

River Watch Items for the January 2026 WRWG Meeting

- River Watch items of interest in January 2026
 - January 2026 sampling was completed on the 4th (Cow Creek and Blw Reservoir), the 7th (Potters Ranch and Ridgway Town), and the 11th (Dallas Creek and CR24).
 - One streamflow measurement was taken on the Uncompahgre at Ridgway Town on January 7th.
 - New board member Tim Grundl took dissolved oxygen (DO) measurements during the sampling events on January 11th using a miniDO₂T sensor. His measurement at Dallas Creek compared favorably with the DO concentration found using the Winkler Method that River Watch uses to analyze DO.
 - December and January metals samples will be shipped to River Watch on January 12th or 13th.
- Precipitation and Streamflow:
 - Table 1 shows Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) data for the Gunnison Basin and two SNOTEL sites in the Uncompahgre Watershed through January 9th, 2026. Relative to median amounts for the dates, all sites showed decreases from December to January. The Red Mtn SNOTEL had the largest decrease of 10 percentage points, down to 53% of its median.

Table 1. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) data for the Gunnison Basin, the Idarado SNOTEL and the Red Mountain SNOTEL as of January 9th, 2026.

Date	Gunnison SWE 15 site avg (in)	Gunnison % of Median	Idarado SWE (in)	Idarado % of Median	Red Mtn SWE (in)	Red Mtn % of Median
11/12/25	0.3	16	0.0	0	0.7	25
11/24/25	1.3	50	1.0	48	1.7	39
12/08/25	2.8	72	2.2	69	3.8	63
01/09/26	4.6	65	3.6	64	5.5	53

- The USGS gauge on the Uncompahgre near Ridgway roughly followed its median curve after the enhanced discharge from the October rains. Discharge gradually dropped from 77 cfs on October 28th to 47 cfs on December 28th. Discharge was then below median values through January 10th. The cold weather following the snow event has caused icing at the gauge since the 10th.
- Discharge on Dallas Creek followed its median curve between November 7th (25 cfs) and December 1st (24 cfs). Discharge was then above the median during the unseasonably warm period from mid to late December. The gauge showed icing conditions after December 29th.
- Discharge at the USGS site below Ridgway Reservoir has been between 44 and 51 cfs since November 4th. With inflow being significantly greater than outflow during this period, Ridgway Reservoir storage has increased from 59,660 AF to 69,370 AF. This is 4,650 AF above the median storage for early January and also exceeds the 75th percentile storage value.
- Progress on a River Watch report covering 2021-2024 data

I had planned to complete a report summarizing UWP River Watch data for 2021 to 2023 by December 2025. River Watch surprised me by having 2024 metals data available a little earlier than usual. So, I backtracked to include this data in my analysis and am about half done with redoing the analysis section of the report. I am analyzing the data by stream segment and noting how the enhanced River Watch data sets since 2021 might change the impairment status documented in the 2022 list of impaired streams compiled by WQCD. At least seven stream segments in the upper portion of the watershed will have sufficient River Watch data by 2026 to update impairment status that hasn't changed for more than a decade.