



Wolf Creek Reservoir Project Newsletter

Issue 1 : August 2023 (Early Public Engagement)

ePlanning Project Site: <https://rb.gy/yztmaa>

General Information

Dear Reader,

In June 2022, the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District (RBWCD) applied for a Right-of-Way (ROW) to use public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to construct and operate a new reservoir known as the Wolf Creek Reservoir. While the RBWCD's application refers to the project as the "White River Regional Water Supply Project", the BLM refers to it as the "Wolf Creek Reservoir Project" to emphasize that the RBWCD only applied for a ROW for the Wolf Creek site (and not the White River site which is also included in the conditional water right).

In fall 2022, the BLM's local White River Field Office (WRFO) worked with the BLM's Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution Program (CADR) to hire an impartial third-party neutral consultant (The Langdon Group) to engage in conversations with a wide range of interests connected to this proposal in spring 2023. Input received was then summarized in a Situation Assessment report, which will be available on the project's ePlanning website on September 8, 2023 at: <https://rb.gy/yztmaa>.

Evaluation of this proposal will be a multi-year effort. Public input is critical to making sure that the BLM is aware of possible alternatives, available data and information, and potential impacts to important resources. We thank you in advance for your time spent attending public meetings, reviewing documents, and providing valuable comments to help the BLM make an informed decision.

Sincerely,
Bill Mills, White River Field Manager

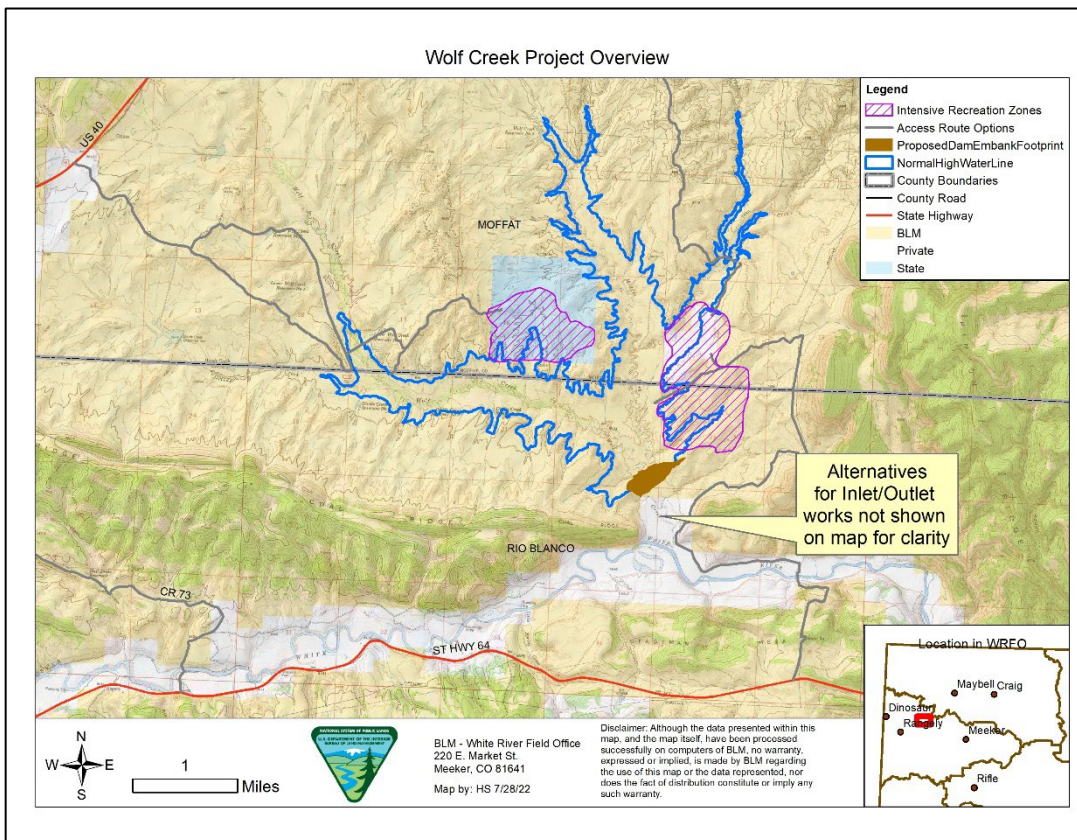
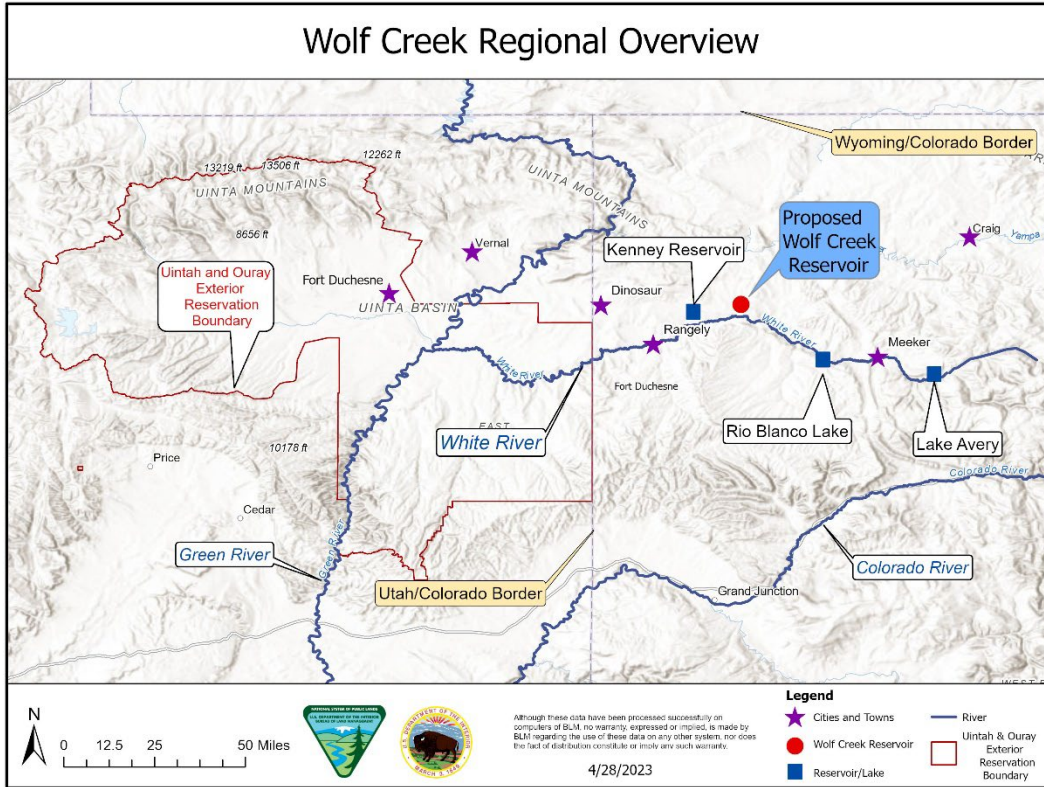
Wolf Creek Reservoir Project Application

The RBWCD's June 2022 initial Plan of Development (POD) was submitted with their ROW application. The initial POD was reviewed by the BLM and Cooperating Agencies who provided feedback to RBWCD regarding areas where additional detail was needed and some preliminary ideas to reduce impacts to other resources. The RBWCD is currently revising the POD which will be made available for public review during scoping (Notice of Intent). For additional information and details about the project application please contact RBWCD at (970) 675-5055, <https://rioblancowatercd.colorado.gov/>

Context: Size Compared to Other Reservoirs

The proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir would be a relatively large reservoir for northwest Colorado with a water storage capacity of 66,720 AF and a surface area of 2,031 acres. In order to assist the public with understanding the size of the proposed reservoir, the BLM has provided a table of comparable reservoirs in Colorado on the ePlanning project website.

Project Location Maps



Situation Assessment and Early Public Engagement

A Situation Assessment is a process to identify relevant stakeholders, and listen to their perspectives, concerns, and advice. For the Wolf Creek Reservoir Project, the Situation Assessment was conducted by a neutral facilitator (The Langdon Group) who conducted a series of confidential discussions with individuals and small groups with more than 73 individuals in March and April 2023.

The neutral facilitator then summarized their findings according to key themes in a written Situation Assessment Report, which will be available on ePlanning on September 8, 2023 at: <https://rb.gy/yztmaa>. It's important to remember that the findings capture the opinions, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants that emerged during interviews. The assessment does not aim to verify the accuracy of people's statements and conflicting understandings of the same phenomena are identified and articulated as best as possible. The assessment is intended to provide a snapshot in time of a cross section of the communities of interested parties. However, it is not a representative sample, nor a "vote" on how many people were in favor of or opposed to the proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir.

The Situation Assessment provided valuable pre-scoping, early public engagement and helps to:

- Identify key issues early and clarify details and nuance;
- Provide insights to formulate issues for analysis in the EIS; and
- Give the BLM an early understanding of the varying public perspectives.

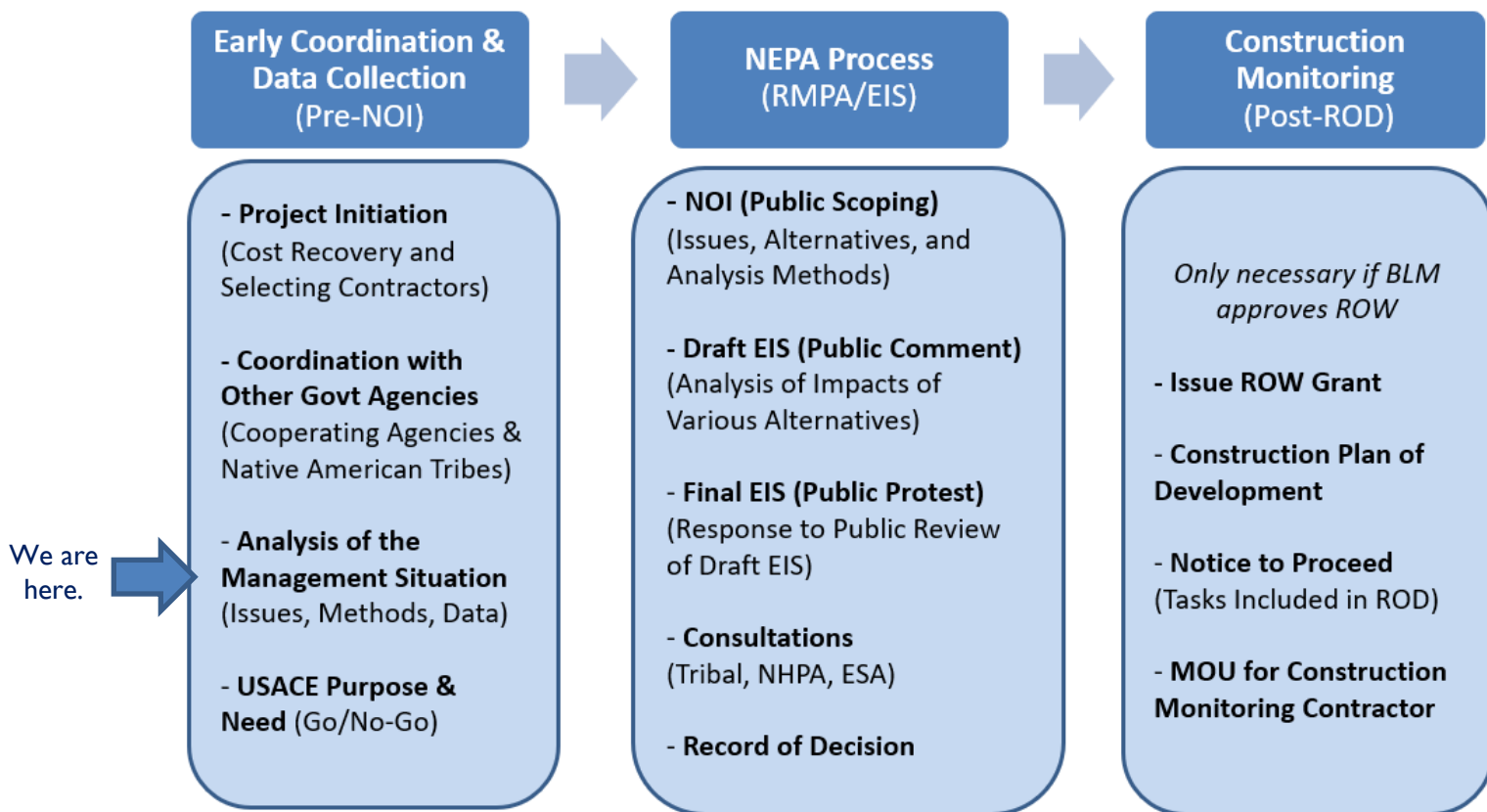
NEPA and BLM's Land Use Planning Process

The BLM has determined that this project would be evaluated through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that would also require amending the 1997 White River Resource Management Plan (RMP). An EIS is appropriate since the project is anticipated to have the potential for significant environmental impacts. The BLM would consider changing existing management direction in the White River RMP to address potential conflicting uses on public land (e.g., the area inundated by the reservoir would no longer be available for livestock grazing or additional constraints may be needed on where a drill rig could be placed in proximity to the dam). The BLM currently anticipates evaluating management decisions in the area around the Wolf Creek Reservoir Project related to recreation, oil and gas leasing, livestock grazing, travel management, lands with wilderness characteristics, greater sage-grouse habitat, and visual resources.

The BLM is the lead Federal agency and is responsible for supervising the preparation of the EIS and developing the project schedule. Many other federal and state agencies and organizations have been identified as Cooperating Agencies (CA). The current list of CAs is published on the ePlanning project website.

Evaluation of the Wolf Creek Reservoir Project is a complex endeavor. The BLM intends to manage this project in three distinct phases:

- Phase 1: Early Coordination and Data Collection (Pre-Notice of Intent (NOI))
- Phase 2: NEPA Process (RMPA/EIS)
- Phase 3: Construction Monitoring (Post-Record of Decision (ROD))



Future Opportunities for Public Involvement

Once the BLM receives the updated Plan of Development (POD) from RBWCD and it has been reviewed by the Cooperating Agencies, the Notice of Intent (NOI) would be published which initiates the NEPA process. After publishing the NOI, BLM plans to make the current proposal, including the updated POD available for public review. Then we will conduct extensive public scoping events to learn more from the public about their concerns and obtain feedback about proposed uses of their public lands. Public scoping events will include information from the BLM about any preliminary analysis that has been conducted or analysis that may be conducted prior to publishing a draft EIS. Prior to any events, the BLM will update the ePlanning project website detailing event times and locations. We'll also directly notify our mailing list. We encourage you to join our mailing list by filling out this Online Form: <https://forms.office.com/r/bBMcv3G4xq>