

Upper Colorado River Watershed Group

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Upper Colorado River
Watershed Group

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Dear Friend,

The North Fork of the Colorado River is in trouble. The headwaters of this iconic Grand County river flows from the snowpack and peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) into the Upper Colorado River watershed, with a beautiful but challenged reach in the center of the western side of RMNP known as the Kawuneeche Valley.

Over the past few decades, an overpopulation of moose and elk in RMNP has upset the ecological balance in the Kawuneeche Valley, decimating riparian willow growth with overgrazing. Beavers rely on willows for both dam material and to fill their winter larder, and the riparian ecosystem of the North Fork depends on beaver dams to protect water quality.

My memory may be faulty, but I believe there used to be an overlook sign on Trail Ridge Road, which climbs up from the valley through the peaks of RMNP, describing a beaver dam below as one of the largest in the world. These dams provided natural sediment ponds, keeping the river clear as it flowed into the shallow Shadow Mountain Reservoir. The [local beaver population moved on or died](#) when they could no longer find enough willows, and the absence of their dams has led to a severe buildup of sediment along the North Fork of the Colorado River.

This is just one watershed restoration project that UCRWG is hoping to address in the coming year [with your support](#).

UCRWG Board Members Dave Troutman and Ken Fucik recently submitted a grant proposal to the Colorado Water Conservation Board with the goal of addressing water quality challenges in the North Fork. UCRWG worked hard to bring together supporters from around the region to sponsor this proposal and we'll need to move fast to pull together stakeholder meetings and prepare a restoration plan if our bid is successful.

We are excited to explore how to address the problems facing the Kawuneeche Valley in 2020 by looking at how it is connected to the

surrounding watershed and we hope that you will [support us](#) on this journey.

Another North Fork challenge that UCRWG is hoping to address over the coming year is a massive sediment load from a Grand Ditch washout currently heading toward Shadow Mountain Reservoir and threatening water quality in this interconnected reservoir system for both water users in Grand Lake and the Northern Colorado Water District.

UCRWG is currently driving efforts on a joint grant proposal with the Northern Colorado Water District to address how the problems facing this waterway impacts the wide variety of water users. This UCRWG-driven grant proposal is an excellent example of a collaborative effort to address a waterways impact on many different water users, and what we strive to accomplish more of in the future – because *everyone* benefits from a healthy watershed.

UCRWG was formed to ensure all Grand County water groups and citizens have access to methods to ensure our watershed remains healthy. **Over 300 miles of Grand County rivers and streams are impaired.** We know that there are a number of smaller groups and private citizens who have worked hard already to protect various parts of the Upper Colorado River Watershed – **our goal is to UNITE those efforts.** It's going to take *all of us* who play in, love, and depend on the Upper Colorado River working together to protect the health of our shared watershed.

Your [tax-deductible donation](#) will help us grow our nascent organization so we can better support local stakeholder groups in protecting our common watershed. With help from concerned citizens and cooperation with local water agencies, UCRWG will continue to address the myriad of challenges facing the Upper Colorado River Watershed.

Every drop in the river counts. That's why I'm hoping YOU will **give where you live this holiday season** and pitch in to help protect the Upper Colorado River.

GIVE
TODAY!

Sincerely,
Andy Miller
President