

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Collaboration & Stewardship – As always, the focus of the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership (UWP) in 2019 was on collaborating with stakeholders and partners on projects that protect and improve the Upper Uncompahgre River Watershed. Our nonprofit’s stability, thanks to a dedicated board of directors and consistent donors and volunteers, helped us reach our goals and plan new initiatives.

In this 2019 Annual Report, you can learn about UWP’s efforts in:

- stewardship through water quality monitoring efforts such as the River Watch program and the Ouray Hydrodam Sediment Release Study – *see pages 3 & 4*
- stewardship of the watershed through creating a watershed guide to inform the community and visitors about our precious resources – *see page 3*
- collaboration on improving the Uncompahgre River’s tributaries through mine reclamation and restoration projects – *see page 5*
- collaboration in protecting and restoring riparian areas by organizing volunteer service events – *see page 6*

On Page 7, we report on three annual events and their success in 2019. The Ridgway RiverFest is our biggest event every year, due to the hard work of many people including RiverFest Assistant Pamela Cannalte, the third member of UWP’s contractor team.

Finally, Page 8 is all about collaboration as we introduce our 2019 Partner of the Year and recognize our board members who represent watershed concerns and connect with stakeholders around the community. Plus, throughout this report, you’ll learn about financial stewards of our community that have awarded grants and donated to our various projects. These generous organizations and individuals truly make it possible for UWP to work on its mission of protecting and improving the watershed.

Please take a few moments to read about our recent accomplishments in this report. I hope they inspire you to increase your participation and commitment to UWP’s collaborative activities, and join us as stewards of the watershed.

With appreciation, Tanya Ishikawa



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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To sign up for email updates,
donate and learn about
our activities and volunteer
opportunities, visit

www.uncompahgrewatershed.org

Lake Como
Photo by Mary Menz



Governor Creek next to a mine waste rock pile in lower Governor Basin
Photo by Ashley Bembenek

Our Mission:

The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership exists to help protect the economic, natural, and scenic values of the Upper Uncompahgre River Watershed. We work to inform and engage all stakeholders and solicit input from diverse interests to ensure collaborative restoration efforts in the watershed.

Our Goals:

- (1) Improve water quality
- (2) Improve riverine ecosystem function
- (3) Improve seasonal low flows
- (4) Improve recreational opportunities
- (5) Maintain a stable stakeholder group

UWP is a volunteer-driven nonprofit. We use our funding efficiently by hiring three part-time contractors who together work less hours than one full-time staff position. We are extremely thankful for more than 100 volunteers who help us accomplish our projects. Our board volunteers alone donated nearly 1,000 hours in 2019.

MESSAGE FROM THE TECHNICAL COORDINATOR

Hello, UWP supporters!

In thinking back on the past few years with the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership (UWP), I'm thrilled with what our little nonprofit and our partners have accomplished. I'm most excited about the progress made towards cleaning up Governor Basin. In 2017, all we knew was that Governor Basin had very poor water quality and large mine waste piles. To make the project a reality, we've dug through heaps of information to better understand everything from land ownership to sediment chemistry. This research, and insights from our partners, allowed us to create a simple and effective preliminary reclamation design.

I'm grateful to our partners at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and Ouray Silver Mines. Their feedback improved our grant applications and allowed us to secure more than \$220,000 in commitments to restore Governor Basin! In the coming years, I look forward to sharing our progress with the community.

*Thanks for your continued support!
Ashley Bembenek*





UWP's River Watch team
Photo by Tanya Ishikawa

WATERSHED INFORMATION & EDUCATION

The Uncompahgre River Watershed in Ouray County

UWP published “The Uncompahgre River Watershed in Ouray County” information booklet at the end of 2019. To determine the most valuable content to include in the compact booklet, we gathered input from around the county through various stakeholder outreach activities. The resulting publication provides useful information about water sources, uses, quality, quantity, conservation, and other relevant topics. With 500 printed copies plus digital copies available online, we plan to distribute the booklet in 2020 and for several years to come.

Watershed Education for Elementary Students

For another year, a UWP board member taught Ridgway third graders about the water cycle and the watershed. Three board members led a day-long activity session at the annual 4th Grade Natural Resource Festival in Montrose in May, while three board members and volunteers provided watershed education activities at UWP’s annual Ridgway Riverfest in June. In the fall, three board members led an activity at the annual Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments Family Nature Night in Ridgway, plus one board member participated in two days of student watershed presentations at Oak Grove Elementary in Montrose.

Website Update

In 2019, UWP’s website (www.uncompahgrewatershed.org) was refreshed with a new, more contemporary page format, and reorganized to better highlight our projects and activities. Our nonprofit saves money by using a mostly free online platform, and managing content in-house. We still have more to add to the site, which is a work in progress, and we are excited to find ways to make our online resources easier to use and search.

WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

Colorado River Watch

River Watch is an important program operated by Colorado Parks & Wildlife that supports a network of citizen scientists in every watershed in the state. Each volunteer spends up to 10 hours per month sampling water quality in rivers and tributaries, to provide valuable data for government agencies and nonprofits. At the end of 2018, two local River Watch volunteers moved away. UWP spent many hours on outreach to find new volunteers and coordinate their new activities. As a result, we now have five volunteers sampling at six locations, an increase from the four previous sites. The samples will be analyzed to create data on several metals and other water quality indicators. Our efforts to keep this water quality monitoring program going in our watershed are among our most important accomplishments in 2019, because our volunteers’ work will result in hundreds of water quality data points, which will lead to future watershed improvements from other projects by UWP and other organizations.

Project Funders and Collaborators:

- Ouray County Community Fund
- Telluride Foundation
- Town of Ridgway
- City of Ouray
- Ouray County
- Shavano Conservation District
- Ridgway Elementary School
- Oak Grove Elementary
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- River Science
- UWP Members

Volunteers:

- Ronna Edgett-Underwood
- Ethan Funk
- Arlen Huggins
- John Hulburd
- Amy Relnick
- Diane Spooner
- UWP Board



River Watch training in Durango
Photo by John Hulburd



Uncompahgre River north of Ouray Hydrodam and upstream of the Perimeter Trail bridge
Photo by Ashley Bembenek



WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP CONTINUED

Project Funders and Collaborators:

Colo. Department of Public Health & Environment
Eric Jacobsen
Ouray County
Town of Ridgway
Telluride Foundation
Delta County
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
UWP members

Volunteers:

Adam Bembenek
Chuck Heywood
Eric Jacobsen
Jeff Litteral

Hydrodam Sediment Release Studies

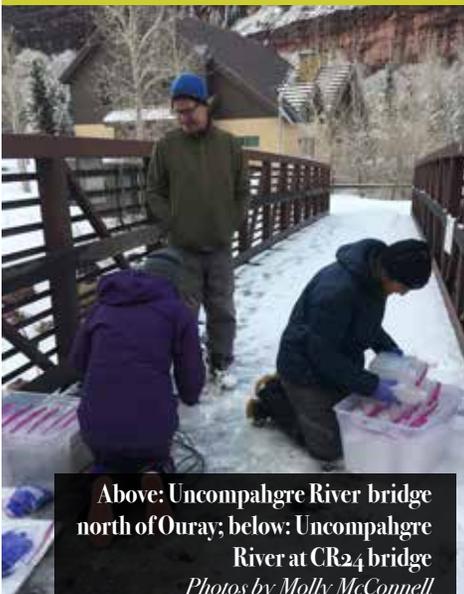
To maintain safe operating conditions and optimize power generation, accumulated sediment must be released each spring from the reservoir of the Ouray Hydrodam. Unusual circumstances, such as a log jam near the penstock (a critical component of the hydrodam), may require smaller releases at other times. Over the years, community members have expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the sediment and changes in water quality during the sediment releases.

In response to those concerns UWP led studies late March of 2017 and 2019, to assess changes to water quality and sediment dynamics during sediment releases. Although both 2017 and 2019 had above-average snowfall, stream flows during each study were remarkably different. In 2017, several days of warm weather increased stream flow. In 2019, a cold front and snowstorm just before and during the study caused stream flows to drop dramatically. Flows in 2017 were approximately four times greater than in 2019. The relatively large difference helped characterize the range of conditions in which sediment releases may occur. In 2019, three locations were sampled during the release: the Uncompahgre River approximately 300 feet downstream of the hydrodam at the Perimeter Trail bridge, the Uncompahgre River at the USGS gage and pedestrian bridge on the north end of Ouray, and the Uncompahgre River in Ridgway at the County Road 24 bridge.

As expected, the change in water color was most pronounced immediately downstream of the hydrodam and decreased as distance from the dam increased. As water and sediment moved downstream, larger sediments like gravel and sand fell from the water column. In the absence of the hydrodam, the sediment moved during the release would have traveled through the Uncompahgre River naturally albeit over a longer period of time as the river ebbs and flows. The sediment releases change the rate of sediment movement, but do not affect the overall quantity of sediment moved. Conservatively, the sediment release accounts for less than one percent of the annual sediment load of the Uncompahgre River. Based on water quality data collected before, during, and after the 2017 and 2019 sediment releases, the sediment releases change water quality for a very brief period. When compared to River Watch data collected from the Uncompahgre River in Ouray and in Ridgway at County Road 24 over the past decade, metal concentrations measured during the release were not greater than the concentrations observed during runoff for most metals.

Outreach about Free Well Testing

Ouray County was part of a six-county partnership providing free private well water sampling for the past five years. In 2018 and 2019, UWP representatives reached out to local governments, media and landowners, as well as participants at events, to notify them of the well testing opportunity. Our hope is that well owners would become better informed about the safety of their water. The last free testing kits were sent out in December 2019, and Delta County – the lead agency for the partnership – is collecting final kits and data to create an online report of well conditions for the region and areas within it (no individual well data will be shared publicly).



Above: Uncompahgre River bridge north of Ouray; below: Uncompahgre River at CR24 bridge
Photos by Molly McConnell





Project partners at Sneffels Creek near Atlas Mill

MINE RECLAMATION & RESTORATION

Governor Basin Project Planning

In late 2018 and early 2019, UWP and project partners continued to refine plans for the Governor Basin Restoration Project. We plan to cap and cover acidic metals-laden tailings with neutralizing materials to prevent contact with uncontaminated snowmelt, precipitation, and stream flow. Drainage channels will be constructed to direct water through and around the site. Disturbed areas will be seeded with a custom high-alpine seed mix. Together, these actions will restore the ecological function of the site and improve water quality.

To make our plans a reality, UWP needed to secure funds from local partners and grant programs. We are very pleased to report that our applications to the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Gunnison Basin Roundtable, and the Natural Resource Damages Fund were successful to secure more than \$140,000 for the project. UWP and our local partners, including Ouray Silver Mines and the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety, have an additional \$80,000 in cash and in-kind support for the project.

In 2020, we will work with the U.S. Forest Service and Ouray Silver Mines to finalize the project design and secure necessary approvals for the project. We look forward to construction and sharing project outcomes with the community in coming years.

Atlas Mill Project Planning

Ouray Silver Mines and Trout Unlimited have partnered to expand upon UWP's bank stabilization project in Sneffels Creek near the Atlas Mill site (completed in 2017). In 2019, the project team focused on refining the design of the Atlas Mill project and getting U.S. Forest Service approval for the portion of the project on federal lands. If all goes well, there will be shovels in the ground shortly. UWP may assist with post-project monitoring efforts. A portion of the project's funding is the result of an enforcement action taken by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment attributed to permit violations by the former owner of the Revenue Mine.

Red Mountain Mining District Winter Tour

UWP's mine reclamation work originates from the need to address impacts from abandoned mines, mostly operated in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Each February, including in 2019, we organize a tour of several mining areas guided by Ouray County Museum Curator Don Paulson. A group of 20 guests joined us on a fun and interesting tour through the snowy landscape to learn about mining history, geology and the legacy of heavy metal drainage in the watershed.

Project Funders and Collaborators:

- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Colo. Division of Reclamation, Mining & Safety
- Gunnison Basin Roundtable
- Colo. Natural Resources Damage Fund
- Ouray County
- Ouray Silver Mines, Inc.
- Trout Unlimited
- United States Forest Service

Partners and Volunteers:

- Brian Briggs
- Grant Clark
- Curtis Cross
- Ross Davis
- Briana Greer
- Jeff Litteral
- Jason Willis
- UWP Board Members

Terrible Mine site in Governor Basin

Photos by Jeff Litteral





Volunteers working at Love Your Gorge

*Photo courtesy of
American Mountain Guides Association*



RIPARIAN & RIVER HABITAT PROTECTION & RESTORATION

Project Funders and Collaborators:

- Frank L. Massard Trust
- Ouray Ice Park
- Ouray Brewery
- American Rivers
- International Coastal Cleanup
- Town of Ridgway
- Ridgway State Park
- RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service
- Colo. River Water Conservation District
- Colo. Watershed Assembly
- Ouray County
- Ouray County Ranch History Museum
- Ouray County Water Users Assoc.
- Tri-County Water Conservancy District
- UWP members

Volunteers:

- 18 Love Your Gorge volunteers
- 6 Rollans Park Cleanup volunteers
- UWP Board Members

Rollans Park Adopt-A-Park Cleanup

Photo by Tanya Ishikawa



Love Your Gorge Volunteer Event

For the second year, UWP and the Ouray Ice Park organized a volunteer work day at the Uncompahgre River Gorge in Ouray. The event called Love Your Gorge brought together almost 20 volunteers on Sept. 28, 2019. The gorge, where ice climbing activities and a large festival happen every winter, needs a little love to ensure the flora, fauna and Uncompahgre River running through it stay healthy and even get healthier. We get support from American Rivers and the International Coastal Cleanup each year, plus the Frank L. Massard Trust awarded a \$600 grant for 2019, when the activities focused on erosion control on the top edges of the gorge plus cleaning up along the top of the gorge. The hard work was followed by a delicious homemade lunch and beer donated by Ouray Brewery.

Rollans Park & Pa-Co-Chu-Puk Cleanups

The annual Rollans Park Cleanup through the Adopt-A-Park program took place on May 4, 2019, in conjunction with a citywide cleanup organized by Ridgway-Ouray Community Council. As always, a handful of energetic volunteers roamed the park alongside the Uncompahgre River in Ridgway, picking up litter and fallen branches on the trails and play areas and preparing the park for summer visitors.

Also in 2019, Ridgway State Park Ranger and avid fly fisherman Nolan Tappenden organized an all-day cleanup at the Pa-Co-Chu-Puk area along the Uncompahgre River. On Oct. 13, fishing line and litter were picked up by volunteers including several staff members from RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service. Nolan would like to make the cleanup into an annual autumn event, and UWP hopes to assist in the planning and promotion to ensure yet another segment of the river receives care and attention.

SEASONAL FLOW IMPROVEMENT

Stream Management Planning Committee

UWP Board Members Michael Johnson, Jay Montgomery and Scott Williams shared duties serving as our nonprofit’s representatives on this important Ouray County water supply planning group in 2018 and 2019. Made up of several stakeholders with a goal of planning for a stable water supply for the county’s future, the group was awarded an \$83,200 grant by the Colorado Water Conservation Board to create the Upper Uncompahgre Cooperative Stream Management Plan. Wright Water Engineers worked with the group to gather data and create a plan, which was complete in the fall of 2019. UWP plans to continue participating in the community process as the plans are implemented, to provide useful information about watershed science and perspectives gained from our collaborations with the various water users in the community.



2019 Ridgway RiverFest
Photos by Dave Jones

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH & RECREATION EVENTS

12th Annual Ridgway RiverFest

What a contrast! From the extreme low water flows in 2018 to the high flows in 2019, the Uncompahgre River changed character completely for the Ridgway RiverFest. Whereas the previous year had seen people of all ages wading across the river, 2019 festival goers stayed safely on the banks as swift water made for some exciting boating. Though no contestants came forward for the Junk of the Unc homemade boat race, a contingent of racers on paddleboards, kayaks and rafts showed up to compete. Instead of a Rubber Ducky Race where many quackers surely would have been lost to the waves, we had an on-land Rubber Duck Hunt with prize winners. Back by popular demand was Ute cultural storyteller Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk as well as bluegrass band, Sugar & The Mint, from Arizona. The whole day was a great success from the River Rat Marketplace (silent auction) to the drinks, food and watershed education and games.

Fly Fishing Film Tour

In 2019, UWP was again a beneficiary of funds raised by the Fly Fishing Film Tour showing at the Montrose Pavilion, organized by Mayfly Outdoors and Ross Reels. This time, our nonprofit shared in the proceeds with the Able Women Foundation and the Gunnison Gorge Anglers chapter of Trout Unlimited. UWP volunteers also staffed a table during a fly fishing trade show before the evening films, and got to converse with many fishermen and women about the Uncompahgre River and our activities.

9th Annual Mining & Reclamation Conference

UWP once again joined partners in organizing the ninth annual San Juan Mining & Reclamation Conference, which was combined with the third annual Innovation Expo in Silverton on September 24 to 26, 2019. The two events continue to bring together diverse mining and reclamation interests from industry, government, nonprofits, and academia to develop solutions and partnerships to address watershed pollution from abandoned mines. Under the theme “Changing Approaches”, presentations and demonstrations were given by speakers from across the U.S. as well as South America. Unique sessions included a panel discussion about Superfund legalities within historic mining districts, the judged Student Challenge Poster Session with scholarship prizes, a Lightning Talk project pitch event, and a showing of “The Mine Next Door” documentary about the Idarado Mine’s history. As usual, the guided field trips to historic and mine reclamation sites for on-the-ground observations and discussions were a highlight.



Project Funders and Collaborators:
Animas River Stakeholders Group
Colo. Division of Reclamation, Mining & Safety

Colo. Department of Public Health & Environment
Double RL Ranch
Headwaters Alliance
Mayfly Outdoors/Ross Reels
Mountain Studies Institute
Town of Ridgway
San Juan Mountain Runners
San Miguel Watershed Coalition
Ridgway RiverFest Sponsors – see ridgwayriverfest.org/2019-sponsors/
San Juan Mining & Reclamation Conference Sponsors – see tinyurl.com/2019SJMRCSPponsors

Volunteers:
40+ RiverFest volunteers
10+ Conference volunteers
UWP Board Members



A tour group at Lake Emma
Photo by Tanya Ishikawa





**2019 PARTNER OF THE YEAR:
MENDY STEWART**

Mendy Stewart has been with Shavano Conservation District since 2012. Mendy is the district's outreach and education coordinator and her main duties include developing educational information, implementing programs in the local schools, and facilitating the district's conservation booth at community events. She also produces the quarterly newsletter and updates the website. Mendy has been the project leader for the 4th Grade Natural Resource Festival for eight years, and the event is in its 28th year. UWP participates along with 20 other organizations annually, allowing us to reach more than 450 children from the local school districts each May. We are super appreciative of Mendy's outstanding coordination of the huge festival that has a major educational impact in our watershed. Mendy has also been the Shavano Conservation District's main representative to host their booth at UWP's Ridgway RiverFest each June. She makes sure to bring interesting activities and information to share and enlighten festival goers about our watershed resources. Between the two festivals, Mendy helps UWP educate more than 500 school-age youth every year.



Thank you very much, Mendy and Shavano Conservation District! *(Plus, special thanks to the Colorado Boy Pub & Brewery in Ridgway for donating a gift card to Mendy.)*

2019 UWP Board Members

President
Dennis Murphy



Vice President
Gary Roberts



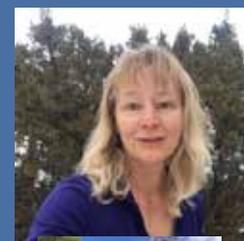
Treasurer
Scott Williams



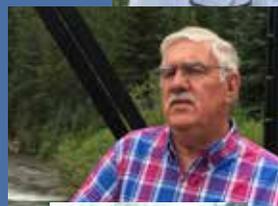
Secretary
Judi Chamberlin



Amanda
Clements



Michael
Johnson



Mary
Menz



Jay
Montgomery



Brad
Wallis



Anthony
Ramsey



Note: George Patten was a board member through May 2019.

UWP's 2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

UWP had another very good year financially in 2019, with great donor support and grant awards. We managed to keep our expenses low, so our net revenue helped create reserves and savings for projects in 2020. Donor and grantor generosity not only helped protect and improve our watershed,

many donors benefited from charitable tax deductions, and numerous Colorado residents and businesses received certificates totaling \$3,569 in Colorado state income tax credits. Our biggest fundraisers of 2019 were the Ridgway RiverFest and our year-end membership drive. Plus, our biggest funders were the Telluride Foundation, Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety, Town of Ridgway, BeP Earthwise Foundation (Barbara Parish and Gary Roberts), Ouray County Community Fund, Marti and Patrick O'Leary, Gary Roberts, and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

2019 Total Revenue: \$70,869
2019 Total Expenses: \$57,379
Net Revenue: \$13,490

Funding by Category

Grants: 44%
Ridgway RiverFest Proceeds: 29%
Donations & Memberships: 24%
Other Fundraising Event Income: 3%

Expenses by Category

Programs: 76%
RiverFest (Fundraising & Outreach): 20%
Other Events & Campaigns: 2%
General Operations: 2%



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