



Media Kit 2015

VOLUNTARY FLOW MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Unlike any other river in Colorado, or in the entire western United States, the Arkansas River is fortunate to have what is known as the Voluntary Flow Management Program. VFMP began in 1990 on an informal basis. In 1992 the program was revised to include cold water fishery protection at the urging of Trout Unlimited and the state Division of Wildlife. Rafting is limited above Granite, Colo. (headwaters) to protect the Brown Trout fishery. Since 1992 the program has worked to maintain summer flows between July 1 – Aug. 15. The goal is to maintain a minimum cubic feet per second (cfs) for boating and year-round flows of not less than 250 cfs, to enhance the trout fishery.

The VFMP is a cooperative effort among the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Trout Unlimited (TU), the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District (SECWCD) and the Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA). The United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) plays a key role in operating the VFMP, although it is not a signatory to the agreement. The BOR operates the reservoirs in Colorado and releases water that makes it all work. What makes this program possible is the cooperation, understanding and willingness of those involved to work together to reach the mutual goals of the divergent groups of water owners, water providers, water users, municipalities and government agencies. The VFMP has created a model for all rivers in the west and one of which Colorado residents can be very proud.

The Arkansas River is one of the few fisheries in Colorado that supports a Brown Trout population that is extremely popular with fly-fishermen. The largest component of the VFMP provides flows that support a healthy fishery.

This unique management technique on the Arkansas River is only possible because there are three upstream reservoirs that are located on feeder creeks, near the actual headwaters of the Arkansas River, and a large reservoir downstream of where all river rafting occurs. The main stem of the Arkansas River flows freely from its source at the headwaters to Lake Pueblo. Lake Pueblo is a very large storage facility, making it possible to capture the water released from the upper reservoirs for later use by municipalities and for agricultural purposes.

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Therefore, other than “transit losses” or evaporative losses of actual water, the VFMP is considered a non-consumptive use of water.

The VFMP’s annual operation during the summer season benefits not only rafting companies and private boaters, but it helps support the many communities and tax-collecting municipalities that depend on tourism for their very survival. Possibly the VFMP’s most important benefit is the chance to serve visitors who flock to the Arkansas River to enjoy the scenic beauty, whitewater thrills, excellent family-class rafting, as well as those inclined to dip a line to catch a trout.

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