

5. Next Steps

The State of the Watershed Report is the result of many months of labor by a host of people including experts in the field of water resources and regular citizens. It is the first step in creating a comprehensive, practical, broadly-accepted Watershed Plan for the Roaring Fork Watershed. The report is based on the premise that we need to know about existing conditions before planning how best to use, conserve, restore, and develop those resources. The goal was to create a valuable stand-alone document representing the accumulated knowledge about the Roaring Fork Watershed, which can act as a common reference for resource managers and private citizens in the future. This report puts us, as a community, in position to translate the mass of its data and findings into action in the form of a Watershed Plan that will be the product of Phase II of the watershed planning process.

In addition to the above goals, the State of the Watershed Report is intended to catalog and analyze the water resources and needs within the watershed, using existing data sources. This body of information will provide the basic data needed to develop strategies and priorities for future study and management of the watershed in Phase II of the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan. Phase II will include a set of goals and objectives developed through citizen input and in consultation with governments and water managers who have an interest in the water resources of the Roaring Fork Watershed. Phase II of the Plan will produce recommendations on critical issues identified in the report. Although the exact nature of those recommendations cannot be predicted at this time, they might address such issues as:

- The potential impact of increased transmountain diversions on local water quantity and quality,
- The projected impacts of residential and commercial growth and changing land uses on local water resources and riparian areas,
- Local wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, and ecosystem components that might be threatened due to changing water uses,
- Trends in domestic, agriculture, recreation, instream, and industrial water uses and conservation,
- Trends in water quality,
- Current amounts of consumptive and non-consumptive uses in comparison to supply, and
- The impact of climate change on local water resources and implications for water managers.

In addition, Phase II of the Plan will include recommendations to local water planners, managers, and governments regarding future water management policies and activities. Those recommendations will contribute to the accomplishment of the Plan's goals and objectives.

Recommendations might address the following:

- Water conservation measures to be adopted by major water users and suppliers,
- Cooperative management activities or policies that could be adopted by water users or agencies,
- Drought management policies,
- Stream and lake setback standards,
- Standards to protect water resources from related impacts of construction activities

- Recommendations for construction, re-operation, rehabilitation, or enlargement of existing water storage and management infrastructure,
- Stormwater treatment standards,
- Water rights acquisition programs,
- Specific water development projects aimed at meeting the Plan's goals and objectives,
- Further studies or follow-up projects,
- Education and outreach opportunities,
- Riparian and instream restoration projects, and
- Implementation and monitoring strategies.

It is important to note that recommendations contained in the Watershed Plan will be reviewed to assure their consistency and compatibility with existing state water laws and water rights. The recommendations will not seek to overturn, subvert, or challenge those laws and rights, but will instead suggest ways in which water management can be improved within the context of those laws and rights. Recommendations will be developed in a cooperative, collaborative process that will emphasize consensus and compatibility with existing policies and regulations.

The process for creating the Watershed Plan will include the following elements:

- A series of public meetings to present the State of the Watershed Report to the public and local government officials and to solicit discussion and debate on the report's findings;
- The convening of a Technical Committee, made up of water resource experts and professionals, that will help to assess the practical, technical, legal, and scientific validity of the Plan's goals, objectives and recommendations;
- Meetings with local elected officials; local, regional, state, and federal water and land managers; and private water managers to review, discuss, and reach consensus on Plan recommendations that are mutually supportive and practical; and
- Composition of a narrative report including goals and objectives, recommended actions, implementation strategies, monitoring programs, and future studies.

Phase II of the Roaring Fork Watershed Plan will begin immediately following the release of the State of the Watershed Report. It will be less data-driven than Phase I and will require an ongoing effort by involved individuals, agencies, governments, and organizations if it is to succeed. The process will be overseen by the Ruedi Water and Power Authority, as was Phase I. Primary project management will be undertaken by the Roaring Fork Conservancy and its subcontractors. We invite readers of this State of the Watershed Report to check local media and relevant websites (including the site of Roaring Fork Conservancy, <http://www.roaringfork.org> and the Ruedi Water and Power Authority <http://www.rwapa.org>) for further information and for opportunities to participate in Phase II.