

Statewide Water Supply Initiative – Phase II
Technical Roundtable – Environmental and Recreational Needs
Pilot Project: Mapping Environmental and Recreational Attributes

Proposal: The SWSI Phase II technical roundtable is charged with identifying the environmental and recreational attributes associated with streams and rivers in Colorado, with the goal of identifying ‘priorities’ for conservation, protection, and restoration. As part of this effort, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy of Colorado, and other interested stakeholders will undertake a demonstration project to map river-related attributes in the State of Colorado. This project will be completed by May 15, 2006, for review by the entire SWSI Phase II TRT on Environment and Recreation.

Purpose: To develop an objective, scientifically-based blueprint of the environmental and recreational attributes associated with rivers and streams in Colorado, in order to provide:

- A shared and objective basis for discussing environmental and recreational priorities;
- A framework for evaluating allocation of resources for protection of streams and rivers;
- A common basis among diverse agency, state, and resource-user partners for developing water supply alternatives that support and sustain the natural environment while providing a clean water supply to Colorado – the purpose of the SWSI.

Tasks:

1. Identify river-dependent attributes that should be included in this assessment (see Table 1).
2. Assemble available data layers, focusing on replicable, science-based assessments and criteria.
3. Use a GIS system to map river system attributes in the major basins of the State of Colorado.
4. Identify next steps, which could include an overlay of water development pressures and/or a project to ‘quantify’ variable flow needs to support key attributes.
5. Recognize shortcomings, gaps, and limitations – i.e. caveats.

Caveats:

- This assessment will not identify all attributes/values/priorities for protection of streams;
- Places not included in this assessment may have important natural or recreational attributes;
- This assessment is not intended as a binding or regulatory tool, but only to inform resource protection and water management decision making.
- This assessment is not a final product, only a pilot demonstration.

Conclusion: Until we develop and share a better understanding of the environmental and recreational attributes for streams and rivers in Colorado, we will not be able to propose or evaluate water supply projects that would sustain those resources. (And we will continue to react to water development proposals rather than incorporate the natural environment into smarter water supply options.) SWSI Phase II is an ideal opportunity to develop a demonstration project to address this information gap. If this demonstration project proves successful, we recommend that the State maintain a concerted effort to map environmental and recreational attributes associated with rivers and streams across the entire state of Colorado.

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Table 1 – Environmental and Recreational Attributes

	Values	SWSI Phase I	SWSI Phase II Focus	Potential Future Work
ENVIRONMENTAL	Native Fish	Recovery Programs/Cons Plans *CPM, HBC, RBS, BT *Native cutthroats (GB) *Arkansas Darter	State Recovery/Conservation plans *FMS, BHS, RTC *Native cutthroat (CR, RG)	*NRD, SRD, Lake Chub *Suckermouth, Brassy, Plains Minnows; *RG Sucker and Chub *Colorado Wildlife Conservation Strategy
	Amphibians	Boreal Toad critical habitat		
	Birds/Riparian Obligates		Audubon Important Bird Areas	Species Conservation Plans (crane, flycatcher, tern, plover)
	Riparian Areas/Wetlands		CNHP riparian/wetland/fen/spring inventories	
	Sport Fishery	Gold Medal fisheries	Streams/rivers that meet GM criteria but are not yet designated by Wildlife Commission	Above average/highly valued fisheries
	Instream Flows	CWCB Instream Flow Reaches	CWCB ISF Work Plan (based on biological or management needs) CWCB Water Short and Truncated Reaches	
	Water Quality	303(d) list (Impaired and M&E list)		
RECREATIONAL	Fishing		TU inventories State Wildlife Areas and DOW leases	
	Rafting/Boating		American Whitewater CO River Outfitter RICDs	
	Birding and Watchable Wildlife		Audubon CDOW Watchable Wildlife	