

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Final Scoping Report on Estes Valley Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment



Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Final Scoping Report on Estes Valley Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

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Bureau of Reclamation
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Executive Summary

The Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, is preparing a resource management plan (RMP) and environmental assessment (EA) for Reclamation lands located in the Estes Valley area near Estes Park in Larimer County, Colorado. The Reclamation lands in Estes Valley are managed by the Eastern Colorado Area Office (ECAO), Great Plains Region, in partnership with the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District (EVRPD).

The RMP/EA will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate natural and cultural resources and recreation needs for Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley area, while ensuring that the federal Colorado-Big Thompson Project continues to meet its authorized purposes of water storage and delivery for irrigation, municipal, industrial and hydroelectric use. The RMP and the EA are individual documents with separate requirements and purposes, however, they are prepared in parallel as one document informs the other for planning and decision-making. The RMP is a planning document which outlines the vision and guidelines for future resource management decisions. The EA is an environmental compliance document which analyzes and discloses the potential effects of proposed resource management decisions contained in the RMP.

This report includes the comments received during the public scoping process. This report summarizes the issues raised during the scoping process and describes the proposed scope of issues to be addressed throughout the planning process.

Scoping Activities

Scoping allows agencies, stakeholders, and interested parties to identify or suggest resources to be evaluated, issues that may require environmental review, reasonable alternatives to consider, and potential mitigation (ways to reduce or avoid adverse effects) options for resources. Scoping also allows Reclamation to clearly set the parameters of the planning and environmental review process and to identify which issues will be addressed in the RMP/EA and which will be eliminated from further consideration, and to provide a rationale for those determinations.

Prior to public involvement, internal scoping was conducted among a team of interdisciplinary Reclamation staff members at ECAO and with a team of staff members at EVRPD.

Public involvement for the Estes Valley RMP/EA is being conducted in three phases:

- 1) Public scoping prior to development of alternatives and NEPA analysis to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the RMP/EA;
- 2) Public outreach via project updates by e-mail and on the ECAO and EVRPD Web sites, news and social media releases, and newspaper advertisements;
- 3) Public review and comment on the draft RMP/EA, which will describe alternatives and analyze likely environmental effects.

This report documents the results of the internal scoping meetings and the first two phases of the public involvement process.

It is noted that scoping is not required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for an EA, though federal agencies may apply the scoping process to development of an EA (43 CFR 46.305(a)(2)).

Scoping Results

During the public comment period, three comment documents were received as of November 18, 2017, and have been incorporated into this Scoping Report. A comment document is a written version of comments submitted by a commentor, whether a letter, comment sheet, or e-mail. “Commentor” is a term that is commonly used in NEPA to refer to any person, agency, or other entity that provides written or oral comments or input relative to the content, process, scope, or analysis of the NEPA process or respective action or project. Of these, one commentor was a property owner’s association, and two commentors were individual members of the public.

A comment document may contain numerous individual comments. Each comment document was read and categorized based on issues and concerns raised. The comments are summarized in Section 2 of this document. Comments were evaluated to determine whether the issues and concerns raised fell within the jurisdiction of Reclamation or within the scope of the RMP. Those issues that fell outside of Reclamation’s jurisdiction or the scope of the RMP were not carried forward for project planning.

Issue Summary

The preliminary list of issues or resources to be addressed in the RMP/EA were divided into the following seven categories:

- Recreation and Visual Resources
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Land Management

- Water Resources
- Public Information, Health, and Safety
- Partnerships and Contracts
- Project Facilities

Chapter 2 contains a breakdown of the individual comments received, paraphrased and organized by issue category.

Future Steps

Reclamation will use the scoping report to evaluate the issues raised by the public and to organize them into issue statements that can be applied to the next phase of planning. The next phase of the planning process is to develop management alternatives, which will be analyzed in a draft RMP/EA. The next official public comment period will begin when the draft RMP/EA are released for public review.

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1. Introduction

The Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, is preparing a resource management plan and associated environmental assessment (RMP/EA) for Reclamation lands located in the Estes Valley area near Estes Park in Larimer County, Colorado (Planning Area). The Reclamation lands in Estes Valley, including the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project's Lake Estes, Marys Lake, and East Portal, are managed by the Eastern Colorado Area Office (ECAO), Great Plains Region, in partnership with the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District (EVRPD).

The purpose of this report is to review and summarize comments received from internal and public scoping and, based on this review combined with Reclamation objectives, to develop broad statements that encompass the range of issues identified during scoping. These issue statements will be used during the planning process to develop the proposed action and alternatives. Planning issues may be concerns or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, and related management practices. Issues include concerns, needs, and resource use, development, and protection opportunities for consideration in preparing the RMP/EA.

1.1 Overview of the National Environmental Policy Act and Public Involvement Process

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA, Federal agencies are required to consider the environmental impacts of their proposed actions prior to taking action. Actions that are subject to NEPA include those involving Federal funding or requiring Federal permits, those involving Federal facilities and equipment, or those affecting Federal employees. The actions that Reclamation would propose as part of the RMP/EA being developed for ECAO are subject to the requirements of NEPA. Pursuant to NEPA, Reclamation will fulfill the requirements of NEPA documentation with a stand-alone RMP and companion EA for Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley area.

Public involvement is a component of NEPA, which requires that Federal agencies involve the public in the decision making process, while considering environmental factors. Guidance for implementing public involvement is codified in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 1501, Part 7 (40 CFR 1501.7), thereby ensuring that Federal agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public in preparing NEPA documents.

Public involvement for the Estes Valley RMP/EA is being conducted in three phases:

- 1) Public scoping prior to Alternatives Development and NEPA analysis to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the RMP/EA;
- 2) Public outreach via project updates by e-mail and on the ECAO homepage, news releases, and newspaper advertisements;
- 3) Public review and comment on the draft RMP/EA, which will describe alternatives and analyze likely environmental effects.

This report documents the results of the first two phases of the public involvement process.

1.2 Purpose and Need for the RMP/EA

Over the past decade, changes have occurred in resource management and recreation interest, as well as changes in the types and level of use of Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley. The Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992 (Public Law [P.L.] 102-575, Title 28 [2805(c)(A)]) directs Reclamation to, “provide for the development, use, conservation, protection, enhancement, and management of resources on Reclamation lands.” These changes and requirements under the act have created a need for Reclamation to re-evaluate resource and recreation management for Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley.

An RMP/EA will be developed that reflects contemporary resource and recreation management needs for Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley, while ensuring that the C-BT Project continues to meet its authorized project purposes. Senate Document 80 describes the authorized project purposes, which include the diversion, storage, and delivery of supplemental water for irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, industrial development, municipal use, and other beneficial purposes.

1.3 Description of the Scoping Process

Scoping is a process designed to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. The process has two main components: internal scoping and external scoping. Internal scoping is conducted within an agency or with cooperating agencies to determine preliminary and anticipated issues and concerns. External scoping involves the public and is meant to be “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action” (Reclamation 2003). The public process is designed to determine and frame the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. External scoping helps ensure that issues are identified early and that they are studied, that the

environmental analysis is focused on the most important issues, that the proposed action and alternatives are balanced, thorough, and can be implemented.

1.3.1 Internal Scoping

An internal scoping meeting was held on June 19, 2017 with an interdisciplinary team of Reclamation resource specialists and staff of ECAO to identify the anticipated planning issues. An additional internal scoping meeting was held with the EVRPD staff on June 22, 2017 to identify anticipated planning issues related specifically to recreation and resource management. These were compiled into a list of potential issues and constituted the first attempt to identify the issues that Reclamation may address in this RMP/EA.

1.3.2 External Scoping

a. News Release and Newspaper Advertisement

One announcement was printed in the Legal Notices section of the *Coloradoan* in the Sunday edition of the paper on October 22, 2017 to notify the public of the public meeting and the public comment period.

The *Estes Park Trail Gazette* agreed to run a story on the public meeting and a follow up story the week of October 30th to help advertise the public comment period, but neither story ever made it to print.

b. Mailing List

Several e-mail notifications were sent out to potential stakeholders by Reclamation and EVRPD. An announcement regarding the upcoming RMP/EA planning process was sent out by EVRPD on October 11, 2017 using their monthly newsletter. The newsletter was distributed to 1,663 people. On October 12, 2017, an e-mail was distributed by Reclamation to 197 individuals recognized as potential stakeholders, including representatives from local, state, and federal government as well as non-profit organizations and individual community members.

c. Web Site Content

Announcements were posted to both the EVRPD and ECAO websites regarding the upcoming Estes Valley RMP/EA planning process, the comment period, and the opportunity to attend the public meeting. Following the public meeting, a digital file of the display boards from the public meeting was made available for viewing on the ECAO website.

d. Social Media

Announcements for the public meeting and comment period were posted to official organizational Facebook pages for EVRPD and Reclamation's pages for Lake Estes and Olympus Dam. EVRPD also created a Facebook event to inform followers of the public meeting and public comment period for the Estes Valley RMP/EA.

e. Public Scoping Meeting & Public Comment

One public meeting was held within the Planning Area on October 25, 2017 from 6:00pm-8:00pm in the Estes Park High School Library. As described above, the meeting was advertised in local media. Additionally, the announcement for the meeting was e-mailed to agency staff and members of the public who have participated in past Reclamation activities and have been included in past Reclamation distribution lists. In addition to Reclamation and EVRPD representatives, six people attended the scoping meeting.

The scoping meeting was hosted in an open house format. Planning team members from Reclamation and its managing partner, EVRPD, staffed informational display boards and interacted with meeting participants to provide information and to answer questions. An open house was chosen over the more formal public meeting format to encourage broader participation, to allow attendees to learn about the project and planning area at their own pace, and to allow attendees to engage with Reclamation representatives in an informal, one-on-one setting. Ten informational display boards were positioned throughout the meeting room allowing participants to learn about the Estes Valley RMP/EA planning process, the C-BT Project, the geography of the planning area, recreation opportunities and facilities within the planning area, and opportunities for further public involvement (Appendix A).

1.4 Management Constraints and Opportunities

1.4.1 Constraints

As explained in Section 1.2, the primary purpose of the C-BT Project is to divert, store, and deliver supplemental water for irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, industrial development, municipal use, and other beneficial purposes. Water delivery is managed based on priority dates of appropriation for water use. The authorizing legislation for the C-BT Project, Senate Document 80, did not include authorization to construct, operate, or maintain recreation facilities. However, the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-72, 79 Stat. 213), gave Reclamation the authority to seek qualified partners and to cost share in recreation management and development. Public Law 89-72 was amended in 1992 with Public Law 102-575, commonly referred to as Title 28 and the Reclamation Recreation Management Act, which declares that there is a

Federal responsibility to provide opportunities for public recreation at Federal water projects and that this additional responsibility does not change the need to meet the purposes for which the Federal Reclamation projects were initially authorized and constructed.

Agencies are constrained by their respective legislative authorities, budgets, personnel, current policies, and environmental limitations when addressing management changes and other actions. The ability of agencies to manage environmental and recreational resources will depend on their ability to maintain sufficient personnel, obtain adequate funding to operate and maintain facilities and programs, and to protect and enhance existing opportunities and resources. Constraints may limit the range of opportunities and scope of issues to be addressed in the RMP/EA. Constraints are the ground rules used to establish the planning criteria, which will guide and direct the preparation of the plan.

1.4.2 Opportunities

Management opportunities exist in the Planning Area to enhance, protect, and interpret the natural and cultural resources of the area, and to provide a range of recreation opportunities and facilities while avoiding significant adverse effects to natural and cultural resources. Opportunities cannot affect the constraints. Planning issues and concerns identified during the scoping process are directly correlated with management opportunities.

1.4.3 Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are established based on the management constraints and opportunities, and are used to guide and direct the preparation of the plan. The following preliminary criteria have been identified for the Estes Valley RMP/EA planning process:

- Protect the primary purposes of the C-BT Project, as authorized in Senate Document 80;
- Protect the secondary purposes of providing recreation opportunities;
- Protect water quality;
- Honor existing contracts and agreements, including but not limited to water delivery and power contracts;
- Protect the ability of Reclamation and EVRPD to enter into future contracts with third-party entities to enhance the primary and secondary project purposes within Reclamation law and the scope and authorization of the C-BT Project.

1.5 Types of Planning Decisions

The land use plan decisions that will be made in this RMP fall into two categories: (1) desired outcomes, and (2) allowable uses and actions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes. All desired outcomes and allowable uses must protect the primary project purposes identified in Section 1.4 above.

1.5.1 Desired Outcomes

The RMP will identify desired outcomes expressed in terms of specific goals and objectives. Goals and objectives are established to direct Reclamation and the managing partner's actions towards most effectively meeting legal mandates, regulatory responsibilities, departmental and agency policy or other guidance, and to achieve other important resource needs. **Goals** are broad statements of desired outcomes within the planning area and are usually not quantifiable. **Objectives** identify specific desired outcomes for resources. They are usually quantifiable and measurable and may have established timeframes for achievement.

1.5.2 Allowable uses and management actions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes

Allowable Uses: The RMP must identify uses (also called allocations) that are allowable, restricted, or prohibited within the planning area. These allocations identify lands where uses are allowed and where any limitations on the use are applied. Certain lands may be open or closed to specific uses based on legislative, regulatory, or policy requirements or criteria to protect sensitive resource values or to address other management concerns.

Management actions: The RMP must identify specific management actions to meet the goals and objectives. These actions include proactive measures, measures that guide day-to-day activities, and establishment of administrative designations.

2. Comment and Planning Issues

2.1 Method of Comment Collection and Analysis

The official public comment period ran from October 18 through November 17, 2017. Written comments could be submitted on a comment sheet at the public meeting, by e-mail, by fax, or by regular mail. All comments received were submitted through comment sheets at the public meeting or by e-mail.

To ensure that comments were properly registered and that none were overlooked, comments were first logged into a comment database and assigned a submission number. Issues and concerns within each comment submission were categorized into one of the planning/issue categories. Furthermore, some discrete comments were relevant to multiple resource issues and thereby were classified by more than one issue. The database was structured to organize comments by issue category.

2.2 Comment Review and Planning Issues

This section lists the comments that were discussed internally and those that were submitted to Reclamation during the public scoping period. In most cases, the comments were paraphrased to save space. In some cases, similar comments appear in more than one section.

Planning issues consist of disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues include resource use, development, and protection opportunities for consideration in the preparation of the RMP. Planning issues for this RMP were identified based on public comments provided during the formal scoping period, input from Reclamation ECAO staff, and input from the managing partner.

Each issue category identifies planning issues that will be carried forward to be resolved in the RMP, items that will be addressed through policy or administrative action, and issues that are beyond the scope of the RMP. Issues considered to be beyond the scope of the RMP include any issues that are not within the jurisdiction of Reclamation or issues outside the planning area boundary. Generally, implementation level decisions would be considered to be beyond the scope of the RMP, since they are decisions that require site-specific planning and NEPA analysis. However, some implementation level decisions may be considered during the planning process.

2.2.1 Issue Category A: Recreation and Visual Resources

Comment Summary

Issue A1: Facility and Infrastructure Maintenance

- Current infrastructure is old and cannot handle the full capacity of the campgrounds during operating season.
- Failing infrastructure needs to be improved or replaced.
- During the wet season, there are drainage problems on the golf course (9-hole).

Issue A2: Fishing and Hunting

- There is uncertainty about where and if hunting is allowed within the planning area.
- There is concern about the safety of fisherman crossing the golf course and using the river banks adjacent to the golf course.

Issue A3: Noise

- Private landowners complain about noise coming from the Marys Lake campground after 8:00pm
- Private landowners experience noise disturbance coming from the Marys Lake campground at all hours of the day and night due to loud music, loud voices, and generators from RVs.

Issue A4: Recreation Development

- The Estes Valley Development Code has specific requirements for Recreational Vehicle Campgrounds. In the code, EVDC 7.15, is detailed the requirement for a 250 foot setback from existing single-family residences and a 6-foot fence is required to screen the campground from adjoining areas.
- In the Estes Valley Development Code, the Marys Lake campground site is zoned 'A' accommodations. The site is outside the Town of Estes Park limits, but within the Estes Valley Development Code boundaries. Any changes being proposed could require special review. According to the Colorado State law, (CRS 30-28-110(1)) there will be a required location and extent review to verify that the public facilities and uses are consistent with the Estes Valley Comprehensive Plan.
- The Facility at Wapiti Meadows should be upgraded.
- Wapiti Meadows should not be developed into a ball-field, as previously envisioned in the 2008 RMP.
- Day use areas at Lake Estes should be improved with additional picnic shelters and playground amenities.
- Campgrounds should not be expanded because it is not in the budget.

- Campgrounds should not be expanded because they are already too crowded.
- Some campsites should be removed to alleviate crowding in the campgrounds.
- There are approximately 50 acres of land near East Portal that have not been developed for recreation. This area could be developed into a small interpretive nature trail to provide close recreation for people camping in the area.
- The road surfaces in the campgrounds should be paved because they are subject to erosion problems.
- The last RMP (2008) recommended a 45-foot landscaped buffer between the fence boundary of the adjacent private property and the closest campsites at Marys Lake campground. However, more campsites have been developed much closer to the fence line, within the previously recommended 45-foot buffer zone. Reclamation should create and maintain a landscaped buffer between the campsites and the private property.
- A trail between Marys Lake campground and the Town of Estes could be developed to provide additional recreation. This would also help alleviate traffic congestion and address safety concerns with the town.
- Many picnic and restroom structures at Lake Estes do not have spur trails from the main Lake Estes trail. This results in widespread vegetation trampling.

Issue A5: Recreation Experience and Opportunity

- The campground (Marys Lake) is surrounded by private residences and the opportunity for a “mountain wilderness experience” no longer exists.
- The picnic shelters at Cherokee Draw have no reservation system. Management should consider implementing a reservation system for the picnic shelters at Cherokee Draw.
- Management should improve areas, such as the Fish Creek Arm, to provide increased wildlife viewing opportunities.

Issue A6: Recreation Use

- Cherokee Draw receives heavy usage and there is not adequate parking for the amount of people that visit the area.
- Campground use has increased over the past 25 years.
- The 2008 RMP envisioned a ball-field at Wapiti Meadows, this doesn’t seem to fit with the current recreation use and demand for the area.
- There are not many options for winter recreation.
- Fluctuating water levels in the reservoirs make the ice unstable and very dangerous. Winter recreation on the ice poses a major safety concern.
- There is a problem with bowling balls getting into the trash rack.
- There is an annual “rubber duck race” where rubber ducks are launched into the river. Many rubber ducks are not retrieved before they windup

downstream in the trash rack of the power plant bay. This poses a concern for the water gauging and instrumentation devices.

- Flying drones is becoming increasingly popular as a recreational activity and it is extremely difficult to manage this type of use.
- Private landowners recommend that open fires be prohibited in the campgrounds and that campgrounds be converted to “stove only” facilities.

Issue A7: Use Authorizations for Commercial and Competitive Recreation

- There are several commercial guides who are using Reclamation lands for profit and who do not have a permit.
- Commercial and competitive use authorizations were not specifically addressed in the previous RMP (2008).

Issue A8: Use Conflicts

- Cyclists are not following the speed limit on Lake Estes Trail.
- Some fishermen like to fish in the river adjacent to the golf course, which is dangerous because someone could get hit by a stray ball.
- The fence line between private property and the Marys Lake campground has been damaged by campers trespassing from the campground onto adjacent private property.
- The Marys Lake campground is negatively impacting the quality of life of the nearby property owners.
- Adjacent private property owners do not like the view of the campground and would like screening landscaping installed between the campground and property line.
- Residential neighbors find camper behavior to be offensive, as they have been seen relieving themselves in plain sight instead of in the bathrooms.
- Blowing and loose trash is a constant problem for residential properties bordering the campground.
- Campers sometimes use the boundary fence as a clothesline, creating an unsightly view for residential neighbors.
- There are problems with pedestrian traffic at the 9-hole golf course as many pedestrians walk across the golf course to look at the elk.

Issue A9: Visual and Scenic Resources

- Many people find the jersey barriers installed at the Marys Lake campground after 9/11 to be unsightly.
- Private landowners think large RVs in the Marys Lake campground are unsightly and would like large RVs to be restricted to the westernmost tiers of campsites in order to make them less visual.
- The campground looks like an RV parking lot with many vehicles parked in close proximity. This creates an unsightly appearance in contrast to the adjacent single-family residences.
- The picnic shelters at Cherokee Draw should be upgraded from metal to wood to look more natural.

- Reclamation should consider how the recreational facilities and allowable uses may contribute to light pollution and negatively affect the quality of the night sky.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *How should the lands within the planning area be zoned for different recreation uses, levels of development, and protection of resources?*
 - a. *What is the best use for areas such as Wapiti Meadows, Fish Creek, and the undeveloped 50 acres near East Portal?*
 - b. *What are the desired visitor experiences and opportunities and how can they be achieved through management actions or decisions?*
 - c. *What level of development is appropriate for each zone classification?*
 - d. *What management actions should be taken to determine the full capacity of the different recreation areas?*
 - e. *How should management policy address the need for infrastructure repairs and improvements?*
 - f. *What management actions or policies could be used to provide additional opportunities for wildlife viewing?*
 - g. *Should any areas be closed to hunting and/or fishing?*
 - h. *Should any areas be recommended for seasonal closures?*
 - i. *Where and what types of special use permits should be allowed?*
 - j. *Where and what types of winter recreation are appropriate?*
 - k. *What types of use should be allowed or prohibited in the different zones?*
2. *What management actions or policy can be used to alleviate crowding?*
 - a. *Should campsites be removed from the campgrounds? How would removal of campsites affect the recreation opportunity and recreation experience?*
 - b. *What management actions could be used to alleviate crowding at Cherokee Draw?*
3. *What guidelines/criteria should be used for planning future development?*
 - a. *Should campgrounds be expanded?*
 - b. *Should new facilities be built?*
 - c. *Should old facilities be expanded or improved?*
 - d. *What visual/aesthetic criteria should be followed for new or improved facilities?*
 - e. *Would paving the campground roads help alleviate erosion and maintenance issues?*
4. *What management actions or policy could be used to reduce the negative effects of recreation?*
 - a. *What management actions or policy can be used to address noise pollution?*

- b. *What management actions or policy can be used to address light pollution?*
- c. *What management actions or policy can be used to address trash/litter in the campgrounds?*
- d. *What management actions or policy can be used to improve the visual quality of campgrounds?*
- e. *What management actions or policy can be used to manage the “rubber duck race” and “bowling ball launch” so that these items do not end up in the trash racks and threaten to damage instrumentation devices?*
- 5. *What management actions or policy can be used to address recreation use and user conflicts?*
 - a. *What are the potential impacts of hunting and/or fishing in the planning area on sensitive species or resources, and how might potential conflicts with other users or uses be resolved?*
 - b. *What management actions or policy can be used to educate and encourage visitors to follow rules and regulations?*
 - c. *What management actions or policy can be used to educate and encourage visitors to be better stewards of the land and resources?*

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP

- 1. *Will Reclamation follow the Estes Valley Development Code requirements for Recreational Vehicle Campgrounds? Are the campgrounds subject to the Estes Valley Development Code boundaries and the Colorado State law requirements for location and extent review?*

Federal lands are not subject to the requirements of local or municipal code.

- 2. *What management actions should be taken to address residential property owner’s quality of life and property value concerns?*

Management actions to address resources, objects, and values on private lands is outside the scope of the RMP. As stated in Section 1.2, the purpose and need of the RMP is to address contemporary resource and recreation management needs on Reclamation lands in the Estes Valley, while ensuring that the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project continues to meet its authorized project purposes.

2.2.2 Issue Category B: Natural and Cultural Resources

Comment Summary

Issue B1: Air Quality

- RVs using diesel generators in the campground may contribute to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution.

- The campgrounds emit dense smoke during periods of heavy use.

Issue B2: Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- Cultural resources exist within the planning area.
- What is the potential for paleontological resources within the planning area?

Issue B3: Ecology & Ecological Restoration

- The Fish Creek Arm of Lake Estes was damaged in the flood of 2013 and this area has experienced extreme sedimentation (approximately 10 feet) and ecological damage. This area should be restored and made into a Natural Area for watching birds and wildlife.
- Wetlands and Riparian areas should be managed to protect the sensitive ecological resources and biological diversity.
- Vegetation is trampled and degraded in heavily used recreation areas.

Issue B4: Fire Danger and Fire Prevention

- Private property owners claim that campfires sometimes reach heights of 8-10 feet and campers demonstrate carelessness with open fires. Although the Marys Lake campground is not in a Wildfire Hazard Area, the open campfires remain a major cause for concern for nearby landowners during dry periods because they pose an increased risk of an escaped campfire.
- In 2007, an automobile parked in the Marys Lake campground started a grass fire and it took the fire department 20 minutes to arrive.
- It is important to manage forested areas to minimize the potential for wildfire.

Issue B5: Noxious Weeds

- It is important to effectively manage invasive and noxious weeds in the planning area.

Issue B6: Pest Management and Aquatic Nuisance Species

- There is growing concern about beetle infestations, both pine beetle and spruce beetle.
- Aquatic Nuisance Species are a growing concern for all reservoirs with motorized boat use in the state of Colorado.

Issue B7: Oil, Gas, and Minerals

- Are any of the lands within the planning area suitable for oil, gas, or mineral development?

Issue B8: Soil

- Erosion occurs on roads, trails, and shorelines.
- There is damage/erosion along the Lake Estes Trail from the 2013 Flood that needs to be repaired.

- The Fish Creek Arm, and other areas in the planning area, have experienced increased deposition and sedimentation as a result of the 2013 flood.
- Sensitive soils exist within the planning area and should be protected.

Issue B9: Threatened and Endangered Species

- It is important to effectively manage for any threatened, endangered or sensitive species that exist or have the potential to exist within the planning area.

Issue B10: Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- Heavy pedestrian traffic on the golf course during elk calving season may disturb the wildlife.
- Lands within the planning area need better support from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) on dealing with wounded elk and wildlife.
- There is growing concern with the increasing frequency and close proximity of human-elk interactions.
- Bird habitat should be improved and increased.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *What management actions or policy can be used to reduce air pollution (smoke and greenhouse gas emissions) from recreational activities in the campgrounds?*
 - a. *Should diesel generators be allowed/prohibited in campgrounds where full electric hookups are available?*
2. *What management actions should be taken to protect cultural and paleontological resources?*
3. *What management actions should be taken to address the ecological and recreational impacts of sedimentation in the Fish Creek arm of Lake Estes?*
4. *What management actions or policy can be used to address fire prevention and fire response?*
 - a. *What actions can be taken to reduce the risk of an escaped campfire?*
 - i. *Fire Pit Screens? Fire Extinguishers? Improved Partnerships? Outreach and Education?*
 - b. *What types of fire treatments should be used or allowed in the different management zones?*
5. *What management actions or policy can be used to avoid or mitigate species invasions in the planning area?*
 - a. *What techniques or treatments should be allowed, restricted, or prohibited to remove invasive species? What are the potential impacts of these treatments on other resources in the planning area?*

- b. *How should Reclamation and/or the managing partner monitor for noxious weeds and invasive species?*
 - c. *Should Reclamation or the managing partner allow non-native species to be planted in the planning area for agricultural or other purposes?*
- 6. *What restrictions regarding mineral development should be in place?*
- 7. *What management actions or policy should be used to address concerns related to soil resources?*
 - a. *What management actions or policy can be used to protect sensitive soils?*
 - b. *What management actions should be taken to address erosion?*
 - c. *What management actions should be taken to address sedimentation / deposition?*
- 8. *What management policy is needed to effectively manage for any threatened, endangered or sensitive species that exist or have the potential to exist within the planning area?*
- 9. *What management actions or policy can be used to address wildlife concerns?*

2.2.3 Issue Category C: Land Management

Comment Summary

Issue C1: Access and Allowable Use

- The Estes Power Plant was closed to the public after 9/11 for security reasons. The parking lot at the Estes Power Plant should remain closed to the public.
- The trail behind the Estes Power Plant should be closed to the public.
- Access to Prospect Mountain should be restricted.
- Marys Lake and East Portal Reservoirs currently have “no boating” and “no swimming” restrictions for safety and security reasons. However, visitors occasionally use their boats in these restricted areas.
- Adjacent private property owners recommend closing the campground and restricting public access.

Issue C2: Acquisition and Disposal of Land

- Adjacent private property owners would like to do a “land swap” with Reclamation in order to acquire the Marys Lake Campground.

Issue C3: Research Activities

- Lands within the planning area may appeal to researchers who want to study a broad spectrum of topics, including: impacts from the 2013 flood, ecological restoration, fire ecology, recreation, reservoir sedimentation, water quality, wildlife, etc.

Issue C4: Use Authorizations

- It is expected that there will be continued interest from individuals, non-profit organizations, commercial businesses, and government agencies to obtain use authorizations.
 - Use Authorizations may take the form of, but are not limited to: Easements, Licenses, Right-of-Way, Special Use Permits
 - Expected requests for use authorizations include, but are not limited to: private road/driveway access, electrical or utility lines, commercial use, and competitive and special event use.

Issue C5: Vandalism and Trespassing

- Graffiti and trespassing are a problem at the Estes Power Plant, where people jump over walls to restricted areas which are then vandalized.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *Which management zones / areas should remain open / closed for public access?*
2. *What management actions or policy should be used to manage research requests or research activities?*
3. *What management policy and guidance should be used to process requests for use authorizations?*
 - a. *What types of use should or should not be allowed in the different planning area zones?*
4. *What management actions or policy should be used to address unauthorized use?*
 - a. *What management actions can be taken to address non-compliance with the “no boating” and “no swimming” restrictions?*
 - b. *What management actions can be taken to address trespassing?*
 - c. *What management actions can be taken to address vandalism?*

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP

1. *Should access to Prospect Mountain remain open to the public?*

Prospect Mountain is located outside the planning area boundary.

2. *How should Reclamation identify lands for acquisition/disposal? Should Reclamation consider a “land swap” or disposal of the Marys Lake Campground?*

All lands within the planning area are subject to a five-year review cycle by Reclamation to determine whether they are needed for C-BT Project purposes or other beneficial value. In the event Reclamation determines any of the lands to be un-needed, Reclamation will follow standard General Services Administration procedures to dispose of the lands and will complete additional NEPA compliance

at that time. The disposal process requires that any un-needed lands be offered first to other Federal or state agencies, then to local counties or municipalities, and lastly, through sale at public auction to the highest bidder.

2.2.4 Issue Category D: Water Resources

Comment Summary

Issue D1: Water Quality

- Reclamation and the managing partner have a responsibility to manage recreation and other resource uses in a way protects water quality.
- The gravel road and parking area at Cherokee Draw is very close to the shoreline of Lake Estes. Fugitive dust and runoff into Lake Estes may be negatively affecting water quality.

Issue D2: Water Operations

- Community members have expressed concern about the fluctuating water levels in the reservoir and the ability of the reservoir to withstand floodwaters.
- One commentor recommended that the water level of the reservoir (commenter did not indicate which reservoir) be lowered in the fall so that it has a greater capacity to absorb spring runoff and heavy summer rains.
- Lowered reservoir water levels may affect recreation opportunities and activities at Lake Estes.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *What management actions are necessary to protect and/or improve water quality within the planning area?*

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP

1. *How can the reservoirs be managed to improve their ability to absorb spring runoff, heavy rains and to withstand floodwaters?*

C-BT Project Operations, including water scheduling and delivery, will not be addressed in this plan. Also, flood control is not one of the congressionally authorized purposes of the C-BT Project. The intent of this RMP is to address the variety of land, recreation, and resource uses.

2. *How should Reclamation manage water operations to minimize the effects on recreation?*

The primary purpose of the C-BT Project is to provide water for irrigation, municipal and industrial use. The intent of this RMP is to address the variety of land, recreation, and resource uses. C-BT Project Operations, including water scheduling and delivery, will not be addressed in this plan.

3. *How should water operations be coordinated with the managing partner?*

Guidelines for coordination between Reclamation and EVRPD are set forth in the Management Agreement.

2.2.5 Issue Category E: Public Information, Health, and Safety

Comment Summary

Issue E1: Education, Interpretation, and Outreach

- Current educational opportunities are limited in number and scope and should be expanded.
- There is a lack of interpretive and educational information for the visiting public regarding Reclamation and the C-BT Project lands. Managers should consider putting interpretive signs about water level fluctuations and the primary purpose of the reservoirs at key recreation areas, such as the campgrounds and below Olympus Dam at Lake Estes.

Issue E2: Public Information and Signage

- There should be warning signs about the danger of the power plant and the “funnel” at Marys Lake.
- Restricted areas and areas that are closed to specific types of use need to be posted/signed.
- Rules and regulations should be posted at all recreation areas.

Issue E3: Public Health

- Residential neighbors have seen campers relieving themselves in the Marys Lake campground instead of in the bathrooms.
- High levels of smoke from the Marys Lake campground creates potential health problems for visitors and nearby residents, such as asthma and other respiratory irritations.

Issue E4: Public Safety

- Some fisherman like to fish in the river adjacent to the 9-hole golf course, which is dangerous because someone could get hit by a stray ball.
- Fluctuating water levels in the reservoirs make the ice unstable and very dangerous. Winter recreation on the ice poses a major safety concern.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *What management actions and policy can be used to improve public education, outreach and interpretation?*
 - a. *What opportunity exists for developing new education and interpretation opportunities?*
 - b. *What opportunity exists for educating the public about the dangers of recreating on project lands and waters?*
2. *What management actions and policy can be used to address public health and safety concerns?*

2.2.6 Issue Category F: Partnerships & Contracts

Comment Summary

Issue F1: Law Enforcement

- Law enforcement of policies and regulations remains a challenge because of jurisdictional boundaries.
- Reclamation should pursue law enforcement partnerships with other federal agencies, such as the National Park Service and US Forest Service.
- Reclamation needs better law enforcement for illegal activities such as trespassing, vandalism, and creating a public hazard or nuisance.

Issue F2: Local and State Agencies

- There needs to be improved coordination and response from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in dealing with human-wildlife conflict and wounded animals.
- CPW has been prohibited from doing electrofishing sampling in the past because water levels were too high and there were safety concerns.

Issue F3: Other Partnerships & Contracts

- Management should support partnerships with other organizations who can help with restoration, research, monitoring, outreach, education, and providing additional recreation opportunities.
- Existing contracts should be considered and protected before defining secondary public roles and responsibilities of entities to ensure proposed actions are consistent with contractual and legal obligations.
- Opportunities for improving resource management among the managing partners should be evaluated as each management agreement expires and is renewed.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *What management actions or policy can be used to improve partnerships?*
2. *What criteria should be used when determining whether to support or pursue new partnerships?*

3. *How can partnerships be used to support resource management and improve the visitor experience?*

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP

1. *How can law enforcement be used to address illegal activities?*

Law enforcement is outside the scope of decisions to be made in the RMP, but all concerns expressed in public comment will be taken into consideration.

2. *Can law enforcement partnerships be formed with other federal entities such as the National Park Service and Forest Service?*

Reclamation can pursue law enforcement partnerships with other agencies through an inter-agency agreement. However, law enforcement, and inter-agency agreements are outside the scope of resource management decisions to be made in this RMP.

2.2.7 Issue Category G: Project Facilities

Comment Summary

Issue G1: Project Facility Maintenance and Improvements

- Sedimentation has caused the Fish Creek arm of Lake Estes to fill in since the flood of 2013 and this has decreased the original storage capacity of the reservoir.
- Dredging may be necessary to restore or maintain the storage capacity of the reservoirs.

Issue G2: Security and Safety

- Kayakers have kayaked through the buoy into the power plant bay, which is a restricted area, without concern/knowledge of safety/security risks.
- Access to the trail behind the Estes Power Plant could pose a security concern. We should consider additional security measures before there is any further recreation development in this area.
- Suspicious activity spiked after 9/11, including: people hopping fences and entering restricted areas, flying drones in restricted areas, taking pictures of project infrastructure.

Issues to be resolved in the RMP

1. *What management actions should be taken to educate the public and enforce restricted access?*
2. *How should management address access and recreation development in areas where there is a safety or security concern?*

3. *How can management policies or actions address suspicious activities?*

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP

1. *Should the reservoirs be dredged to restore or maintain storage capacity?*

Dredging to restore or maintain reservoir storage capacity would fall under C-BT Project operations and maintenance. The intent of this RMP is to address the variety of land, recreation, and resource uses. C-BT Project operations and maintenance will not be addressed in this plan.

3.Future Steps

3.1 Summary of Future Steps and Public Participation Opportunities

Scoping is the first phase of the planning process. The goal of this scoping report is to formulate a comprehensive evaluation of the issues raised by the public that can be applied to the next phases of planning. The next phases of the planning process include development of alternatives, analyzing effects of the alternatives, selection of a preferred alternative, a public comment period, and issuing a record of decision.

Development of Alternatives

Alternatives will be developed by a planning team consisting of Reclamation ECAO resource specialists and managers and staff of EVRPD. This is accomplished by identifying a range of reasonable combinations of resource uses and management actions that address the issues identified during scoping and which meet the goals and objectives identified by the planning team. The range will include a no action alternative, which would be a continuation of current management and existing conditions. No new development or changes in use would be permitted under the no action alternative.

Analyzing Effects of Alternatives

Once the alternatives are developed, the planning team will analyze the effects of each alternative on the environment. The analysis will be disclosed in the EA associated with the RMP and will inform the selection of the preferred alternative.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative

The ECAO Resources Division Manager and Area Office Manager will recommend to the Regional Director a preferred alternative that best resolves planning issues and protects the authorized C-BT Project purposes. The Regional Director will provide concurrence of the selection of the preferred alternative along with the other alternatives under consideration through release of the draft Estes Valley RMP and draft EA documents.

Public Comment Period

Although Reclamation welcomes public input at any time during the planning process, the next official public comment period will begin with the release of the draft Estes Valley RMP and draft EA. Reclamation and EVRPD will inform the public of the comment period through print and social media releases, website announcements, and email lists.

Decision Record

At the conclusion of the public comment period, Reclamation will address all comments, will resolve inconsistencies, and will publish the final approved Estes Valley RMP and EA.

3.2 Contact Information

The public is invited and encouraged to participate throughout the planning process for the Estes Valley RMP/EA. One way to participate is by reviewing the progress of the Estes Valley RMP/EA online at the official ECAO Web site, at <https://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca0>. The ECAO Web site will be updated with information, documents, and announcements throughout the duration of the planning process.

Another means of participation is by requesting to be added to the official Estes Valley RMP/EA mailing list to receive future mailings and information. Anyone wishing to be added to the distribution list or requesting further information may email the planning team at EstesRMP@usbr.gov or call Justina Thorsen at (970) 962-4207.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scoping Meeting Display Boards



RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

Welcome

The Bureau of Reclamation, in cooperation with Estes Valley Recreation and Park District (EVRPD), is hosting this scoping meeting for the Estes Valley Resource Management Plan (RMP).

What is Scoping?

- Scoping is an opportunity for the public to be involved and to provide input into the planning process.
- Public input helps Reclamation identify issues that may need to be addressed or resolved in the RMP.

Estes Valley Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017



RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

Management Partnership

Estes Valley Recreation and Park District (EVRPD) manages recreation at Lake Estes, Marys Lake, and East Portal under a 25-year management agreement with Reclamation.

EVRPD is a public agency providing park and recreation programs for members of the community and visitors to Estes Park. EVRPD is challenged with satisfying the outdoor recreational demands of a diverse and expanding population, while responsibly conserving the natural resources for future generations and for maintaining the resources for which Colorado is renowned.

Reclamation is the lead agency preparing the RMP and EVRPD is a cooperating agency.

Estes Valley Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

What is a Resource Management Plan?

An RMP is a comprehensive planning document that identifies goals and objectives for land use and resource management, specifies desired future land and resource conditions, and explains the policies and actions that will be implemented during the life of the plan to achieve those goals and objectives in fulfillment of Reclamation's management responsibilities.

- An RMP provides a decisional framework for managing the biological, physical and social conditions that Reclamation wishes to achieve within the planning area.
- An RMP provides a general outline for future land use management, documents the current condition of resources within the planning area, and establishes resource and management priorities.
- An RMP represents a long-term commitment to decisions, usually for a period of 10 years.

In a nutshell, an RMP sets a strategic vision for the future which helps identify priorities and guide management decisions.

Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

Planning Timeline



We are in the early stages of planning, which begins with public scoping. This timeline shows an overview of the milestones in the planning process and the timeframe in which we hope to achieve them.

Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

Planning Area

Lake Estes, Marys Lake, and East Portal are all features of the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project. The C-BT Project stores, regulates, and diverts water from the Colorado River on the western slope of the Continental Divide to the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. The C-BT Project provides supplemental water for land irrigation, municipal and industrial use, hydroelectric power, and water-oriented recreational opportunities. The Town of Estes Park gets approximately 25% of its water from the C-BT Project.

The primary purpose of these project features is water storage and delivery. The reservoirs and associated project land also provide **recreational opportunities**, which is what will be addressed in this plan.

Operations of the C-BT, and the resulting water levels in the reservoirs, will not be addressed in the RMP.



Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

Lake Estes

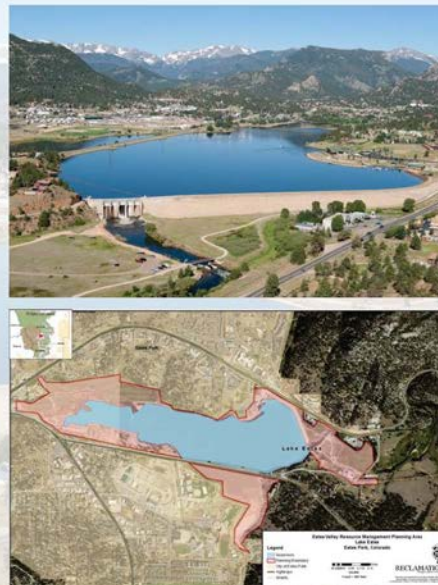
Lake Estes is a 160-acre reservoir with approximately 145 acres of surrounding land under the jurisdiction of Reclamation. Drainage into Lake Estes comes from native flows of the Big Thompson River in addition to trans-mountain diversions from the C-BT Project.

The primary function of Lake Estes is to provide regulation and storage of irrigation and municipal water, and to serve as an afterbay for hydroelectric power generation. Recreation is a secondary use of the reservoir. Surrounding land and current recreational activities include:

- Golfing
- Hiking
- Biking
- Fishing
- Boating
- Bird and wildlife watching
- Picnicking
- Volleyball
- Horse shoes

Existing facilities, which support recreation, include:

- Nine-hole golf course
- Picnic tables
- Playground
- Marina
- Trails
- Restrooms
- Fishing access
- Bird Sanctuary
- Dog Park



Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Marys Lake

Marys Lake is a 42-acre reservoir with approximately 138 acres of surrounding land under the jurisdiction of Reclamation.

The primary function of Marys Lake is to provide regulation and storage of irrigation and municipal water, and to serve as an afterbay to the Marys Lake Power Plant and a forebay to the Estes Power Plant. Recreation is a secondary use and recreational opportunities include:

- Camping
- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Hiking
- Bouldering
- Wildlife viewing
- Photography

Existing facilities, which support recreation, include:

- Informal parking areas
- Picnic tables
- Restrooms
- Developed fee campground
- Fishing access



Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

East Portal

East Portal is a 2-acre reservoir with approximately 72 acres of surrounding land under the jurisdiction of Reclamation.

The primary function of the East Portal Reservoir is to serve as an afterbay for the Alva B. Adams Tunnel and a forebay to the Marys Lake Power Plant. Recreation is a secondary use and recreational opportunities include:

- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Overnight camping
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Wildlife viewing
- Trailhead access into Rocky Mountain National Park

Existing facilities, which support recreation, include:

- Informal parking areas
- Picnic tables
- Restrooms
- Developed fee campground
- Trails



Estes Valley Resource Management Plan

Public Scoping Meetings, October 25, 2017

Scoping Issues

There are a range of issues to be considered during development of alternatives and to be evaluated as part of the environmental review process. Some categories we have identified include:

1. Water Resources
2. Recreation and Visual Resources
3. Natural and Cultural Resources
4. Public Information, Health and Safety
5. Land Management
6. Project Facilities

What input should you provide? Tell us how you use the land, what you think of the facilities, any user-conflicts you have had, how the visitor experience could be improved, and any other concerns you may have about the resources.

Please give us your comments

There are several different ways you may provide input:

1. Fill out a comment form (available at the registration table) and drop it in the box.
2. Send an email with your comments to EstesRMP@usbr.gov
3. Mail written comments to:
Justina Thorsen
11056 West County Road 18E
Loveland, CO 80537

The comment period for this scoping process ends on
November 18, 2017

Acronyms and Abbreviations

C-BT	Colorado-Big Thompson
CEQ	Council on environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EA	Environmental Assessment
ECAO	Eastern Colorado Area Office, Bureau of Reclamation
EVRPD	Estes Valley Recreation and Park District
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RMP	Resource Management Plan