Integrated Water Management Planning in the Middle Colorado River

To improve security for all water uses in the Middle Colorado River by understanding and protecting existing uses, meeting shortages, and maintaining healthy riverine ecosystems in the face of increased future demand and climate uncertainty.

Recreation Focus Group Meeting
December 13, 2018
Meeting Summary

I. Attendees.
Brian Smith – Parks and Recreation Director, Glenwood
Joe Mollica – River enthusiast
Derek Wingfield – Community Development, Parachute
Tom Whitmore – Parks and Recreation Director – Rifle
Richard VanGytenbeek – Trout Unlimited
Kimberly Leitzinger – Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM Colorado River Field Office
Seth Mason, Lotic Hydrological
Quinn Donnelly – River Restoration Inc.
Laurie Rink – Middle Colorado Watershed Council

II. Discussion – What Kind of Planning Outputs could Benefit the Middle River?
The following questions were asked: What kind of river recreational improvements can be done to help growing communities between Glenwood and De Beque? What are the limitations now and in future? What are communities doing now in terms of planning for river use?

- Parachute developing island they acquired. Will have tent camping. Currently run TOP venue to rent tubes, kayaks, rafts to families seeking a water-oriented experience.
- Glenwood is approaching a closure to its RICD (recreational in-channel diversion) application with the state. Not yet clear where structure will be constructed, but they are currently evaluating the confluence area (Colorado and Roaring Fork). They are currently planning improvements at the existing whitewater park (the wave), including better parking for access. Improvements at Two Rivers Park are scheduled for 2019 – shoreline improvements and expansion of the boat ramp to three lanes. Improvements have been made at Veltus Park and to the riparian area near Three-Mile Creek. City Council is considering the adoption of riparian setbacks. The triangle area at the confluence is undergoing development (site of old wastewater plant) and may include additional river access.
- Rifle is considering a water park in the future. It’s not currently in any of their plans.
- Better access needed overall. Access is currently sprinkled between sometimes long stretches of private land.
- A River Guide is needed to illustrate public versus private land – lots of private land in middle section, particularly below Rifle. Also consider:
  - Camping opportunities – currently limited. Future camping planned on island at Parachute, possibly at Una Bridge on property recently acquired by CPW.
  - Georeferencing to accurately locate boundaries between public and private land.
III. Discussion – Using a Recreation Survey to Gather Input
Quinn at River Restoration shared a draft river recreation user survey to determine how people currently use the river. The following suggestions were offered:
- Ask what kind of river experience people are looking for.
- Expand the survey to include the reach from Glenwood to De Beque.
- Consider all user groups, including fall and winter waterfowl hunters.
- Based on BLM’s experience with surveys, including those used for Wild & Scenic evaluations:
  - Catch people at access points
  - Provide on-line opportunity to complete
  - Advertise in newspapers
  - Use the wording “citizen science” rather than survey
- Have cities and other advertise on websites and social media
- Solicit for interns to conduct surveys
- Provide a scanner code at access points for survey by phone
Quinn will send another draft version of the survey to the focus group for additional review and feedback.

IV. Mental Model Exercise
Seth is working with each of the focus groups to develop a “mental model” of different sectors of water use in the middle river. The purpose of the exercise is to explore relationships between water use, ecosystem health and the various good and services that humans derive from river-related goods and services, introducing our individual perceptions around the value of these goods and services. Results from all of the focus groups will be combined in a larger model. This model will serve as an important tool as the group moves deeper into the assessment and project/program prioritization process of integrated water management planning. The focus group dove into the exercise, developing a web of relationships around the topic of recreation.

IV. Next Meeting
The group will be reconvened in another month or two to review the aggregated results of the mental model. Laurie will send out a poll for scheduling when the time is appropriate.