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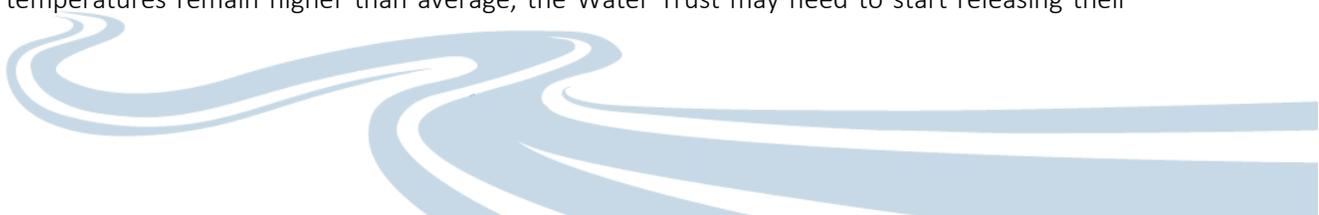
Contract for Reservoir Releases to Bolster Yampa River Flows

Steamboat Springs, Co., (July 8, 2021) – On Thursday July 8th, Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (UYWCD) contracted the purchase of 1000 acre-feet of water in Stagecoach Reservoir by the Colorado Water Trust (Water Trust) with an option to purchase an additional 1000 acre-feet if needed. The Water Trust's purchase will improve river health during the exceptional drought conditions across the Yampa River basin this year. The initial purchase cost is \$45,560. The Water Trust raised well over \$100,000 to support the purchase of stored water in Stagecoach and Elkhead Reservoirs as needed in 2021, including a \$90,585 grant from the Yampa River Fund.

Since 2012, the Water Trust has purchased and released over 12,000 acre-feet of water into the Yampa River from Stagecoach Reservoir at a cost of \$496,104. The Water Trust releases help maintain healthy streamflow and water temperature from Stagecoach Reservoir downstream through the City of Steamboat Springs.

"Our team is hard at work collaborating with partners and devising solutions to support the Yampa River this year. We are grateful the Yampa basin community understands that a rising tide lifts all boats. Each year, across the state, the need for this kind of innovation and cooperation increases as our water supply is more stressed," Andy Schultheiss, Colorado Water Trust Executive Director.

Exceptional drought conditions this year led to flows far below average and a closure on the Yampa River below Stagecoach early in the year. The inflow at Stagecoach Reservoir fell below 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) in late May. The historical average inflow for that time of year is over 100 cfs. As flows continue to drop and temperatures remain higher than average, the Water Trust may need to start releasing their





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purchased water earlier than in past years. UYWCD has already voluntarily released over 1500 acre-feet of its stored water to support Yampa River flows this year.

“The amount of collaboration required to keep the river flowing during dry years is significant. We are fortunate to have so many people dedicated to navigating the legal framework and building partnerships to release water into the Yampa River system that benefits all users and the environment. We expected drought conditions this year, but to see drastically low flows, high temperatures, river closures and wildfires so early further highlights the importance of securing funding and legal mechanisms for water releases long before they are needed,” says Holly Kirkpatrick, UYWCD Public Information and External Affairs Manager.

The Water Trust and UYWCD are working together on longer-term solutions to support the Yampa River during low flows. The Water Trust and UYWCD intend to utilize Colorado House Bill 20-1157, passed in 2020, by filing a joint application to the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s (CWCB) Instream Flow and Natural Lake Level Program. Effective March 2021, amended rules governing the program created additional tools for the temporary loan of water rights for instream flow use, including the ability to further support the natural environment via loan renewals for up to three 10-year periods and potentially increased flow rates. Renewable loans through the program could allow environmental releases to bolster flows in the Yampa River for up to 15 out of 30 years if needed. Legislation previously only allowed for loaned water to be used for instream flow in 3 out of 10 years, and were not renewable.

Essential to the project’s success in 2021 are Colorado Water Trust’s dedicated donors: The Yampa River Fund, Yampa Valley Community Foundation, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, and individual donors as well as key project partners: The City of Steamboat Springs; Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District; Catamount Development, Inc.; Catamount Metropolitan District; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Colorado Water Conservation Board; and the Colorado Division of Water Resources. Without these generous donations and the collaborative work of numerous local and statewide entities, water releases to support the health of the Yampa River would not be possible.

