



City & CPW Collaborate on River Closure & Reopening

Reopening Requires Determination Conditions Have Improved For Aquatic Health

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO-July 22, 2022-The Yampa River closed Wednesday to recreational use due to high water temperatures, one of three criteria that trigger a closure. However, some have asked what goes into determining when the waterway could reopen?

Well, quite a few factors come together to assist Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) and the city in determining that additional harm will not occur, and that use is not detrimental to the health of the river.

During a closure, the city works with CPW experts on aquatic health and the impacts to the fishery to determine the appropriate time to reopen. The city code supports CPW and scientific studies that show high river temperatures above 70 degrees results in elevated levels of stress in fish, with potential negative impacts to the fishery.

While the city's two consecutive days of 75°F closure criteria are higher than CPW's (>71°), the community goal that helped establish these criteria was to find a balance between providing recreational opportunities and protecting the aquatic health of the river. For the past 10 days, the river temperature has exceeded 71 degrees, including three days around 75.



“Simply following the approved temperature, dissolved oxygen or flow criteria to restrict river recreation does not account for the science supported by CPW that the fishery needs time to recover from the negative impacts,” said Parks & Recreation Director Angela Cosby.

Reopening requires a determination that conditions have improved to allow for aquatic wildlife health. Since CPW announced a voluntary fishing closure from Chuck Lewis to the western city limits this week, it is clear the state agency does not feel conditions have improved and that the river is not ready to reopen at this point.

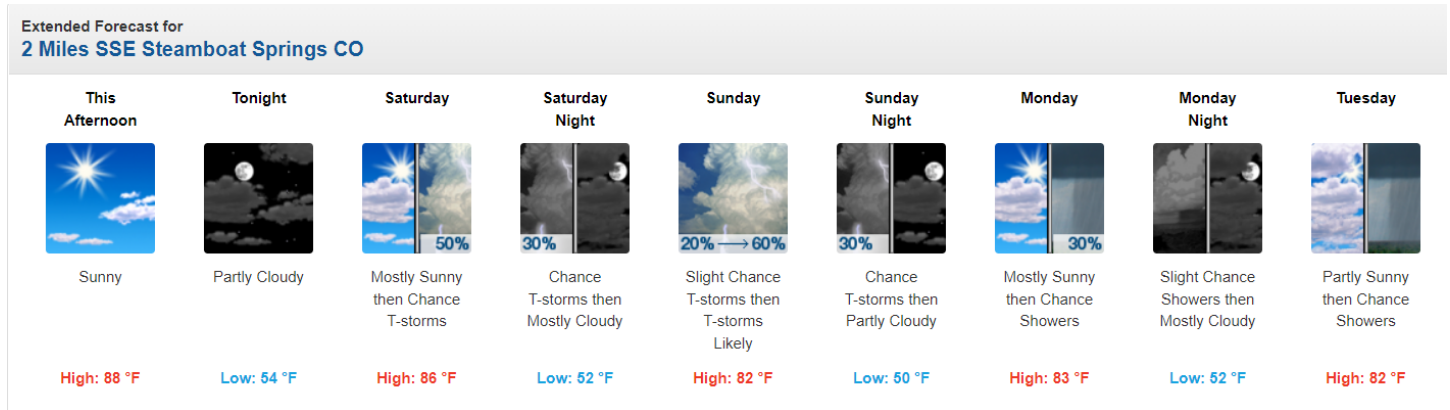
CPW staff has noted that even though temperatures may drop below 75 for a day or two or rains may increase flows above 85 cfs temporarily (another closure criteria), the negative impacts associated with elevated water temperatures are cumulative and fish do not recover in a moment's notice once closure criteria is no longer met.

As reopening is discussed, some of the factors considered include sustained lower water temperatures, sustained higher levels of dissolved oxygen, lower daytime/nighttime air temperatures and a favorable weather forecast.

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Once favorable conditions not impacting the closure criteria are seen, the goal for CPW and the city is to allow time for the fishery to recover from the cumulative negative impacts and have a favorable weather pattern. This ensures a closure is not lifted too early or there is an on/off closure which causes public confusion and may additionally negatively impact aquatic health.

The five-day forecast does not indicate a favorable short-term weather pattern and the river will likely see temperatures above 75° again.



Rain and lower temps for a couple of days look promising and experts will reassess conditions next week based on the outlook for the remainder of the week

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Contact

Craig Robinson, Parks, Open Space and Trails Manager, 970.871.7034 or [email](#)

Jenny Carey, Open Space and Trails Supervisor, 970.871.7014 or [email](#)

Michael Lane, Communications Manager, 970.871.8220 or [email](#)