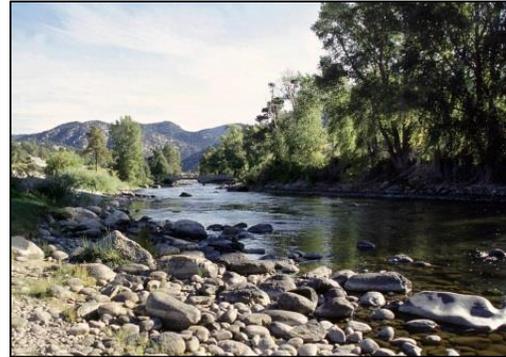


Water and Riparian Resources



Background Information

Water and riparian areas are some of the most productive and important ecosystems found on BLM-administered lands. These areas play an integral role in restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's water resources. They stabilize water supplies, thus ameliorating both floods and droughts. Functioning streams and riparian areas provide many values for other resources such as fish, wildlife, and recreation.



Water and riparian resources are diverse throughout the planning area, and management is complicated by noncontiguous ownership patterns. The BLM rarely manages entire watersheds; therefore, cooperation with various groups, adjacent landowners, and other agencies is critical. The planning area covers parts of three major sub-basins: the Upper Arkansas, Upper South Platte, and Republican Rivers. Agricultural activities account for the largest amount of water used within these sub-basins, and runoff also serves as a critical municipal water source to Front Range cities and towns.

Potential Decisions:

Water and riparian management planning as part of the Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS may:

- Identify area-wide use restrictions or other protective measures to meet tribal, state, and local water quality requirements
- Identify measures to ensure water availability for multiple use management and functioning and healthy riparian and upland systems
- Identify desired outcomes (including standards or goals under the Clean Water Act)

Planning Issues:

- What efficiencies need to be employed to manage riparian area grazing with aging infrastructure (e.g., fences and water developments) and a changing landscape that has seen rapid subdivision of adjacent ranch lands?
- What water flow and water right protection strategies need to be incorporated into the planning process to protect flows of BLM-administered water-dependent resources? What anticipated future water-development needs to be evaluated for large rivers, creeks, small seeps, springs, and fens?
- How should the BLM manage resource uses that cause impairment (e.g., weed invasion) to riparian resources?
- How should the BLM prepare and manage for drought conditions?