

WINTER PARK RANCH  
WATER & SANITATION DISTRICT



July 16, 2013

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## SHORT-TERM WATER LEASE WILL BENEFIT FRASER RIVER

*Winter Park Ranch Water and Sanitation District leases water to bolster critical instream flows*

The amount of water flowing in the heavily negotiated Fraser River has long been a topic of state-wide concern. While many parties are seeking solutions to flow shortages, local on-the-ground projects are playing a role in helping the river. The Board of Directors for [Winter Park Ranch Water and Sanitation District](#) saw an opportunity to lease some of the District's water rights to supplement streamflows in St. Louis Creek and the Fraser River and pursued a local project to benefit their home river.

The [instream flow](#) water rights on the Fraser River are often water short because they are junior to other rights on the stream. Through a [2003 Colorado state statute](#), water rights can be loaned or leased on a temporary basis to fill those water-short instream flows. A short-term lease between Winter Park Ranch, the [Colorado Water Conservation Board](#) (CWCB), and the [Colorado Water Trust](#) (CWT) was approved by the [State Engineer's Office](#) on June 6<sup>th</sup>, accepted by CWCB Assistant Director Tom Browning on June 11<sup>th</sup>, and ratified by the CWCB Board of Directors on July 16<sup>th</sup> at their meeting in Alamosa. This approval paves the way for temporary instream flow use of the Winter Park Ranch water rights when flows in the Fraser River start to drop off in the next few weeks.

Preparing to measure water and administer the lease, CWT, CWCB, and Winter Park Ranch representatives were in the field on July 15<sup>th</sup>, or more accurately, in the Fraser River. Klancke and CWCB hydrologist/hydrographer Brian Epstein prepared a site where they will monitor streamflows later this season, and Epstein installed a staff gage nearby.

“The Fraser is a hard working river with much of its flow diverted. The consistent low-flow conditions degrade habitat for wildlife and the river’s natural beauty,” said District Manager Kirk Klancke. “While these water rights can provide some benefit to the Fraser, I would encourage other water users or managers to consider their water rights and if those rights might be appropriate for instream flow use. Our river can use all of the help it can get.”

As a water manager, an avid fly fisher, president of Trout Unlimited’s [Colorado River Headwaters Chapter](#), and a conservationist [recognized by Field & Stream](#), Klancke is a champion of the Fraser River. When the Colorado Water Trust launched the [Request for Water 2012 pilot program](#), which is implemented in partnership with the CWCB, Klancke recognized that the [short-term leasing tool](#) could help boost local streamflows. When Klancke approached his Board of Directors, they enthusiastically supported the project to benefit the Fraser River.

“Kirk was one of the first water users to express interest in the Request for Water pilot program last year. It’s been a pleasure to work with someone so invested in the community’s river,” said Zach Smith, staff attorney for the Colorado Water Trust. “We hope the leasing tool can bring some short-term benefits to the Fraser.”

The 2003 Colorado state statute provides legal authority to loan or lease water to fill an existing but *water-short* instream flow right on a temporary basis without changing the water right in water court. Through this process, the water can only be used for instream flow purposes for three years in a ten year period, and can only be used for up to 120 days in each of those three years. CWT has been vetting and analyzing water rights for short-term lease agreements while coordinating efforts closely with the CWCB, the only entity in Colorado authorized to hold instream flow water rights. While this short-term leasing tool can only be used under specific and limited circumstances, it provides flexibility in the context of Colorado water law.

“As a water provider, Winter Park Ranch feels responsible for stewarding the river that provides water to our community,” said Klancke. “Leasing some of Winter Park Ranch’s water rights for instream flow use was both a smart choice for Winter Park Ranch and a great way to protect water in our local rivers.”

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The Winter Park Ranch Water and Sanitation District was established in 1966 to provide water and sewer services to the 440 acres of the Winter Park Ranch Development. The District was established to serve 3,000 customers at full build out. WPRW&SD is a Special District governed by Colorado State Statute and regulated by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. More information about the District can be found at [www.wprwater.com](http://www.wprwater.com).

The Colorado Water Trust is a private, nonprofit organization that engages in and supports voluntary efforts to restore and protect streamflows in Colorado to sustain healthy aquatic ecosystems. These efforts include water acquisitions, other creative transfers of water, on-the-ground physical solutions, and providing technical assistance to land trusts. More information about the Colorado Water Trust is available at [www.coloradowatertrust.org](http://www.coloradowatertrust.org).

The Colorado Water Conservation Board, an agency within the Department of Natural Resources, was created in 1937 to provide policy direction on water issues. Governed by a 15-member board, the CWCB's responsibilities range from protecting Colorado's streams and lakes to water conservation, flood mitigation, watershed protection, stream restoration, drought planning, water supply planning and water project financing. The CWCB administers Colorado's Instream Flow Program and is the only entity in the state authorized to hold instream flow water rights. More information about the Colorado Water Conservation Board is available at <http://cwc.state.co.us>