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**GORE CANYON WHITEWATER PARK AWARDED \$500,000 BY STATE WATER BOARD**

Grand County took another huge step forward in the quest build the proposed Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at Pumphouse, thanks to the members of the Colorado Basin Roundtable and the Colorado Water Conservation Board. At their recent board meeting, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) members awarded Grand County \$500,000 from the Water Supply Reserve Account to help construct whitewater features in the Colorado River at the popular BLM recreational boating site west of Kremmling.

Over \$39 Million has been awarded to hundreds of water projects across the State since the fund's inception by the Colorado Legislature in 2007. This is the first award for a project that is primarily for recreational purposes. "The time has come to recognize non-consumptive water rights have a place at the table in Colorado," acknowledged, CWCB's Colorado Basin Director Russell George. "Just a few years ago, this would have been inconceivable, but we're evolving."

"Recreation is a huge part of our local and state economy," explained Grand County Commissioner James Newberry. "We are grateful to the CWCB Board members for recognizing the economic value of whitewater boating on the Colorado River." Newberry, who is also Chair of the Colorado River District board, emphasized that working together to recognize interests and benefits on both sides of the divide is the only way to get large water projects moved forward.

Grand County's newest Commissioner, Merrit Linke also thanked the CWCB Board for supporting the project during the Denver meeting adding, "Grand County has been working hard to protect the Colorado River environment and recreation for years. This project will encourage more visitors to stay and enjoy the beauty of Grand County."

In this multi-step state process, the project was unanimously approved by the members of the Colorado Basin Roundtable in July 2012 and forwarded to the CWCB Board for consideration. "Folks from all across the basin supported Grand County's application," noted Gary Bumgarner, at-large Agricultural Representative to the Roundtable and Grand County Commissioner. "There are a lot of additional benefits to the region that were negotiated with this project."

Folks in Eagle County definitely agree. “Ensuring water stays in the river for recreation is a perfect complement to our efforts to open up more access points along the Colorado River for boaters and anglers,” praised Eagle County Commissioner and Colorado River District vice-chair, Jon Stavney. “Having water rights with this whitewater park ensures this project will bring benefits to the whole river for generations to come.”

Grand County, Colorado River District and other west slope water interests have been negotiating with Front Range water providers to protect and enhance the environment and recreation on the Colorado River. Like many features of those negotiations, the proposed \$1.7 million whitewater park will take at least another couple years to bring to fruition. Partnerships with other funders are needed to leverage the major investment Grand County has made to date. Approximately \$500,000 more must be raised from boaters and other partners before construction can begin.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board members noted the broad and diverse support for the project. Endorsements for the grant came from Denver Water, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Colorado River District, Eagle County Commissioners, Summit County Commissioners, Eagle River Water & Sanitation District, Colorado Trout Unlimited and American Whitewater. Additionally, over 100 boaters sent passionate letters of support to CWCB for the project. During the 2012 Gorefest Race, kayakers enthusiastically pledged funds to help Grand County build the park.

This major capital investment in recreation infrastructure is expected to create a good financial return for Grand County and the State of Colorado. According to the 2012 Year End Commercial River Use Report just released by the Colorado River Outfitters Association, commercial boating on the Upper Colorado River through Grand County, Eagle County and Glenwood Springs already provides an economic impact of over \$32 million dollars annually to the state. In 2012, there were 39,645 commercial passengers and about 40,000 private boaters who floated this reach. Only the Arkansas River had more users.

The accessible new feature on the Upper Colorado River above Launch #2 at Pumphouse will provide additional opportunities for kayakers and Stand Up Paddle boarders to perfect their skills. This park and play whitewater park will be situated between the exhilarating Class IV-V Gore Canyon run and the splashy, scenic Class II-III section below Pumphouse. Even in low water years, this family friendly reach has consistent flows all summer due to upstream reservoir releases for farmers and other downstream water users in the Colorado Basin.

The County worked with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife to ensure the project design would not impact fish habitat, wildlife migration or the existing users at the Pumphouse Launch ramps.

Before this project can be constructed, a right-of-way permit from the BLM is required. Construction will not be scheduled until all the necessary permits, funding and approvals are in place. To learn more about how you can help Grand County bring the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park to life, contact project coordinator [CarolineBradford@wildblue.net](mailto:CarolineBradford@wildblue.net).

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