

PROJECT UPDATE

May 2, 2018:

This URL previously hosted a document showing a 2014 Conceptual Stream Restoration Design for the Crystal River in Carbondale, CO. That conceptual design is no longer applicable to the project so the document has been removed.

The goals, scope, and site of the Carbondale Crystal River Restoration Project were revised in 2017. We have initiated a new planning effort with a new team of consultants who are taking a completely new approach to the project.

A thorough survey and analysis of the new project site will be conducted in the spring and summer of 2018. The results will be presented to the public for initial feedback in the late summer or early fall of 2018.

The following is a joint press release dated April 26, 2018. Please read on for a full update.

For more information, please contact:

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JOINT PRESS RELEASE:

Town of Carbondale
Aspen Valley Land Trust
American Rivers
Roaring Fork Conservancy
Public Counsel of the Rockies

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For immediate release

Crystal River Restoration Effort Gains Steam in Carbondale

A project to restore a degraded portion of the Crystal River in Carbondale is about to kick off its planning phase. The ½-mile reach is located along the Carbondale-owned Riverfront Park in River Valley Ranch (RVR). Initial survey and site analysis work will begin this week and continue through the spring. A public planning process will follow in the late summer or early fall of 2018.

Riverfront Park lies between the Carbondale Fish Hatchery and Crystal Bridge Drive (see attached map), and was identified by the 2016 Crystal River Management Plan as being severely to unsustainably impaired.

The project is a partnership between the Town of Carbondale, Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT), American Rivers, Roaring Fork Conservancy (RFC), Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Public Counsel of the Rockies, and Trout Unlimited.

Aspen Valley Land Trust and the Town of Carbondale have been engaged in efforts to restore the Crystal River as it flows through RVR since 2013. The original project scope was based on a vision to restore the entire 1.5-mile reach of the Crystal River as it flows through RVR. That proved to be too big a bite to take all at once. In 2017, the project goals evolved to reflect a first step towards improving instream and riparian habitat along the river. The focus shifted to the publically accessible Riverfront Park and the adjacent reach of river.

For the Town of Carbondale, this is an opportunity to act on a major goal of the 2015 Carbondale Park's & Recreation Master Plan, which calls for improved connectivity between the community and its rivers. Carbondale Town Manager Jay Harrington states, "The project site at Riverfront Park offers a unique opportunity for our community to come together around restoring one of our biggest assets, the Crystal River. Our goal is to maintain the park's character and passive use as a wildland park, but improve the health of the ecosystem and enhance the educational experience."

AVLT Executive Director Suzanne Stephens has been part of the project's evolution and is excited to see it moving forward. Stephen's states, "Riverfront Park has huge educational potential for the next generation of land and water stewards. We'd love to see it better leveraged as part of the regular learning environment for Carbondale schoolchildren. There are five schools within a short walk of park. If we can create a healthy ecosystem, and engaging ways to learn from it, both the river and our community will benefit."

Heather Lewin, Watershed Action Director at the Roaring Fork Conservancy agrees. Lewin added, “RFC runs several education programs in Carbondale schools and the community. We’re excited to take advantage of this opportunity to share the restoration process with the community, fostering a better connection between the town and the river.”

The project also is significant on another level. The RFC, along with Public Counsel of the Rockies, were the organizations behind the development of the 2016 Crystal River Management Plan, one of the first Stream Management Plans in Colorado. Lewin states, “A management plan is only as useful as its execution. Our goal is to bring the management plan’s recommendations to reality and this project is an early opportunity to dig in and get started.”

Chelsea Brundige, a consultant with Public Counsel of the Rockies views the project as an opportunity to create a restoration model that is replicable elsewhere in the watershed. Brundige states, “This park is a perfect place to create a demonstration model that could generate public and private landowner interest in restoring more of the river. That’s an important opportunity - for this project to seed others in the future.”

Ken Neubecker, Colorado Projects Director at American Rivers, sees another opportunity. He has been working with Mark O’Meara, the Town of Carbondale’s Utility Director, on a long-term parallel plan to improve the efficiency of the Town’s ditch systems. One such ditch, the Weaver Ditch, diverts from the Crystal River in the middle of the project reach. Water is diverted to the Weaver using a “push-up dam,” a pile of large rocks and river material pushed into place by heavy equipment to form a partial dam across the river. Push-up dams require frequent maintenance. According to Neubecker, “Nobody likes seeing heavy equipment in the river less than the fish. One of the important benefits for this project is to install a minimal-maintenance diversion structure that reduces sedimentation and also creates great fish habitat.”

The project will also replace the Weaver’s old manual screw-type headgate with a structure that can be retrofitted with an automated headgate system in the future. That’s a day O’Meara looks forward to. O’Meara states, “Rivers are always changing. With a manual system, there is an art to maintaining the right level of flow in the ditch. Making a simple adjustment means sending somebody out to the headgate. That takes times. Headgate automation would make it real-time, helping us better serve our customers and ultimately keeping more water and energy in the river.”

The planning, design, and permitting for the project is anticipated to cost \$200,000 and take over a year to complete. The project was preliminarily awarded \$130,000 in grant funding earlier this year from two separate Colorado Water Conservation Board funds (\$100,000 from the Watershed Restoration Grant Fund and \$20,700 from the Water Supply Reserve Fund), as well as \$9,300 grant from the Environment Foundation.

The remaining \$70,000 needed for the planning phase will be funded in part by the Town of Carbondale and in-kind contributions from the partnering organizations and other funders, as needed.

The project partners look forward to sharing the results of the site analysis and engaging stakeholders and the public for input in the late summer or early fall.

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CRYSTAL RIVER RESTORATION & WEAVER DITCH EFFICIENCY PROJECT

PROPOSED PROJECT REACH

