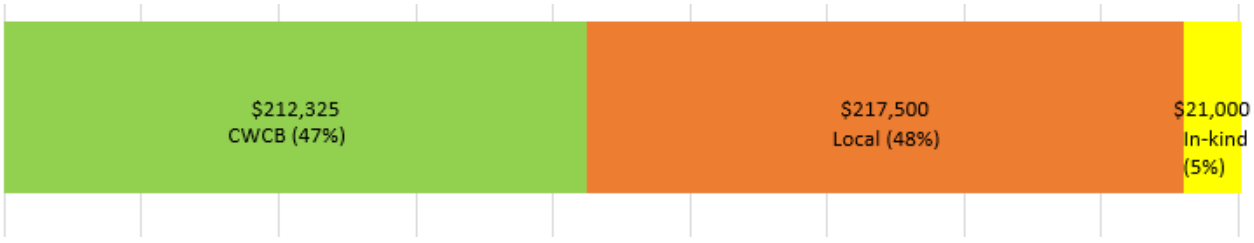
Eagle River Community Water Plan

Geographic Description: Colorado River Basin – Eagle River Watershed
Size: 970 square miles
Project Homepage: https://erwc.org/
Primary Contact: James Dilzell – Eagle River Watershed Council; dilzell@erwc.org
Planning Phase: Implement Priority Actions, Monitor Implementation Outcomes, Manage Adaptively

Project Goals:

- Complete assessment of ecosystem condition, future flow needs, and recreational use preferences.
- Agree upon planning goals to meet environmental and recreational gaps at a reach level.
- Identify and implement projects and processes that may help meet the diversity of use needs present in the basin.
- Implement a community engagement plan to elevate understanding of river health.

Overview:
About 75% of the land in the watershed is public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The Eagle River Watershed Council initiated the Eagle River Community Water Plan to develop proactive water management recommendations that anticipate changes to local hydrology and water demand. Some of the threats to water in the Eagle River watershed include population growth, climate change, and new water development projects in the headwaters.

Approach:
In the fall of 2017, Eagle River Watershed Council partnered with River Network to begin engaging stakeholders to both build support for an integrated water management plan for the watershed and better understand stakeholder concerns, constraints, and individual objectives. In 2018, Peak Facilitation was hired as the stakeholder process consultant and Lotic Hydrological as the technical consultant on the watershed assessment, tasked with working with the advisory group to assess watershed conditions and identify risks through reviewing existing data and information, characterizing hydrological regimes, and developing conceptual models, among other tasks. Upon assessment completion, Peak Facilitation assembled the stakeholders with the greatest ability to control outcomes and implement actions to collaboratively prioritize and implement projects. The stakeholder list boasts representation from 45 groups from both in and outside of the valley. In spring of 2022, project managers and stakeholders began finalizing plan objectives, actions, and recommendations. All stakeholders are motivated to participate for a variety of reasons; however, all appreciate that the completed Eagle River Community Water Plan and recommended management activities will help to balance the water needs and uses in the watershed while also protecting stream health and preparing the community for a future where additional water projects, population growth, and climate change are anticipated and expected.

Budget: $452,825