

St. Vrain Left Hand Stream Management Plan Stakeholder Meeting #1
Izaak Walton Clubhouse, Longmont, Colorado
Friday, September 21, 9:30 am - 12:00 pm
Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attendance: Dustin Allard, Jill Baty, Kevin Boden, Monica Bortolini, Audrey Butler, Kristin Cannon, Pete Conovitz, Nathan Fey, Wade Gonzales, Al Hardy, Mac Kobza, Nancy Koch, Jim Krick, Eric Lane, Barbara Luneau, Geoffrey May, Julie Mikulas, Mickey O'Hara, Jessie Olson, Greg Peterson, Kevin Peterson, Terry Plummer, Jake Ruthven, Chris Smith, Ernst Strenge, Shera Sumerford, Ron Sutherland, Garrett Varra, Amy Willhite, Dan Wolford, and Boyd Wright.

Project Team: Claudia Browne, Sean Cronin, Terry Lance, Andi Rutherford, Scott Schweiber, Travis Smith

Facilitation: Heather Bergman, Dan Myers

ACTION ITEMS

Lesli Ellis	Post a link to Section 14 of the Larimer County Land Use Code on the project website.
Peak Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send Peak Facilitation contact information to Working Group members.• Finalize the Working Group Protocols and post them on the project website.• Provide a list of group interests for the next meeting.

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Members of the project team welcomed stakeholders to the St. Vrain Left Hand Stream Management Plan (SMP) process and provided an overview of the SMP project.

Project Process

- The St. Vrain Left Hand Water Conservancy District (SVLHWCD) was created in 1971 to manage processes like the SMP. The District's mission is to develop, management, and protect water resources in the St. Vrain Left Hand watershed.
- The project team is making a conscious effort to engage water users, the agricultural community, and the public in the SMP.
- The goal of the SMP is to identify projects and management strategies in the whole watershed that proactively protect stream health while aligning with the needs of water users.
- \$300,000 has been raised to conduct the SMP. The project team is already in the process of allocating this money, including to community outreach efforts. The funding is composed of:
 - Grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and the South Platte Basin Roundtable (SPBRT).
 - Cash match from the City of Longmont, Boulder County, Colorado Trout Unlimited, and JLB Engineering.
 - In-kind funding from American Whitewater.
 - Funding from the District itself.
- The consultants working on the project team include, Biohabitats, Wright Water Engineers, DiNatale Water Consultants, Peak Facilitation Group, the Open Water Foundation, and the

Left Hand Watershed Oversight Group. Stakeholders should feel free to contact any of the project team consultants at any time.

- The overall process for creating an SMP will entail:
 - Building collaborative community support.
 - Focusing available resources on needs, opportunities, and related analysis.
 - Developing a road map for next step.
 - Gaining momentum for the process.
-  The scope of work for this project outlined five core steps for the process:
 1. Stakeholder engagement (see below).
 2. Existing data collection and review: the project team wants to use the best and most recent data available in the SMP. Stakeholders may have some data that is not publicly available that could help the project team if they feel comfortable sharing it.
 3. Hydrology characterization, assessment of demand storage and recreation.
 4. River health preparation.
 5. Report preparation.
- The project team is conducting riparian assessments but cannot conduct high-quality assessments on all of the 150 miles of creek, so the team will be selective about the areas it assesses. Today's meeting will include a mapping exercise that provides stakeholders with a chance to provide input on the areas that are most meaningful to them and their constituents.
- The project team will conduct an intersection analysis, model and identify areas of opportunity, and then use fieldwork to evaluate specific options for action.
- The strategic approach to identifying options for action will begin with a desktop analysis to synthesize the environmental data that the project team currently has and to examine habitat risks and sensitivities. Understanding the vulnerability of ecosystems entails thinking in terms of non-consumptive needs using the same language as the Colorado Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI). The SWSI process can lead to funding through Colorado's Basin Roundtables (BRTs), so speaking that language will help to align projects with funding goals.
- The next step is integrating infrastructure and social needs from the flow analysis. Doing so means identifying what stakeholders need from the creeks.
- These needs will be synthesized into a baseline map of the watershed's ecological framework with an overlay of social needs. The map will be used to identify areas with one or more intersections between needs and opportunities.
- The project team will then do field work and more detailed analysis of those intersectional areas.
- Finally, the project team will evaluate the health of the river system using transparent criteria.
- This project is about meeting the needs and telling the stories of stakeholders and community members and telling. The project team wants the SMP to be interactive and responsive to stakeholder needs.
- Project information is currently hosted on the SVLHWCD website, but the project team is working on developing a website for the SMP itself. Stakeholders can contact the project team whenever they like

Watershed Overview

- This is a large and diverse watershed made up of over 500 square miles, 18 sub-watersheds, 135,00 people, and 150 miles of major creek corridors.

- The project area forms part of the Central and Pacific Flyways, which funnel through the watershed.
- The project area lies at the middle of the plains and the Rockies.
- The watershed's geology features shale of interest for oil and gas development, alluvium where surface water and groundwater interact, and a variety of other geologic features.
- The area has substantial water resources and storage potential and lies at the western edge of the South Platte aquifer.
- The natural variety found in the watershed means that the SMP's priorities will be different in different landscapes.
- The project team has created five planning areas with the watershed: St. Vrain Creek/Canyon, Left Hand Creek/Canyon, St. Vrain Foothills Transition, Left Hand Foothills Transition, and St. Vrain Creek/Plains. The planning areas can serve as starting points for stakeholder input.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plans

- The project team will rely on stakeholder input to develop an effective SMP; it is the stakeholders who live and work along these creeks. It is critical that stakeholders share their priorities and what they are hearing from the community, in addition to getting other community members to attend SMP meetings and get excited about the process.
- The SMP's community engagement efforts will cover a large watershed in two counties with diverse stakeholders. The project team has created several kinds of groups to allow stakeholders to choose how they would like to participate in the process. These groups are:
 - The full stakeholder group (i.e., everyone: recreation, environmental, agricultural, municipal, etc.). The group is where the process begins and ends. Stakeholders will provide initial ideas and review the options that the other groups develop.
 - The core stakeholder advisory group. Any stakeholder can join this group, which will entail a deeper dive within the process in the form of processing input and ideas from the larger group and helping technical stakeholders to process relevant data.
 - The project team is making a concerted effort to reach agricultural stakeholders. Part of this effort includes creating a core agricultural group to ensure that the project team is conducting community outreach in a way that resonates with agricultural stakeholders in the watershed. Many agricultural stakeholders could not attend today's meeting because of the harvest, but the project team hopes to get them more involved going forward. So far, the project team has heard questions from the agricultural community about the purpose of the SMP and its desired outcomes.
 - Beyond these groups is the broader community (i.e., anyone who cares about these creeks). The project team will engage the community at critical points to understand their needs and values. Community outreach will involve many avenues for input: open houses, surveys, and outreach at places where community members congregate (e.g., farmers markets). It would be beneficial if stakeholders work to further these efforts so that community members can associate the SMP with people they know.
- The rough schedule of key, near-term engagement process events is as follows:
 - Stakeholder survey on visions, values, needs, and priorities: September 12-19.
 - Stakeholder workshop #1: September 21.
 - Community open houses: October 13 and 16, and next spring.
 - Agricultural community input: week of August 27, week of November 5, ongoing.
 - Core agricultural group conference call: week of September 24.

- Core stakeholder advisory group meeting #1: October 8.
-  The overall project timeline should play out over roughly one year. The project team will post a more detailed timeline online for stakeholders to review as the schedule becomes clearer.
- There are sign-up sheets posted for stakeholders to join the core stakeholder advisory group and a group to help Biohabitats with data interpretation.

DISCUSSION OF SURVEY RESULTS

The project team summarized the results of the stakeholder survey. Stakeholders were also provided with the full version of the survey to read in greater detail after the meeting.

- 21 stakeholders had responded to the survey as of this meeting.
- Respondents indicated that they represented broad geographic interests.
- They also represented broad professional backgrounds: land managers, farmers, ditch company staff, educators, technical advisors, recreational professionals, etc.
- The project team used word clouds to identify commonly used words in answers on specific topics. These included:
 - Stakeholder hopes/visions: water, quality, floodplain, recreational opportunities, river, etc.
 - Highest priorities for infrastructure needs: structures, passage, diversions, fish, recreation, water, etc.
 - Highest priorities for environmental needs: invasive species, native species, water, recreation, flows/quality, riparian health, etc.
 - Highest priorities for recreational needs: access, fishing, quality, public access, boating, waterfowl, aquatic habitat, etc.
 - Highest priorities for regulatory needs: no more regulations, flows/provisions, quality, ditches, weed management, invasive species, etc.
 - Opportunities: riparian access, management, recreation, diversions, education, storage, etc.
- Themes from identified challenges included having enough water for agriculture; agricultural runoff; balancing growth, social/environmental needs, and water law; the scale/cost of forest health (fire is a threat to water quality and provision); infrastructure/flooding (costs, permitting, and protection), and conflicts among stakeholders.

INTERPRETING SURVEY RESULTS FOR VISIONS AND VALUES

Stakeholders used sticky notes to indicate their ideas for visions and values surrounding the two creeks, the people of the watershed, and the SMP process.

Creeks

- “Education (awareness) + communication + partnerships + science-based= balance.”
- “We want to develop a robust understanding of current water uses and water conditions.”
- Quality and quantity of water.
- Native fish species (habitat and population).
- Streamline regulatory processes.
- Money.

- “Recognize that the values may be different in the different zones from headwaters to plains.”
- “They are working creeks/waterways. We’d like to see if they can work better for diverse areas.”
- Sustainability (realistic solutions).
- Flood protection.
- Protecting water rights.
- Remove water quality impairments.
- “As land management changes, water quality is protected.”
- “Healthy aquatic environment with impacting waters.”
- Minimum stream flows, no dry points.
- Multiple-use diversions.
- Planning for water quality impacts from fire and flood.

People

- End users.
- Landowners.
- Those with solutions.
- Cooperative.
- “Real water users- the big dogs!!!”
- “Let’s not miss anyone in this process. Where is USFS + RMNP? Let’s make sure CWCB is here. Lyons? Weld? BCNA? Oil/gas?”
- Division of Water Resources.
- River administrators.
- Stormwater managers.
- Keep It Clean Partnership.
- Sewer, utilities, and public works staff.
- Planning agencies from town of Mead and Weld County.
- Planners for all municipalities in the watershed.
- “Opportunity: Community/recreationalist+ ditch companies coordinate better to understand opportunities and limitations.”
- Diverse stakeholder engagement.
- “Users of the river and outreach.”
- “Involvement from the start; open book.”

Process

- “It’s clear that there’s specific efforts to involve ag users but we need to make sure that they are at the large, multi-users meetings so we can hear them directly.”
- “Process should help us understand (data) what is working well in the watershed. Recognize that. Data-driven.”
- Putting water where its needed.
- Working with schedules.
- Inclusive.
- Responsive.
- Priority.
- (Realistic) action plan.
- “Separate St. Vrain and Left Hand Creek a bit more in the process, or specific aspects (they are managed differently).”

- Work with Left Hand Watershed Oversight Group and St. Vrain Creek Coalition boards.
- “Go to problem areas with appropriate stakeholders and identify solutions.”
- Provide structure for meetings of all water sectors.
- Field trips.
- Leveraging existing stakeholder coalitions.
- Better integration of different water sectors (stormwater, agricultural, water rights, etc.)

Group Discussion

The group discussed the results of the vision and values exercise.

- The project team invited the US Forest Service, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Town of Lyons, Weld County, Boulder County Nature Association, and oil and gas interests. There is more outreach to be done to bring those groups to the table in this process.
- The project team still needs contacts for Rocky Mountain National Park and local municipal planners (e.g., Weld County and Mead).
- The project team will create vision statements with the ideas that the stakeholders have shared.

GROUP MAPPING EXERCISE

Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback at four maps (habitat/environment, water quality, infrastructure, and recreation) using dots. Green dots were used to mark spots where successes that do not need to be changed are occurring. Orange dots represented opportunities for improvement. Red dots marked spots with needs or concerns. Group members wrote more about each dot they placed on chart paper.

Habitat/Environment

Successes (Location) (Dot Number)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North St. Vrain Creek restoration (Buttonrock Preserve) (Green A) • Apple Valley restoration (North St. Vrain Creek west of Lyons) (Green B) • 2017 Left Hand Watershed Oversight Group (LWOG) and IWC flood restoration (Left Hand Creek south of Allens Lake) (Green D) • Help stream restoration: habitat, backwater, and riparian systems improved (St. Vrain Creek north of Foothills Reservoir) (Green 1) • Stable flows returned to creek near Beckwith diversion. Fish species diversity increases considerably from here downstream. (St. Vrain Creek south of Burch Lake) (Green 3) • Reach 3 restoration (St. Vrain Creek north of Foothills Reservoir) (Green 3A) • Help meadows restoration (Middle St. Vrain Creek southwest of Lyons, St. Vrain Creek southeast of Foothills Reservoir) (Green 4)

- South St. Vrain Creek restoration: maintenance, monitoring, long-term viability; riparian and wetlands habitats; floodplains (southwest of Lyons) (Green 4A)
- Leverage government owned water portfolios (city, county, etc.) (Longmont) (Green 5)
-  Good, quality angling (Middle St. Vrain Creek northwest of Minnie Lake) (Green 5)
- Good, quality angling (northwest of Allenspark) (Green 6)

Opportunities for Improvement

- Buttonrock Preserve wildfire mitigation (west end of Buttonrock Reservoir) (Orange 1)
- 2A: General forest health/erosion control (South St. Vrain Creek northwest of Ward) (Orange 2A)
- Spring Gulch Fish Passage (St. Vrain Creek east of Lyons) (Orange 3B)
- Perennial return flows to creek, Preble's jumping mouse habitat, opportunity for refuge habitat for fish (South Branch St. Vrain Creek southeast of Foothills Reservoir) (Orange 4)
- Habitat restoration/weed control downstream of County Line Road (St. Vrain Creek south of Union Reservoir) (Orange 5)
- Mine restoration/river restoration needed (Middle St. Vrain Creek southwest of Lyons) (Orange 6)
- Green infrastructure opportunities (Left Hand Creek north of Dodd Reservoir) (Orange 10)
- Urban habitat opportunities (Left Hand Creek south of Longmont) (Orange 11)
- Bonus Ditch diversion fish passage (Left Hand /St. Vrain Creek confluence) (Orange 22)

Needs and Concerns

- Beckwith diversion (native fish passage) (St. Vrain creek south of Burch lake) (Red 1)
- Dispersed camping in Ceran St. Vrain and other areas is causing riparian degradation (South St Vrain Creek north of Ward) (Red 2)
- Critical transition zone habitat for native fish that has experienced recent crashes in populations; extreme flow challenges from fragmentation cause by diversions (St. Vrain Creek south of Burch Lake) (Red 3)
- Noxious weed control (Middle St. Vrain Creek west of Lyons) (Red 4)
- Balance desired new uses with natural resource protection and values. Consult existing management

plans and recognize existing processes for county open space (St. Vrain Creek north of Foothills Reservoir) (Red 5)

Discussion of themes

- Good distribution of dot colors throughout habitats
- Forest health, fishing, and dispersed camping in canyons were concerns.
- Invasive species management, habitat restoration, fish passage, flood reduction, and green infrastructure were opportunities. Habitat/Environment

Infrastructure

Successes (Location) (Dot Number)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough and Ready Ditch (near Lyons) (10) • Oligarchy Ditch (near McCall Lake) (11) • Flood Control (St. Vrain Creek through Longmont) (15)
Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat /flow opportunities for flow connectivity (South St. Vrain Creek near Hygiene) (9) • Keep the creek channel clear in general (near Zweck and Turner Ditch, Taylor Ditch) (12) • Floodplain preservation opportunity (near St. Vrain creek at Golden Ponds) (13) • Opportunity to make structure changes to address a dry up due to an upstream diversion (south of Table Mountain/along Left Hand Creek) (18) • Longmont supply bifurcation (near Clough and True Ditch) (19) • Fish passage above Longmont (near South Flat, Niwot, Bonus, Beckwith, and Spring Gulch #2 Ditches) (20) • Nimbus Bridge capacity (Left Hand Creek north of Dodd Reservoir) (22) • General work with stakeholders on the ground for solutions (Boulder Valley Ranch) (23) • Dry-out (below North St. Vrain Creek) (24) • Water storage for flood control and supply near the confluence of South St. Vrain and Middle St. Vrain Creeks (N/A) • General: invest in high-tech electronics and better manage them (N/A)
Needs and Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) insurance (near Lyons) (1)

- Better water management (South St. Vrain Creek, north of Foothills Reservoir) (2,3)
- Debris/maintenance, sand from upstream projects (east end of Foothills Reservoir) (4)
- Sedimentation (on Left Hand Creek near the confluence and at Foothills Reservoir) (5)
- Better water management (near Golden Ponds) (6)
- Outlet of St. Vrain Creek from Buttonrock Reservoir (there was disagreement about this point) (7)
- Need for new structure and measurement (at the confluence of St. Vrain and Left Hand Creeks and at the Bonus Ditch) (8)
- Flood protection (near St. Vrain Creek southeast of Longmont Reservoir and south of that on Left Hand Creek) (14)
- Forest health (West of Buttonrock Reservoir) (16)
- Eliminating of new structure (at Beckwith Ditch) (17)
- Measuring at confluence of James Creek and Left Hand Creek (21)

Discussion of themes

- Not much green on this map.
- Common themes included forest health (pre- and post- fire conditions), water supply issues, and sedimentation.

Water Quality

Successes (Location) (Dot Number)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11: Golden Ponds near Longmont. • Riparian grazing: cattle in creek, reduced buffer (veg), sediment input • Development ceased, increased direct delivery of sediment to the river (ditch south of Foster Reservoir).
Opportunities for Improvement	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality is best higher up in watershed (2) • Increased flows to river-could be an opportunity for storage, other values, fishing, etc. (north of St. Vrain State Park) (3) • Seasonal water quality-sediment (fall) (near Hygiene) (4) • Agricultural runoff= water quality opportunity-point and non-point source pollution, fields draining, manure, pesticides, septic systems (near Hygiene) (6) • Septic system-need to quantify the problem, data on opportunities for improvement (7)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13: Near confluence south of Longmont • Increase, flow water quality (St. Vrain State Park) (14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15: between I-25 and Colorado Boulevard. • No flushing flows, no opportunities to push sediment through-impact to fish and animals (N/A) (N/A) • Agricultural concerns about water quality/blame/politics=opportunity! (N/A) (N/A) • Work with agriculture and water providers to convert agriculture water thoughtfully (N/A) (N/A) • Moving water from one basin to another (N/A) (N/A)
<p>Needs and Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentation (Haldi Ditch) (1) • Sediment transport through plains/river reach: runs through diversions, has geographic impacts and makes the river unpredictable (near Hygiene) (5) • Septic system: need to quantify the problem, data on opportunities for improvement (N/A) (8) • Mines-runoff, opportunities for new structures (mostly on Left Hand Creek near Heil Valley Ranch) (9,10) • E. coli impairments (especially low flows) (below confluence) (N/A) • Ammonia impairments (below confluence) (N/A) • 12: (south of Left Hand Creek near Allens Lake)

Discussion of themes

- The green dots were disproportionately placed in the uplands.
- There are opportunities in the lowlands to use education, data, etc. to solve the identified problems.
- Topics of discussion included: mine tailings, perceived and actual agricultural impacts, increased flows from new developments, E. coli, nitrogen, and sedimentation.

Boating and Recreation

Successes (Location) (Dot Number)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality angling (North St. Vrain Creek north of Allenspark, Middle St. Vrain Creek northwest of Minnie Lake, North St. Vrain Creek west and east of Buttonrock Reservoir, (Green A) • McCall Lake (N/A) • McIntosh Lake (N/A) • Confluence (N/A) • Union Reservoir (N/A) • St. Vrain State Park (N/A)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milavec Reservoir (N/A)
<p>Opportunities for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for non-motorized boat access (downstream of Buttonrock Reservoir, South St. Vrain Creek southwest of Lyons, St. Vrain Creek southeast of Lyons, St. Vrain Creek southwest of McIntosh Lake, Golden Ponds, confluence, St. Vrain State Park) (Orange A-G) • Continuing trail work (Indian Peaks Wilderness) (Orange H) • Better management of heavily used South Branch St. Vrain Creek (south of Buttonrock Reservoir) (N/A) • Rocky Mountain Greenway (N/A) (99) • Colorado Front Range Trail (N/A) (100)
<p>Needs and Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversion structure: public safety risk (South St. Vrain Creek in Lyons) (Red 1) • Diversion structure: public safety risk (Highland Ditch southeast of Lyons) (Red 2) • Need formal access to meadows: there is existing use. (South St. Vrain Creek southwest of Lyons) (Red 3) • Buttonrock management plan: recreation, overuse, loved to death? (Buttonrock Reservoir) (Red 5) • Hard to access North St. Vrain Creek north of Taylor Mountain (N/A) • Building storage for water providers that can be used for recreation, mixed use, storage sharing. (N/A) (N/A)

Discussion of themes

- Recreation goes way beyond boating and fishing (e.g., bird watching)
- Common themes included multi-benefit projects on reservoirs, opportunities in trails above Peak to Peak Highway, the need for more access points, and a need for more outreach on Left Hand Creek (which is covered by more private ownership than St. Vrain)

NEXT STEPS

- The project team will reach out to members of the core stakeholder advisory and data integration groups once it has processed the names of those who indicated that they want to be involved.
- The project team’s contact information is on the SVLHWCD website. Stakeholders should reach out to the project team (or visit the SVLHWCD office) if they have any questions or concerns.