

River Watch Items for the February 2026 UWP Board Meeting

- River Watch items of interest Jan-Feb 2026
 - February 2026 sampling is expected to be completed on February 7th (Dallas Cr and CR24 on the Uncompahgre). Potters Ranch and Ridgway Town were sampled on February 4th, and Cow Creek and Below Reservoir sites were sampled on February 2nd.
 - No streamflow measurements were taken in February. The Global Flow Meter has a problem with the propeller sometimes sticking and recording zero flow. It appears to catch on the sensor that protrudes slightly inside the propeller housing. I will be sending it in for evaluation and repair. It is under its 1-year warranty.
 - Tim Grundl has done another analysis of Dallas Creek flows over the past 25 years and compared annual flow to the number of days that the CWCB Instream Flow (ISF) limits of 9 cfs (winter) and 20 cfs (summer) are exceeded each year. He will present his results at one of our next board or working group meetings.
- Precipitation and Streamflow:
 - Table 1 shows Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) data for the Gunnison Basin and two SNOTEL sites in the Uncompahgre Watershed through February 6th, 2026. Relative to median amounts for the dates, all sites showed decreases from December to February. The Gunnison Basin and the two SNOTELs dropped by 14 – 16 percentage points. The percentile rankings demonstrate how very dry this water year has been with the Gunnison Basin at the 4th percentile of SWE and the Red Mtn SNOTEL at the 2nd percentile of SWE.

Table 1. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) data for the Gunnison Basin, the Idarado SNOTEL and the Red Mountain SNOTEL as of February 6th, 2026.

Date	Gunnison SWE 15 site avg (in)	Gunnison % of Median	Percentile Ranking	Idarado SWE (in)	Percentile Ranking	Idarado % of Median	Red Mtn SWE (in)	Percentile Ranking	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
02/06/26	5.4	56	4	4.5	7	55	6.7	2	48

- 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 generally below median values through February 2nd. The discharge at Ridgway was 43.7 cfs on February 6th compared to the median of 43 cfs.
- The USGS gauge on Dallas Creek has been ice-affected since January 24th. Prior to the icing period discharge was generally running above the median curve since December 1st, 2025. The last valid measurement on January 24th was 19.8 cfs with the median being 17.0 cfs.
- Discharge at the USGS site below Ridgway Reservoir has been between 44 and 51 cfs since November 4th. Currently the inflow to the reservoir from Dallas Cr and the Uncompahgre River is about 61 cfs, compared to the outflow of about 49 cfs. With inflow being greater than outflow since November, Ridgway Reservoir storage has increased from 59,660 AF to 69,550 AF. This is 4,420 AF above the median storage for early February and also exceeds the 75th percentile storage value.
- River Watch data from Segment COGUUN03c_A between Dexter Creek and Dallas Creek

In updating River Watch data for the years from 2022 through 2024 I found some interesting upstream-to-downstream changes in water quality parameters at the three River Watch sites in Uncompahgre River Segment COGUUN03c_A. Segment -03c_A consists of the main stem of the Uncompahgre from a point just

above the confluence with Dexter Creek down to a point just below the confluence with Dallas Creek. Figure 1 shows a portion of Segment -03c_A and the three River Watch sites: Potters Ranch, Ridgway Town and CR24. Between Potters Ranch and Ridgway Town the Uncompahgre gets inflow from irrigated ranch land, at least one creek in Ridgway, storm drainage from Ridgway, and some hot springs outflow. Between Ridgway Town and CR24 the main discharges into the Uncompahgre are Dallas Cr return flow, the Ridgway sewer plant, Dry Creek (which gets return flow from irrigated ranch land), and a wetland area about a half mile north of Ridgway.

Figure 2 shows box plots of pH measurements for the three River Watch sites. Potters Ranch and Ridgway Town had similar distributions and medians of about 7.8. At CR24, about 2.3 miles downstream of Ridgway

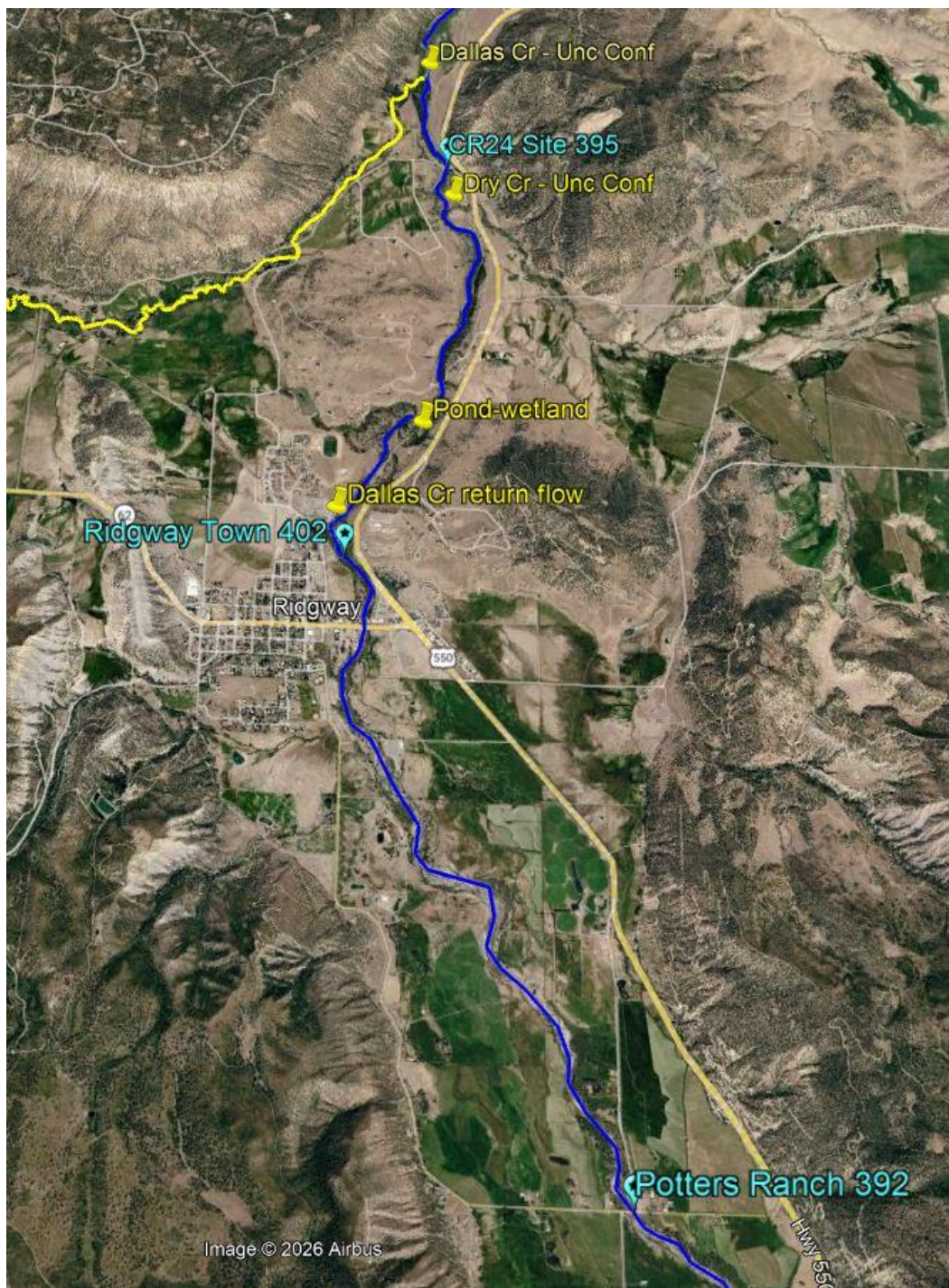


Figure 1. Map showing a portion of Uncompahgre River Segment -03c_A (blue line). River Watch sites are shown as blue icons. Yellow line is Dallas Cr.

Town, the pH median increased to 8.3. The most likely reason for the increase is the return flow from Dallas Cr, where pH is consistently greater than 8, and possibly from Dry Creek where pH is not currently measured.

Box plots of dissolved manganese (Mn-D) are shown in Figure 3. For Mn-D Potters Ranch had a large spread in concentrations and a median concentration of about 200 µg/liter. The water supply standard of 180 µg/liter was exceeded by the 74th percentile of concentrations (298 µg/liter). At the two downstream sites where the range of concentrations was much smaller, Mn-D concentration medians dropped to ≤ 130 µg/liter and both downstream sites attained the water supply standard.

Figure 4 shows the box plots for total iron (Fe-T) concentrations. Median Fe-T concentrations decreased from about 2000 µg/liter at Potters Ranch to 1200 µg/liter at CR24, likely due to suspended iron particles settling out over the 5.5 miles between the sites. The median Fe-T concentration at Potters Ranch exceeded the aquatic life standard for iron. All three sites had concentration outliers that exceeded 9000 µg/liter, which is occasionally noted during periods of very high spring runoff.

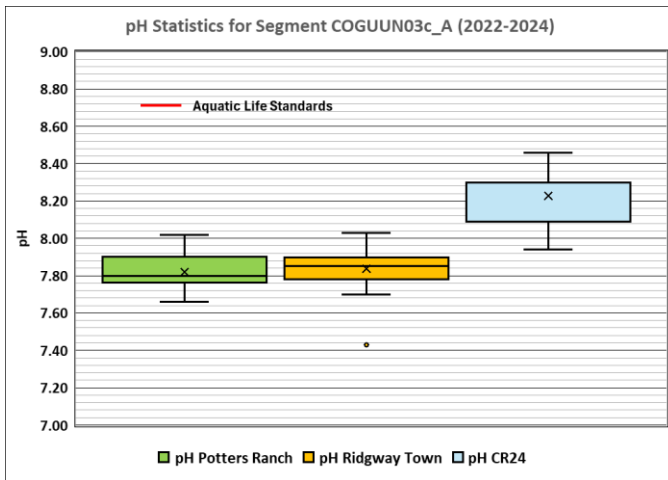


Figure 2. Box plots of pH at RW sites Potters Ranch, Ridgway Town and CR24 compiled from samples collected between 2022 and 2024.

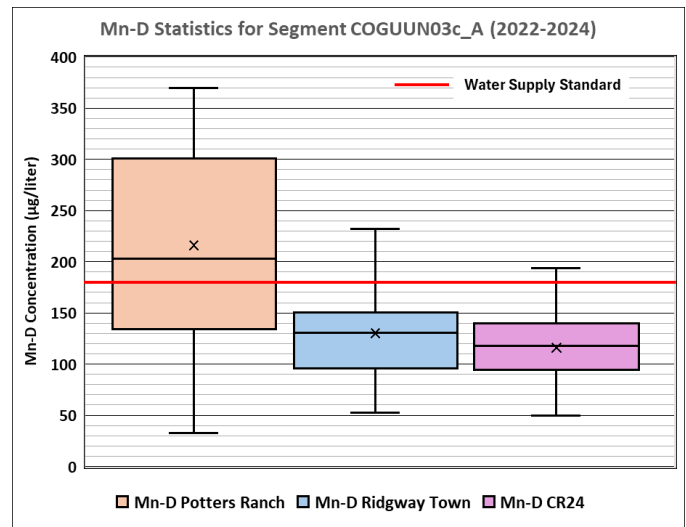


Figure 3. As in Figure 2, except showing box plots of dissolved Mn (Mn-D) concentrations. Red line is the water supply standard for Mn.

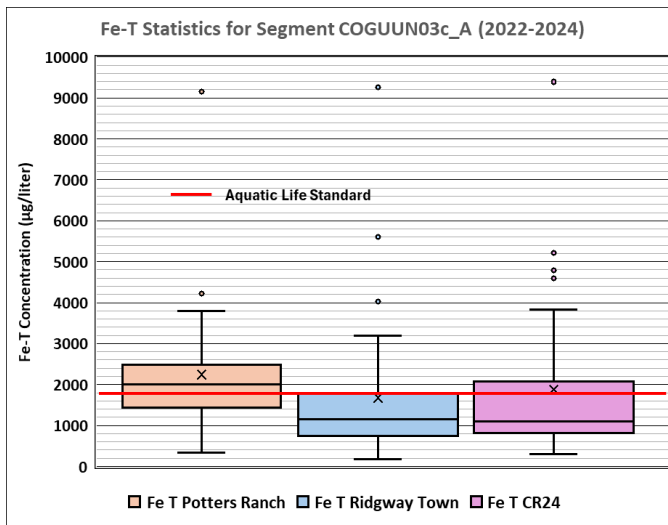


Figure 4. As in Figure 2, except showing box plots of total iron (Fe-T) concentrations. Red line is the aquatic life standard for Fe-T.

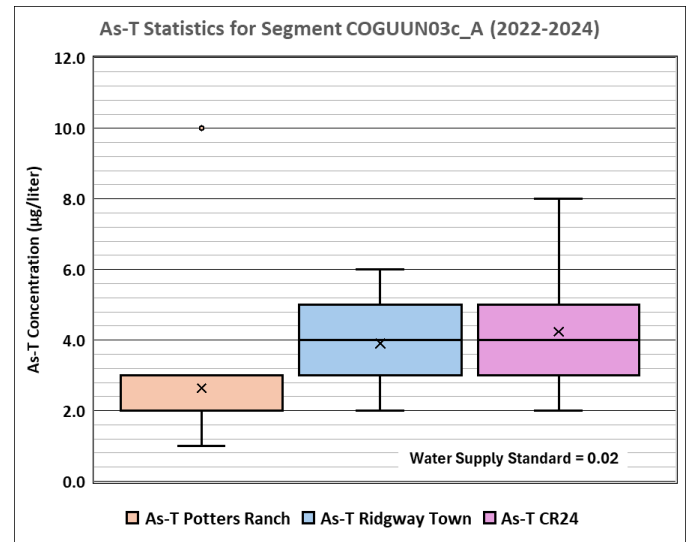


Figure 5. As in Figure 2, except showing box plots of total arsenic (As-T) concentrations.

Figure 5 shows the box plots for total arsenic (As-T) concentrations. The Water Quality Control Division (WQCD) did not list Segment -03c_A as impaired for As-T in its 2022 assessment of impaired streams. However, Figure 5 indicates that the median concentrations of As-T at all three sites exceeded the water supply standard of 0.02 µg/liter. Figure 5 also indicates that the median As-T concentration increased from 2.0 to 4.0 below Potters Ranch.

Finally, Figure 6 presents box plots of total alkalinity and total hardness concentrations. Both parameters showed concentration increases from upstream to downstream, with the largest increase being from Potters Ranch to Ridgway Town. Since streamflow (water volume) also increases downstream, the concentration increases must be due to the masses of calcium and magnesium entering the river at a greater rate than the increase in water volume. The sources of these metals could be from the streambed itself, irrigation return flow, or from tributaries entering the river.

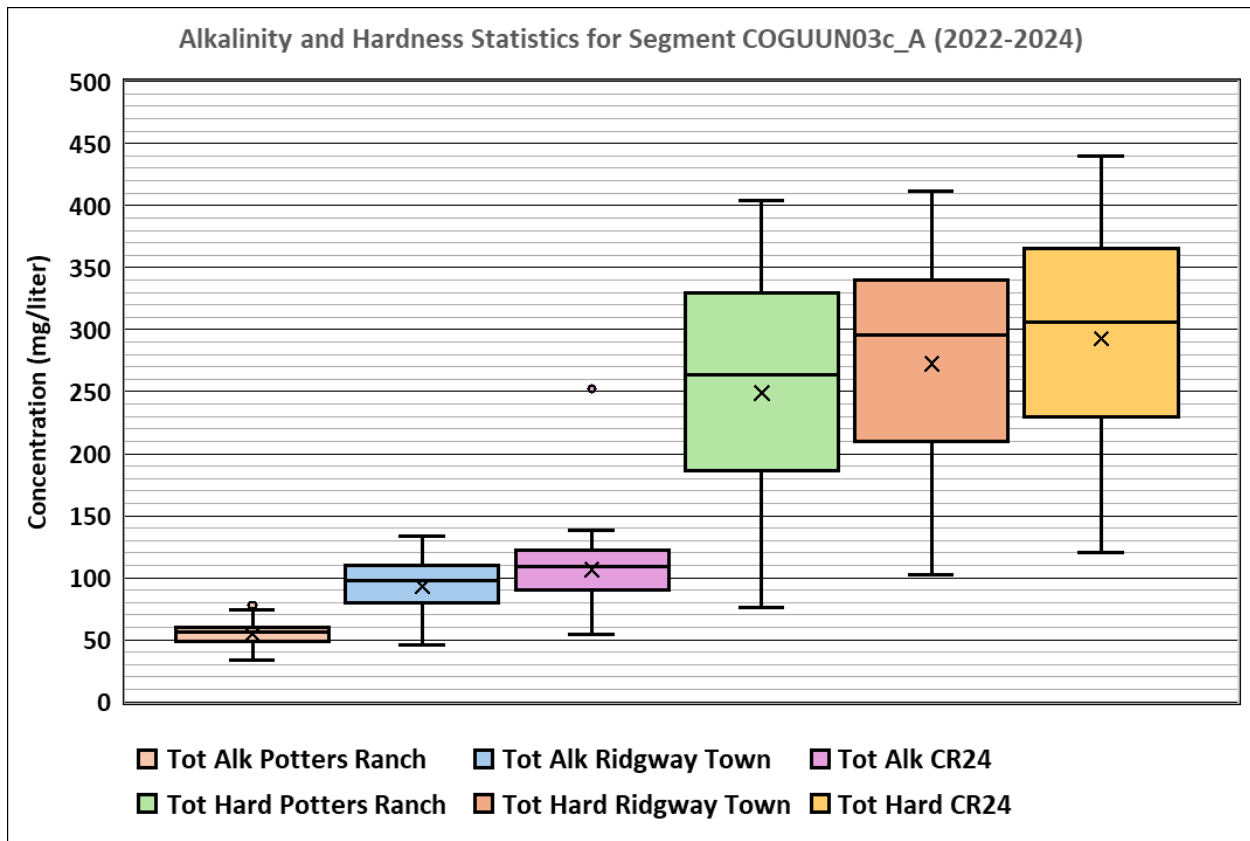


Figure 6. As in Figure 2, except showing box plots of total alkalinity and total hardness concentrations in units of mg/liter C_0CO_3 .