



Photo Credit: Erin McWilliams

WELCOME!

The RGBRT fosters cooperation in Colorado's Rio Grande basin through support of multi-purpose projects that help us manage, protect, and sustain water use for today and into the future. The Roundtable exists to make stuff happen! Check out our website: <http://rgbrt.org/>

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Upcoming Events:

● RGBRT Meetings - August 9

The August RGBRT meeting will be held on August 9th at the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Office, located at 8805 Independence Way in Alamosa, from 2- 4 PM, with an Executive Committee Meeting starting at 1 PM. The Education Committee will meet at 11 AM at the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District Office, located at 623 4th St. in Alamosa. Visit the [RGBRT website](http://rgbrt.org/) for Zoom links to attend virtually!

● ASU Water Courses Available to Community Members!

Are you concerned about the Valley's water future? Do water issues and challenges across the West interest you? San Luis Valley residents can sign up to audit courses being offered through the Water Studies Minor at Adams State University. Read more on page 4!

● Trinchera Ranch Conservation Tour - July 22

Experience the diverse conservation work that is occurring at Trinchera Ranch on July 22 from 10 AM-3PM! This tour will showcase the ranch's watershed health approach, which includes forest, rangeland, stream and riparian habitat management, and the adaptive management strategies it utilizes to address changing conditions. A sandwich lunch will be provided for folks attending the tour. Email any event questions to info.rgbrt@gmail.com. RSVP by filling out the Google form linked [here](#) by July 19th!

● Acequia Tour - August 10

Join the RGBRT to tour water projects in the Culebra Basin August 10th! The tour will showcase the Costilla county electric tarp project, the importance of fisheries in the Culebra, and more! Check our website and Facebook page for more details coming in the future!

The Roundtable and Education Committee meet on the second Tuesday of each month. Visit rgbrt.org for meeting times and virtual attendance options.



Access and safety improvements are a boon for boaters in the Rio Grande Basin

By Daniel Boyes

Summer is here and people are getting out on the water in Colorado's Rio Grande Basin. The Basin's lakes, reservoirs, rivers, and other water bodies offer excellent boating, fishing, and other recreation opportunities for the public to enjoy.

The Rio Grande mainstem is an especially popular destination for boating and offers everything from "float fishing" (fishing from a raft or dory) and whitewater rafting to leisurely float trips on stand-up paddleboards or inner tubes. Boating opportunities on the Rio Grande vary with each section of river. For example, the river between the Town of South Fork and Hanna Lane (County Rd 17) offers world class float fishing while the Rio Grande in Alamosa is the perfect place for a leisurely afternoon tube trip.

Well-built and accessible boat ramps and other access points are critical for recreational boating, and great strides have been made in recent years to improve existing and create new river access infrastructure. For example, in 2019 a recreational playwave, boat ramp, fish habitat features, and safe river access was completed at the Del Norte Riverfront Park. The park provides a formal river recreation area and is enjoyed by residents of Del Norte, San Luis Valley communities, and Valley visitors alike.

Additionally, two boat ramps were constructed along the Rio Grande in Alamosa in 2020. This new river infrastructure enabled the City of Alamosa to host the first annual Rio Trio Adventure Race in 2021, which was a great success and had a significant economic impact on the community. The second annual event is set for June 11, and racers can register at <http://rioraces.com/>.

Additionally, Colorado Parks and Wildlife recently improved three boat ramps within Collier State Wildlife Area by installing concrete blocks for ease of use and to reduce erosion. The community benefits and positive economic impact of these river access improvements illustrate the value of well-planned and well-built river access. The improvements are a boon for all boaters who enjoy the Rio Grande, especially for Valley communities.

Along with river access, boater safety and hazard mitigation is also important. Low bridges, low head dams (LHDs), fences, and other navigational hazards pose a risk to boaters and it is important to know where hazards exist and plan river trips accordingly. A LHD is a structure built in a river channel, extending fully across the river's banks. In the Basin, these are built to divert water from a river for irrigation. LHDs are particularly dangerous because they can produce a hydraulic jump, a phenomenon in which water recirculates at the base of the LHD, thereby creating a drowning hazard. Boats (and boaters) can become trapped in a hydraulic jump and, unfortunately, this has resulted in many drownings across the country. However, state agencies, landowners, and other groups in the Basin are taking steps to mitigate these hazards. The Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently launched a statewide safety campaign to highlight and raise awareness of the risks associated with LHDs.

Locally, the Rio Grande Canal Water Users Association (RGCWUA) is working with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and state and local partners on a project to improve recreational safety at the Rio Grande Canal, an irrigation diversion dam just upstream of Del Norte. The dam is dangerous for boaters, especially at high flows, so the RGCWUA is spearheading a project that will result in a new and safe boat portage around the dam. The project also will include robust signage to notify boaters of the hazardous dam and direct them to the portage. When complete, the project will improve public safety and greatly enhance the recreational boating experience on this section of the Rio Grande.

The Del Norte, Alamosa, and Rio Grande Canal projects described above received funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board's Colorado Water Plan grant program and were supported by the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable. Each of these projects, along with many others across the Basin, enhance recreational opportunities and make the outdoors more accessible. So, get outside this summer to enjoy the Basin's exceptional water-based recreational opportunities, and stay safe!



Surfer at the Del Norte Riverfront Park Playwave. Photo Credit: Emma Reesor



New safety signage installed on the Rio Grande. Photo Credit: Jay Yeager



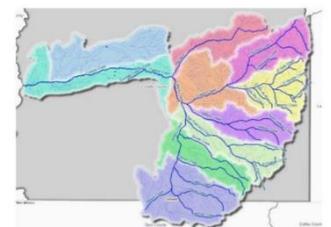
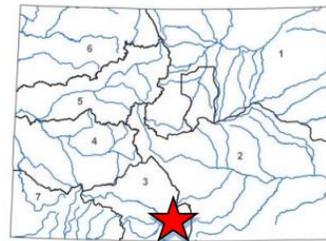
Upper Culebra Watershed Assessment *By Judy Lopez*

The Upper Culebra Watershed Assessment (assessment) is being completed to evaluate watershed conditions within the Culebra River basin (basin) and develop projects and strategies to address watershed health concerns. The assessment approach is based on community-identified areas of concern and is evaluating a broad range of technical topics from water and streams to forest health. The Costilla County Conservancy District (CCCD) is the project lead and, with the assistance of Colorado Open Lands, was able to secure funding to complete this assessment. The field assessment began in May 2021 with boots on the ground taking measurements and evaluating conditions.

The areas of the assessment that were completed in 2021 include: riparian habitat, aquatic habitat, flow regimes, water quality, forest health, geology/geomorphology, infrastructure, and safety and emergency management. In addition, historic and current land use was assessed through one-on-one interviews and historic documents. The rangeland and wildlife assessment portions of the assessment are anticipated to be completed in 2022. With those completed, the final step of the assessment will be the stakeholder group developing projects and strategies to address watershed health concerns identified in the assessment.

The field assessment was completed throughout the summer of 2021. Below are some of the statistics showing what has been completed to date:

- 18 field technicians from 4 consulting firms – RedFISH Environmental (3), SWCA Incorporated (7), AloTerra Restoration Services (4), and Tailwater Limited (4) – were involved in the assessment.
- 10 water quality samples were analyzed by the Bureau of Reclamation, whose services the assessment team is very grateful for.
- >50 additional field parameter sites were evaluated for pH and Specific Conductance.
- 23 aquatic habitat sites were sampled including 22 macroinvertebrate samples.
- Detailed habitat assessment of 14,609 feet of stream including 496 pieces of large woody debris.
- Approximately 200 stream/road crossings were visually assessed.
- 39 sites were surveyed for geomorphic conditions.
- 100 tree stand measurements were taken.
- Approximately 500 hours were dedicated to mapping riparian conditions including 38 rapid health assessment field verification points and detailed reference surveys of each of the vegetation life zones.
- 60 hours spent conducting one-on-one interviews and summarizing responses.
- Evaluation and summary of nearly 10,000 existing and new water quality sample data.
- Development of a land erosion risk model for the entire basin.
- Post-fire debris flow for applicable areas of the basin.



*Pictured above: Culebra Creek headwaters.
Photo credit: Greg Taillacq.
Map Credit: Tailwater Limited.*

During the fall of '21 and the winter of '22 the assessment team worked to compile data and write the final report for each assessment area. The complete assessment report is expected to be available in September 2022. Assessment teams and review committees have been working on reviewing each of the sections, which will be combined into one comprehensive report and presentation. In addition to the report and presentation all data will be provided electronically to the CCCD to provide a basis for future work that could include assessing trends within the basin. A big thanks to all who helped identify needs, provided comments on the study plans, and participated in the stakeholder process.

This assessment is possible with funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Watershed Assembly, San Luis Valley Conservation Fund, Trinchera Blanca Foundation, CCCD, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, and Colorado Department of Agriculture. Staff with CCCD and Tailwater Limited will be scheduling the final presentation this fall, so be on the lookout for the date!



Adams State WATR 101 class field trip. Photo Credit: Rio de la Vista



ASU Water Courses Available to Community Members!

Are you concerned about the Valley's water future? Do water issues and challenges across the West interest you? San Luis Valley residents can sign up to audit courses being offered through the Water Studies Minor at Adams State University for just \$150 for the full semester, starting August 23rd! Available classes are: *WATR 101: Water Essentials: How Water Works in the West* taught by agronomist Maya ter-Kuile Miller and/or the *Water and Equity* taught by Dr. Nick Saenz. Participants will join students to learn directly from experts as well as local water users and managers. WATR 101's field trips will add to understanding of water use and issues on the ground. These courses are designed to prepare students (also open to highschool students!) for the challenges ahead, to enhance professional development across diverse careers, and to increase community participation in a sustainable water future. For more information, please contact salazarriograndecenter@adams.edu or go to <https://www.adams.edu/academics/undergraduate/water-studies-minor/>. Register for a "Listening Course" online at: https://ssb.adams.edu/bannerweb/xs_registration/registration/?page_id=persnlcnrchmt_noncredit.

Roundtable Member Highlight:



Emma Reesor

Vice Chair, Watershed Health
Member at Large

Emma serves as the Executive Director for the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, working to improve the health of rivers in Colorado's San Luis Valley. Emma grew up on the prairies of Kansas and graduated from Bethel College (KS) with a BA in Biology. Since moving to the San Luis Valley in 2013, she has applied her passion for rivers and restoration ecology through her involvement with the Restoration Project, RGBRT, and state water community. Emma lives in Alamosa with her husband John and son Julian, who loves learning about water!

Want to stay up to date? Subscribe to our newsletter at info.rgbrt@gmail.com and follow us on our [Facebook Page](#)!

We're also happy to share statewide initiatives, events, and other water-centric programs on our Facebook Page, website calendar, and in this newsletter! Email info.rgbrt@gmail.com with content you wish to share!

