

Stream Management Plan Grantee Project Summary

Big Thompson River Envisioning Project

Geographic Description:

South Platte River Basin:
Mouth of the Big Thompson Canyon
to I-25

Size:

~15 river miles

Project Homepage:

<https://bigthompson.co/project/big-thompson-river-envisioning-project>

Primary Contact:

Courtney Gutman
Big Thompson Watershed Coalition
courtney.gutman@bigthompson.co

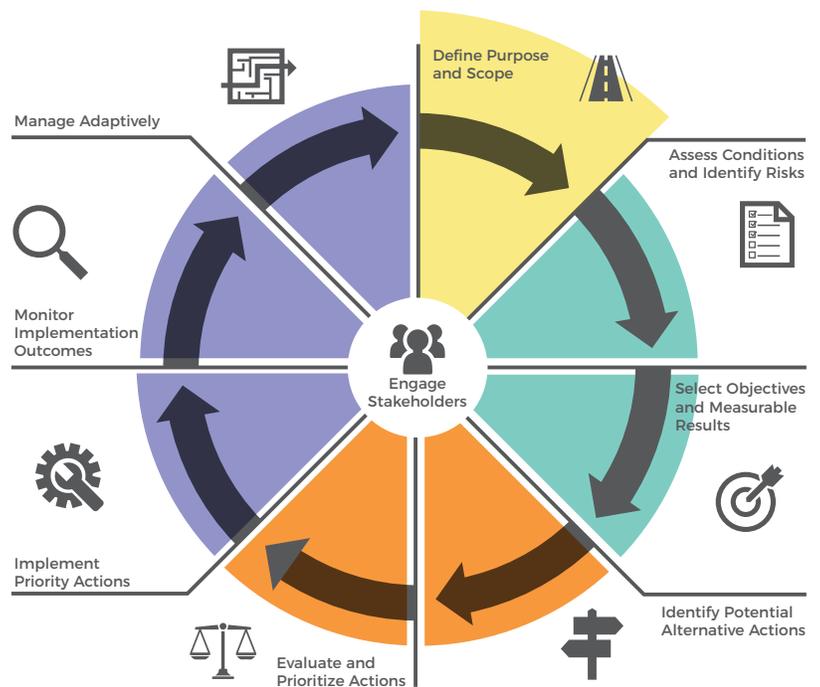
Project Timeline



Stakeholder Groups Involved in Planning Process

●	Riparian landowners
●	General public
●	Aquatic and riparian science
●	Local business and industry
●	Utilities or other water management
●	Recreation & tourism
●	Local government and land use planners

Current Planning Phase



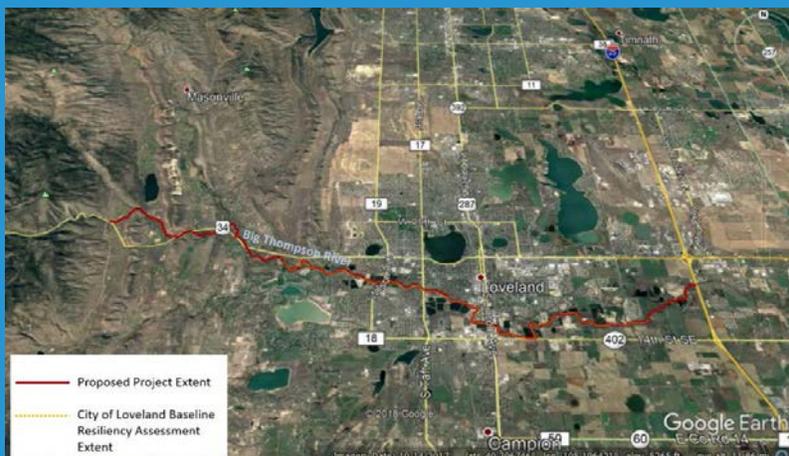
Project Goals

- Engage the general public and stakeholders in a robust process to identify common values and goals related to various water uses including agriculture, municipal, recreation, fisheries and riparian habitat
- Assess river function by analyzing existing information and new data as needed to identify key issues, their locations and causes
- Assess the impacts of future population growth, development, and climate and weather changes on water availability, river health, and user needs and identify opportunities to mitigate impacts
- Identify and prioritize voluntary, multi-purpose projects and actions that will meet collective needs and values and protect or enhance the Big Thompson River corridor

Overview

Geography:

The Big Thompson flows from its headwaters in Rocky Mountain National Park, east from the Continental Divide to its confluence with the South Platte River.



Users:

The Big Thompson watershed is important for Loveland and the surrounding community, for the many Front Range communities who obtain their water supply from the Big Thompson River, and the millions that visit the river corridor each year on their way to Rocky Mountain National Park. The river supports recreational trout fishing, wildlife and the local tourist economy, as well as municipal, agricultural and industrial water uses.

Need for planning:

In September 2013, catastrophic flooding hit the watershed. In the aftermath, projects repaired infrastructure and enhanced floodplains. Among them was the Big Thompson River Restoration Master Plan, which covered more than 70 river miles and provided a high-level assessment and guide for flood recovery projects. Another was the City of Loveland's Big Thompson River Corridor Master Plan, covering nine river miles. Both plans assessed river function and land use to varying extents, but neither assessed flow needs. Given the variety of water uses and projected changes to land use and hydrology, a plan that balances river health with water users' needs will ensure that the communities and wildlife that rely on the Big Thompson River can continue to do so. The Big Thompson River Envisioning Plan will build on these two existing plans, integrate data collected and assessments conducted, create a more comprehensive baseline assessment of river health and water user needs, evaluate future impacts of growth and climate change, and build a more detailed implementation plan for priority multi-purpose projects.

Approach

The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition and an advisory committee will lead this stream management planning effort by engaging community members and stakeholders to create a shared vision for improving the Big Thompson River. Tasks include:

1. Community outreach and stakeholder engagement:

Convene an advisory committee to guide the project, develop a strategy to involve stakeholders through community meetings, focus groups, and interviews. Based on feedback, refine the planning efforts' objectives and scope of work, establish on-going education programming for community members, and develop a web-based resource to house assessment information and educational materials.

2. Current and projected hydrology characterization:

Summarize how water is stored, diverted, consumed, and returned to the river, and characterize current and potential future flows in the study area. Assess potential future demand increases for municipal, agricultural and recreational water users and potential impacts to the system.

3. River health and benefits assessment:

Assess existing ecological conditions and characterize the system's ability to deliver ecosystem goods and services to the local community.

4. Irrigation and other infrastructure assessment:

Inventory a maximum of 10 in-river structures to document the type of infrastructure, condition/deficiencies, and opportunities for retrofit/repair.



5. Future conditions, growth and development:

Produce a technical memorandum which assesses how future infrastructure, land use, water management and use, and water quality changes could impact river health variables and user needs.

6. Information synthesis and reporting:

Synthesize all assessments into a final report characterizing the capacity of the river to deliver desired goods and services to the community now and into the future. Identify next steps for the River Envisioning Project.

7. Action strategies and implementation plan:

Prioritize threats for water users and river health and identify action strategies to make measurable progress on priority issues.

Budget

Contributing Entity	Amount and Form of Match
CWCB Watershed Restoration Fund	\$146,440 cash
South Platte Roundtable	\$40,000 cash
New Belgium grant	\$2,500 cash
Northern Water	\$5,000 cash
City of Loveland	\$15,000 cash
City of Greeley	\$10,000 cash
Larimer County	\$5,000 cash
Northern Water	\$20,280 In-kind
Big Thompson Watershed Forum	\$49,800 in-kind
Total	\$294,020



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