



### COLORADO WATER TRUST

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## Reservoir Releases to Bolster Yampa River Flows

June 9, 2020, Steamboat Springs, Colorado -- Routt and Moffat County are already facing extreme and exceptional drought conditions moving into the summer months. Although conditions could still change, the Yampa River is expected to be in critical need of more water this year. At stake are the economies of the counties' farmers and ranchers, the ecology and fish of the Yampa River and its tributaries, the local recreation industry that depends on healthy flows, such as fly-fishing and tubing businesses, not to mention the potential effects of wildfires, which have already started in surrounding areas.

In response to the current conditions, Colorado Water Trust (CWT) is preparing to lease water from Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (UYWCD) to support the Yampa River this summer and fall when the river drops below healthy levels and water temperatures spike. CWT will collaborate closely with local partners to manage releases together to ensure we are doing all we can to keep the Yampa River flowing strong. CWT continues to fundraise in order to maximize our ability to purchase water from UYWCD and release it from Stagecoach Reservoir when needed.

Since 2012, when CWT began our project on the Yampa River, we have worked without a long-term mechanism for streamflow restoration on the river. We are hoping, in 2021, that this may change. A new statute, Colorado HB20-1157, passed last year will allow water to be used for instream flow by the Colorado Water Conservation Board in 5 years out of 10, instead of the previous 3 years in 10. It also allows the partners to make an agreement for up to 3 terms, resulting in potential releases for 15 years in 30. We expect to be the first in the state of Colorado to utilize this new statute, as originally envisioned by Colorado Reps Dylan Roberts and Perry Will, and Senator Kerry Donovan.

Operation of the release project is possible thanks to a dedicated group of community partners that support Colorado Water Trust's efforts to maintain healthy flows in the Yampa River. UYWCD has worked closely with CWT over the past several months to finalize a temporary contract for releases out of Stagecoach





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Reservoir for 2021. Additionally, UYWCD and CWT are working on a long-term contract that will allow for environmental releases in accordance with HB20-1157 in the coming years. UYWCD is dedicated to working collaboratively with all its community partners to ensure a healthy river system long into the future.

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 Patagonia, 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.

*ABOUT COLORADO WATER TRUST: Colorado Water Trust is a statewide nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with partners across Colorado on restoring flow to Colorado's rivers in need using solutions that benefit both the people we work with and our rivers. Since 2001, we have restored 13.5 billion gallons of water to rivers and streams across the state.*

*Since 2012, Colorado Water Trust has worked with local partners to find solutions for boosting flows in the Yampa River when it experienced low flow conditions, which have become increasingly common due to climate change. Thanks to significant collaboration among local entities, Colorado Water Trust has restored over 12,000 acre-feet (or four billion gallons) of water to the Yampa River over the past nine years by purchasing water from Stagecoach Reservoir and ensuring its protection through the town of Steamboat Springs.*

*Also in 2020, for the first time, Colorado Water Trust purchased and released water from Elkhead Reservoir to benefit the Lower Yampa River, in addition to the Upper. Together with our partners, we took action in response to rapidly degrading conditions on the lower Yampa.*

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