

Yampa River Health Assessment and Streamflow Management Plan

Geographic Description: Yampa-White-Green Basin – Yampa River through Steamboat Springs

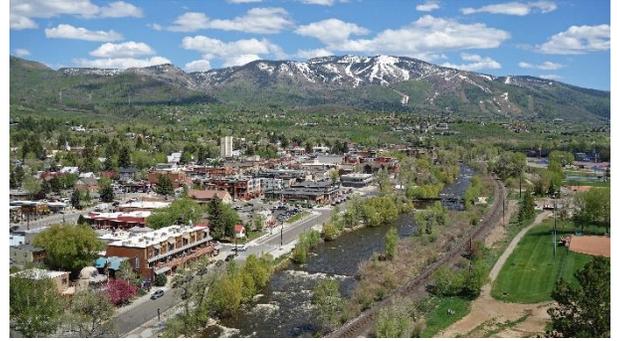
Size: 12.5 miles of the Yampa River through Steamboat Springs

Project Homepage: <https://steamboatsprings.net/587/Yampa-River-Health-Streamflow-Management>

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Planning Phase: Implement Priority Actions, Monitor Implementation Outcomes, Manage Adaptively

Status: Assessment and plan completed in 2018



Project Goals:

- Build upon existing information to develop a science-based assessment of river system conditions and needs to inform decision-making and long-term monitoring.
- Preserve and enhance healthy aquatic and riparian habitat by maintaining natural flow regimes, increasing floodplain connectivity, improving riparian vegetation, and promote native and sport fisheries.
- Meet regulatory responsibilities including water quality and temperature standards.
- Protect a strong local economy, particularly the agriculture and recreation sectors.
- Establish integrated and flexible management strategies that align with other planning efforts and strengthen resilience and sustainability.
- Foster a culture of shared stewardship of the Yampa River among stakeholders and community members.

Overview:

In 2003, the City of Steamboat Springs adopted a Yampa River Management Plan, but policy changes, subsequent management, and increasing stress necessitated an update to the plan. Stressors include significantly depleted flows and warmer stream temperatures due to the impacts of climate change and ongoing drought and increasing water demand due to population growth.

Approach and Outcomes:

The City of Steamboat Springs initiated the plan and convened an advisory committee, representing major stakeholder groups. An interdisciplinary team of scientists conducted a river health assessment that informed the development of eight management objectives to serve as specific, measurable outcomes to track over time. The final deliverable recommended 15 priority projects in the areas of streamflow management, land and stream restoration, land use and planning, and education and outreach. Two of the more innovative projects advanced by the plan are the Yampa River Fund and the Yampa River Riparian Forest Restoration Program. The Yampa River Fund is a collaborative, community-based organization dedicated to identifying and funding activities that protect water supply, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities provided by the Yampa River. The Riparian Forest Restoration Program enlists volunteers to plant native tree species along the Yampa River riparian corridor to reduce solar loading and water temperature.

Budget: \$130,935

