

One Section at a Time

You may have been reached out to by the Community Agriculture (CAA) in the last couple of years if you had a diversion structure on your property within the Yampa River watershed. This work was an extension of the Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP). The IWMP Committee consisting of 27 volunteer stakeholders was created by the Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable. This Committee divided the Yampa River into four geographic sections of the Yampa River: the Upper, Middle and Lower Yampa and the Elk River for a comprehensive assessment.

After the successful completion of landowner surveys, diversion assessments and diversion projects, the CAA is following up on the past surveys and once again reaching out to landowners. The outreach this time is targeting those living on the banks of the Yampa River to identify projects that enhance and benefit agriculture, industrial, environmental and recreational uses focusing on riparian health and a balanced river system. These multi-beneficial projects can take on many forms including a diversion structure upgrade that also helps fish passage, a river bank enhancement project near a recreational access point, or bank stabilization ensuring a diversion will receive water. Another goal of the outreach is to connect adjoining landowners often experiencing similar issues. Greater impact can be made when addressing adjacent parcels if adjoining landowners combine efforts for bank protection since the restored land would be connected. The combined efforts can also aid in grant requests. These are just a few examples and the opportunity for multi-beneficial projects is unlimited in the Yampa Valley.

This past summer outreach was focused on the Yampa River from the confluence of the Elk River to Elkhead Creek past Hayden. Landowners were contacted and encouraged to reach out if they had any riparian or bank concerns. A CAA representative then met with the landowner to document and discuss the history of the area, past restoration attempts, problems the landowner is currently facing and future hopes for the riverbank. If the project was not considered multi-beneficial, the landowner was connected to a local partner and resources better suited to their needs. If the project was deemed multi-beneficial and within the scope of the IWMP, attempts were made to provide assistance with identifying funds and assisting with the grant process in coordination with other local nonprofits in our valley interested in preserving the Yampa River.

Next summer's outreach will focus on the thirty-one mile segment of the Elk River from the Yampa River to the entrance of the Routt National Forest. This spring landowners along this stretch will again be contacted by phone, email and letter to discuss their bank concerns with a professional and site visits made to talk and discuss options. Outreach on the Upper Yampa from Stillwater Reservoir to Catamount Reservoir and from Catamount Reservoir through Steamboat will occur in the next few years. If you are a current landowner along any of these sections of the Yampa or Elk river and have riverbank issues please reach out to sally@communityagalliance.org to talk about your concerns.

