



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

Environmental - Recreation Committee

Meeting Summary - Monday, Mar 30, 2026

via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81238782192?pwd=ZVc4VjRacWdST1BwVktTdlAycytXUT09#success>

A regular meeting of the Environmental – Recreation Committee of the [Arkansas Basin Roundtable](#) convened virtually. The meeting was called to order by Bob Hamel, Envi-Rec Committee Chair.

Attendees:

Roundtable Members: Bob Hamel (Ark River Outfitters Assoc - Recreation Chair); Ricki Garden (Central Colorado Conservancy - Environmental Chair), Alan Ward (Pueblo Water, CWCB Director and Ark Basin RT), Dave Allgood (Chair, Ark Basin RT).

Agency Liaisons: Rena Griggs (CPW – Water Specialist – SE Region), Tom Waters (CPW- Park Manager AHRA State Park), John Smeins (BLM)

Stakeholders & Guests: Jonathan Paklaian (ARWC), Cecilia Timberg (ARWC), Yates McConnell (ARWC), Jacob Stewart (ARWC), Mark Gebhart (TU Pikes Peak Chapter), Nathan Ward (Upper Ark Watershed Partnership), Luke Javernick (River Science), Kyle Horne (Canon City Recreation), Lisa Walters (CS-U), Patrick Bachman (CPW – Water Project Mitigation Coordinator), Jen Shanahan (Ducks Unlimited, Lower Ark Planning Initiative).

1. Welcome and Introductions – Bob Hamel, Chair

- a. Jan 26, 2026 Minutes. Approved by consensus.
- b. Public Comments - none.

2. Old and New Business

[Ark River Voluntary Flow Management Program \(VFMP\)](#) –Update

· Bob shared that the 5-year renewal for the VFMP agreement has been signed by all parties (Chaffee County, CPW, Ark River Outfitters Assoc., Trout Unlimited, and SECWCD) and will be valid until 2031. No changes were made from the last version.



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· The monthly VFMP internal agency call will be held tomorrow (Mar 31, 2026) to hear the latest updates from the Bureau of Reclamation and others on west slope import predictions, snowpack conditions, and river flow. Conditions so far look very dry, perhaps as bad as the 2002 dry year. As we know, the VFMP strives for a target flow of 700 cfs at the Wellsville gauge (Salida) from July 1 to Aug 15, but that flow target is not likely to be met this summer. Rafting Outfitters are strategizing or planning for lower summer rafting flows. Fish biologists are hoping there's enough water in the upper Ark Gold Medal stretch to keep a minimum of 250 cfs for the fishery. The Parkdale and Wellsville gauges have temperature measurement capability to tell us if the fishery could be stressed due to warmer water. Alan Ward shared some good news that reservoir levels in the upper Ark are good right now. The Winter Water Storage Program also had an average yield this winter, which is good for farmers in the lower Ark.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Updates

· Rena shared that flows below Pueblo dam are likely to be low this summer. This is a popular tail water fishery. Co Springs Utilities and Pueblo Water have Low Flow programs in place, but with a limited supply of 3000 AF for this program, it may not last long depending on released flow rate and timing. Remember that in dry years, Agriculture and Municipalities operate differently than they might operate in a wet or average year. Alan Ward explained that, to preserve supply, municipalities are unlikely to release water from Pueblo Dam. Farmers might call for water earlier in the season or call for less water than they normally would.

· Rena shared a reminder that Grizzly Reservoir is going to be drained for repairs (located on the west slope, just west over the continental divide from Twin Lakes Reservoir). That drained water will be diverted through the tunnel toward Lake Creek in the Ark Basin which flows to Twin Lakes Reservoir. That water is known to have heavy metals, and with this year's dry conditions, that water is likely to be more concentrated with pollutants. CPW biologists will be monitoring water quality on Lake Creek as the water comes through.

ARWC - Update

· Jonathan shared that the Wildfire Ready Action Plan work is in action, making forests in Chaffee and Lake County more resilient. The Flume Creek project was recently awarded funding at the CWCB meeting in March. Wildfire mitigation and wetland restoration efforts are in progress.

· Yates shared that Minnequa Dam, on the Ark River near Florence, CO, is owned by Orion Steel (formerly EVRAZ Steel). Studies are underway to consider partial dam removal for safe boat passage. Current discussions involve specific designs for a boat chute at lower flows. Designs will be shared with Orion Steel once the specifics are known.

· Cecelia introduced Jacob Stewart as the new AmeriCorps member who will be helping ARWC with outreach and communications until September 2026. Cecelia will be leaving for school in May. We wish her the best!



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BLM Updates

- John shared that BLM is working on strategies to improve flows below DeWeese Reservoir on Grape Creek. This stretch of Grape Creek struggles to maintain good fishery flows, especially in dry years.

Lower Ark Watershed Planning Initiative – Rena (for Jen Shanahan, Ducks Unlimited)

- You might recall the effort to examine sedimentation issues and restoration opportunities on the Lower Arkansas River, from Pueblo Reservoir to John Martin. Jen Shanahan has been hired to manage the study – she has experience with grading rivers to understand needs and make plans for targeted improvements. Jen met with CPW staff earlier this year to discuss CPW's interests regarding habitat improvements and ongoing wildlife studies. Good discussions were held regarding tamarisk removal (lessons learned from the past). Jen will provide an update for this group at a future Envi-Rec Committee meeting.

Proposed John Griffin Regional Park Reservoir – Canon City – Update

- Currently working to get feasibility approval from City Council, a 12–18-month process. Also working to get a USACE letter of interest.

[DeWeese Reservoir proposed dam raise](#)

- Deweese dam raise feasibility study Phase II was recently funded by CWCB.

Black Hills (now known as Western Gateway Park in Canon City)

- The city is moving slowly with plans to have a rafting put-in/take-out.

CWCB Funding awards from March board meeting

- Rena reviewed the projects that received funding during the March CWCB board meeting:
 - o Williams Ranch Conservation Easement (Central Colorado Water Conservancy)
 - o Monument Lake Dam Rehab – City of Trinidad
 - o DeWeese Enlargement Phase II design (DeWeese Dye Ditch Co and UAWCD)
 - o Flume Creek Restoration (ARWC)



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- o South Ark River 100% design – partially funded (Central Colorado Water Conservancy)

[Ark River Basin Water Forum \(ARBWF\)](#) set for April 21, 22, 23 in Salida.

· Two-day attendance and first day attendance are sold out. Thursday (one day) still has openings. There will be no virtual option (lack of interest). We look forward to seeing you there.

4. **Next Meeting Date, Monday, June 29, 2026, 10:00am on Zoom.**

· Envi-Rec Committee Meeting Schedule for 2026: Jan 26, Mar 30, Jun 29, Aug 31, Oct 26 (Starts 10:00am).

5. **Meeting Adjourned 11:15am.**