

**American Whitewater’s Guide to the
BLM’s Kremmling Field Office’s
draft Resource Management Plan
January 2012**

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Wild and Scenic	2
About Suitability	3
The Alternatives and Wild and Scenic Rivers	4
Stakeholder Plan.....	4
Other Protections for River Values	5
Recreation and Visitor Services	5
Recreation Management on BLM Lands	5
Current River Recreation Management	5
The Alternatives and Recreation Management Areas	6
Upper Colorado River SRMA	6
Other Special Designations	7
Wilderness Study Areas.....	8
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	8

I. Introduction

The [Kremmling Field Office \(KFO\)](#) of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently seeking comment on their [draft Resource Management Plan \(dRMP\)](#). The Plan has far-reaching implications for the management of Off-Highway Vehicles, mineral and oil & gas development, grazing, timber, recreation, and much more on Colorado’s rivers and public lands. The dRMP is a very large document, and American Whitewater is providing this guide to help you digest the proposed management actions outlined in the Plan that affect river-based recreation and river health, including flows on the iconic Upper Colorado River. (See “[KFO Region Map](#)”). **The Chapters, Tables and Figures within the dRMP mentioned throughout this document can all be found on the [KFO dRMP webpage](#):**

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Programs/land_use_planning/rmp/kfo-gsfo/crv.html.

The BLM’s dRMP proposes four management plan alternatives – A, B, C, and D.

- Alternative A: No action alternative, meaning public lands and waterways would continue to be managed as they currently are.
- Alternative B: The BLM’s preferred alternative, which attempts to find a balance between resource protection and resource use.
- Alternative C: Focuses more on resource protection.
- Alternative D: Focuses on resource use.

Alternative B is divided into two possible alternatives - B1 and B2, which are described more below. American Whitewater supports Alternative B2 because we believe that it is the Alternative that is the most protective of flows in the Colorado River.

While the dRMP reviews a variety of key issues and impacts from numerous land and resource use activities¹, American Whitewater has created this guide to the RMP with a specific focus on how the four alternatives will impact boating-related recreation opportunities and the following special designations:

- Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR's): Congressional designation which protects the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing nature of rivers (2-6).
- Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's): An area designated by BLM as having wilderness characteristics, making it worthy of consideration by Congress for designation as a National Wilderness Area. The wilderness values of the area are preserved while Congress considers the designation (p. 2-6).
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's): BLM designation for lands where “special management attention is required in order to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes; or to protect life and safety from natural hazards” (p. 2-6).
- Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA's): Areas designated by the BLM where one of the main management objectives is recreation and where recreation activities are more concentrated, structured and regulated (p. 2-7).
- Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMA's): BLM designation for areas where recreation is unstructured and dispersed and minimal recreation-related investments are required (p. 2.7).

We hope this guide will help you navigate the dRMP and find the relevant sections you need to make substantive comments to the BLM and make a difference for the future of flows in the Colorado and other important rivers within KFO lands. For an overview of the major rivers in the KFO region, see pages 3-34 through 3-35.

II. Wild and Scenic

Of main concern to those who love rivers is how the dRMP will decide the fate of 15 river segments in the KFO region (see Figures [2-54: Wild and Scenic Rivers Alternative B](#) and [2-55: Wild and Scenic Rivers Alternative C](#)). These segments are currently eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) for their Outstandingly Remarkable Values, or “ORVs.” Whitewater Boating is one of the primary flow-dependent ORVs in the CRVFO area, and interest in this and other related activities is increasing. One of the key issues facing river managers is how to sustain whitewater boating activities. These activities require certain flow levels, and these levels currently are at risk as demand for additional water supplies increase along Colorado’s eastern Slope and as the Windy Gap and Moffat Projects come closer to being a reality.

The Upper Colorado River is the largest supplemental source of water for the cities of Denver, Aurora, Colorado Springs, and eastern Colorado towns and farms. Currently, water agencies that provide and manage water supplies for these communities hold significant legal rights to take more water out of the Colorado River, even though these rights are not currently exercised. In essence, under current water rights structures, in the future the Colorado River will not likely flow at the same levels that it does today. Under Colorado’s Water Laws, these existing rights are recognized as senior to any potential water rights in the future, meaning they have priority over even

¹ For a complete list of the issues BLM examines, see pages 2-4 to 2-15.

those intended to protect recreation or the environment. This is true even of a federal water right established in conjunction with a Wild and Scenic River designation by Congress. This means that even if the River was added to the Wild and Scenic River Inventory, there could be no water left in the river to protect after all senior rights were met. And so, while a Wild and Scenic designation has been a key method of protecting rivers across the country, it unfortunately may not be the most protective management option for the Upper Colorado River. (See also p. 3-214.)

As you consider the implications of management decisions on *all* of the eligible Wild and Scenic River segments, we suggest you look at the following:

- [American Whitewater's Toolkit on Wild and Scenic Rivers](#).
- [Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 on pages 2-142 to 2-145](#). This table compares Wild and Scenic management under the different alternatives.
- [Table 3-32 on page 3-213](#) "Eligible Stream Segments within the Planning Area," which provides a complete list of eligible segments, their lengths, classifications and ORV's.
- Table 4-70 on pages 4-565 through 4-577 for the BLM's Wild and Scenic Rivers Analysis Framework, which compares the specific river protection elements for each Wild and Scenic option (not suitable, eligible, suitable, stakeholder group, designation by Congress).

A. About Suitability

The Wild and Scenic designation process:

- 1) Agency designates river segment as eligible, manages to protect the free-flowing nature, Outstandingly Remarkable Values and tentative classification.
- 2) Agency studies whether river segment is Suitable or not. Profile of river segment is raised and becomes more likely for Congressional designation for inclusion in the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Management is the same as when eligible.
- 3) Congressional designation – river segment is included in the national Wild and Scenic River system and is given the formal protections under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. A federal reserved water right is given with the designation. (See pp. 3-207 to 3-211 for a good summary of the WSRA and designation process.)

The 15 segments currently under management review in the KFO include the Upper Colorado, Blue, and North Platte Rivers, and others important to whitewater recreation.² These segments are currently being managed as eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS, and depending on the alternative selected, these segments will either remain eligible, be found Suitable, or be determined not Suitable and released from further consideration for inclusion in the national system.

² The 15 segments are: Blue River (Segments 2 and 3), Colorado River (Segments 1 through 5), Kinney Creek, Muddy Creek, North Platte River, Piney River, Rabbit Ears Creek, Spruce Creek, Sulphur Gulch and Troublesome Creek.

In 2010, BLM released its [Suitability Report](#) which found:

- Suitable Segments (see [Figure 2-54](#))
 - o Colorado River Segments 4 and 5
- All remaining segments were found to not be Suitable because they either:
 - o had too little land under BLM jurisdiction, with local governments expressing disinterest in managing a Wild and Scenic River;
 - o could be adequately managed using other protective designations, or;
 - o only had one ORV which could be protected through other BLM management actions and protective designations.

(See the 2010 Suitability Report, p. C-3; See "[KFO dRMP WSR Eligible Rivers](#)" for more information about which segments fall into which category).

B. The Alternatives and Wild and Scenic Rivers

Alternative A: Continue to manage the 15 segments as eligible.

Alternative B1: Colorado River segments 4 and 5 would be found Suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The management of these segments would remain the same as it is today until either the RMP is revised again or Congress formally includes them in the NWSRS. The remaining 13 segments would be found not Suitable and released from consideration in the NWSRS.

Alternative B2: The Suitability Determination would be deferred for Colorado River Segments 4 and 5, and the river would retain its eligible status. A stakeholder agreement plan that protects flows would be implemented. The remaining 13 segments would be found not Suitable and released from consideration in the NWSRS.

Alternative C: All 15 segments would be found Suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS.

Alternative D: All 15 segments would be found not Suitable and released from future consideration for inclusion in the NWSRS.

More in-depth information about the Impacts to and from Wild and Scenic management decisions, see "[KFO Env't'l Consequences Summary](#)." See also Chapter 4, Section 4.2.22, pages 4-559 to 4-585.

C. The Stakeholder Plan

Since 2007, American Whitewater has been a key member of the stakeholder group mentioned in Alternative B2, joining with water and conservation districts, utilities, counties, and environmental organizations to find a collaborative solution to meeting the growing needs and demands on the Colorado River. Because a WSR designation can do very little to protect streamflows, the Stakeholder Plan has worked hard to find a way, under Colorado water law, to protect flows critical to river health and a robust outdoor recreation economy. According to the dRMP, "if implemented successfully, this cooperative approach could provide higher long-term certainty that adequate flows would be present to support the ORVs. Water rights administration and management is outside the BLM's management authority; however the success of this approach could result in long-term beneficial impacts to the WSR characteristics of the suitable streams"

(p. 4-582). American Whitewater has worked hard with other stakeholders to protect instream flows into the future, and as a result we support Alternative B2. (For BLM's description of the Stakeholder process, see section 1.11.6 on pages 1-39 to 1-40.)

D. Other Protections for River Values

Other management actions may protect some Wild and Scenic ORV's whether or not a river segment is included in the NWSRS. These actions come in the form of use restrictions related to other key management issues, such as Recreation and Visitor Services and other Special Designations (i.e., Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, etc...). You'll see them outlined more below, and we hope you'll consider supporting these use restrictions in your comments to further protect water quality and riparian values.

We don't want you to get too lost in the acronym soup of these extra protective measures, so watch out for:

- NSO: no surface occupancy or surface disturbing activities
- CSU: controlled surface use
- VRM: Visual Resource Management areas
- ROW: Right of Way avoidance areas (Right of Way restrictions for power lines, roads, communications, etc...)
- Other restrictions on travel, logging and mineral explorations

III. **Recreation and Visitor Services**

A. Recreation Management on BLM Lands

Recreation activities on BLM lands are managed through two types of Recreation Management Areas:

- Special Recreation Management Area "SMRA"
 - o An area where recreation is one of the main management objectives and activities are more concentrated, structures and regulated (p. 2-7).
- Extensive Recreation Management Area "ERMA"
 - o An area where recreation is unstructured and dispersed, with minimal regulation and investment (p. 2-7).

General information about SMRA/ERMA's can be found [from the BLM here](#). Maps of the proposed SMRA/ERMAs under each alternative can be found in Figures [2-30 \(Alternative A\)](#), [2-31 \(Alternative B\)](#), [2-32 \(Alternative C\)](#) and [2-33 \(Alternative D\)](#).

B. Current River Recreation Management (p. 3-150 through 3-151)

Upper Colorado River

- River use and access
 - o Byers Canyon has a short whitewater section used by kayakers during the spring runoff
 - o Parshall to Kremmling: BLM manages BLM manages 5 walk-in fishing sites.

- Below Kremmling: BLM has 3 developed river access sites.
- Gore Canyon is a nationally significant Class V section that is used by boaters in the late summer.
- Pumphouse to State Bridge: River recreation here is the primary recreation activity on the river, and within the KRO overall. Class II-III whitewater, used heavily in the summer, mostly by commercial outfitters, although private boaters have come in increasing numbers since 2005.
- Camping
 - Two fee campgrounds (Pumphouse and Radium Recreation Areas)
 - Campsites along the river have fire rings, picnic tables and primitive toilets.

Other Rivers in the KFO

- Fraser River
 - Boating and fishing are key activities.
 - BLM does not manage the put-in or takeout.
- Blue River
 - Boating and fishing are key activities.
 - BLM manages the takeout only.
- Muddy Creek
 - BLM manages one river access point on Muddy Creek for wade fishing.

C. The Alternatives and Recreation Management Areas

Currently, there are 2 SRMA's in the KFO region - North Sand Hills (OHV riding) and Upper Colorado River (rafting, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, camping). While there are numerous Recreation Management Areas being considered in the RMP under the Alternatives, only the Upper Colorado River West SRMA has "floatboating" (i.e. rafting, kayaking and canoeing) as a primary recreation management activity. It would be designated under all action alternatives outlined in the dRMP, and the major boating related impacts by Alternative are outlined below.

Note that the Headwaters ERMA proposed under Alternative B and SRMA under Alternative D contains Kinney Creek, and the Strawberry ERMA proposed under Alternative B and SRMA under Alternative C and D contains a major tributary to the Fraser River. Protection of the riparian values of these resources is also important to support in your comments). For more information about the other SRMA/ERMA's managed by the KFO, see pages 2-30, and Chapter 4, pages 4-422 to 4-425 (Alternative B); 4-429 to 4-430 (Alternative C); 4-432 to 4-435 (Alternative D).

Upper Colorado River (West) SRMA (Unless otherwise noted, Alt B pp. 4-422 to 4-423; Alt C pp. 4-429 to 4-430; Alt D pp. 4-432 to 4-433) See American Whitewater's "[KFO Env't'l Consequences Summary](#)" for a more in depth summary.

- Level of remoteness:
 - Alternative B: make the river corridor more remote
 - Alternative C: place emphasis on a less crowded recreational setting

- Alternative D: more developed physical setting would come; fewer management controls on number of people
- Group size limitations
 - Alternative B: none
 - Alternative C: 25 people, including guides for commercial trips. Private users could be restricted too depending on whether social setting numbers are exceeded.
 - Alternative D: none
- Permit requirements
 - Alternative B: require permits for private users within the SRMA.
 - Alternative C: (not discussed in Chapter 4)
 - Alternative D: none for private users
- User fees (p. 2-106): may be implemented “as appropriate.” None specifically outlined for Upper Colorado River SRMA.
- Camping (p. 2-103)
 - Alternative B: 14-day limit from September 1 to March 31 and 7-day limit from April 1 to August 31. Campers must relocate at least a 30-mile radius away and may not return within 30 days.
 - Alternative C: Same as Alternative B.
 - Alternative D: 14-day limit year-round. Campers must relocate at least a 30-mile radius away and may not return within 30 days.
- Special Recreation Permits
 - Alternative B: Limit Class III³ SRP’s (i.e., the Gore Canyon Race would not be a festival)
 - Alternative C: Reduce the number of SRP’s issued to commercial operators; Limit the issuance of Class II⁴ permits (i.e. no competitive events permitted).
 - Alternative D: Issued on demand; existing permits modified to allow new areas and new activities; Class IV⁵ permits issued for large events (i.e. Gore Canyon Race could become a large festival).
- Visitor facilities
 - Alternative B: remove some pit toilets, fire rings and picnic tables to make the area more remote.
 - Alternative C: (not discussed in Chapter 4)
 - Alternative D: Existing facilities maintained, new facilities added to meet growing need.

IV. Other Special Designations

The BLM has other Special Designations to protect certain values. These include Wilderness Study Areas, which are areas that are being considered for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, which are areas within BLM lands where special management actions are taken to protect areas of environmental significance. These designations may provide additional protection to rivers and specific ORV’s within the CRVFO region whether or not certain segments eventually are designated for inclusion in the NWSRS. Note, however, that

³ For more about SRP Permit Classes, see page M-6 in [Appendix M](#).

⁴ See note 5.

⁵ See note 5.

BLM specific protections (ACECs in this instance) are not necessarily permanent protections. Despite this, these protections are important to support in your comments.

A. Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas:

Under all alternatives, the 3 existing Wilderness Study Areas will be maintained (p. 3-203). These areas include the Troublesome Creek WSA and Platte River Contiguous WSA. The Platte River WSA is adjacent to the USFS's Platt River Wilderness Area, and also is likely near the 0.07-mile segment that is eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS (see Maps 2-52 and 3-22). Boating is an ORV of the Platt River. The Troublesome WSA contains portions of Troublesome and Rabbit Ears Creeks, both of which have segments eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS (pp. 3-205 to 3-206). The area is remote and access is limited (p. 4-557). The third WSA, North Sand Hills Instant Study Area, does not relate to riparian values or boating. No additional WSA's are proposed in the dRMP.

Different use restrictions are proposed for these WSA's under each alternative. See pp 4-556 to 4-559 for more information.

B. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's) are BLM lands that receive special management attention in order to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historical, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes. They also protect life and safety from natural hazards (p. 4-538). General information about ACEC's can be found [from the BLM here](#). Management actions vary from one ACEC to the next, and depend on the "relevant and important values" identified for each one.

Supporting ACEC's can also help to protect water quality and riparian values. All ACECs have surface occupancy and use restrictions. For example, the areas are recommended for withdrawal from mineral location, closed to solid mineral leasing, mineral material sales and coal leasing, and new motorized routes are prohibited (p. 2-136 to 2-137).

Four proposed ACEC's encompass rivers, outlined below. Consider supporting these additional riparian protections in your comments.

- Kinney Creek ACEC (p. 4-550 to 4-552)
 - o An ACEC under Alternative C only.
 - o Relevant and important values: Colorado River cutthroat trout.
 - o Kinney Creek has segments that are eligible under the NWSRS.

- Laramie River ACEC (p. 4-548 to 4-549)
 - o An ACEC under Alternatives B and C only.
 - o Relevant and important values: plant species

- Troublesome Creek ACEC (p. 4-549 to 4-550)
 - o An ACEC under Alternatives B and C only.
 - o Relevant and important values: plant species

- Troublesome Creek has segments that are eligible under the NWSRS (not within the ACEC).
- North Park Natural Area ACEC (p. 4-547)
 - An ACEC under all Alternatives; larger area designated under Alternatives B and C
 - Near the North Platte River (small segment eligible, Floatboating ORV)
 - Relevant and important values: plant and wildlife species

For more information about the other existing and proposed ACEC's, see Table 2-2 (pp. 2-135 to 2-140) and Environmental Consequences in Chapter 4 (pp. 4-538 to 4-556). See also table 4-69, "Existing and Potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" in Chapter 4 on page 4-539, which compares the values and number of acres designated under each current and proposed ACEC. Figures 2-51, 2-52 and 2-53 are maps of ACEC designations for each alternative.