



**COLORADO WATER TRUST**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Amy Beatie, Executive Director

Phone: (720) 570-2897

Email: [abeatie@coloradowatertrust.org](mailto:abeatie@coloradowatertrust.org)

[www.coloradowatertrust.org](http://www.coloradowatertrust.org)

Kevin McBride, General Manager

Phone: (970) 871-1035

Email: [kmcbride@upperyampawater.com](mailto:kmcbride@upperyampawater.com)

[www.upperyampawater.com](http://www.upperyampawater.com)

## **PARTIES ENTER INTO PIONEERING AGREEMENT TO KEEP WATER FLOWING IN YAMPA RIVER**

*Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District, Colorado Water Trust, and Colorado Water Conservation Board work together to preserve environmental values and wildlife habitat.*

Today, the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (Upper Yampa) Board of Directors approved a water lease with the Colorado Water Trust (CWT) and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). CWT is leasing 4,000 acre feet of storage water owned by Upper Yampa in Stagecoach Reservoir, an on-stream reservoir on the Yampa River, to make strategic releases for hydropower and for streamflow benefits below the reservoir. CWT has been working on a short-term water leasing pilot program, Request for Water 2012, for about three months, since water forecasts projected low water availability.

“The Colorado Water Trust is grateful for intrepid, innovative partners, Upper Yampa and the CWCB in particular, who have been enterprising, thoughtful, and responsive over the past weeks as we have worked to utilize this never-before-used 2003 water leasing statute. Upper Yampa’s actions benefit their local river and their community. We look forward to providing some extra water for the Yampa River, an iconic river that is drawing statewide interest in this dry year, and to utilizing that water for multiple benefits,” says Amy Beatie, Executive Director.

Since its bi-partisan creation in 2003 in response to drought conditions, the Colorado short-term leasing statute has never been used, and CWT has been working with the CWCB and willing water users to put the statute to work this year. Enter Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District. The Upper Yampa District has four thousand acre feet of water available because a contract was not renewed this year.

“When we saw the CWT Request for Water 2012, we thought it would be a great opportunity for collaboration in meeting multiple needs during this drought year, and the Upper Yampa Board is fully supportive of meeting multiple needs. Thankfully, the District had the foresight to build upstream

storage,” stated Kevin McBride, District Manager. The Upper Yampa District is committed to coping with the challenging water situation as best as possible, and they have been working with CWT, the CWCB, the City of Steamboat Springs, and other local partners to utilize the available water to meet multiple needs. This kind of cooperation and creative thinking goes a long way when resources are especially scarce. CWT is working to remarket the leased water to a downstream water user; delivering the water downstream could wet a longer reach of the Yampa River.

Although these groups are working together to provide some water for the Yampa River, streamflows will still be well below average. Through the 2003 state statute, water can only be released to fulfill a decreed instream flow water right. Below Stagecoach Reservoir, the instream flow from Morrison Creek to Lake Catamount is for 72.5 cfs from April 1 – August 14 and 47.5 cfs from August 15 – March 30. To illustrate what 4,000 acre feet of water could provide, the reservoir could release water at a rate of 26 cfs for 75 days. Currently, the groups plan to make strategic releases to maximize the benefits that this water can provide. With flows at these levels, the Yampa River may still be too low for tubers and other recreationists; still, the instream flow levels might prevent the river from going dry and should alleviate some stress on the natural environment.

The Colorado Water Trust is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting streamflows in Colorado through voluntary, market-based efforts. These efforts include permanent water acquisitions, water leases, physical solutions, technical assistance and support, and other creative solutions that improve streamflows. More information about the Colorado Water Trust is available at [www.coloradowatertrust.org](http://www.coloradowatertrust.org)

The Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District was formed in 1966 to provide legal authority to plan and construct water conservation projects in the Yampa Valley. More information about the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District is available at [www.upperyampawater.com](http://www.upperyampawater.com).

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