails
- Geologic value: Glacially formed valley
- Cutthroat trout in Falls Creek tributary, and in some other tributaries, possibly in Little Sand and Big Sand creeks
- Lynx habitat in upper stretches
- Recreation: Hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding
- Impressive scenery from headwaters to confluence with Piedra
- No active grazing on allotments on upper Weminuche Creek
- Roadless area
- Abundant wildlife
- Private Property/Water rights
- Right to Farm and Ranch (Hinsdale County)
- Ability to make a living
- Sand Creek grazing closed
- No active grazing on Poison Creek
- Private property limits access

USFS- or BLM-Identified Values: None

This segment has not been found suitable for WSR so there are no values identified by the USFS or BLM in their Draft Land Management Plan.

Protections in place – Weminuche Creek

- Upper (northern) section of creek is in Weminuche Wilderness
- In-stream flows: Three stretches totaling 41 cfs
- Roadless area above Weminuche Valley Ranch and a section of roadless area below the Ranch to the confluence with the Piedra River
- Hinsdale County land-use plan protective of the creek
- Conservation easements including Weminuche Valley Ranch (2500 acres) and Cungiini Ranch (estimated 500 acres)
- San Juan Forest Plan

Threats identified by the group – Weminuche Creek

- Erosive soils
- Development
- Dams
- Change in land use plans
- Change in Forest Plans
- Increased visitation
- Increased trails
- User-made trails
- Tourism on private land
- Increased water allocation
- Decreased water rights
- Federal reserved water right
- Not enough local control

Ideas for Protection identified by group – Weminuche Creek

- Wild & Scenic designation
- San Juan Forest plan
- County land use plans
- Additional in-stream flow rights
- Improved irrigation techniques

Main Stem

Values identified by the Workgroup – Main Stem

- Limited road access
- Limited trails
- Whitewater boating, mostly on an expert level
- Some old-growth and Douglas Fir stands on the river
- Water rights
- Outstanding views, scenic canyons
- Hot springs
- The wild and free flowing nature of the river
- Educational value for natural sciences, outdoor recreation, eco-systems and wildlife
- Hunting, especially along west and north sides
- Can make a living (outfitters)
- Key wildlife corridor linking lower elevation winter habitat with higher summer ranges
- Mule deer especially thrive in the region and rely on it for calving
- Wildlife includes deer, elk, river otter, bobcat, turkey, bear, mountain lion
- Rock climbing - Active grazing rights

USFS Identified Values: Piedra River North of Highway 160 being “Preliminarily Suitable” for WSR

- **Recreation and scenery:** There is high quality rafting and kayaking of the Class IV and V waters through the two box canyons. The reach also offers a combination of beautiful and varied wild trout fishing for large fish and a long Class IV whitewater run. The narrow box canyon and areas of hot springs provide exceptional scenery.
- **Geology:** In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America. In the lower canyons, the visible rocks are from 200 million to 2 billion years old and represent nearly half of the geologic history of Earth. They cover the period when life evolved in the sea to the first colonization of land by plant and animal life.

Protections in place – Main Stem

- Wild & Scenic River suitability
- Portion of the river flows in the Piedra Area
- Portions of the river flows through protected Roadless areas
- In-stream flows through four different segments totaling 322 cfs.(some ISFs are

seasonal)

- Hinsdale County and Archuleta County land use plans
- Conservation easements

Threats identified by the group – Main Stem

- Transmountain diversion
- Development
- Three potential dam sites
- Water demand from Pagosa Springs
- Front Range water demands
- Drought
- Increase in visitation
- Paving roads/increased use
- More trails
- More homes
- Wildfire
- Less water available
- Change in County plans
- Change in forest plans
- Climate change
- Population increase
- Decrease in water rights
- Increase in water rights
- Doctrine of “unintended consequences” that could come with a federally reserved water right
- Federal reserved water right
- Increased mountain bike traffic
- Increased ATV use
- Paving of Piedra Road
- More logging operations
- Geothermal development
- Evaporation from dust on snow
- Change in land use patterns
- Population in 30-40 years
- Gravel mines
- Industrial development
- Telecommunication towers
- Lack of local control
- Dogs polluting river

Ideas for Protection identified by group – Main Stem

- Wild & Scenic designation
- New San Juan Forest plan
- Additional in-stream flow rights
- Better timing of flows
- County land use plans
- Improved irrigation techniques
- Creation of a Special Management Area (discussed in more detail below.)*
- Expansion of Piedra Area in exchange for dropping Wild & Scenic suitability on the Main Stem (discussed in more detail below.)*
- Consensus agreement for no new major impoundments on the Main Stem (discussed in more detail

below)*

* **Drafting Committee:** The group agreed to designate a Drafting Committee of Workgroup members who would be tasked with exploring these issues further including the need to find consensus on the northern boundary of the Main Stem, for the purposes of defining an area for no new major impoundments. The Drafting Committee was asked to report back to the Workgroup with their findings. The findings are reflected below, under “Workgroup desired outcomes.”

Workgroup desired outcomes

Areas of Consensus

The segment-by-segment analysis discussions produced a variety of specific ideas for future actions by Workgroup members, designed to support protection of the identified values. **These ideas had varying levels of support. The areas where consensus was reached are underlined below.** The group was asked to keep in mind that various proposals have different jurisdictions, which also may overlap. Existing laws and regulations within the state, federal, county, city, and the Southern Ute tribe would need to be considered with the proposals.

1. Piedra Area - exploration of potential expansion

Expand Piedra Area into adjacent Colorado Roadless Area in exchange for dropping Wild and Scenic suitability status on the Piedra main stem (Meeting #6, March 13, 2012 and Meeting #12, Sept. 18, 2012)

The Piedra Area was established as an alternative to Wilderness as part of the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act. The Piedra Area was created as an alternative to Wilderness status because of water language in the original bill. Congress initially used boilerplate headwater language, but it was found to not be applicable to the Piedra Area region because it is technically not in the headwaters. The Piedra Area is midstream, so rather than try and renegotiate the headwater language they designated it the Piedra Area, which has similar protections to Wilderness. Land management is more flexible in the Piedra Area than in Wilderness areas.

The Workgroup agreed to explore this proposal in greater detail and asked the Drafting Committee to also continue the exploration.

Consensus regarding potential Piedra Area expansion:

- Upon recommendation of the Drafting Committee, the full Piedra Workgroup agreed that the creation of a Special Management Area, which would overlay the current contiguous CRAs, was a preferred option to the expansion of the Piedra Area (see more detail below).

2. Exploration of the creation of a Special Management Area (SMA)

Explore the creation of a Special Management Area in the vicinity of the Colorado Roadless Areas contiguous to the Piedra Area, as a possible alternative to expansion of the Piedra Area (Meeting # 15, January 15, 2013).

The Workgroup began identifying issues and considerations related to the potential creation of an SMA, both in general and specific to individual contiguous Colorado Roadless Areas. In addition to numerous issues and considerations which were identified by the full Workgroup, a Drafting Committee comprised of Piedra Workgroup members was charged with continuing to explore the creation of an SMA (in addition to

exploring the possible expansion of the Piedra Area). The Drafting Committee met 5 times in May, June and July of 2013 and then reported back to the larger Piedra RPW

The workgroup wanted to make sure that it is clear that the set of ideas listed below regarding the creation of a SMA reflects a package for prospective legislation and that no element should be removed as a stand-alone item.

Consensus areas regarding the creation of a Special Management Area contiguous to the Piedra Area and overlaying the existing CRAs:

Creation of a Special Management Area that would include designated Colorado Roadless Areas (CRA) adjacent to the Piedra Area.

- SMA to be managed to maintain existing character.
- The existing Travel Management Plan (TMP) will become the baseline for future Travel Management and preservation of existing character, as it relates to recreation. Legislation needs to describe and define existing character. Values statement, as crafted by Piedra Workgroup to be included in legislation.
- Existing and historical rights not to be affected and this to be enumerated in legislation.
- Motorized access associated with agricultural operations (e.g., fencing, stockpond maintenance) would be allowed to the same extent allowed now.
- Motorized access by USFS for management purposes and for fire suppression protection allowed.
- Chainsaws: Land managers and permittees allowed to clear trails and campsites Permittees must follow special use permit requirements.
- Grazing: in accordance with Grazing Guidelines.
- Timber harvest/vegetation management: agreement to be consistent with the current CRA rules related to timber cutting and vegetation management, as per current CRA Tier 1 and Tier 2 guidelines.

Impoundments

No new major impoundments on the Mainstem, East Fork or Middle Fork of the Piedra River, on Weminuche Creek, or on Williams Creek (downstream from 1/4 mile below dam). The northern boundary of the main stem is identified as 100 yards above the USFS Road 631 bridge.

- Impoundment prohibition would not affect ability of water users to effect needed upgrades to their diversion systems, provided that safe passage for boating and fisheries is maintained.

Mineral withdrawal on federal lands: this would include locatable, saleable (i.e., sand and gravel) and leasable (i.e., oil and gas) resources.

- The intention of a mineral withdrawal is to protect the river corridor and water quality.
- All minerals (locatable, saleable and leasable), would be withdrawn (not just surface occupancy

restrictions) from the SMAs and from the Mainstem of the Piedra River within ¼ mile of the river (excluding private lands).

- No sand and gravel development would be allowed on the four primary streams (Middle Fork, East Fork, Weminuche Creek, Williams Creek (from point ¼ mile below Williams Reservoir dam) or on federal lands within 150 feet from edge of water.
- Any existing patented claims would be exempted, with creation of a surrounding buffer.

WSR eligibility and suitability status: Remove Wild and Scenic Rivers Act eligibility and suitability in the basin.

3. State In-stream flow

The group discussed exploring the possibility of increasing in-stream flow rights as a way to:

- a. Preempt future water development.
- b. Prevent streams from drying up.
- c. To better guarantee healthy flows into the future. In-stream flows are an in-channel appropriation of non-consumptive water between two specific points and are appropriated by the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the purpose of protecting the natural environment to a reasonable degree (Meeting #8, May 8, 2012).

In the end, the group reached consensus that the need for additional in-stream flows was eliminated, as a result of the additional protections that would be in place with the creation of a SMA.

4. Cooperation amongst water users

Organizing with private landowners on the East Fork to secure funding for river protection measures that benefit them. Federal assistance could be used as positive incentive to partner with private landowners, for example a cost-share program for improving irrigation efficiency that protects water rights while also improving water quality and the fishery (Meeting #14, Dec. 11, 2012). The group agreed that encouraging cooperation with water right holders and water districts in the focus area to help maintain minimum flows in the stream and avoid dewatering was a worthwhile effort. There is currently discussion at the state level on how to modify water laws to make them more flexible to achieve these sort of options. The group also reached general consensus that agricultural diversion structures and decreed water rights were a value that should be protected. Also, the group acknowledged the importance of protecting the ability of landowners, farmers and ranchers to continue agricultural practices.

Range of Ideas for Future Action

The following ideas were discussed as possible future actions but did not gain full consensus of the group.

1. Negotiate an agreement to end federal funding for major impoundments outlined in Statewide Water Supply Initiative for dam sites on the Piedra River (Meeting #12, Sept. 18, 2012).
2. Develop a plan to improve irrigation techniques as a way to conserve water. Many ranches and farms use flood irrigation or sprinklers, and it was noted that more efficient methods such as piping and drip irrigation

would help keep the river flowing, especially during drier years. For example, a portion of the East Fork has a tendency to dry up completely during the agricultural season due to water demand and drought conditions.

- a. State money is available for improved irrigation systems.
- b. Irrigators report that there is not much incentive to conserve excess water under current Colorado water law. If there was a compensation program there would be more incentives to shut water off, or lease it, rather than let it run under the 'use it or lose it' water law standard (Meeting #7, April 17, 2012).
- c. The group requested information from water conservation districts on monitoring return flows from agricultural uses (Meeting #13, October 15, 2012).

3. It was suggested that using additional methodologies for determining appropriate in-stream flow levels be explored. The current R2Cross method was established in the 1970s and there have been advances in river and fishery science since then. A recommendation may be to look at newer methodologies for determining in-stream flows (Meeting #11, August 21, 2012 and Meeting #15, Jan. 15, 2013).

4. A proposal was discussed by the group to better monitor water quality. It was suggested that the group could develop a monitoring program that studies agricultural runoff, a potential source of pollution. A volunteer program to install fencing that protects riparian areas from cattle grazing was also an idea with general support (Meeting #13, Oct. 15, 2012).

5. The group discussed the potential for a leasing program that earmarks water saved from more efficient irrigation techniques to be used for increasing in-stream flows where needed. It was suggested that the group figure out a way that gives irrigators some sort of water credit or incentive if they put more water in the stream as a result of improved irrigation efficiency. Under current water law saving water through more efficient irrigation can cause a risk to agricultural water credits. A lease program could be flexible and adjusted according to various factors and be used to help increase low flows every once in a while or even every few years. Any plan has to protect historic uses of water while providing incentives for more efficient irrigation structures and techniques. This sort of program was discussed as part of the voluntary cooperative efforts to maintain minimum flows and avoid dewatering (Meeting #13, October 15, 2012 and Meeting #14, Dec. 11, 2012).

6. Develop a plan to improve irrigation techniques in order to conserve water.

7. Consider forming a more permanent advisory committee made up of local stakeholders that would help to inform the forest service of local needs and concerns regarding land management and water issues (Meeting #14, December 11, 2012.).

Conclusion

This section of the Piedra River and its tributaries are part of a unique and varied watershed. From deep box canyons to alpine Wilderness with expansive views, it is enjoyed by a wide variety of outdoor enthusiasts and offers the ability to make a living to those who call it home. There are many diverse interests and voices that are to be considered when discussing the future. The Workgroup presents this report to all interested citizens, groups, government entities and elected officials in hopes that consensus ideas might move forward and that the full range of views and values are reflected from an in-depth study, discussion and deliberative Workgroup process that spanned 19 months.



Top left: Outfitters taking in the scenery ***Top right:*** along the Piedra main stem
Bottom left: Workgroup members John Whitney and Mike Reid on our second tour
Bottom right: Ponderosa forest just above the Piedra bridge

Attachment A:
Information on the River Protection Workgroup Regional Project and the
Upcoming “Regional Discussion”

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 Water Resources, and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA)
- San Juan Public Lands (USFS) (The project links with the Tres Rios BLM Field Office when necessary.)
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Staff from the local offices of U.S. Senator Michael Bennet, U.S. Senator Mark Udall and U.S. Representative Scott Tipton
- The Wilderness Society - Wilderness Support Center
- Trout Unlimited – Five Rivers Chapter

Note: The Colorado Division of Water Resources participated until 2012 when budget cuts necessitated this entity could no longer send a representative.

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 and 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. Any funding given to the RPW does not guarantee the findings or conclusions of a Workgroup. The Dolores Water Conservancy District serves as the project’s fiscal agent.

Activities: The River Protection Steering Committee designed and is carrying out a public process that includes forming 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. Four of the Workgroups have completed reports and those documents are on the website at the top and include: Hermosa Creek, Vallecito Creek/Pine River, the San Juan and the Animas. The Piedra Workgroup is the last group to complete its work.

Local Workgroup participants are asked to attend and contribute to facilitated meetings and to share information including stream protections already in place. They are asked to reach an understanding of available protection “tools” and develop plans for the future through consensus and/or negotiations, and/or reflect a range of views. The goal of the local Workgroup process is 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” are considered in the Workgroup’s deliberations including, but not limited to, the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (“WSR”). The success for each Workgroup is 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.

After the five Workgroups finish this phase, there will be a “Regional Discussion” led by the RPW Steering Committee. This regional discussion will:

- draw on the work done by the local public Workgroups and develop, if possible, a consensus approach(es) to protection of rivers and river segments in the region while allowing water development to continue;
- honor and include the discussions, recommendations and conclusions of the 5 local River Protection Workgroups;
- be an inclusive process where the local Public Workgroups will remain informed and involved;
- involve the RPW Steering Committee looking carefully at the work done by the five local Workgroups to see if there are any potential next steps and ideas that could be explored across the five basins;
- be based on the river specific Workgroups: their consensus recommendations; their issues and concerns; their ideas; and
- be considered Phase II of the RPW effort with a target date for completion of summer, 2014.

The Regional Discussion will be carried out through:

- remaining flexible;
- the RPW Steering Committee developing an initial set of draft ideas and these ideas will then be discussed at the public Workgroup level;
- using the transparent, inclusive and collaborative principles and process steps that the Public Workgroups use;
- continued funding from a variety of stakeholders;
- understanding that various forms of dialogue and problem solving may be needed including negotiations or mediation; and
- striving towards consensus, communication and transparency with the public Workgroups throughout all steps and phases.

River Protection Workgroup Information Sheet

Piedra River (Final Version: 4/3/2012)

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

This *Initial Information Sheet* was prepared to support the discussions of participants involved in the Piedra River Workgroup (PRW). This version can be updated and changed as the Workgroup proceeds and as new information is made available or requested. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms and the Glossary of Agencies handouts for clarification on any words used or entities mentioned (documents available at the meetings and on the Web site).

Area of Focus: The Area of Focus includes the watershed of the Piedra River upstream of Colorado Highway 160. The area drained by the Piedra River at the Highway 160 Bridge falls in Archuleta, Mineral and Hinsdale Counties.

The *San Juan Public Lands (USFS/BLM) 2007 Draft Land Management Plan* found 3 river segments totaling 50.12 miles in the Piedra Watershed above Highway 160 to be “Preliminarily Suitable” for the Wild and Scenic River (WSR) status. More details and information are provided below.

Values (in alphabetical order): This list of values was brainstormed by the River Protection Workgroup Steering Committee. The Workgroup can add to and refine this list. The word “values” means what is special or important about the river and the watershed. All values are considered of equal priority and weight.

Economic: Livestock grazing; agriculture; open space; agricultural and domestic water supplies; outfitting businesses (water-related, hunting, fishing, etc.); heritage tourism; forest products; and the Piedra River as a regional public access and recreation attraction form the economic foundation within the Area of Focus.

Fish: The Piedra drainage also has many miles of sustainable wild native and introduced trout habitat and populations. Non-native trout (Rainbow, brown, brook), and native Colorado River cutthroat trout and mottled sculpin occupy the Piedra River upstream of Highway 160. There are miles of quality habitat in the Piedra Canyons (1st and 2nd Box between the Piedra Road and Highway 160) with the potential to grow large brown and rainbow trout. There is a self-sustaining population of Kokanee salmon in the Williams Creek Reservoir. Warm water species occur in the lower reach near Highway 160 and include flannelmouth and bluehead sucker.

The Piedra River drainage has some of the most intact and extensive Colorado River cutthroat populations in the State, reflecting the excellent water quality and quantity. There are 6 Conservation Populations of Colorado cutthroat trout in the Piedra watershed above Highway 160. A Conservation Population of cutthroat trout is generally defined as being 90% or more genetically pure. The East Fork of the Piedra (above Piedra Falls) is one such Conservation Population and the source of the Division of Parks and Wildlife's Weminuche broodstock. It is a high quality and unique population of fish because there are about 8 miles of mainstem river and approximately another 4 miles of tributaries flowing into it. Flows are typically 10-20 cfs – large compared to most of the cutthroat waters in Colorado, which are isolated into 2-3 mile sections of headwater stream. Also, Cimarrona Creek, Shaw Creek, Fall Creek, North Fork Sand Creek, and Sand Creek are all Colorado cutthroat trout Conservation Populations.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CSP, formerly CDOW) considers all of the streams in the Piedra River to be wild trout waters. Some supplemental stocking occurs near campgrounds and popular road access points, but for the most part fish populations are self-sustaining. Stocking, mostly of sub-catchable (5 inch) fish, occurs in Williams Lake, Williams Creek, Middle Fork of the Piedra and the Piedra River at the CG near Highway 160.

Standard regulations (4 trout per day and you can use bait) apply everywhere in the Piedra above Highway 160 EXCEPT for two reaches. The regulation in the Piedra River from Tres Piedras Ranch boundary (~3 mi upstream of Highway 160) to the Piedra Road, and in the East Fork of the Piedra River above the East Fork Falls, is that all fish must be returned to the water immediately; flies and lures only.

Flora: The USFS Region 2 Forester identifies a list of Sensitive Species of animals and plants (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/projects/scp/sensitivespecies/>) for which population viability is a concern, based on significant current or predicted downward trends in populations and/or habitat. See the handout entitled: *Checklist of sensitive plant species known to occur, or with potential to occur, in the Piedra River drainage above Highway 160*. There are no known occurrences of plant species within the Area of Focus listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. However, there is suitable habitat on San Juan Public Lands in the area for the Pagosa skyrocket, listed as Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Geology: The Piedra River cuts through over 6000 feet of rock as it flows from the headwaters of the East and Middle Forks of the Piedra River, to the southern edge of the Forest boundary. The river has created a slice of outcrops which opens a window in time. Much of the geologic record is missing; either due to erosion or possibly, no deposition. Today, we see great mountains and box canyons covered primarily by a temperate alpine forest. What rocks that have been preserved tell us that a lot has happened over the last 1.8 billion years. Mountains have popped out of the earth. Seas have come and receded. The world has gone from warm tropical climes to Ice Ages. What is covered by a river and mountains today was previously, at one time or another, covered by seas, rivers, lakes, swamps, beaches, deserts, volcanoes, or

glaciers. An excellent timeline of the geology of the area may be found in Raby, 2008. See the separate geology handout <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/resourceDocuments.htm>

for broad descriptions of the history of the rocks that can be found in the Piedra River.

Intact Natural Landscape: This watershed is valuable because it supports ecosystems that encompass a diversity of life zones from ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests up to the alpine, with abundant riverside and stream habitats. The Area of Focus is largely healthy and intact and provides abundant wildlife habitat. Due to its overall intactness, as well as the presence of Wilderness in the Piedra Area, it maintains a wild quality. The Weminuche Wilderness is the largest wilderness area in Colorado.

Forest Resources: There is a history of timber harvest in the area. The Mixed Conifer Workgroup is considering the health and management of mixed conifer in the area. A growing issue is forest die off associated with a regional spruce beetle outbreak.

Human Values: Residents of the Piedra River watershed value their ability to continue to live in the area and make a sustainable living through employment based on the plentiful natural resources of the area. Residents value the ability to make and influence decisions about how the lands in the area are used and managed.

Open Space: The Piedra River watershed above US Highway 160 represents an open, relatively undeveloped landscape enjoyed and valued by residents and visitors alike. These open lands support both natural systems and agricultural land uses.

Recreation: The area is used for a variety of recreational activities including the following.

- Backcountry skiing
- Backpacking
- Camping
- Fishing
- Foraging (mushrooms, berries)
- Hiking
- Horseback riding and horse packing
- Hot springs soaking
- Hunting
- Mountaineering
- OHV use
- Painting
- Photography
- Rock climbing
- Sightseeing
- Snowshoeing
- Snowmobiling
- Whitewater boating

Scenery: The Area of Focus holds a variety of scenic values, from open agricultural lands, to the river canyon, to Piedra Falls. Visitors and residents alike value the open agricultural and natural vistas available within this landscape. The scenic reach from the confluence of the Middle and East Forks up to Piedra Falls is relatively accessible and receives high use.

Tribal Values: The Southern Ute Indian Tribe maintains an interest in management issues related to the Piedra River for a variety of reasons. The Tribe has substantial water rights in the basin downstream of the Area of Focus, and supports management actions in the watershed that serve to maintain the water supply for those rights.

Under an 1874 treaty commonly known as the Brunot Agreement, the Tribe also has the right to hunt, fish, and gather in an off-Reservation area that is approximately 4 million acres in size. The area within which the Tribe retained reserved rights is the San Juan Mountain region of Colorado and includes parts of nine counties and is marked roughly by a rectangle by the towns of Naturita, Lake City, Pagosa Springs, and Cortez. Tribal members can hunt, fish, and gather in that area subject to regulation by the Tribe. Importantly, treaty rights cannot be exercised on private property without landowner consent.

In addition, the Tribe has a significant interest in promoting management actions that protect water quality. It adopted surface water quality standards based on “designated uses” in the 1990s which, although they are not formally recognized by either USEPA or the State of Colorado, reflect the concern the Tribe has for protecting water quality. The Tribe is currently revisiting those standards as well as working on “Treatment as a State” status and the development of numeric surface water quality standards.

Terrestrial wildlife: Some of the wildlife species common in the area include: elk, mule deer, big horn sheep, black bear, coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, beaver, and snowshoe hare. River otters were reintroduced in 1978 and are doing well. Introduced moose also use the area occasionally. Canada lynx have been reintroduced to Southwest Colorado and use the area. There is a small population of black swifts within the Area. Wolves used the area until the 1940s, and grizzly bears up until the 1970s.

The CPW *State Wildlife Action Plan* (SWAP) identifies species most in need of proactive conservation measures. The SWAP identifies a 2-tiered list of *Species of Greatest Conservation Need*, with Tier I species having the most urgent need. Some of these species are also listed on the State Threatened & Endangered Species List. The USFS and BLM each identify lists of Sensitive Species, some of which are known or likely to occur in the area. Finally, the US Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a list of species identified as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The only ESA listed species likely to occur in the Area of Focus are the Canada lynx and the southwestern willow flycatcher. A handout is available summarizing this information for the Area of Focus

USFS-Identified Outstandingly Remarkable Values or “ORVs”: As part of its evaluation of rivers for Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligibility, the USFS analyzes rivers for any river-related values that are unique, rare, or exemplary, and that are significant on a regional or national scale. These features are identified as “Outstandingly Remarkable Values.” The following box provides a description of the ORVs identified for the 3 Piedra River segments based on the *San Juan Public Lands Center’s 2007 Draft Land Management Plan*. See Appendix D (pages D-89 to 102) of that plan for the San Juan Public Land’s complete description of the values associated with these streams and the Suitability Analysis provided, including 1) Characteristics of the river, 2) Current status of land ownership and use, and 3) Potential uses and effects of WSR status on those uses.

<p>Piedra River North of Highway 160</p> <p>Recreation and scenery: There is high quality rafting and kayaking of the Class IV and V waters through the two box canyons. The reach also offers a combination of beautiful and varied wild trout fishing for large fish and a long Class IV whitewater run. The narrow box canyon and areas of hot springs provide exceptional scenery.</p> <p>Geology: In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America. In the lower canyons, the visible rocks are from 200 million to 2 billion years old and represent nearly half of the geologic history of Earth. They cover the period when life evolved in the sea to the first colonization of land by plant and animal life.</p>
<p>East Fork Piedra River in Wilderness</p> <p>Scenery: There are impressive waterfalls along the stream.</p> <p>Recreation: Not described.</p> <p>Fish: One of 12 sites within the San Juan National Forest that contain genetically pure strains of Colorado River cutthroat trout. The East Fork of the Piedra was selected as one of the two best pure cutthroat fisheries in the San Juan watershed.</p> <p>Geology: In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America.</p>
<p>Middle Fork Piedra River</p> <p>Scenery: Not described.</p> <p>Recreation: Not described</p> <p>Geology: In a relatively short distance, the river system cuts through some of the most recent and most ancient rock exposures in western North America.</p>

Protections Currently in Place

Conservation Easements: Conservation easements are voluntary agreements between private landowners and qualified land trusts to limit the ability to subdivide and develop private land. Conservation easements are public documents recorded with the county in which they occur.

Several properties within the Area of Focus are currently protected under conservation easements. As of February 2012, the workgroup estimates (based on local knowledge and conversations with landowners) the total acreage under conservation easements within the Area of Focus to be at least 6630 acres. There are approximately 48,000 acres of private land north of Hwy 160 within the Piedra watershed, so these acres covered by conservation easements represent about 14 percent of the total private land in the Area of Focus.

County Land Use Plans: The Hinsdale County Upper Piedra Area Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2001. In 2007, the county created the “Upper Piedra District”, which was designed and developed to implement the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the District is to “preserve the natural character of the Upper Piedra, including its open meadows, wildlife habitats, open ridgelines, ... and to accommodate and sustain agricultural and agriculture-related uses along with low density residential development uses in the Upper Piedra area of Hinsdale County.” The District sets out use and dimensional standards for development in the Upper Piedra area, in addition to those found in the Hinsdale County Zoning Resolution. Hinsdale County has a Right to Farm and Ranch Policy. The Archuleta County Community Plan (2006) lists most of the private land within the corridor as “agricultural ranching”, with a base density of one dwelling per 35 acres. Near Highway 160, there is a small area classified as “agricultural estate”, with a base density of one dwelling per 5 acre lot to 1 per 35 acre lot (Appendix D, SJPL DLMP-DEIS, pD-91). The Archuleta County Community Plan includes protection for riparian areas. Mineral County has a Planning and Zoning Commission; it does not have a land use plan.

Roadless Area: About 48,805 acres of Inventoried Roadless Area fall within the Area of Focus. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294) prohibits road construction and timber harvest, with limited exceptions, in Inventoried Roadless Areas. It seems likely that some version of a roadless rule – although it is not clear which one (the Colorado Rule or the Federal Rule) – will be in place in the future, restricting road construction and timber harvest.

Wilderness: About 67,520 acres of the headwaters of the Piedra River watershed above US Highway 160 fall within the Weminuche Wilderness area. Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport is not permitted within the wilderness area. Use of aircraft to land or drop people or materials is prohibited, with the exception of agency-approved administrative use or emergency search-and-rescue operations.

Piedra Area: The Piedra Area constitutes 60,341 acres of the Piedra River watershed above US Highway 160, including about 6 miles of the Piedra River. The Piedra Area was established by the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act, and is managed to preserve its wilderness character. It lacks the implied water rights protection of areas designated as wilderness. Also, the USFS can authorize chainsaw use within the area.

Wild and Scenic Suitability: The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 directed the US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of Interior to evaluate selected rivers for potential addition to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. In 1979, one such suitability study was completed for the Piedra River and recommended designation for 50.9 miles of the

river (35.2 wild, 12.9 scenic, and 5.5 recreational). The Piedra River was re-evaluated in 1989 with no changes made. From 1979 to the present, these “suitable” segments (the East and Middle Forks, and the mainstem of the Piedra down to Highway 160) have been managed to protect their free-flowing character, water quality, ORVs and recommended classifications. According to the *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (p.3.549), *“A finding of suitability does not create a water right. A water resource project proposed on a suitable river will be analyzed as to its effect on a river’s free-flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values, with adverse effects prevented to the extent of existing agency authorities (such as special-use authority) and subject to valid existing rights. Projects on a suitable river may be subject to more intense analysis and additional mitigation, compared to rivers not eligible or suitable.”*

USFS Management (current and proposed under the San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan): The entire Area of Focus is managed by the USFS. The box below provide more information:

Piedra River above US Highway 160

Current management: The areas of USFS public land within the Area of Focus are allocated to large areas of MA1W which means: “Natural Processes Dominate: Designated Wilderness Study Areas and Piedra Area” (Weminuche Wilderness in the Piedra headwaters and the Piedra Area and MA5 “Active Management” (most of the public lands between the Piedra Area and the Weminuche Wilderness, as well as south and east of the Piedra Area). Smaller areas between the Weminuche Wilderness and the Piedra Area are allocated to MA3 “Natural Landscape with Limited Management”. The lands west of the Piedra Area are allocated to MA5 “Active Management.” There is one small linear area stretching along the east side of the Piedra River north of Highway 160 that is allocated to MA4 “High Use Recreation Emphasis.”

Proposed management: Under the *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan* some changes to allocations under these management areas would occur. In the USFS lands between the Piedra Area and Highway 160, a small area would change from MA3 “Natural Landscape with Limited Management” to MA5 “Active Management;” while another small area would change from “Active Management” to MA1 “Natural Processes dominate.” The linear area stretching along the east side of the Piedra River north of Highway 160 and allocated to MA4 “High Use Recreation Emphasis” would be extended further to the north, to the First Fork of the Piedra. The allocation of USFS lands to the west of the Piedra Area would change from MA5 “Active Management” to MA 3 “Natural Landscape with Limited Management.” In the USFS lands between the Piedra Area and the Weminuche Wilderness, including the drainages of the East Fork, Middle Fork, Williams Creek , Weminuche Creek, and Little Sand Creek, the total area allocated to MA5 “Active Management” would decrease and the area allocated to MA3 “Natural Landscape with Limited Management” would increase. Between the Middle Fork and the East fork of the Piedra, an area adjacent to the Wilderness would change from MA3 “Natural Landscape with Limited Management” to MA1 “Natural Processes Dominate”. The road to Williams Creek Reservoir would be allocated to MA4 “High Use Recreation Emphasis”. The areas currently managed as MA2 “Special Areas and Unique Landscapes” would continue under this management. (*San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft EIS, page 2.15-2.16*).

The USFS has a map of mechanical and prescribed fire treatment areas, many of which are about the river. This is an area where a lot of fire mitigation work is done.

Downstream Senior Water Rights: Senior water rights existing downstream of the Area of Focus act to maintain some flows through the area of focus in years when natural conditions

provide sufficient water. The decreed diversions below the Hwy 160 bridge to Navajo Reservoir total approximately 74 CFS. These are all direct flow rights; there are no storage rights. Approximately 12 CFS of the 74 CFS belongs to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. According to CDWR records, this water is rarely diverted from the river. Of the 74 CFS, there are roughly 20 points of diversion. The most junior is a pumpsite for 1 CFS, adjudicated in 2009. The largest is the Buckskin Nailor diversion for 21.9 CFS, with adjudication dates range from 1902 to 1968. The M E & M Ditch is decreed for 12 CFS with adjudication dates in the 1962-1978 range, but they have appropriation dates ranging back to 1868 to 1945. In addition to the 74 CFS of decreed diversions, there is a CWCB in-stream flow right for 70 CFS.

In-stream Flows and Minimum Lake Levels: An In-stream Flow is an in-channel appropriation of non-consumptive water between two specific points and is appropriated by the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the purpose of protecting the natural environment to a reasonable degree. A Minimum Lake Level is a non-consumptive, in-lake use of water made exclusively by the Colorado Water Conservation Board for minimum levels in natural lakes in order to preserve or improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree. Both in-stream flow and natural lake level rights are administered within the state's water right priority system.

In-stream Flows:

STREAM NAME	CASE NO.	Upper End	Lower End	AMOUNTS IN CFS (DATES)	APPROPRIATION DATE
Piedra River	7-78W1812	Confl. MF & EF Piedra River	Confl. Williams Creek	30 (3/1-8/31) 20 (9/1-2/29)	3/16/1978
Middle Fork Piedra River	7-78W1817	Confl. Porphyry Gulch	Confl. EF Piedra River.	11 (1/1-12/31)	3/16/1978
East Fork Piedra River	7-78W1818	Confl. Deadman Creek	Confl. MF Piedra River.	10 (1/1-12/31)	3/16/1978
Williams Creek	7-78W1819	Confl. Indian Creek	Confl. Piedra River	14 (1/1-12/31)	3/16/1978
Weminuche Creek	7-78W1820	Confl. EF Weminuche Crk	Confl. Little Sand Creek	9 (1/1-12/31)	3/16/1978
Weminuche Creek	7-78W1821	Confl. Little Sand Creek	Confl. Piedra River	18 (1/1-12/31)	3/16/1978
Piedra River	7-78W1813	Confl. Williams Creek	Confl. Weminuche Crk	44 (3/1-8/31) 30 (9/1-2/29)	3/16/1978
Piedra River	7-78W1814	Confl. Weminuche Crk	Confl First Fork Piedra river	53 (3/1-8/31) 35 (9/1-2/29)	3/16/1978

Piedra River	7-78W1815	Confl First Fork Piedra River	US HWY 160 bridge	70 (3/1-8/31) 40 (9/1-2/29)	3/16/1978
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Minimum Lake Levels: There are no Minimum Lake Levels within the Area of Focus.

Important Water Information

Court Actions (USFS Reserved Right): A case is pending (USFS Reserved Rights Application in Case W-1605-76B) that involves whether the USFS is entitled to water rights "reserved" as of the date Congress reserved land for the National Forest for fluvial geomorphological (stream-channel maintenance) purposes, and, if so, how much water per stream across USFS land. In short, this case relates to whether or not the USFS holds a Federally Reserved Water Right and, if so, its size. Negotiations to resolve the case have been limited since 2003.

Consumptive Uses: There are three trans-mountain diversions. Two, the Don La Font 1 and 2 are Colorado Parks and Wildlife diversions. The Williams/Squaw diversion on Williams Creek is private. All three divert water to the Rio Grande basin. Other decreed consumptive uses are mainly agricultural. The East Fork of the Piedra below the USFS boundary is over-allocated. When the Abraham Davis and the Piedra Falls Ditches are used to their fullest rights, they sometimes dry up the East Fork of the Piedra for a portion of its length, until return flows replenish the water in the channel.

Potential for Additional Consumptive Uses: There are currently 7 cfs (Cubic Feet per Second) in conditional direct flow water rights and no conditional storage rights within the Piedra River watershed above Highway 160. Given these small amounts, the short term potential for additional consumptive use within the Area of Focus is very limited. The 2010 SWSI (State Water Supply Initiative) Basin Update provides a list of consumptive (and non-consumptive) "Identified Projects and Processes" in the San Juan and Dolores Basins of Southwest Colorado. This update is available at

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/water-management/basin-roundtables/Documents/Southwest/SWBasinNeedsAssessmentReport.pdf>.

A Presidential exemption would be needed for development of facilities within the Weminuche Wilderness and the Piedra Area. Note: The next paragraph explains SWSI.

Potential New Water Diversion and Storage Locations: The State Water Supply Initiative ("SWSI") was a basin-by-basin study conducted by the CWCB to examine Colorado's water uses, water-supply needs, and future water planning efforts. SWSI focused on using a common technical basis for identifying and quantifying water needs and issues and it catalogued the specific projects, plans, and processes that local water suppliers have identified and are undertaking as components of their own water supply planning efforts to meet the needs they themselves have identified. SWSI I identified 4 potential dam sites within the Piedra drainage

above Highway 160. See SWSI (2004) at

<http://cwcbweblink.state.co.us/WebLink/ElectronicFile.aspx?docid=144066&searchid=2c16c041-d0b2-4ec5-ac42-8b95aa0c04e3&dbid=0>, Figure 10-11, page 10-20.

The sites are:

- First Box Reservoir appears to be on the Piedra in Section 32, Township 36 North, Range 4 West at an elevation of 7355 ft
- Weminuche Dam site appears to be on the Weminuche in Section 6, Township 37 North, Range 3 West at an elevation of 8065 ft.
- Weminuche Reservoir on the Weminuche in Section 18, Township 37 North, Range 3 West that has a 1968 water right
- Oneal Park Reservoir is on Gordon Creek in Section 1, Township 36 North, Range 3 West with a 1968 water right.

According to CWCB, these sites were identified as part of a CWCB dam site inventory conducted in 1997 to fulfill a statutory requirement. The inventory was a compilation of all the potential dam sites from feasibility studies, conditional water rights, and reservoirs with potential for expansion that existed at the time. Apparently any such site was included, independent of whether it was deemed feasible or not. The inventory has not been updated, but may be in the future.

In addition, pursuant to House Bill 1117 and the Water for the 21st Century Act, the Southwest Basins Roundtable has evaluated the consumptive processes in the San Juan basin. For more information, go to: <http://cwcb.state.co.us/public-information/publications/Pages/StudiesReports.aspx> (then go to SWSI I, SWSI II or the most recent iteration, SWSI 2010).

Other Consumptive and Non-consumptive Water-Related Efforts: The SWSI process continues and the recent SWSI 2010 document includes lists of both consumptive and non-consumptive projects and processes (IPPs) identified by local roundtables around the state. The IPPs inventoried by the Southwest Basins Roundtable for the San Juan Basin are available at

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/water-management/basin-roundtables/Documents/Southwest/SWBasinNeedsAssessmentReport.pdf>

Stream-Flow Data: Several U.S. Geological Survey gauges have been operated in the area. The chart below shows the gauge sites' number, name and dates of operation.

<u>Gauge Site Number</u>	<u>Site Name</u>	<u>Dates of Operation</u>
09349500	Piedra River near Piedra, CO.	1939-10-01 to 1973-06-30
09347500	Piedra R at Bridge Rngr Sta Nr Pagosa Springs, CO.	1936-10-01 to 1954-09-30
09347205	Middle Fork Piedra River Near Dyke, CO.	1977-10-01 to

		1983-09-30
09348500	Williams C Nr Bridge Ra Sta, Nr Pagosa Spgs, CO.	1937-10-01 to 1949-09-30
09349000	Weminuche C Nr Brdge Ra Sta, Nr Pagosa Springs, CO.	1937-04-01 to 1949-09-30
09347200	Middle Fork Piedra River Nr Pagosa Springs, CO.	1969-10-01 to 1975-09-30
09347000	Don La Font Ditches No. 1 & 2 at Piedra Pass, CO.	
09348000	Williams Creek-Squaw Pass D at Squaw Pass, CO.	

Note: Stream-flow data for each of these gauges is available in a variety of formats on the U.S. Geological Survey Water Data Web site at: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/>

Water Rights: The following charts summarize water rights for direct flow and storage, not including in-stream flow rights held by CWCB in the Piedra River watershed above Highway 160. There are three trans-basin rights from the Piedra River basin above Highway 160 to the Rio Grande basin for a total of 20 CFS: Don La Font 1 = 4 CFS, Don La Font 2 = 6 CFS and Williams/Squaw = 10 CFS. *Please refer to the Glossary of Terms (handed out at the meetings and also on the Web site) to understand these various types of water rights).*

DIRECT FLOW WATER RIGHTS above HWY 160	Total # of Rights	Total CFS (Cubic feet per second)
Absolute	64	470
Conditional	2	7

STORAGE WATER RIGHTS above HWY 160	Total # of Rights	Total AF (Acre-feet)
Absolute	7	10,256*
Conditional	0	0

* Williams Creek Reservoir absolute storage right is 10,084AF.

Pending Applications: The USFS has filed on two springs up First Notch Road: Cabin Spring for .0015 CFS and Mountain Lion Spring for .00078 CFS. There is also a pending diligence USFS case on Gordon Creek wetlands, asking to go absolute on an additional 3 cfs. This is not a new filing.

Water Quality: The Colorado Water Quality Control Commission is the agency responsible for developing specific state water quality policies to implement the broader policies set forth by the Legislature in the Colorado Water Quality Control Act. The Commission adopts water quality classifications and standards for surface and ground waters of the state, as well as regulations aimed at achieving compliance with those classifications and standards. There are various categories that apply to measuring water quality. Basic standards are the general water quality standards that apply to all surface waters of the state. For more detail on water quality standards, please refer to the handouts at the meeting and/or the State of Colorado's Water Quality Control Division website:

<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/>

Within the Weminuche Wilderness Area, all tributaries to the Piedra River, including all wetlands, lakes and reservoirs, have a designation as Outstanding Waters, as do all streams in Wilderness Areas within Colorado.

Outside of the wilderness boundary, water quality is good overall, with no major concerns. The water is not heavily mineralized. For specific water quality classifications and standards by segment, please refer to the attached tables, which can also be accessed at

[http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/34_2010\(06\)-2011\(06\)tables.pdf](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/34_2010(06)-2011(06)tables.pdf)

Pending Applications: The USFS has filed on two springs up First Notch Road: Cabin Spring for .0015 CFS and Mountain Lion Spring for .00078 CFS. There is also a pending diligence USFS case on Gordon Creek wetlands, asking to go absolute on an additional 3 cfs. This is not a new filing.

Local History around 1979 Wild and Scenic River Efforts and Piedra Area:

In the 1970s, some ranchers within the private land above the Piedra River Fork initially supported Wild & Scenic River protection for the Upper Piedra Reach where there was a large area of private land on which development was likely to occur. When revised, a much more extensive river protection plan was introduced. There were many more protests following the original proposal because two factors had changed the potential for development of the private lands: 1) the Nature Conservancy had purchased the a large ranch and donated it to the USFS, and 2) when wilderness status was proposed for this area a special Piedra Area was created without a federally reserved water right. The Area of Focus includes about six miles of the Piedra River but for much of the distance the Area is limited to the western side of the Piedra drainage. The statute that created the Piedra Area does refer to "further study of water issues," which could change the Areas' designation, but further Congressional action would be required.

2007 Draft Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Information: The *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan* found three (3) segments (50.12 miles) to be "preliminarily suitable" for

Wild and Scenic Rivers (“WSR”) designation. To be considered “eligible” for designation under the Act, a segment must be free flowing and must meet state water quality standards or at least have a plan in place to attain those standards. The following chart summarizes the suitability findings for these reaches. Please refer to Appendix D, pages D-89 to 102 of the *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan* for a complete description of the values associated with these streams and the Suitability Analysis provided, including: 1) characteristics of the river, 2) current status of land ownership and use, and 3) potential uses and effects of WSR status on those uses.

Stream	Segment	Classification	Length	ORVs	% Private
Piedra River N of Highway 160	From the confluence of the East Fork and the Middle Fork, to the USFS boundary just north of HWY 160	Recreation	7.89 mi	Recreation and Scenery	?
		Wild	14.09 mi	Geology	
East Fork Piedra River in Wilderness	From headwaters to the wilderness boundary.	Wild	9.37 mi	Fish Scenery	0%
Middle Fork Piedra River	From headwaters to USFS boundary that lies upstream of the confluence with the East Fork Piedra River.	Recreation	7.03 mi	Scenery, Recreation, and	0%
		Wild	11.75 mi	Geology	

Source: *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan*, Appendix D

Anyone interested in more information can access the actual Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and its amendments by going to <http://www.rivers.gov/> and look under the Information Tab for “WSR Act.” This site also offers more user friendly summaries of the Act under the Publications Tab in “Technical Papers.”

Note: The website is maintained by the interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Council. According to the Website: *“The Council consists of representatives of the four wild and scenic rivers administering agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service. Other federal agencies with river interests have key contacts and participate in discussions affecting their interests. The public has an opportunity to provide input at all Council meetings; their support is crucial to the Council's success.”*

Other Important Information

Potential Conflicts: To be discussed thoroughly in the Piedra River Workgroup meetings and process.

Air Quality: According to the *San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan*, “the Weminuche Wilderness Class I Area has been recognized by Congress as being an “outstanding special area” – deserving the highest air-quality protection in the nation,” and maintaining Class I air conditions within the Weminuche is a high priority. Under the Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended, federal land managers are responsible for protecting the air quality related values within Class I areas. According to recent findings, there is an increasing trend for nitrates, but no trend for sulfates, organics or fine soil in the Weminuche Wilderness (San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan). Ongoing monitoring of air quality and air quality related values is carried out under the Weminuche Wilderness Monitoring Plan (USFS 1991) and through agreements with the EPA and State of Colorado.

Climate: Climate plays a large role in the Area’s hydrology. Projections about future climate conditions can provide useful input to planning efforts around the water resources which sustain the values in the area. The CWCB has prepared several reports on climate projections, water availability, and drought planning in Colorado. These can be viewed and downloaded at: <http://cwcb.state.co.us/environment/climate-change/Pages/main.aspx>. A two-page summary is available at: <http://cwcb.state.co.us/environment/climate-change/Documents/COClimateReportOnePager.pdf>. For information specific to the San Juan’s, the Mountain Studies Institute has compiled a summary of studies of projected future climate in Southwest Colorado. This report is available at: http://www.mountainstudies.org/sites/default/files/pdf/publications/MSI_CC_Observ_Sum_2011.pdf. Table E.S.1 Pages 18 and 19 present a concise summary of projected climate changes for southwestern Colorado, with references cited. http://www.mountainstudies.org/sites/default/files/pdf/research/Climate/Climate_Summary.pdf

Weeds: The San Juan National Forest’s Invasive Species Action Plan for FY2007-2009 identifies as priorities for treatment the following weed species that are known to occur in the Area of Focus: scentless chamomile, dames rocket, yellow toadflax, houndstongue, spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, oxeye daisy, hoary cress, Scotch thistle, musk thistle, bull thistle, and Canada thistle. Weed infestations are largely focused along trails, roads, and other disturbed areas.

Reasonably Foreseeable Economic Development:

Forest Products – Current USFS management classifies most of the non-wilderness, non-Piedra Management Area USFS lands within the Area of Focus as “suitable” or “tentatively suitable for timber harvest.” Under *the San Juan Public Lands 2007 Draft Land Management Plan*, some of these lands would shift from “suitable” to “tentatively suitable”. Land within designated wilderness and within the Piedra Area is not available for timber production.

Oil, Gas, and Mineral development – The Weminuche Wilderness and the Piedra Area are withdrawn from mineral entry, including oil and gas leasing. There is one privately owned patented mining claim (the East Medicine Mine, approximately 151 acres in the Piedra Area) and 14 unpatented mining claims within the Area of Focus.

There is no oil and gas production within the Area of Focus. Generally speaking, the lower portion of the Area of Focus, lying west and south of Little Sand Creek, is judged to have no potential for Oil and gas development, and much of the upper portion has only moderate potential.

Private land development – There are over 10,000 acres of private land within the Area of Focus. These lands are currently managed for ranching and recreation. Landowners have protected several properties under conservation easements to limit development in the future. Finding potable water may require deep wells, which are costly. In addition, the Upper Piedra District resolution is fairly restrictive for development.

Commercial outfitting (fishing, hunting, horseback riding, kayaking etc.) – Commercial outfitters require a permit to operate on USFS lands. There are about 21 permitted outfitters and guides within the Area of Focus. There is very limited potential for increasing the number of outfitters and guides (O/G's) to be permitted in the Area of Focus.

In the 1990's the San Juan completed a "Capacity Study" for O/G's across the San Juan. The capacity study separated the forest into "compartments" and then determined a "number of days" within each compartment. A percentage of days were allocated to commercial activities and a percentage of days were allocated to public recreation. Within the 16 compartments of the Area of Focus, essentially all days have been allocated to commercial O/G's to do specific activities.

The main way a non-permitted O/G can obtain a permit is to apply for a vacated permit when an existing permittee sells their business (permits cannot be sold). The selling of the business would create capacity and if the buyer (applicant) met FS criteria they may be issued a permit.

Most of the capacity study focused on hunting activities. There has been a demand for non-hunting activities (e.g. mountain biking tours). In order to permit these activities, the SJNF needs to conduct a needs assessment. If a legitimate need is warranted, an open competitive process would be used to permit the activities (Source: USFS Pagosa District).

Livestock grazing – Most of the Area is available for livestock use. Livestock owners require a permit to graze on public lands. There are 15 Cattle and Horse allotments (14 Active, 1 Vacant) that fall either entirely or partially within the Area of Focus. Nine are completely within the watershed, while portions of 6 others cross into other watersheds. Three of these are managed by the Columbine District. There are 6 Sheep and Goat allotments, all of which are closed due to proximity to the wild bighorn sheep population. Four of these allotments are completely within the watershed, with portions of 2 crossing into other watersheds. All are managed by the Pagosa District.

Ski Areas – There is little to no potential for ski area development in the Area of Focus.

Transportation – There are forest roads and county roads within the Area of Focus. The Piedra Road is a very heavily used Forest Service Road. There is some potential for new roads to be constructed in areas outside of the Weminuche Wilderness and Piedra Area. Lots of new social trails are being built to get to the river or to see the river canyon (especially by the headwaters

near Williams Creek). The San Juan National Forest is currently conducting a travel management planning process for the Turkey Springs landscape. A similar process for the Beaver Meadows landscape has been completed.

Utility Corridors and Telecommunication Sites – There are no telecommunication sites located on public lands within the Area of Focus. There are electrical transmission lines serving the private lands within the Area. There are no designated or proposed utility corridors within the Area. There are currently no major oil or gas pipelines existing or proposed within the focus area.

Maps: refer to the map at this link: http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/piedra/pdf/Piedra%20Wild_Roadless.pdf

