



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 2015

Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at Pumphouse Open to Boaters

May 13, 2015 - Hot Sulphur Springs, CO. Grand County has completed construction of Gore Canyon Whitewater Park on the Colorado River at the BLM Pumphouse recreation site. The waves have opened to rave reviews from enthusiastic boaters, many of whom have been watching the project's progress over the winter. Completing this project took over five years of coordinated effort led by Grand County Commissioners. This included extensive planning, outreach, negotiation, water court processes, engineering, fundraising and permitting. The final--and shortest--phase of the project was the actual construction which was completed on schedule in under five months by the award winning contractor, Kissner General Contracting. Boaters, landowners, regulatory agencies and a wide variety of Colorado River lovers all had crucial and active roles in bringing the project to fruition.

Grand County's vision was to enhance the recreational opportunities and protect the environment of the Colorado River headwaters in order to ensure a strong economy and a good quality of life for all residents and visitors. The Grand County team determined the best way to protect Colorado's recreational boating economy included building a whitewater park on the Colorado River and filing for a recreational in-channel diversion water right to protect the flows at the site.

Jason Carey, P.E., of RiverRestoration designed the whitewater park structure which meets the recreational vision as well as ensuring fish passage and aquatic macro-invertebrate protection. The effort was an important element of Grand County's Stream Management Plan.

The Gore Canyon Whitewater Park waves can stretch from bank to bank across the Colorado River just upstream of Launch 2 at Pumphouse. Boaters and anglers launching upstream at Pumphouse Launch #1 are advised to scout the new features from the viewing platform prior to launching. Boaters preferring to avoid the new whitewater features have the option of launching downstream at the boat chute/steps at Launch 2 or the ramp at Launch 3. Like all natural whitewater features throughout this reach of the Colorado River, changes in flow will change the navigation options through the site. As with all popular multi-use areas, cooperation between those users playing on the features and those users continuing downstream through the new waves is key to a good experience for everyone.

The bank area below the viewing platform will be accessible once the vegetation has had a chance to grow in. Please respect this small bank closure and help protect the river by not trampling the new vegetation that has been planted to control erosion.

This site on the Colorado River is between the Class V expert reaches of Gore Canyon and the family friendly Class II-III reach below Pumphouse Recreation Site. This scenic area hosts thousands of visitors each year while still providing peace, solitude, majestic canyons and wildlife viewing so important to locals and visitors alike. The BLM maintains access to the river, bathrooms, parking and a large family

campground at the Pumphouse Recreation Area. A trail along the river provides access to excellent fishing throughout this reach.

Grand County will host a ribbon cutting celebration on Monday afternoon, July 13, 2015 to honor the funding partners from Eagle County, the Colorado Basin Roundtable, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs who collaborated with the citizens of Grand County to bring the project to fruition. The public is invited to attend and experienced whitewater boaters are encouraged to gather and show off their whitewater prowess throughout the afternoon. For more information about being part of the event, contact coordinator, CarolineBradford@wildblue.net or call 970-688-0812.

GORE CANYON WHITEWATER PARK BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SITE SELCTION. The Pumphouse site was selected in 2009 after outreach to landowners, private and commercial boaters and fishermen, state and federal agency staff, American Whitewater and Colorado River Outfitter's Association. Gore Canyon is a nationally recognized destination for expert boaters. This reach of the Colorado River benefits from releases of water stored in upstream reservoirs throughout the summer. These releases provide boating flows in dry years and well into the fall when flows in other rivers are generally too low to boat.

THE WATER RIGHT. Grand County's Stream Management Plan was adopted in 2006 and that plan envisioned permanent protections for recreational stream flows so important to the community. Grand County filed for the water rights for this recreational feature in 2010 and after much negotiation with parties from across the state, as well as significant findings of fact in the case, the water rights were awarded in April 2014. Although junior to other major diversion projects, these recreational water rights provide long term protection for the park from water diversions that may be proposed many years from now.

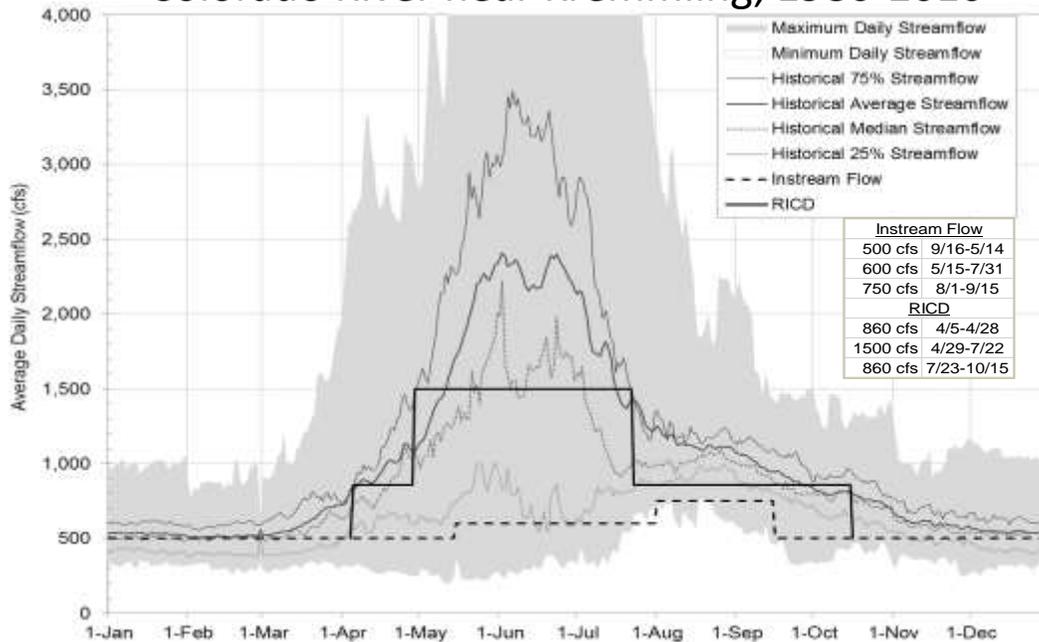
These water rights were part of a negotiation process known as the Colorado River Cooperative Agreement reached in 2013 with Denver Water and the Windy Gap Firing Project Intergovernmental Agreement with the Municipal Sub-District of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. Lauding the agreement, Commissioner Merritt Linke said, "Although there was a lot of pushing and shoving to get these water rights through water court, the decree represents a good balance of the multiple uses of water in our state." Commissioner James Newberry added, "We had 25 objectors in our case, but were able to reach a settlement with everyone."

Recreational in-channel diversions (RICD's), aka whitewater parks, have had a controversial history due to concerns that RICD's "tie-up" stream systems and impede more traditional, consumptive uses of water. As a result, the Colorado General Assembly substantially revamped the law in 2006 to require the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) provide findings that RICD's: 1) will not impair Colorado's ability to develop water under its compact; 2) will promote maximum utilization of waters of the State; and 3) will not injure CWCB's in-stream flow water rights. The CWCB made favorable findings on the Grand County RICD filing in March 2012. In January 2013, the CWCB board also voted to award a grant of \$500,000 to help fund a portion of the project's construction costs.

"This is the first RICD decree entered under the new statutes," noted David Taussig, an attorney with White & Jankowski, LLP in Denver who represents Grand County on water matters. "It is the largest

RICD water right decreed in Colorado and the only one on the Colorado River mainstem to date. "The beauty of Colorado Water Law is its ability to accommodate new uses of water and to fit them into the prior appropriation system."

Comparison of Instream Flow Water Right to RICD filing to daily stream flow statistics, Colorado River near Kremmling, 1980-2010



GREAT FISHING. The Colorado River near Pumphouse is some of the best fishing in the state. The existing habitat provides an excellent fishery. In 2011, this reach of the Colorado River mainstream gained the protection of minimum in-stream flow water rights to protect the fishery. Grand County always has the long term protection of both the fishery and recreational use of the river in focus. The added bonus of the recreational water right secured for protection of the whitewater features, is that it also provides ancillary benefits for the fishery in the Colorado River. Protected flows are important for both fishing and recreational float boating, now and for generations to come.

Grand County worked with the Colorado Parks & Wildlife staff to ensure the protection of this remarkable fishery throughout the project. The whitewater park design incorporated protective fish friendly elements, such as not using grout that might prevent small fish from migrating through the feature using the small spaces between the rocks. Special attention was paid to the hydraulics from bank to bank to ensure the velocity of the water created by the manmade features was balanced by areas that fish could easily navigate upstream. On river right, large boulders were used to create the whitewater features and additional habitat boulders were placed to provide cover for fish.

MONITORING PLAN. Grand County has undertaken an extensive monitoring effort to ensure the effectiveness of the protective measures incorporated into the project design and construction. Monitoring efforts include the study of lateral scour, sediment aggradation, passage of target fish

species through the structure and effects on habitat for target macro-invertebrates. Monitoring will be conducted in the fall, once a year for five consecutive years. The results of this monitoring will be submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers and the report will be available on request.

BLM ROLE. The Bureau of Land Management conducted an Environmental Assessment and awarded a Right of Way Permit to Grand County to enable construction of the project on Federal land. The Gore Canyon Whitewater Park supports the BLM's land use management plan objectives that call for protection of the "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of this reach of the Colorado River. These values include recreational float boating, scenic values, and fishing.

FUNDING. Recreation is a huge part of the headwaters economy. Whitewater boating provides hundreds of jobs and thousands of dollars to Grand County businesses every year. Building a whitewater park is an investment in recreational infrastructure that benefits the entire regional economy. The Upper Colorado River is second only to the Arkansas River in commercially guided rafting trips in Colorado. The citizens of the headwaters understand the good return on the investment in creation and protection of recreational infrastructure and access to the Colorado River.

The Gore Canyon Whitewater Park was funded by broad support from many sources. The residents of Grand and Eagle County have been long term supporters of County Commissioner's decisions to allocate public funds to enhance river recreation. The diverse members of the Colorado Basin Roundtable voted unanimously to award Basin Funds to the project and the members of the Colorado Water Conservation board also allocated Water Supply Reserve Account funds to the project. The Department of Local Affairs awarded Mineral and Energy Assistance Impact Funds derived from oil, gas, carbon dioxide, coal and metals extracted in Colorado towards the project.

\$600,000+	Grand County Colorado Citizens & Individual Boaters
\$340,000	Eagle County Colorado Citizens
\$100,000	Colorado Basin Roundtable Basin Account Fund
\$400,000	Colorado Water Conservation Board, Water Supply Reserve Account
\$200,000	Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Tier I, Severance Tax Funds

GRAND COUNTY PROJECT TEAM:

Project Sponsor:	Grand County Commissioners
Legal Team:	White & Jankowski, LLP, David Taussig & Mitra Pemberton
Hydrology:	AMEC, Lee Rozaklis
Design/Engineers:	RiverRestoration.org, Jason Carey
Fundraising /Coordination:	Caroline Bradford
General Contractors:	Kissner GC, Inc, Bryan Kissner
Monitoring:	Tetra Tech, Peggy Bailey

DIRECTIONS: Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at the Pumphouse BLM Recreation Site is accessible from the east via County Road 1, off Colorado Highway 9 just south of Kremmling, CO. From the west, access is via Colorado River Road, off Colorado Highway 131 at State Bridge, north of Wolcott at Interstate 70.

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