

## Volunteers needed to assess river

BY KATI O'HARE  
DAILY PRESS WRITER

**MONTROSE** — The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership is seeking volunteers to help it eyeball the majestic river and catalog its vegetation, species, development and other features.

No experience is necessary for this "quick and dirty look at the river," said Sarah Sauter, UWP watershed coordinator.

But the work is critical for the partnership, which needs data to set priorities and pinpoint projects to ensure the river's health.

The health evaluation of the Uncompahgre

will lead to a watershed plan that includes the entire river, from its headwaters outside of Ouray to its confluence in Delta.

A team already samples the river's water each month, and the UWP will use 40 years of those samples when it drafts its water quality report, said Rachel Boothby, UWP outreach coordinator.

"That is an important part," she said. "But we also need to know physically what the river looks like."

So the partnership will set out Oct. 9 to do just that.

It has divided the river into four sections, with

each stretch to be scoured on land by a volunteer group and one river expert.

The UWP has contacted land owners for river access, and areas without access will be evaluated from bridges and other river crossing areas.

The four sections are: Delta to Colona, Colona to the Ridgway Reservoir dam, from above the dam to Ouray, and from Ouray to the river's headwaters on Red Mountain Pass.

Volunteers should register by Sept. 29; e-mail Boothby at [uwpvista@gmail.com](mailto:uwpvista@gmail.com). A

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mandatory meeting from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Oct. 8 will explain the next day's plan for volunteers.

The watershed plan is expected to be completed by the end of this year. "The plan could allow us to pinpoint restoration projects," Boothby said. "It also helps the organi-

zations stay on track as it will have priorities to keep everyone in check."

The plan also will provide the data required when applying for grants.

Indeed, the plan itself is made possible by a grant from the Colorado Healthy River Fund, to which taxpayers donate voluntarily on their tax

returns.

The UWP's next monthly meeting is from 5 to 7 p.m. Sept. 23 at the Delta Library. For more information, visit the partnership's website at <http://uncompahgrewatershed.org>.

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