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**Upper Colorado River among America's Most Endangered Rivers**

***Water diversions threaten prized trout fisheries and sustainable water supply***

**Washington**— New water diversion projects could sap the life from the Upper Colorado, threatening prized trout fisheries, boating, and the long-term sustainable water supply for the region. This threat landed the Upper Colorado in the number six spot in *America's Most Endangered Rivers: 2010 edition*, produced by American Rivers.

“The key to a reliable and predictable water supply is a healthy river,” said Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers. “We need 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions like water efficiency and green infrastructure to ensure a future of water security and river health for the Upper Colorado.”

American Rivers called on the Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to include conservation and efficiency requirements in the Final Environmental Impact Statements for the Windy Gap Firming Project and the Moffat Tunnel Collection System Project before allowing any additional water withdrawals.

“We can't continue to take and take water from the Upper Colorado without accounting for the serious impacts to fish and wildlife habitat,” said Ken Neubecker of Colorado Trout Unlimited. “This is a river on the brink. A vibrant, healthy river system in the Upper Colorado is every bit as important to the future of Colorado as the water it supplies to our farms and cities.”

The Colorado headwaters have been subject to major water diversions and depletions for over 100 years, and the health of the river and its fish and wildlife has paid the price. Two new projects, the Windy Gap Firming Project and the Moffat Tunnel Collection System Project, have been proposed, which would lead to the diversion of even more water from an already heavily-tapped basin. If these projects proceed as planned, the flows of the Upper Colorado could be reduced to levels that can no longer maintain a healthy river. Conversely, if the projects incorporate appropriate river protections they could herald an era of water supply planning that better balances water development with the needs of the river.

The Upper Colorado River begins in Rocky Mountain National Park and flows southwest toward Utah. The area is home to 93,000 full time residents, and hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. The Upper Colorado and its major tributaries provide water to the resort areas of Granby, Winter Park, Breckenridge, Keystone, and Vail, and a large percentage of the urban Front Range of Colorado. The river is a recreational hotspot, with its gold medal trout fisheries, world class rafting and kayaking, and outstanding scenic canyons. These values have qualified the river, from near its source to its confluence with the Roaring Fork in Glenwood Springs, as a candidate for federal Wild and Scenic River designation.

### **About America's Most Endangered Rivers**

Each year, American Rivers reviews nominations for the *America's Most Endangered Rivers*<sup>TM</sup> report from river groups and concerned citizens across the country. Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria:

- A major decision (that the public can help influence) in the coming year on the proposed action
- The significance of the threat to human and natural communities
- The degree to which the proposed action would exacerbate or alleviate stresses caused by climate change

The report is a call to action and emphasizes solutions for the rivers and their communities. By shining the spotlight on key decisions that will impact the rivers, and by providing clear actions the public can take on their behalf, the report is a powerful tool for saving these important rivers.

### **Interviews**

**American Rivers Senior Vice President for Conservation Andrew Fahlund and David Moryc, Senior Director of River Protection, are available for interviews, both pre and post embargo. Please contact Amy Kober, 206-898-3864 for booking.**

**Reporters wishing to direct readers to the report online may use the following link:**  
[www.AmericanRivers.org/EndangeredRivers](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/EndangeredRivers)

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*American Rivers is the leading national organization standing up for healthy rivers so communities can thrive. American Rivers protects and restores America's rivers for the benefit of people, wildlife and nature. Founded in 1973, American Rivers has more than 65,000 members and supporters, with offices in Washington, DC and nationwide. Visit [www.AmericanRivers.org](http://www.AmericanRivers.org)*