

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

A. INTRODUCTION

This plan revision effort began in the Spring of 1998 as a revision of the Arkansas River Recreation Management Plan [ARRMP], which was originally completed in October of 1989 as a part of the establishment of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area [AHRA]. AHRA is a partnership between the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management [BLM] and the State of Colorado's Department of Natural Resource's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation [CDPOR] to manage recreation resources and activities along 148 miles of the river from its headwaters near Leadville down to Pueblo Reservoir. This plan expands the scope of the recreation management partnership to include the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service [FS] and the State of Colorado's Department of Natural Resource's Division of Wildlife [CDOW].

The 1989 Arkansas River Recreation Management Plan was a product of a very comprehensive public involvement process. Sixteen governmental entities and two citizen groups were involved in the original planning effort. Various recreational user groups, environmental organizations, conservation districts, industry associations and area residents also participated. This plan revision has attempted to match that effort with an extensive series of public involvement efforts. This plan revision process specifically utilized the AHRA Citizens Task Force to guide, lead and extensively participate in the plan revision process. On the following pages are a description of the river corridor setting, a mile by mile discussion of the river segment resources, a summary of recreation use along the river, the purpose and need for this plan revision, a listing of the public involvement steps for this plan revision, a summarized discussion of the issues covered in this plan revision, a description of the role of the Citizens Task Force, an analysis of alternatives considered in this revision process and various other applicable subjects to this plan revision. A Cooperative Management Agreement {See APPENDIX A} has been drafted to fully implement this ARRMP.

1. Location and Setting

The 148 mile Arkansas River corridor within the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area is one of the most diverse and attractive river corridors in Colorado. Descending from lofty mountain peaks near Leadville, the Arkansas flows through wide open grasslands at altitudes of 10,000 feet, traverses a varied range

of impressive and beautiful montane ecosystems on its way down hill and finally ends in a mature river system at Pueblo Reservoir. The corridor has remained remarkably pristine despite the fact that it has been modified by a railroad, a busy highway and substantial agricultural, residential and commercial development along much of its length. From top to bottom the river has a significant and vital impact on the valley economy and beyond because of water rights for irrigation, municipal and industrial purposes and for the sale and storage of water. Also, because of its natural beauty, biological productivity, steep gradient and diversity of river environments, the Arkansas River is much beloved by avid recreationists. The challenge for the AHRA is to satisfy recreational needs and at the same time maintain environmental quality as well as the quality of experiences along the river. See Illustration 1-1 for a graphical representation of the river corridor.

Illustration 1-1

2. Resources by River Segment

From Leadville, the Arkansas River flows down through the communities of Granite, Buena Vista, Johnson Village, Salida, Swissvale, Howard, Coaldale, Cotopaxi, Texas Creek, Canon City and Florence. While some sections are bordered by roads and towns, other sections are more remote. Each has different resource and visitor use characteristics. Six distinct river segments have been recognized and are described below. These segments are also shown graphically in Illustration 1-2.

- Segment 1 Leadville to Buena Vista** - Ideally suited for technical private boating, this segment offers Class I through Class V rapids and vertical drops ranging from 26 to 66 feet per mile. Commercial boating occurs in the lower portion of this segment, along with many other activities, i.e. camping, fishing, picnicking, wildlife watching, recreational gold placering and hiking. The Granite, Numbers, Number 4 Put in, Railroad Bridge and Buena Vista Boat Ramp access points receive extensive use. River access lease sites have enhanced fishing opportunities along this segment of the river.
- Segment 2 Buena Vista to Salida** - The most heavily used portion of the river for commercial rafting trips, this segment offers Class III and IV rapids and a vertical drop of 30 feet per mile. Other activities include fishing, a considerable amount of historic private kayaking and rafting and some overnight camping trips. Recreation sites along this segment that offer boating opportunities are Fisherman's Bridge, Ruby Mountain, Hecla Junction, Stone Bridge, Big Bend and the Salida Boat Ramp. Other activities occur at these sites as well, i.e. fishing, camping, hiking, picnicking, wildlife watching and recreational gold placering. River access lease sites have enhanced fishing opportunities along this segment of the river.
- Segment 3 Salida to Vallie Bridge** - Fishing is the dominant use in this segment, although private and commercial boating does occur, as well as special events i.e. the annual FIBArk race. This segment lies adjacent to US Highway 50 and offers mostly quiet water. The vertical drop is 24 feet per mile. Many of the recreation sites along this segment offer boating opportunities, i.e. Salida East, Rincon and Vallie Bridge and most of these sites, along with others, i.e. Point Barr, also offer picnicking, fishing, camping, hiking, wildlife watching and recreational gold placering. River access lease sites have enhanced fishing opportunities along this segment of the river.
- Segment 4 Vallie Bridge to Parkdale** - A heavily used segment for commercial and private boating, this portion of the river lies adjacent to US Highway 50 and has rapids up to Class IV. The vertical drop is 30 feet per mile. The Canyon Trading Post, Lone Pine, Texas Creek, Pinnacle Rock, Salt Lick, Five Points, Spikebuck and Parkdale recreation sites provide extensive access to the river. These sites, along with various other smaller less developed sites, i.e. Loma Linda, Fernleaf Gulch, Maytag, etc., provide for picnicking, fishing, camping, hiking, wildlife watching and recreational gold placering.
- Segment 5 Parkdale to Canon City** - Running through the Royal Gorge, this segment offers very technical whitewater, Class III, IV, and V rapids, with a vertical drop of 50 feet per mile. It is potentially quite hazardous at both low and high water flows. This segment provides commercial boating as well as private boating opportunities. Grape Creek and the Canon City Boat Ramp are the recreation sites in this segment. Other recreation activities available at these sites include picnicking, fishing, hiking, wildlife watching and recreational gold placering.
- Segment 6 Canon City to Pueblo Reservoir** - This segment differs from the previous five in that it is characterized as a plains river, dropping only 15 vertical feet per mile and offering Class I rapids. Ideally suited for canoeists and other boaters desiring a tranquil river trip, it offers fishing, wildlife watching and picnicking opportunities. Access to the river in this segment is somewhat limited at this time, occurring principally at the Canon City Boat Ramp, several municipal parks and at the Pueblo Reservoir boat ramp.

Illustration 1-2

3. Recreation Use Summary

Recreation visitation of all forms has increased since this recreation area began. The following table describes in summary form the recreation use within the river corridor from 1990 through 2000. The details of this recreation use in the recreation area are presented in APPENDIX B on a yearly and activity basis.

Table 1-1 Recreation Use Within AHRA

Activity	Annual Vistors											Totals	
	1990 *	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Visitors	%
Sightseeing	68,743	126,878	149,962	168,975	180,372	186,421	192,157	206,414	215,955	247,598	266,676	2,010,151	33
Fishing Shore	14,102	18,846	20,904	22,166	23,495	23,753	27,667	34,286	40,823	50,367	66,426	342,840	5
Fishing Boat	853	1,582	1,885	1,850	2,341	1,787	3,109	4,403	5,634	6,538	6,631	36,613	1
Picnicking	14,044	18,672	22,420	24,548	25,962	26,291	27,699	29,938	32,377	34,524	44,160	300,635	5
Boating-Commercial	178,690	189,678	219,894	226,506	244,144	242,624	276,125	283,862	301,390	293,848	301,152	2,757,913	44
Boating-Private	19,043	19,704	17,360	25,052	24,855	25,273	25,829	24,178	29,401	28,550	28,105	267,350	4
Other {hiking,biking, hunting, horseback riding, mining, swimming, OHV}	6,432	10,744	15,320	15,650	19,246	18,812	22,517	25,098	28,415	39,793	35,269	237,296	4
Interpretive	1,216	1,216	971	974	1,821	1,094	2,163	1,752	4,737	10,781	11,574	38,583	1
Camping	8,748	9,737	11,674	12,644	13,880	13,418	14,749	16,148	20,331	26,618	22,973	170,920	3
Total	311,871	396,812	460,393	498,891	536,116	539,473	592,015	626,079	679,068	738,617	782,966	6,162,301	100

* 1990 figures are for May through December only

B. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

A Recreation Area Management Plan for management of recreation use on public lands adjacent to the Arkansas River was completed by the BLM in 1982. While several elements of that original plan were implemented in the form of facility development, maintenance improvements and visitor information materials, much still remained to be done. A planning process, which began in 1986, was completed in 1989 with the finalization of a comprehensive river management plan, "The Final Arkansas River Recreation Management Plan". This plan was completed by BLM with lots of cooperation from user groups, other agencies and a Citizen Task Force. This plan, which established a partnership between CDPOR and the BLM, has accomplished much in the last ten years. The majority of the planning decisions within the 1989 plan have been implemented to the degree that on a national basis this partnership is looked at as an exemplary success story in river management between a state and a federal entity.

However, recreation visitation has increased since this plan began. Issues have arisen that need answers, and critical and complex management issues have developed that must be dealt with. See APPENDIX C for a detailed description of this very extensive public involvement process. The following Table 1-2 lays out that planning process by general steps.

Table 1-2 River Plan Revision Planning Process

Planning Process Step	Process Summary	Time line
Step #1	Issue development for plan revision {public scoping process, open houses, issue categorization & draft issue development}	August 1998 - December 1998
Step #2	Development of final issues & rough draft proposed revisions {writing revisions, public workshops process, CTF workshop & informal sharing of revisions}	January 1999 - October 1999
Step #3	Development of Draft Plan Revision & Preliminary Supplemental Environmental Assessment {writing, sharing & obtaining public comments on the draft document}	November 1999 - August 2000
Step #4	Development of the Final Plan Revision/Supplemental Environmental Assessment {responding to comments, final reviews & writing of final document}	September 2000 - December 2000
Step #5	Adoption of Revised Plan, Decision Record Signing & publishing process.	January 2001 - February 2001

This plan revision process has led to the development of the following preamble to an AHRA river plan vision statement:

This preamble is written with the aid of ten years of experience in managing the various issues along the various river segments. One high priority goal given the managers, among others, was to manage for intensive recreation. From this perspective the management has been a success judging by the expressed feelings of the major user groups on the river. Regulations are in place to control and distribute use in the corridor. Facilities have been built that enhance the quality of the experience for a wide range of users, a permanent AHRA Headquarters has been constructed in Salida and there is a staff which oversees and maintains these sites and uses. Also, to the credit of everyone, the health of the river's riparian areas has improved despite significantly increased use in this same time period. So, from a development point of view, most of the primary goals of the original management plan have come to fruition. Legitimate questions arise, "Where do we go from here?, How do we acknowledge and improve coordination with other agencies? and What plans should be in place to use and at the same time maintain the quality of this public treasure?"

In addition to the plan revision preamble, the following **VISION STATEMENT** was developed to act as a guide for what the next ten years of river management should bring to the Arkansas River corridor:

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area shall be managed to emphasize its natural resources, resource sustainability and the standards for public land health, recognizing and respecting private property, while embracing numerous recreational, educational and commercial activities. Such management will require balancing the many uses that preserve the existing natural settings and conditions as well as recognizing existing agriculture, rural and urban conditions throughout the river corridor. Maintaining these expectations and settings for visitors and residents alike will require individualized management through different sections of the river, in recognition of varying natural and manmade influences. Where conflict over goals and objectives occurs, balance and compromise should be found that recognizes the value of authorized recreational activities without diminishing the standards for public land health or the water resources.

C. CITIZENS TASK FORCE

The AHRA Citizens Task Force [CTF] has been functioning since 1990 as an advisory group to the BLM River Manager and the State Park Manager. This task force, comprised of seven interest areas, has adjusted roles, functions and processes as described below:

The Role of the Citizens Task Force is to:

- Provide advice to the AHRA in application of the Recreation Management Guidelines developed from the Standards for Public Land Health;
- Assist AHRA in maintaining a watershed focus;
- Provide recommendations to AHRA on growth, value and potential development issues within the recreation area;
- Assist AHRA in resolving other management problems along the river corridor as they arise;
- Assist in providing an open communication link to all interested parties affected by management decisions;
- Provide support to the AHRA Management Plan and implementation of plan goals and objectives.

The Citizens Task Force is to be composed of seven {7} representative groups with fourteen members:

1. Two anglers {representing all fishing types-Fly, Bait, Lure, etc.};
2. Two commercial permittees {AHRA Agreement Holders with an AHRA Agreement in good standing};
3. Two private boaters {representing all boating types-Kayak, Raft, etc.};
4. Two environmentalists {representing environmental organizations};

5. Two water users {representing all types, i.e. Municipal, Agriculture, Industrial, etc.};
6. Two river front property owners {representing ranching and non-ranching river property ownership};
7. Two local government representatives {members of the Upper Arkansas Council of Governments}.

The Appointment Process for the Citizens Task Force:

- Members of recognized organizations or user groups may be used as a pool from which Citizens Task Force members are selected.
- Candidates for the Citizens Task Force should be able to demonstrate interest and experience with the issues of their constituency throughout the river corridor.
- Members must be capable of representing their respective interests while working as productive members in a team setting.
- Every effort should be made to advertise widely when vacancies exist so that Citizens Task Force members represent a wide range of opinions and users within their constituency.
- The following organizations are identified and selected to serve as a clearing house for selection of nominees by ALL parties interested in the selection process. They are to serve as a central and existent organization for individuals and/or members of other similar interest organizations to contact and then TOGETHER, collectively select nominees. The identified organization is consequently not to make the decision on their own, but rather to coordinate the nomination process. They are:

Anglers – Colorado Trout Unlimited in Denver, as well as the public, will help develop nominees. The CDOW Area Manager in Salida will participate in the selection of the nominees for these two positions.

Commercial Permittees – Arkansas River Outfitter Association in Salida, the Colorado River Outfitter Association in Denver, as well as the public, will help develop nominees.

Private Boaters – Colorado Whitewater Association in Denver, as well as the public, will help develop nominees. Both rafters and kayakers must be equitably represented.

Environmental – Colorado Environmental Coalition in Denver, as well as the public, will help develop nominees.

Water Users – Colorado Water Congress in Denver, as well as other water users, will help develop nominees.

River Front property owners - Colorado Cattlemen’s Association in Denver, as well as the public, will help develop nominees. These members will be residents of different counties if possible.

Local Governments - Upper Arkansas Council of Governments headquartered in Canon City will develop nominees.

- Annually review at a CTF meeting the groups selected above for applicability.
- The AHRA BLM River Manager and the AHRA State Park Manager will make recommendations to the BLM Field Office Manager and the CDPOR South Region Assistant Manager for the final appointments to the Citizens Task Force from referred nominees.
- Appointments to the Citizens Task Force will be for a term of two {2} years. Citizens Task Force members may be re-nominated for additional terms and shall serve staggered terms with their fellow representative.

The Agency Representation/Ad Hoc Membership and Function for the CTF:

1. The FS District Rangers, the SECWCD Manager, the CDOW Salida Area Wildlife Manager, the BOR Project Manager, the BLM Field Office Associate Manager, the State Parks South Region Assistant Manager, the UACOG Director, County Commissioners for Lake, Chaffee, and Fremont Counties, the chairperson of the Lake County Open Space Coalition and others as appropriate should represent their agency and have an Ad Hoc membership on the CTF;
2. These ad hoc members will be encouraged to discuss respective agency issues with AHRA managers and attend CTF meetings to provide input and discussion on the issues that concern their mission, agency or organization;

3. The main function of these ad hoc members is to provide a link between their agency or group and the AHRA;

4. The City governments and the Chambers of Commerce for Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida and Canon City will be added to the mailing list and also receive all documents for their review.

Other Considerations/Directions for the CTF:

- The CTF will meet 5 times per year except when specific needs of the AHRA require special meetings;
- The CTF members will be polled as to their opinions, and their reasons for same, regarding all decisions of substance relating to the AHRA, with the outcome of this to become a part of the public record;
- The CTF will elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson on an annual basis;
- The chairperson and vice-chairperson, along with the BLM River Manager and State Park Manager, will develop the meeting agendas;
- The chairperson and vice-chairperson, along with the BLM River Manager and State Park Manager, will develop and disseminate adequate public notices and press releases;
- The agendas for all CTF meetings will include a specific time for receiving public input;
- The chairperson or their designated representative will conduct all meetings;
- CTF members are expected to attend all meetings except when extenuating circumstances prohibit such;
- The CTF will determine if a vacancy exists when a CTF member has missed two {2} or more meetings in a calendar year;
- CTF Members who travel over 25 miles on a regular basis to attend meetings

will
be paid for that mileage at the prevailing rate by BLM;

- When meals or refreshments are required as a function of attendance at a meeting
the CDPOR will pay for such;
- All CTF members will receive a CDPOR Annual Pass each year they actively
serve.

D. PLAN REVISION ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

This plan revision considered only a no action alternative to the proposed actions within the “preferred alternative”. The rationale for this was that with the 20+ months of extensive public involvement, i.e. four public issue open houses, 9 issue development workshops, over 40+ public briefings/agencies meetings, the Citizen Task Force issue and plan revision retreat, etc., no clear alternative to the proposed plan revision except the no action alternative appeared to make sense. BLM policy suggests that we look at a no change/no action alternative. Within the 41 significant plan issues that emerged during the process that affected changes within the management plan, none potentially could be partially implemented or broken into logical portions to build a separate alternative. It seemed to be that to force another alternative into the extremely complex planning process was not a logical choice, therefore no other alternatives were analyzed.

E. APPLICABLE MANDATES & AUTHORITIES

The various applicable mandates, laws, guidance, regulations, etc., are referenced for BLM, CDPOR, CDOW and the FS within the original plan and within the revised Cooperative Management Agreement located in APPENDIX A of this plan.

F. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION & AMENDMENTS

The decisions, capacities and development outlined in the revised plan are consistent with the intent of the vision statement. Plan implementation will begin for the majority of decisions immediately upon completion of signatures on the signatory page of the revised plan, on the EA decision record, on the CMA signatory page and/or as otherwise shown within this revised plan. Those items that are related to carrying capacity will be effective with the 2001 boating season.

The AHRA managers and the CTF will continue to monitor the river management plan on an annual basis, analyzing the potential need for plan amendments or revisions. Plan amendments should be considered at such times that use and/or resource monitoring shows that there is an apparent need to amend or change a decision within this revised plan. It was necessary to amend the original plan during the first ten years and it is logical to assume that something will come up that was not anticipated and/or monitoring shows a need to change or modify with regards to the decisions within this plan. The vision statement will guide the managers in this process.