

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Wolf Creek Reservoir

Project Introduction for the Northwest Resource Advisory Council – September 15, 2022





Briefing Outline

- Brief History of the Project
- Wolf Creek Reservoir
 - High-Level Overview of the Proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir
 - Geographic Context & ESA-Listed Fish
 - Plan Conformance
- Permitting Process
 - Required Permits/Approvals
 - Phased Approach
 - BLM's Process for an EIS-level RMP Amendment
- Communication
 - Tribes & Cooperating Agencies
 - Public Communication Plan

BLM would appreciate the RAC's input on whether to provide any pre-NOI opportunities for public involvement





Brief History of the Project



Brief History of the Project

Kenney Reservoir was built in 1984 and originally provided 13,800 acre-feet (AF) of water storage but is silting in at an average rate of 300 AF/yr which is reducing recreation use and water storage.

Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District (RBWCD) manages Kenney Reservoir and is the applicant for the Wolf Creek Reservoir.





Brief History of the Project

RBWCD
begins
feasibility
studies

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022



Brief History of the Project

RBWCD
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2013

2014

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2016

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2019

2020

2021

2022

RBWCD files
application for
water rights
(90K AF)

The water rights application was for 90,000 AF for use at either one of two potential reservoir sites:

- “off-channel” Wolf Creek site
- “on-channel” White River site



Brief History of the Project

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White River
Storage
Feasibility
Study

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2016

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2022

RBWCD files
application for
water rights
(90K AF)

2015 Feasibility Study considered three alternatives:

- Constructing a new reservoir in a new location (23 potential dam sites)
- Expand Kenney Reservoir
- Dredge Kenney Reservoir



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RBWCD files
application for
water rights
(90K AF)

Stipulation
with BLM

Stipulation between BLM and RBWCD filed in Water Court

- Authorization to use BLM-managed lands requires a right-of-way
- BLM must conduct evaluation under NEPA
- Waiver of takings claim (if BLM were to deny ROW)



Brief History of the Project

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White River
Storage
Feasibility
Study

Phase 2
Feasibility
Study

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2021

2022

RBWCD files
application
for water
rights (90k AF)

Stipulation
with BLM

Phase 2 Feasibility Study

- Focused on Wolf Creek and White River reservoir sites
- Evaluated different sizes at each site – 20k AF and 90k AF



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Phase 2
Feasibility
Study

Conditional
water right
decree
(66,720 AF)

2013

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2015

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2017

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2021

2022

RBWCD files
application
for water
rights (90k AF)

Stipulation
with BLM

Conditional Water Right

- Includes option for either Wolf Creek or White River reservoir sites
- 66,720 AF (annual releases limited to 7,000 AF; 20,720 AF for mitigation)
- Municipal use, augmentation, mitigation, hydropower (in conjunction with other uses), in-reservoir uses for recreation, fish, and wildlife habitat



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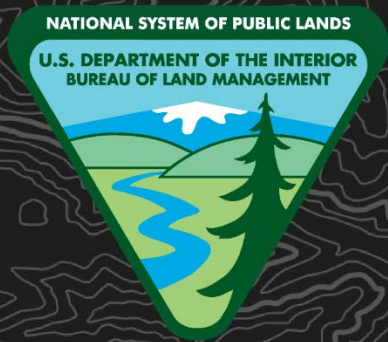
RBWCD files
application
for water
rights (90k AF)

Stipulation
with BLM

RBWCD submits
SF299 ROW
application to BLM

ROW application

- Includes only the Wolf Creek site



Wolf Creek Reservoir Proposal

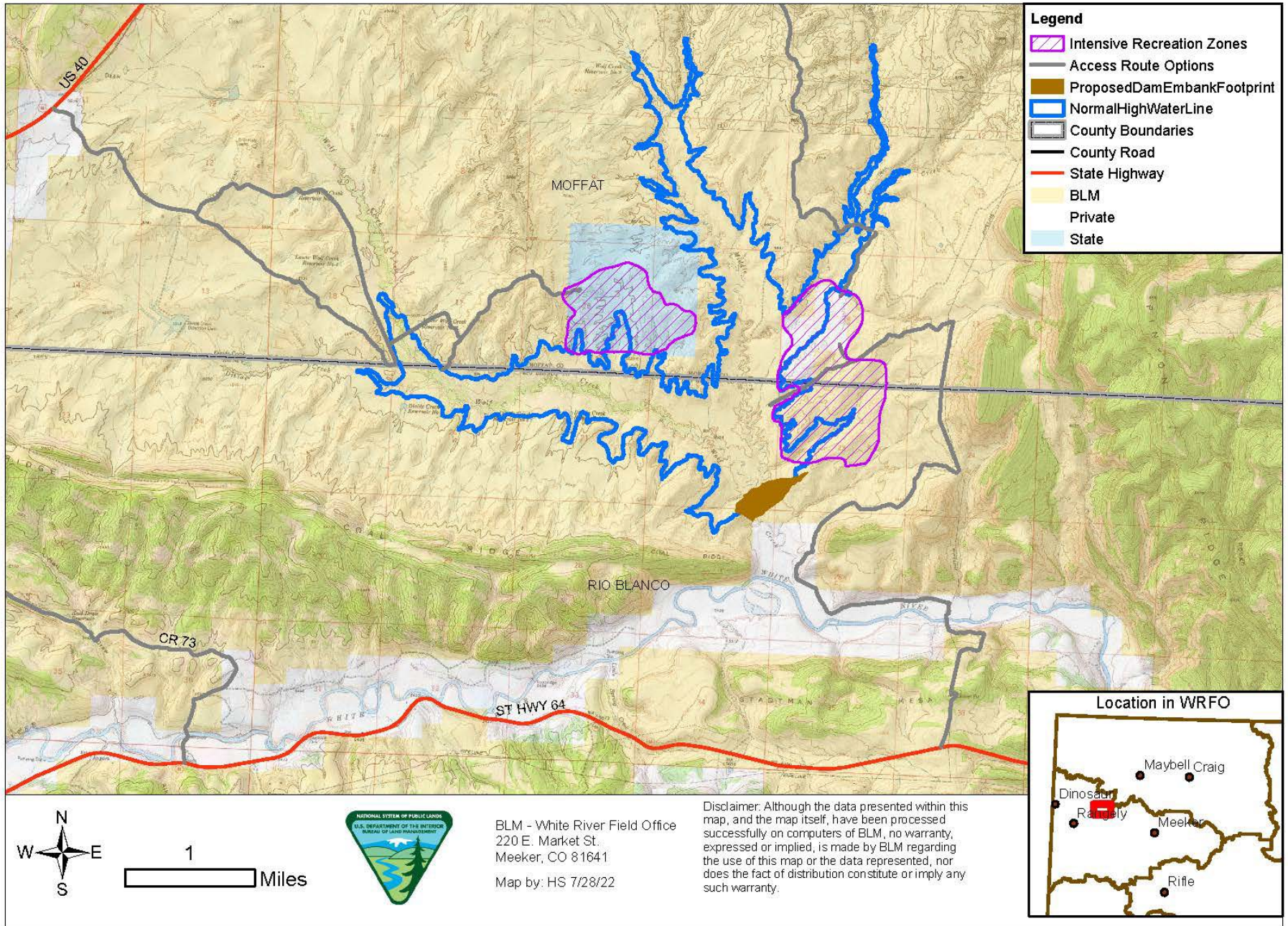


White River Regional Water Supply Project

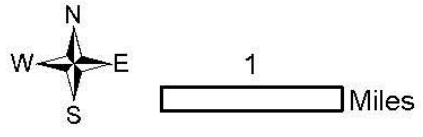
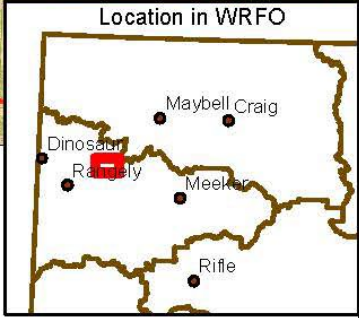
Proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir

- 66,720 AF reservoir with 2,031 surface acres
- 115-foot-high embankment dam
- 400-foot-wide excavated earth spillway
- 10-ft diameter steel outlet work conduit through the maximum section of the dam; discharge into stilling basin and concrete discharge channel
- Pump station and 8-ft diameter steel pipeline to fill reservoir
- Temporary and permanent access road improvements
- Development of recreation facilities

Proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir Site



- Legend**
- Intensive Recreation Zones
 - Access Route Options
 - Proposed Dam Embankment Footprint
 - Normal High Water Line
 - County Boundaries
 - County Road
 - State Highway
 - BLM
 - Private
 - State



BLM - White River Field Office
 220 E. Market St.
 Meeker, CO 81641
 Map by: HS 7/28/22

Disclaimer: Although the data presented within this map, and the map itself, have been processed successfully on computers of BLM, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made by BLM regarding the use of this map or the data represented, nor does the fact of distribution constitute or imply any such warranty.

Wolf Creek



General Location of the Reservoir



Dam Location



White River





Size Compared to Other Reservoirs

Name	Location	Water Storage (acre-feet, AF)	Surface Size (Acres)
Rio Blanco Lake ³	Rio Blanco County, CO	1,036	108
Leavitt Reservoir Expansion ²	Big Horn County, WY	6,606	194
Lake Avery ³	Rio Blanco County, CO	7,658	245
Alkali Creek Reservoir ²	Big Horn County, WY	7,994	294
Rifle Gap	Garfield County, CO	12,168	359
Elkhead Reservoir	Moffat and Rout, CO	13,700	900
Kenney Reservoir ³	Rio Blanco County, CO	13,800	650
Steamboat Lake	Routt County, CO	23,000	1,053
Vega Reservoir	Mesa County, CO	33,800	900
Stagecoach Reservoir	Routt County, CO	36,400	765
Wolford Mountain Reservoir	Grand County, CO	66,000	1,550
Wolf Creek Reservoir (Proposed)	Rio Blanco County, CO	66,720	2,031
Ridgeway State Park	Ouray County, CO	94,100	940
Green Mountain Reservoir ¹	Grand County, CO	153,000	2,125
Dillon Reservoir ¹	Summit County, CO	257,300	3,233
Blue Mesa Reservoir ¹	Gunnison County, CO	940,800	9,180

¹ Blue Mesa, Dillon, and Green Mountain are among the 10 largest reservoirs in Colorado. Blue Mesa is the largest in Colorado.

² Alkali Creek & Leavitt Expansion are the most recently completed reservoir EISs by BLM nationally.

³ Current reservoirs along the White River in Colorado include Lake Avery, Rio Blanco Lake, and Kenney Reservoir.



Colorado River Basin

- Confluence of the White River and Green River is in UT
- White River and Green River are tributary to the Colorado River
- US Bureau of Reclamation will be a Cooperating Agency due to their Special Expertise in operation of reservoirs and cumulative effects within the Colorado River Basin



Threatened & Endangered Fish



- Colorado pikeminnow
- Endangered
- Designated critical habitat is White River & 100yr floodplain below Rio Blanco Lake to Green River
- Occupied habitat below Kenney Reservoir (and downstream into the Green River)



- Bonytail
- Endangered
- Designated critical habitat (DCH) in Green River



- Razorback Sucker
- Endangered
- Occupied habitat in Green River & lower White River
- DCH in Green River

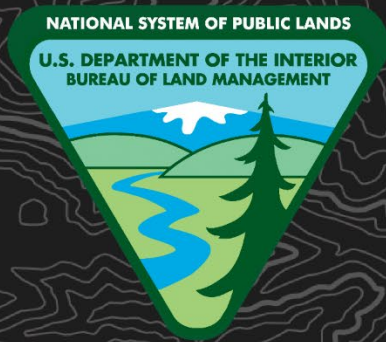


- Humpback Chub
- Threatened
- Occupied habitat in portions of Green River



BLM's Plan Conformance Issues

- Visual Resources:
 - VRM Class II – Allowed Level of Change: low; activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer (overlaps portion of the dam)
 - VRM Class III – Allowed Level of Change: moderate; activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer
- Greater Sage-Grouse
 - Priority Habitat : ROW Exclusion Area for Major ROWs
- Lands with Wilderness Characteristics: ROW Exclusion Area
 - 1997 RMP is silent
 - 2015 Oil & Gas RMPA manages Coal Ridge as ROW Exclusion Area
 - 2021 Travel Mgmt RMPA purposely modified non-motorized boundary to avoid proposed reservoir area (requested by RBC)

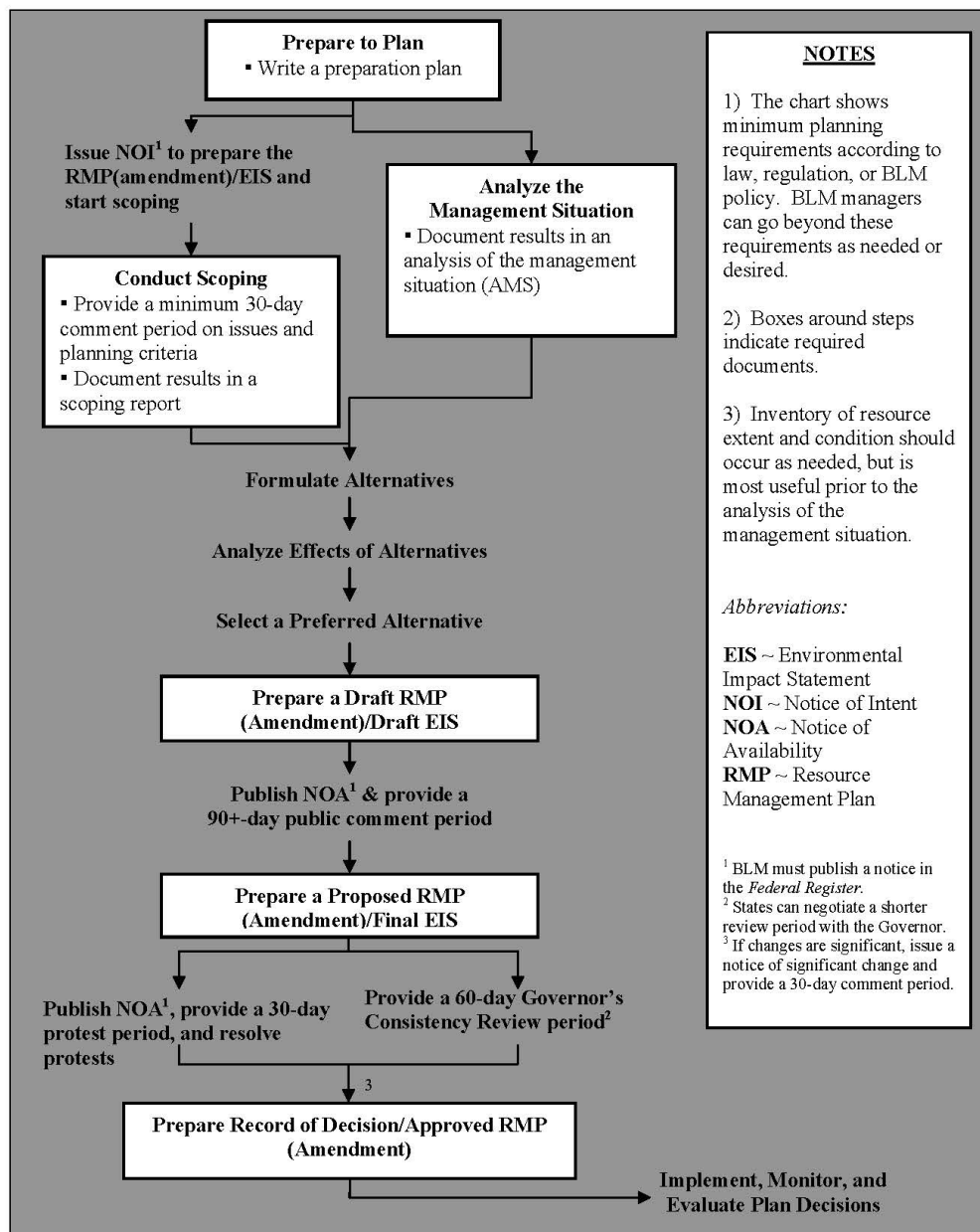


Permitting Process



BLM Process

- Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)
- Consistency with local land use plans (RMP amendment)
- Longer public comment on the Draft EIS (90 days vs 45 days)
- Administrative remedies prior to Record of Decision
 - Protest to BLM Director
 - Governor’s Consistency Review
 - BLM HQ must resolve protests before SD can approve ROD





Other Agency Requirements

Federal

- USACE – Individual Permit (section 404 Clean Water Act)
- EPA – section 404 permit oversight; reviews DEIS
- FWS – consultation under section 7 ESA

State

- CDPHE – water quality permit (section 401 Clean Water Act)
- CPW – fish and wildlife mitigation plan
- State Land Board – use of state property
- SHPO – consultation under section 106 NHPA

Local

- No local 1041 approvals required in RBC or Moffat County



Phased Approach

Pre-NOI

- **Project Initiation**
(Cost Recovery, Selecting Contractors)
- **Coordination with Other Govt Agencies**
(Cooperating Agencies & Native American Tribes)
- **Purpose & Need and Alternatives (Go/No-Go)**
- **Analysis of the Management Situation**
(Issues, Methods, Data)

RMPA/EIS

- **NOI & Public Scoping**
(Issues, Alternatives, Analysis Methods)
- **Draft EIS**
(Analysis of Impacts of Various Alternatives)
- **Final EIS**
(Response to Public Review of Draft EIS)
- **Consultations**
(Tribal, NHPA, ESA)
- **Record of Decision**

Post-ROD

- Only necessary if BLM approves ROW*
- **Issue ROW Grant**
- **Construction Plan of Development**
- **Notice to Proceed**
(Tasks Included in ROD)
- **MOU for Construction Monitoring Contractor**



Purpose & Need

- Purpose and Need Statement
 - Federal agency's need for action or decision to be made (BLM and USACE)
 - Determines the scope of the EIS and reasonable alternatives
- Components
 - ROW grant
 - Respond to FLPMA ROW application
 - Amendments to the White River RMP
 - Components of the RMP that the project proposal does not conform with
 - Other potential changes in management to address resource conflicts
 - USACE permitting process
 - Specific purposes and quantified water needs



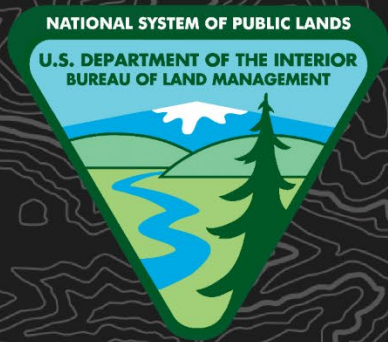
Alternatives

Alternatives To Be Analyzed in the EIS

- Applicant's Proposal for Wolf Creek Reservoir
- No Action Alternative (Deny ROW Application)

Conceptually, other potential alternatives could include:

- Modify current Wolf Creek proposal (e.g., smaller size)
- Alternate location for a reservoir
- Multiple smaller reservoirs
- Expanding an existing reservoir
- Conservation as an alternate means of water supply



Communication



List of Potential Cooperating Agencies

Federal

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation



List of Potential Cooperating Agencies

State of Colorado

- CO Dept. Public Health & Env.
 - Water Quality Control Division
- CO Dept. Natural Resources
 - Division of Water Resources
 - Colorado Parks & Wildlife
 - State Land Board
 - Water Conservation Board
- CO Dept of Agriculture

State of Utah

- UT Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office
 - Division of Water Resources
 - Division of Water Rights
 - Division of Wildlife Resources



List of Potential Cooperating Agencies

Local Government

- Rio Blanco County
- Moffat County
- Uintah County
- Town of Rangely

Special Districts

(Political Subdivisions of the State)

- Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District (Applicant)
- Yellow Jacket Water Conservation District
- Colorado River District
- White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts
- Western Rio Blanco County Recreation and Metropolitan District
- Colorado River Authority of Utah
- Uintah County Utah Water Conservancy District



Potential Conflicts of Interest

- BLM working with Regional Solicitor for guidance to include in MOUs regarding communication/participation
- Potential perception of conflict of interest for agencies that have either provided funding or entered into written augmentation agreements
 - Rio Blanco County
 - Town of Rangely
 - Colorado River Water Conservation District
 - Yellow Jacket Water Conservation District
- Applicant is a special district (government entity)



Eligible CAs – More likely to participate via section 106 process?

Federal

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

State

- History Colorado (SHPO)

Tribes WRFO Typically Consults

- Ute Indian Tribe
- Southern Ute
- Ute Mountain Ute
- Eastern Shoshone
- Hopi Tribe
- Pueblo of Jemez

Additional Tribes the BLM may consult with regarding the Green River

Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation; Comanche Nation; Crow Tribe of Montana; Navajo Nation; Ohkay Owingeh; Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah (Cedar Band, Indian Peaks Band, Kanosh Band, Koosharem Band, Shivwits Band); Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris, Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Taos, Tesuque, Zia; San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe; Santo Domingo Pueblo; Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation; Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation; Zuni Tribe of the Zuni Reservation



Public Involvement

BLM's Required Public Involvement for RMPA/EIS Process

- **Notice of Intent – 30 days to submit scoping comments**
 - *Focus on range of alternatives, issue identification, analysis methods*
 - *Publication of NOI starts 2-yr timeframe to issue ROD*
- **Draft RMPA/EIS – 90 days to submit comments on DEIS**
 - *Focus on comparison of alternatives through impacts analysis*
 - *Substantial changes to the DEIS could require a SEIS*
- **Proposed RMPA/Final EIS – 30 days to protest**
 - *Formal process to address unresolved concerns about process*

RBWCD Previous Public Outreach Efforts

- 2015 Feasibility Study – public meetings in 2014/2015
- 2018 Phase 2 Study – public meetings in 2017/2018



Input from the NW RAC

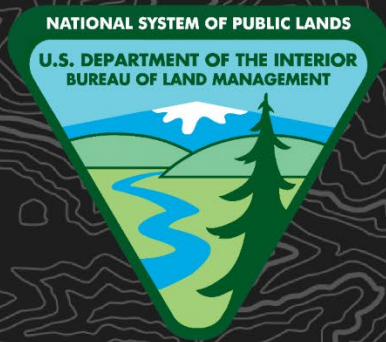
Should the BLM provide an additional opportunity for public involvement **prior** to the Notice of Intent?

Considerations in Support

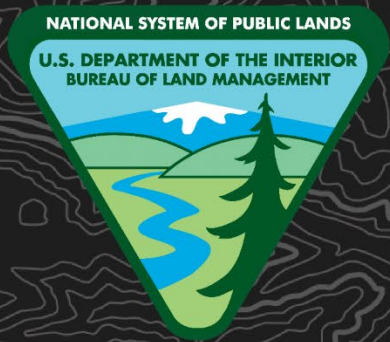
- This is a complex project. Pre-NOI public involvement can help eliminate surprises post-NOI and lead to a smoother planning process. (NOI starts 2-yr schedule to issue a ROD.)
- There may be groups (other than government agencies) with expertise that may not be fully captured by Cooperating Agencies.
- Public meetings organized by RBWCD were most recently held in 2018 and may not have included as many people as the BLM would reach out to.

Considerations Against

- Additional pre-NOI public involvement would result in additional costs to the applicant and require additional time.
- Engaging Cooperating Agencies pre-NOI would help to identify issues.
- The RBWCD conducted numerous public meetings during development of their feasibility studies.



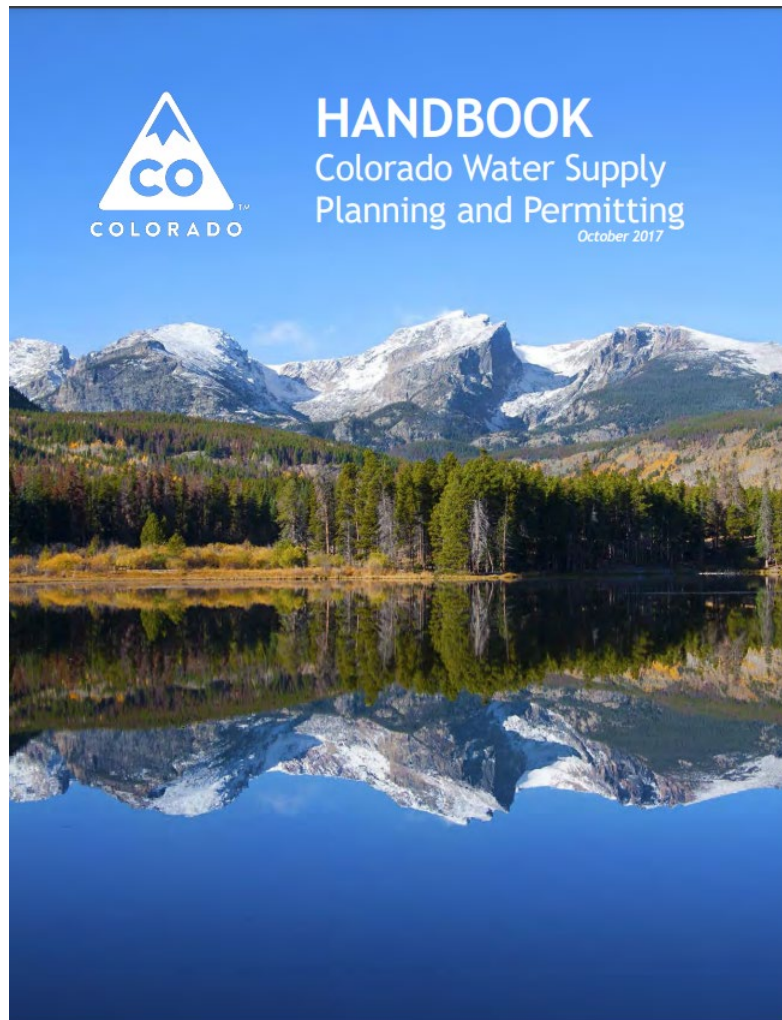
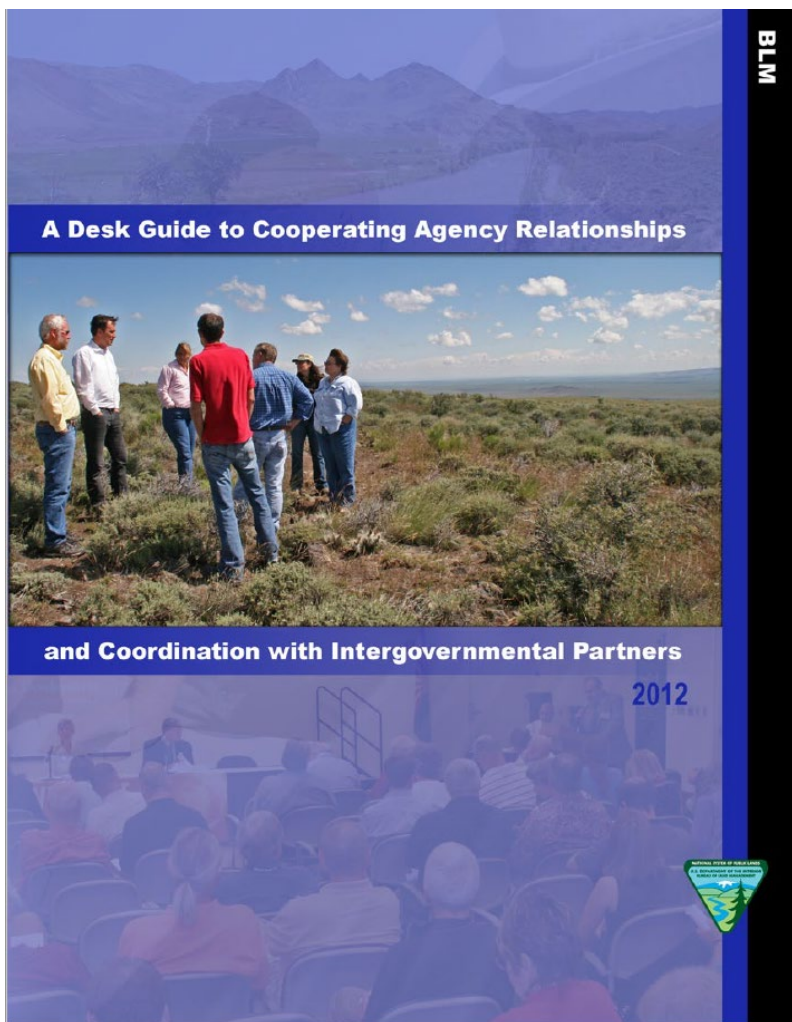
Questions and Discussion



Reference Material

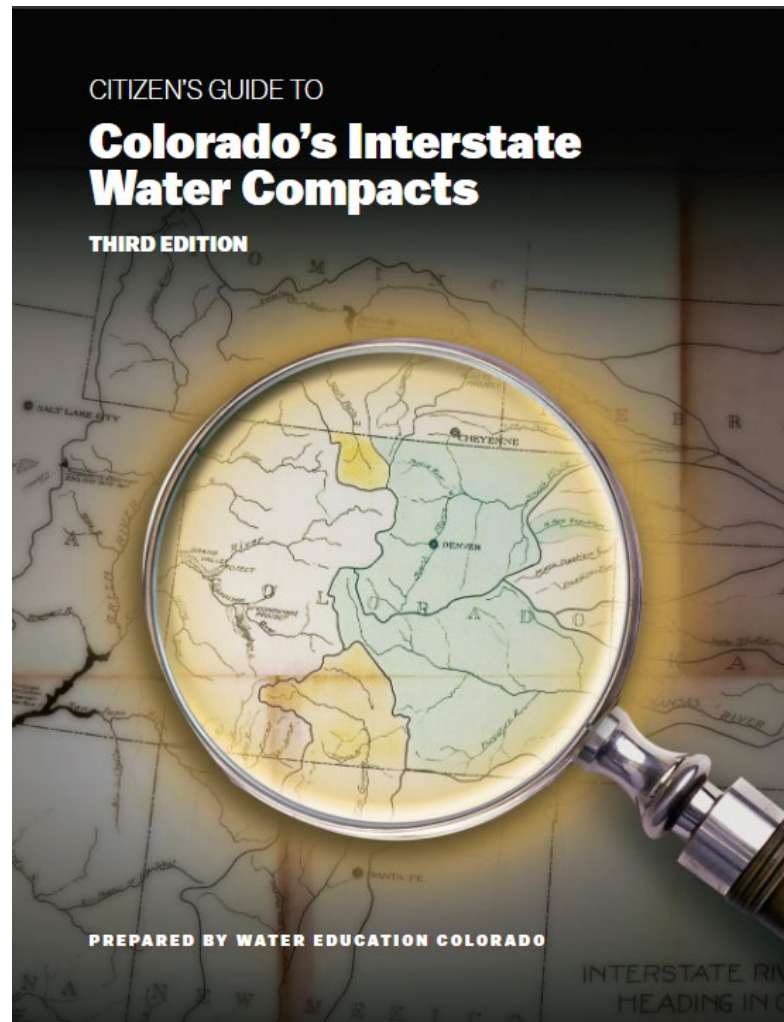
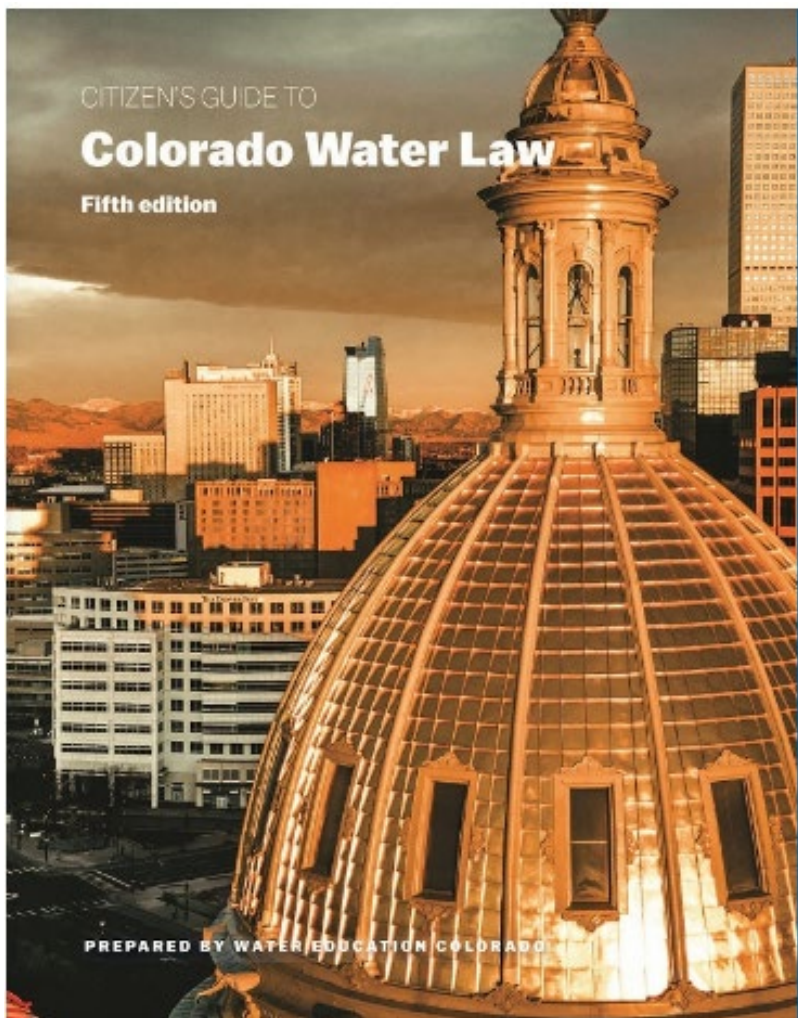


General Information - Process



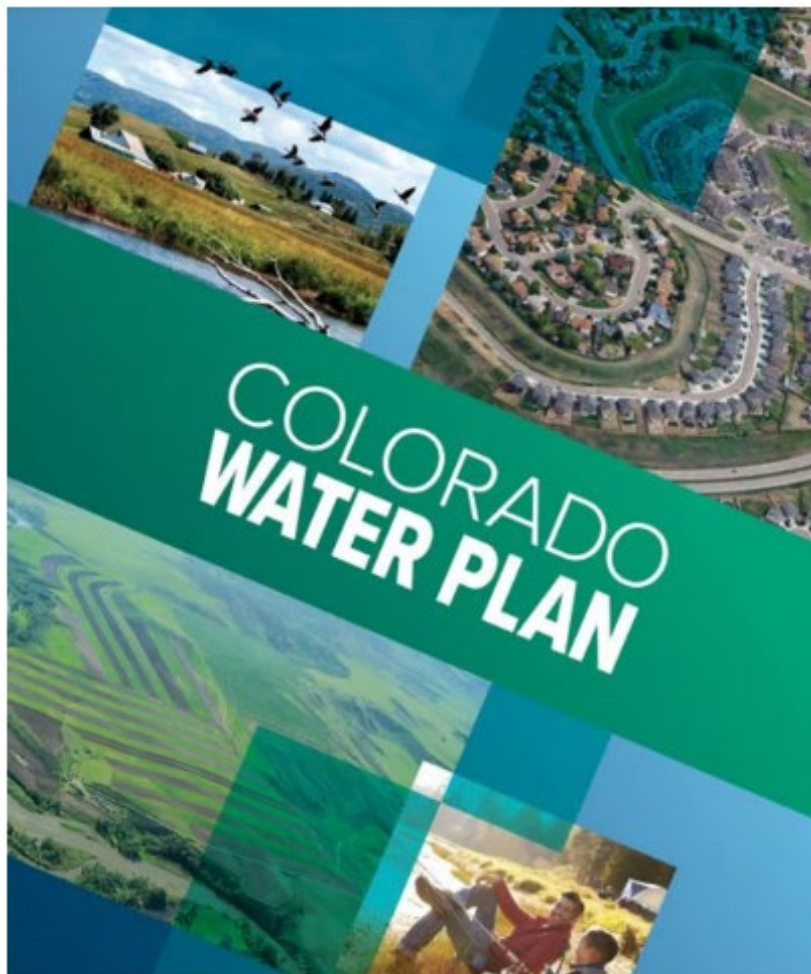


General Information – Water Law





Colorado Water Plan



Out for public comment thru 9/30/22

