

Commercial & Voluntary River Closure Enacted

Yampa River Exceeds Threshold Criteria for River Health

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO-September 1, 2020-Yampa River flows have dropped below 85 cubic feet per second triggering the City of Steamboat Springs to enact commercial and voluntary recreational closures for the Yampa River starting at 12:01am, Wednesday, September 2, 2020. The closure will remain in effect until rescinded in consultation with Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW).

“Mandatory closures of the Yampa River are becoming unfortunately more frequent,” said Craig Robinson, Parks, Open Space & Trails Manager. “We would like to thank the community, especially our commercial operators, for their cooperation and support during this critical time. Our efforts go directly to the long-term health of our number one natural resource.”

Primarily due to low river flows along with a concern about high water temperatures and low oxygen levels in the Yampa River, the city is implementing closures for all commercial activities on the Yampa River and asking the public to abide by a voluntary closure for all recreational river use.

Yampa River stream flow and temperatures are measured instantaneously with instruments and gauges maintained by the United States Geological Survey. Periodic maintenance and calibration are required on this equipment to ensure accurate data. While calibrating streamflow gauges today, the city was notified of a correction and lower flows were present than expected. Variations in measurements can be affected within 8% by channel geometry and uniformity of flow.



Once properly calibrated, the Yampa River gauge showed the river was flowing at 74 cubic feet per second, which exceeds the threshold for a mandatory river closure as outlined in the Yampa River Management Plan and Steamboat Springs Ordinance 2685. Low water flows, high water temperatures, and low levels of dissolved oxygen are all unfavorable conditions to aquatic life and any one of these factors can trigger a closure.

Commercial tubing and angling companies will be required to suspend operations. River users – tubers, SUPers, swimmers, anglers – are requested to adhere to the voluntary closure and avoid river recreation. The voluntary fishing closure is in effect within city limits as well as at the Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area. Please be mindful of the impacts your actions may have on the Yampa River and its wildlife.

In addition to the mandatory closure of commercial activities on the Yampa River through Steamboat Springs, Colorado Parks & Wildlife is initiating a voluntary fishing closure between the Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area and the western edge of Steamboat Springs. Although anglers are not prohibited

from fishing in this stretch, CPW and the city ask anglers to find alternative places to fish to protect the popular fishery.

"When water flows are minimal, fish become concentrated in residual pool habitat and become stressed due to increased competition for food resources," said Kris Middledorf, CPW's area wildlife manager in Steamboat Springs. "Because the fish are already stressed by poor water quality conditions, any additional stress from being hooked could make them even more vulnerable to disease and death."

Due to strong relationships and funding from the Yampa River Fund, the Colorado Water Trust upped the initial Stagecoach release amount when the city's 350-acre-foot pool expired in late August. The increased amount was in addition to the Upper Yampa Water District's bypass and drawdown releases. This marks the seventh year in the past decade that the Water Trust leased water from Stagecoach River to help maintain flows and water temperatures.

City and Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff will continue to monitor flows and river temperatures at the [5th Street Bridge](#). Water temperature monitoring was incorporated in November 2017 through a partnership with Mt. Werner Water, the Colorado River District and the USGS.

Notices will be posted at popular river access points and requests everyone's cooperation in protecting the Yampa River by staying out of the river until conditions improve. The health and protection of the Yampa River rates high with residents. Thank you for Respecting the Yampa and helping to protect the health of the river.

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