



**COLORADO
WATER TRUST**



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Colorado Water Trust boosting flows in the Upper Yampa River

Steamboat Springs, CO, (August 29, 2023) – On August 17, Colorado Water Trust (the Water Trust) began boosting flows in the Upper Yampa River with initial order of 1,000 acre-feet of water (3.6 million gallons) at a rate of up to 40 cfs. The Water Trust purchased this water out of Stagecoach Reservoir and has the contractual opportunity to purchase up to 5,100 acre-feet of water in 2023 if and when the Upper Yampa River is in need of additional flow. This project, in partnership with the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (UYWCD), and City of Steamboat Springs (City) aims to support the Yampa River for water quality purposes.

Despite an exceptional snowpack, early spring runoff and dry, warm summer conditions have resulted in suboptimal streamflow conditions on the Yampa River. Current water temperatures exceed important regulatory thresholds for a cold-water stream like the Yampa River. The Water Trust purchases water and requests its release from the reservoir when the Yampa River temperatures exceed these regulatory thresholds. Upon release from Stagecoach Reservoir, the purchased water passes through an 18-mile stretch, past the downtown area of Steamboat Springs to the City’s waste water treatment plant.

The Water Trust’s contributions to the Yampa River will continue through the fall, if needed, to support a healthy river. During the summer and fall of 2023, the Water Trust aims to purchase and release up to 5,100 (or 1.7 billion gallons) of water from Stagecoach Reservoir.

QUOTE FROM COLORADO WATER TRUST

“As I watched the snow pile up in the Yampa watershed last winter, I didn’t anticipate a need for significant releases from Stagecoach Reservoir this year but hydrology in the arid west is rarely that simple. Fortunately, with our partners in the basin, we were able to adapt to an unexpected situation and begin releases from Stagecoach to help with high stream temperatures, and in turn support many uses and users of the river.” Blake Mamich, Colorado Water Trust

QUOTE FROM UYWCD

“The partnership with the Colorado Water Trust is working exactly as we hoped. Yampa River Basin water managers now have a flexible set of management tools that can be deployed in response to the dynamic

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vulnerabilities the Yampa River faces. These releases help our community's continued use and enjoyment of a precious resource." Andy Rossi, Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District

QUOTE FROM CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

"This collaborative partnership and the support from the Yampa River Fund allow us to put some water back in the river, when the river system needs it most. The late summer releases from Stagecoach Reservoir have become a critical tool in helping to address the water quality and aquatic habitat concerns that come with high temperatures and low flows." Julie Baxter, City of Steamboat Springs

BACKGROUND

Since 2012, the Water Trust has led local efforts to restore flows to the Yampa River. Throughout the past decade, the Water Trust has purchased and released over 17,707 acre-feet (5.77 billion gallons) of water to boost flows in dry years. In 2022 alone, the Water Trust purchased and released almost 4,000 acre-feet. The impacts have been significant. At times, the Water Trust's boosted flows contributed to over half of the flow of the Yampa River as it passed through the city of Steamboat Springs. The Water Trust is grateful for the hard work and collaboration of the community of Steamboat Springs, which has made this project possible through the years. It has taken a decade to build the relationships and process that make this project so successful. With rapidly changing climatic conditions and a 20-year megadrought, the Water Trust hopes other communities across the state will very soon follow in the footsteps of the Yampa Basin.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Essential to the project's success in 2023 are the Water Trust's key project partners: Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District; The City of Steamboat Springs; Colorado River Water Conservation District; Catamount Development, Inc.; Catamount Metropolitan District; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Colorado Water Conservation Board; and the Colorado Division of Water Resources. **Without the generous donations from donors and the collaborative work of numerous local and statewide entities, strategic reservoir releases to support the health of the Yampa River would not be possible.**

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