

APPENDIX A: ISSUE STATEMENTS AND GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

APPENDIX A: ISSUE STATEMENTS AND GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Steinaker Reservoir Resource Management Plan (RMP) Project Issue Statements and Project Goals and Objectives represent the guidelines that were used in developing the resource management alternatives found in Chapter 2 of this Environmental Assessment (EA). The Issue Statements clarify the issues and opportunities (identified through public and agency scoping) that will be addressed and solved in the course of the RMP implementation process. The Goals and Objectives respond to the issues and opportunities identified in the Issue Statements. The Goals give descriptions of the desired future resource conditions at Steinaker Reservoir, while the Objectives define the activities required to achieve each Goal.

The Issue Statements and the Goals and Objectives were developed through an iterative process and are based on comments received through public and agency consultation and coordination as described in Chapter 5 of this EA. Specifically, their content was based on comments received from (1) the general public at the Public Workshops held in November 2011 and May 2012; (2) the general public through the Voluntary Mail-In Response Form contained in the first two editions of the project newsletter; (3) management agency personnel interviewed during the planning process including U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation (State Parks), and Uintah Water Conservancy District (UWCD); (4) members of the Planning Work Group formed for the project; and (5) the Steinaker Reservoir RMP/EA Interdisciplinary Project Team members in a series of coordination meetings. The RMP Issue Statements and the Goals and Objectives are presented in their entirety in the following sections.

ISSUE STATEMENTS

These Issue Statements resulted from the exploration of identified issues and opportunities that should be addressed by the Steinaker Reservoir RMP Project. The Issue Statements provide detailed discussions of the primary issues or opportunities that have been identified by the public and involved agencies described above. Although the Issue Statements provide a necessary foundation for the RMP process by representing both public and agency opinions, some of the statements may reflect “perceptions” rather than factual data. The Issue Statements are intended to clarify the scope of each concern and to provide the foundation for the development of RMP Goals and Objectives. The Issue Statements were organized into the following Issue Categories: (A) Partnerships, (B) Water Resources, (C) Recreational and Visual Resources, (D) Natural and Cultural Resources, and (E) Land Management.

Issue Category A: Partnerships

Issue A1: Partnership Contracts

Existing agency partnerships for Steinaker Reservoir are working well. Reclamation has long-standing partnerships with State Parks, UWCD, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR). State Parks manages all public recreation

facilities, UWCD performs all reservoir operation and maintenance functions, and UDWR manages the fishery and wildlife on Reclamation lands.

The possibility of additional partnerships that could mutually improve land and resource management at Steinaker Reservoir should be evaluated in the RMP. In addition to agency partnerships, there may be potential for partnerships with private concessioners and/or private recreation user groups. Future partnerships should be formalized to ensure proposed activities are consistent with existing contractual and legal obligations. For example, a formal agreement with National Scenic Byways Program partner(s) is needed for maintenance of the existing nature trail at the scenic byway parking lot.

Issue Category B: Water Resources

Issue B1: Water Quality

Maintaining water quality is important for meeting designated beneficial uses of water at Steinaker Reservoir. State of Utah ratings indicate that Steinaker Reservoir currently does not meet numeric criteria for temperature for the coldwater aquatic life designated beneficial use (Class 3A). Low dissolved oxygen levels for supporting aquatic life have been a concern. Another concern is algae and algal blooms that occur near the boat dock each year, which might indicate high nutrient availability periodically during the year. Algal blooms can become a health hazard because cyanobacteria in high concentrations can create toxic conditions. Algal blooms can make swimming and boating less appealing, which affects recreational opportunities. Algal blooms affect the dissolved oxygen levels, and under certain circumstance can result in fish kills.

Runoff from areas with impervious surfaces poses a potential threat to water quality. Impervious surfaces allow deposition from vehicles and the atmosphere to accumulate. Rainfall and snowmelt then transport the deposition (possibly consisting of metals, nutrients, and other pollutants) to Steinaker Reservoir. Stormwater runoff may create erosion issues and may transport sediment to the reservoir. Therefore, development and maintenance of adequate stormwater controls around developed areas are important design elements for existing and future recreation sites.

Other potential water-quality concerns that require monitoring include concentrations of metals (e.g., selenium and mercury) and potential introductions of bacteria and viruses. Selenium accumulations can create conditions potentially harmful to aquatic organisms, and mercury is a concern for human health associated with fish consumption. Bacteria and viruses may also become an issue at Steinaker Reservoir as recreational use increases. The State of Utah has not identified *E. coli* as an impairment to water quality in Steinaker Reservoir, but monitoring is important.

Issue Category C: Recreation and Visual Resources

Issue C1: Recreation Development

Added capacity and accommodation of diverse recreation activities at Steinaker Reservoir could increase visitation and revenue throughout the year. Capacity of existing recreation facilities is generally lacking to accommodate users during peak visitation. Additional boat parking and

electric service was added in 2010–2011. Steinaker State Park (the State Park) still needs additional parking for day use visitors, including groups. The park could accommodate additional campers with the development of more camping sites and upgrades to facilities (e.g. water systems, utilities, restrooms). Beach areas could also be expanded and connected.

Fishing is very popular and additional parking is needed for day-use anglers. An accessible fishing dock would be a great addition if a feasible location can be identified. State Parks' policy allows visitors a maximum 2-week stay at campgrounds. However, there is interest from the public for longer-term camping spots if this could be accommodated. Development of rental cabins could likely attract year-round use. Accommodation of motorized and nonmotorized trailheads and connectivity to trails beyond the park boundaries would bring additional visitors. Ideally, trails would provide connectivity to Red Fleet Reservoir and to Vernal City. Accommodation of nonmotorized watersports (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, kite boarding) could also bring additional visitors to Steinaker Reservoir. It is acknowledged that all suggestions above are feasible if appropriate developable areas are available or become available.

Issue C2: Visual Quality

Steinaker Reservoir and the surrounding Reclamation lands offer exceptional natural scenery. The Flaming Gorge-Uintas Scenic Byway on U.S. Route 191 (US-191) from Vernal to the Wyoming border attracts day visitors and campers to the State Park and has provided funding for a nature trail and parking area along US-191. Design and development of recreation structures and facilities should blend with and complement the surrounding landscape to protect existing visual quality.

Issue Category D: Natural and Cultural Resources

Issue D1: Reservoir Fishery

Maintaining high-quality fishing experiences is a high priority at Steinaker Reservoir. Steinaker Reservoir offers anglers the opportunity to catch both coldwater and warmwater fish species. Species include rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), and green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*). Smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) were illegally stocked in the reservoir, and that species has become established. Rainbow trout are stocked each year to maintain the trout fishery. Brown trout are present as a result of downstream migration from Ashley Creek or from natural reproduction in the reservoir. Special events (e.g., Fox Family Fun Fishing Contest, ice fishing derby) help to maintain interest in fishing at Steinaker Reservoir. Shoreline fishing on the east shoreline is popular, creating parking and erosion problems along US-191.

With the presence of selenium throughout the Ashley Creek drainage, there is potential for elevated selenium levels to occur in Steinaker Reservoir. Accumulated selenium in fish tissue could result in consumption advisories for harvested fish. Selenium has also shown to cause malformations in fish that can hinder their reproductive capacity. The presence of mercury in fish tissue has been detected and resulted in a fish consumption advisory for largemouth bass and bluegill. Monitoring for both mercury and selenium must be considered and/or continued to ensure the health of the fishery and the public.

Issue D2: Aquatic Invasive Species and Pathogens

The spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), such as the quagga mussel (*Dreissena bugensis*), is a statewide issue in Utah. Although AIS have not been found at Steinaker Reservoir, quagga mussel veligers were detected in nearby Red Fleet Reservoir in 2008. The UDWR has established prevention and monitoring efforts to protect the resource at Steinaker Reservoir. Prevention of all AIS must be addressed in ways that do not discourage visitation, but that also ensure the longevity of dam operations and healthy fish populations.

Whirling disease is a condition caused by the parasite *Myxobolus cerebralis*. This pathogen has been detected in Utah waters throughout the years. Although it has not been detected in Steinaker Reservoir or Ashley Creek, efforts should continue to monitor and prevent the spread of whirling disease because rainbow trout are very susceptible to infestation.

Issue D3: Vegetation Communities

Reclamation lands surrounding Steinaker Reservoir include a variety of vegetation communities that are important to wildlife and fish. Steinaker Reservoir contains three significant areas of vegetated shallows and emergent wetlands. These areas are located in the bay just north of the boat launch, at the main inflow, and at the extreme northern end of the reservoir. Dominant rooted aquatic plant species include water smartweed (*Polygonum amphibium*) and Canadian waterweed (*Elodea Canadensis*). Many native, emergent wetland plants were noted further upslope from the aquatic species. These vegetated shallows and emergent wetlands are important to waterfowl, fish, and amphibians.

Other communities include riparian shrub and forested areas located along inflows to Steinaker Reservoir and above the emergent fringe wetlands. A particular concern is a lack of cottonwood saplings in the forest understory. Mature cottonwoods die out eventually, and if they are not replaced through recruitment, the forested cottonwood areas will transition to shrub areas or be invaded by nonnative species. This would lead to a loss of valuable habitat in these areas of the reservoir.

Invasive plants found in various areas around Steinaker Reservoir include saltcedear (*Tamarix* spp.), cocklebur (*Xanthium* spp.), horseweed (*Conyza* spp.), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and curly dock (*Rumex crispus*). Potential management strategies to control and reduce the spread of these invasive plant species should be included in the RMP.

Issue D4: Wildlife and Special Status Species

Reclamation lands provide habitat for numerous wildlife species including birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Important wildlife habitats within Reclamation boundaries, such as riparian and wetland areas, should be maintained and improved to benefit wildlife. The broader surrounding area includes BLM and private lands that provide crucial habitat for several game species, including California quail (*Callipepla californica*), chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), cougar (*Puma concolor*) and winter range for elk (*Cervus canadensis*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). Interpretation and education programs may be helpful for informing the public regarding the value of Reclamation lands and surrounding area for general wildlife and sensitive species habitat.

Several state-listed sensitive species have been documented using the reservoir or have the potential to be found there, such as the American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Golden eagle nests have been documented at Steinaker Reservoir. Other raptors documented at or near Steinaker Reservoir include osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) and red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). The potential occurrence of other State or Federally-listed species should be evaluated including greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and the Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucidae*).

Issue D5: Soil Erosion and Deposition

Soils in many areas around Steinaker Reservoir are sandy and susceptible to erosion. Unmanaged all-terrain vehicle trails have been a problem in some areas in previous years. Access points have been closed, but some areas are difficult to patrol regularly. Providing additional access areas and maintained trails could help meet public demand for additional use areas while reducing impacts that facilitate erosion. The areas around the State Park facilities are also very sandy. Rills and gully erosion occur in association with drainage from some paved parking areas and concrete pathways. Drainage improvements and stormwater best management practices (BMPs), such as gravel shoulders along pavement, could be implemented to reduce the sediment impacts from existing and future development.

Adjustments to existing recreation facilities have been necessary with increased reservoir water storage levels in recent years. Cut banks are present along sandy parts of the shoreline (such as the constructed beach areas) and appear to be associated with wave action when the reservoir level is high. In some areas this erosion has undermined the root systems of mature cottonwood trees. Therefore, shoreline erosion is another important consideration for decisions related to recreation facility design and vegetation community health.

Issue D6: Paleontological Resources

Identification, management, and interpretation of paleontological resources within and surrounding Steinaker Reservoir should be considered in the RMP. Any areas in which geologic deposits have the potential to yield significant fossil localities would need to be surveyed for paleontological resources prior to implementation of any ground-disturbing activities. Primary concerns associated with protecting the physical condition or integrity of paleontological sites include (but are not limited to) potential effects from recreational development, erosion, and vandalism.

Issue D7: Cultural Resources

Identification, management, and interpretation of cultural resources within and surrounding Steinaker Reservoir should be considered in the RMP. Any areas in which ground-disturbing activities could occur would need to be surveyed prior to implementation in order to determine the presence, nature, and extent of cultural resources. Primary concerns associated with protecting the physical condition or integrity of cultural resource sites include (but are not limited to) potential effects from recreational development, erosion, and vandalism.

Issue Category E: Land Management

Issue E1: Access Control

Access control is important for preventing the spread of invasive species, minimizing erosion, and managing public safety. Public parking along US-191 can be hazardous when parking areas are full. All-terrain vehicle users have crossed into Reclamation lands from various locations and utilize the borrow pit area to the east of US-191 as an open riding area. Providing additional public access is desirable, particularly by creating motorized and nonmotorized trails within the park and connecting these to trails beyond the Steinaker Reservoir RMP Study Area (Study Area) boundary. In providing improved public access, security of the dam and water facilities must be maintained.

Issue E2: Private Land Access

Some private lands adjacent to Steinaker Reservoir require access through Reclamation lands. There are residences to the north of the reservoir and undeveloped private lands to the west. Lands in both of these locations are currently used for cattle grazing. Private lands to the west are zoned for agricultural use in Uintah County, but there has been some interest from landowners in getting the area rezoned for residential development. Ongoing coordination and formal agreements are necessary to provide any future private land access while maintaining the quality of the State Park for visitors.

Issue E3: Minerals

There are borrow pit areas, which were used for the construction of Steinaker Dam, located on Reclamation lands. The future use of these areas for material extraction should be addressed in the RMP. There is oil and gas development in the surrounding area, but in different geologic strata than found on Reclamation lands. Mineral rights for the Study Area should be identified. The RMP should address future mineral development on its lands and develop appropriate lease stipulations if mineral extraction is anticipated in the future.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives developed for the Steinaker Reservoir RMP are in direct response to the preceding Issue Statements. However, each Issue Statement may not require a specific set of Goals and Objectives and, in some cases, a set of Goals and Objectives may address several Issue Statements. In all cases, an effort has been made to translate the issues and opportunities identified in the Issue Statements into proactive Goals and Objectives for the RMP.

The Goals and Objectives served as the primary foundation on which resource management alternatives for the RMP were developed. Each Goal provides a description of a desired future resource condition within the Study Area. Objectives listed under each Goal describe a series of activities to be accomplished in order to achieve each Goal. When each of the Objectives is implemented, the corresponding Goal will be attained. The Issue Statement(s) that each Goal addresses is noted in parentheses. The Goals and Objectives were organized into the same five categories as the Issue Statements: (A) Partnerships, (B) Water Resources, (C) Recreational and Visual Resources, (D) Natural and Cultural Resources, and (E) Land Management.

It is not the intent of the RMP or the RMP process to challenge or change existing law, treaties, formal agreements, or water rights. Therefore, all Goals, Objectives, and management alternatives developed as part of the RMP will be in agreement with existing laws, treaties, formal agreements, water rights, and operating constraints of Steinaker Reservoir.

Goal Category A: Partnerships

Goal A1: Support Existing Agreements and Contracts and Encourage New Partnerships that Improve Management Practices for Steinaker Reservoir's Associated Lands and Resources (Issue A1)

Objectives:

- A.1.1 Evaluate proposed use activities against existing project purposes, contracts, and agreements.
- A.1.2 Formalize any existing partnerships that have not been formalized to establish roles and commitments of resources from respective entities.
- A.1.3 Pursue additional partnerships with Uintah County, Vernal City, UDWR, BLM, the National Scenic Byways Program, and other entities to facilitate best management of Study Area resources.
- A.1.4 Consider contracts with qualified, private concessioners for provision of specific public recreation facilities and/or activities.
- A.1.5 Consider formal partnerships with private, nonprofit recreation user groups for provision and maintenance of specific public recreation facilities and/or activities.

Goal Category B: Water Resources

Goal B1: Protect and Improve Water Quality in Steinaker Reservoir (Issue B1)

Objectives:

- B.1.1 Identify water-quality impacts originating in Steinaker Reservoir and suggest ways to meet beneficial use designations.
- B.1.2 Include BMPs and design elements for stormwater controls in developing upgraded facility designs and new public use areas.
- B.1.3 Identify areas where sanitation facilities (e.g., restrooms, refuse containers) are needed at public use areas.
- B.1.4 Coordinate with Utah Division of Water Quality and other entities in monitoring potential contaminants, bacteria, and viruses that can pose threats to aquatic life and human health.

Goal Category C: Recreation and Visual Resources

Goal C1: Increase Visitation and Revenue by Improving Existing Recreational Facilities, Expanding and Enhancing Recreation Opportunities, and Providing Access to Regional Recreation Resources (Issue C1)

Objectives:

- C.1.1 Recommend improvements to existing facilities to meet visitor needs.
- C.1.2 Recommend appropriate new recreational facilities at appropriate locations to meet demands for existing and potential recreation activity interests.
- C.1.3 Work with other entities, particularly BLM, Uintah County, and the National Scenic Byway Program, to determine opportunities for connectivity of motorized and nonmotorized trails.
- C.1.4 Consider other public and private partnerships that can enhance recreation opportunity, visitation, and revenue.

Goal C2: Provide for Safe, Quality Recreation Opportunities that Minimize Conflicts (Issue C1)

Objectives:

- C.2.1 Identify appropriate recreational use areas for various activities.
- C.2.2 Identify recreation capacities for both land-based and water-based recreation.
- C.2.3 Explore ways to increase safety and security and to prevent user conflicts from becoming an issue.

Goal C3: Protect and Manage Visual Resources (Issue C2)

Objectives:

- C.3.1 Establish Visual Integrity Objectives for the Study Area that are compatible with the National Scenic Byway designation of US-191.
- C.3.2 Complement or enhance the natural surroundings when maintaining and/or designing new facilities.

Goal Category D: Natural and Cultural Resources

Goal D1: Protect and Enhance the Quality of the Fishery and Fishing Opportunities (Issues D1 and D2)

Objectives:

- D.1.1 Work with UDWR to identify a desired fish species composition for Steinaker Reservoir and to develop a Fisheries Management Plan to proactively manage the fishery for the desired species composition.
- D.1.2 Include objectives in the Fisheries Management Plan to monitor accumulations of selenium and mercury and provide adequate public information and education.
- D.1.3 Include objectives in the Fisheries Management Plan to monitor and prevent introduction of AIS and pathogens that can negatively affect the health of fish populations, visitation, and dam operations.
- D.1.4 Coordinate with UDWR in all of the above-listed efforts and work collaboratively to identify possible fishery enhancement opportunities.

Goal D2: Protect and Enhance Native Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat (Issues D3 and D4)

Objectives:

- D.2.1 Identify Study Area vegetation and habitat communities and develop a Habitat Management Plan for wildlife species conservation.
- D.2.2 Evaluate effects of shoreline erosion on native vegetation.
- D.2.3 Consider plantings of native shrubs and trees along shorelines and riparian areas where appropriate.
- D.2.4 Provide and maintain fencing and signage to keep off-road vehicles out of riparian wetlands and other sensitive areas.
- D.2.5 Develop an appropriate plant list for future landscaping, erosion control, and water conservation for recreation facility and public access areas.
- D.2.6 Identify the location and extent of noxious and invading weeds, pests, and any other nuisance species.
- D.2.7 Control/manage noxious and invading plant species through development of an Integrated Pest Management Plan.

Goal D3: Identify, Protect, and Enhance Special Status and Other Wildlife Species of Interest and Their Habitats (Issue D4)

Objectives:

- D.3.1 Determine the location and extent of suitable habitat for, and known occurrences of, threatened, endangered, and other special status species as a component of the Habitat Management Plan.
- D.3.2 Identify undeveloped areas at suitable locations to conserve long-term, viable habitat for all wildlife with attention to deer and elk winter range and habitat for any special status species.
- D.3.3 Cooperate with appropriate entities in managing wildlife values and providing public education and interpretation.
- D.3.4 Identify areas where Reclamation and partner agencies can restore, enhance, or conserve habitat for special status species in the Habitat Management Plan.
- D.3.5 Coordinate with UDWR in prioritizing areas for habitat restoration, enhancement, and conservation of areas that may be at risk according to the 2005 Utah Wildlife Action Plan.

Goal D4: Control Erosion (Issue D5)

Objectives:

- D.4.1 Inventory erosion problem locations and causes.
- D.4.2 Address erosion problem locations through BMPs for site-specific design and construction.
- D.4.3 Work with partner agencies and other entities as appropriate to implement erosion-control strategies.

Goal D5: Protect and Manage Paleontological Resources (Issue D6)

Objectives:

- D.5.1 Determine the nature and extent of paleontological resources where development is proposed.
- D.5.2 Recommend mechanisms to identify, manage, protect, and interpret paleontological resources.

Goal D6: Protect and Manage Cultural Resources (Issue D7)

Objectives:

- D.6.1 Determine the nature and extent of cultural resources where development is proposed.
- D.6.2 Recommend mechanisms to identify, manage, protect, and interpret cultural resource sites.

Goal Category E: Land Management

Goal E1: Provide Appropriate and Safe Access to Public Use Areas (Issue E1)

Objectives:

- E.1.1 Evaluate current access and access controls to public use areas and recommend improvements.
- E.1.2 Determine future access needs and develop plans for implementation.
- E.1.3 Restrict access to sensitive areas where public safety and natural resources protection are concerns (e.g., important wildlife habitat, hazardous areas, Primary Jurisdiction Areas).

Goal E2: Evaluate Access Needs for Adjacent Private Land Owners (Issue E2)

Objectives:

- E.2.1 Coordinate with Uintah County, State Parks, and private landowners regarding potential access needs.
- E.2.2 In evaluating potential access, maintaining the quality of the State Park for visitors is paramount.
- E.2.3 Establish formal access agreements where appropriate.

Goal E3: Manage Mineral Development (Issue E3)

Objectives:

- E.3.1 Determine appropriate land uses for borrow pit area(s).
- E.3.2 Identify mineral rights for Reclamation lands and address future mineral development, if any, through appropriate lease stipulations.
- E.3.3 Coordinate with appropriate entities managing surrounding lands regarding any potential indirect effects of mineral development on Reclamation lands and the reservoir.