

Durango

Animas River

Corridor Management Plan



Adopted
February 19, 2013



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Acknowledgements

Several hundred community members participated in the development of the plan by providing written comments and contributing to the collaborative discussions to generate ideas and solutions for the management of the Animas River in Durango.

The planning process for creating the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan was developed through a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. Joy Lujan, Community Planner with the National Park Service, facilitated the collaborative and inclusive public process.

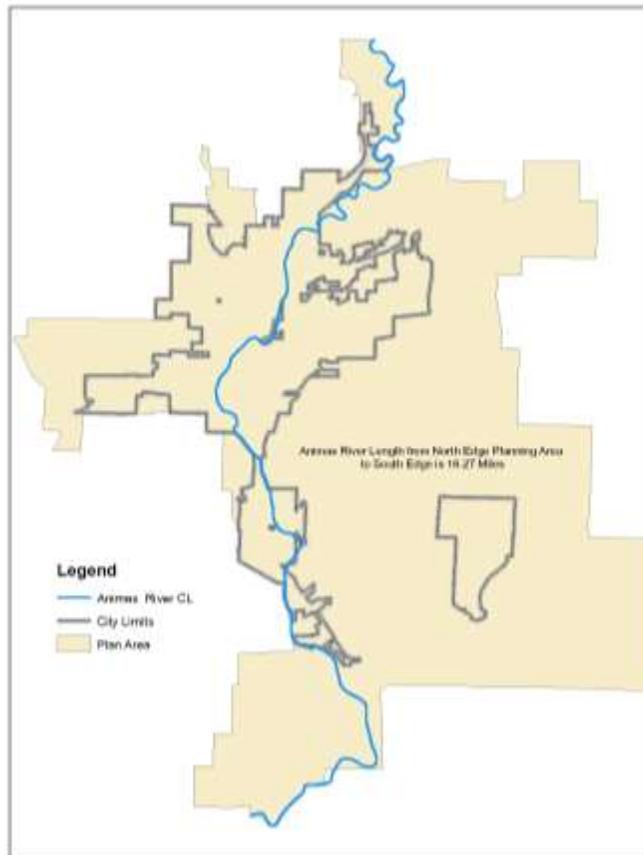
Community resource experts assisted in the preparation of the plan including Shane Sigle, John Brennan, Kara Hellige, Jim White, Steve McClung, and Peter Butler.

City of Durango staff that participated in the plan development included Kevin Hall, Scott McClain, Greg Hoch, Roy Petersen, Jack Rogers, Jim Spratlen and numerous officers with the Durango Police Department, Mike Thornton, Skip Merry, Joanne Gantt and Cathy Metz.

I. Plan Purpose

The Animas River is a vital element of the Durango community. Its presence in the heart of the City is one of the most prominent characteristics that distinguishes and defines Durango as an exceptional area and the river greatly contributes to the community’s year-round appeal. The proximity of the City of Durango to a major river with a high quality Gold Medal Water trout fishery, broad range of recreational opportunities and high level of scenic quality is unique.

Ever-increasing use of the Animas River for recreation over the past decade has resulted in the need to develop a management framework for the river to protect the health of this priceless resource. The Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan is intended to help ensure protection of the river as a valuable natural and community resource and provide management objectives for its recreational use. As shown in Map 1, the project planning area includes an approximate 0.25-mile wide corridor along the 16.27-mile stretch of the Animas River within the City of Durango Comprehensive Plan boundaries, from the Glider Park in the north Animas Valley to Basin Creek in the south.



Map 1 – Animas River Corridor Planning Area

II. Issues

An inclusive and collaborative community planning effort identified six (6) primary issues related to the management of the Animas River within the study area. The Plan will address these issues in subsequent chapters.

- River Access Points
- In-stream Recreational Amenities
- Conservation and Habitat
- Water Quality
- Regulation and Law Enforcement
- Education and Community Outreach

III. Planning Process

The process of creating this Management Plan was an open, inclusive and collaborative effort. A series of community meetings were held, as illustrated on the meeting announcement below. The process gave people an opportunity to clearly articulate their issues and concerns and to hear and understand the issues, concerns and desired river experiences of other river users, to explore issues together and to collaboratively create river management solutions that addressed the concerns of all river users. The issues and recommendations detailed throughout this document are the result of the community process.

**Community Meetings for the
Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan**

November 10, 2011 4 - 8 p.m. <i>Open House</i> La Plata County Fairgrounds, Pine Room	December 7, 2011 6 - 8 p.m. <i>Public Forum</i> Durango Public Library, Program Rooms 1 & 2	January 4 & 5, 2012 5 - 8 p.m. <i>Issues Workshops</i> Durango Recreation Center, Peaks Rooms	February 15 & 16, 2012 <i>Detailed Concepts Exploration</i> Durango Recreation Center, Peaks (Time TBA)
Learn the WHAT, WHY, WHO, WHEN & HOW related to the upcoming Animas River Corridor Management Planning Process	Share your ideas, issues and concerns with the planning team and other river users	Work with other river users to understand issues and explore strategies for addressing issues.	Develop collaborative strategies for preserving the river, protecting private property and safely sharing recreational uses of the river

Envision the future of the
Animas River Corridor in Durango.

Your participation is essential to create the plan.
Please join us at these events!

For additional information about the project,
visit the City website at: www.durangogov.org

CITY of DURANGO

Throughout the planning process, information, questions and answers, and public comments were posted on the City website and this Management Plan is available online at www.durangogov.org

Survey

The Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan was initiated in August 2011 with a community survey administered on-line with over 400 respondents. The survey results revealed important information about the spectrum of types of river uses, the concentrations of usage at various points along the river, an initial sense of community concerns and ideas about river use and management. The survey respondents revealed that the most frequent use of the Animas River is rafting (72%), tubing (50%), kayaking (49%), and fishing (43%). The most frequently utilized river access put-in locations include 33rd Street (66%), 29th Street in Memorial Park (33%) and Santa Rita Park (29%). The most frequently utilized river access take-out locations include Santa Rita Park (45%), High Bridge (38%) and Cundiff Park (36%). Fifty-nine (59) percent of respondents thought additional public river access locations should be provided. The top concern related to recreational use on the river is environmental integrity (e.g. preservation, erosion, water quality, wildlife, etc.) with 71% of respondents rating this concern as a high priority. Respondents indicated that high priority primary considerations for how the Animas River should be managed included: recreational opportunities (67%), habitat and environmental preservation (66%), and as a community amenity (65%).

The survey clearly illustrated that a broad spectrum of users and concerns exist and that there is work to be done in balancing river protection and recreational use in this urban river environment.

Open House

The next step in the public process was an Open House in early November 2011. The intent was to provide basic information, answer questions, and to provide a baseline of factual information to establish a foundation upon which to proceed with the public process. These initial steps helped people understand facts and history of the project including the planning area and process, and what decisions and commitments were already in place that would help establish a framework for the plan.

Public Forum

In addition to the on-line survey, comment cards, web comments, direct phone calls, and e-mails, a Public Forum was hosted in early December 2011 during which people expressed their ideas and concerns to the planning group and community members in attendance. Group understanding of the nature of people's ideas and concerns was necessary in order to move forward collaboratively.

Issues Workshops

In January 2012, two 3-hour long meetings were held. The first explored the interests and desired river experience for: (1) Anglers; (2) Commercial Outfitters; (3) Personal Rafting, Tubing and Unstructured Recreation; (4) Whitewater Boaters and Kayakers; (5) Adjacent Property Owners; and (6) Conservation and Habitat. The second meeting explored strategies and potential solutions to achieve the desired river experience for each of these river user groups. After the various desired experiences were presented by each group, the groups were split up and re-formed to include representatives for each of the desired experience types. People were asked to keep in mind the full array of desired experiences but to focus on one particular experience and to explore whether and how that desired experience could maintain its character while addressing the interests and desires of people with different perspectives. The groups explored a variety of management possibilities to accomplish their objectives. Group conversation was robust and productive and explored potential impacts of various uses and strategies to address those impacts.



Detailed Concepts Exploration

Recommendations and ideas for potential shared solutions that were developed in the Issues Workshops were carried over to a two day workshop in February 2012. Participants at the February meetings self-selected an issues working group to join and helped to further develop recommendations for management of the Animas River. A full range of perspectives were represented on each work team.

The work groups focused on six different issues:

1. River Access Points
2. Recreational Amenities (in-stream and shore improvement opportunities)
3. Conservation and Habitat
4. Regulation and Law Enforcement
5. Water Quality
6. Education and Community Outreach

A variety of resource experts were on hand to assist the groups as they worked to explore opportunities and develop recommendations. By the end of day two, as a result of many hours of discussion and negotiation, participants developed a set of recommendations for management in all six categories.

A public meeting was held the evening of the second day, with each working group reporting out on their findings and recommendations.



Introduction

The foundation for the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan builds upon a number of previous planning studies and reports. These are described below, starting with the most recent:

2010 Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan

Identifies the importance of the Animas River corridor to the community and sets forth the priority to develop an Animas River Management Plan.

2008 Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan

Prepared by the Animas River Task Force and submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Plan identified ten proposed work locations within the reach of the Animas River between the 33rd Street River Access and Dallabetta Park.

2007 City of Durango Comprehensive Plan

The Plan describes the essence of conservation and preservation of the Animas River corridor.

2006 Economic Impacts of Whitewater Recreation

Study by RPI Consulting Inc. reported the total economic impact of whitewater recreation on the lower Animas River is over \$19 million annually.

2001 Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

The Plan identifies the Animas River Greenway as a linear park with high recreation values.

1994 Animas River Corridor Plan

Establishes development guidelines within the Animas River corridor and was adopted as an amendment to the City of Durango Comprehensive Plan. The plan sets forth goals and recommended actions to preserve, protect and enhance the Animas River and the river environment that traverses the City.

Visitation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Durango had a population of 16,887 in 2010. This population reflected a 21.3% increase since 2000. In addition to residents, it was estimated in 2011 that 900,000 people visit Durango annually according to the Durango Area Tourism Office. A large percentage of visitors participate in activities on the Animas River. Colorado River Outfitters Association estimated 41,000 commercial river user days on the lower Animas (Durango) in 2010. This estimate does not account for the private boaters and tubers, anglers and non-water based recreational activities adjacent to the river, i.e. trail users.

Recreational activity occurs year-round, with peak use occurring in June, July and August on the Animas River. These months provide the most suitable weather and flow for the greatest number of recreational activities. In general, optimal use periods for most activities can be correlated directly to river flow. For example, large boat rafting occurs during peak flow periods in May, June and July. General kayaking (wave play) makes use of both high and moderate flows from April through July. Slalom kayaking takes place year-round. Optimal conditions for tubing usually occur in July and August. The natural seasonal distribution of uses helps to reduce conflicts. User conflict primarily occurs during overlapping periods, as one use ends and another begins. The exception to this pattern is fishing. Though optimum fishing conditions exist early in the year, this use occurs year-round, except during spring runoff with higher river flows and when kayaking is most popular.

User groups

There are three primary user groups in the river – paddlers, fishermen and tubers. There is also unstructured recreation as noted under other activities below. Commercial use by these groups must obtain a permit issued by the Durango Parks and Recreation Department. In 2011, the City of Durango permitted eleven (11) commercial outfitters on the Animas River which is consistent with the five year average. Commercial outfitters are also licensed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and must adhere to state regulations. Goals and guidelines established through the planning process for the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan will help ensure compliance with relevant ordinances, provide a quality recreational experience for all users, and help protect the interests of private landowners and residents who live along the river. Guidelines will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

I. Paddlers

Paddling activities include rafting, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding. The City of Durango is known for having some of the best kayaking in Colorado. The Whitewater Park at Smelter Rapids was originally constructed in the late 1980's and was the first whitewater park of its size and scale in the United States. The City intends to reconstruct the Whitewater Park to increase the quality and safety of this recreational amenity. Several area outfitters rent kayaks, tubes and offer lessons. The rafting outfitters also

offer guided trips on the Animas River. Trips range in difficulty, depending on water flow. Currently, the only City permits on paddling activities apply to commercial outfitters, in regard to use of designated access points.

The majority of paddlers use the river beginning in April through September, with peak use May through August. The Animas River in Durango is an Olympic Training Center which accommodates instruction and year round paddling for athletes. Several summer events center on paddling, including the annual Animas River Days in June. Key play holes or play waves are becoming increasingly popular, resulting in a high concentration of users at these locations, and related demand for services such as parking, restrooms or changing facilities.

II. Fishermen

The Animas River in Durango includes a high quality trout fishery. Anglers travel from all over Colorado, as well as the rest of the country, to fish this outstanding resource. The State of Colorado has designated the section of the Animas River from Lightner Creek to the Rivera Bridge behind Home Depot a Gold Medal fishery.

Other primary reasons for high angler use levels include the exceptional scenic quality of the area, easy accessibility and the availability of fishing guides. The primary method of fishing is fly fishing. Habitat improvement projects completed by the Animas River Task Force have also contributed to an improved fishery. Areas of concern for anglers include water quality (sedimentation and mineral loading), preserving spawning habitat, and creating sustainable access trails from the shoreline to fishing areas.

Most fly fishermen are private users; however, others contract the services of commercial fishing guides. In general, fishermen use the entire section of river through Durango. While the Gold Medal section carries special regulations and lower bag limit, it offers less of an urbanized feel and more opportunity for quality fish. On the other hand, the section of river from the Highway 160 bridge upstream to 32nd Street is usually stocked with catchable trout and allow a bigger bag limit and no size restriction, hence the popularity with bait fishermen and those wanting to catch edible fish.

III. Tubers

Tubers comprise the largest increase in a single user group on the Animas River in the past decade. This use occurs from mid-June to early September, with peak use in July and August as low flows occur and water temperatures warm up. Increasing public feedback has emerged concerning high use on the river and in particular at the 33rd Street River Access by private tubers.

IV. Other Activities

In addition to paddling, fishing and tubing, other uses occurring along the river corridor include swimming, pedestrian uses, dog walking and swimming, people watching,

picnicking, wildlife viewing and the general public that enjoys the aesthetics of the natural river system. The Animas River Trail is the focal point for these users. This hard surface trail is the spine of the City's trail system and runs along the majority of the river corridor through Durango. It is planned that the trail will extend to the northern and southern City limits within the river corridor. Periodic trail user counts indicate that well over a thousand people per day use the trail in the center of Durango on a busy summer day. The Animas River Trail also provides residents with a year-round alternative to motorized transportation.

Access

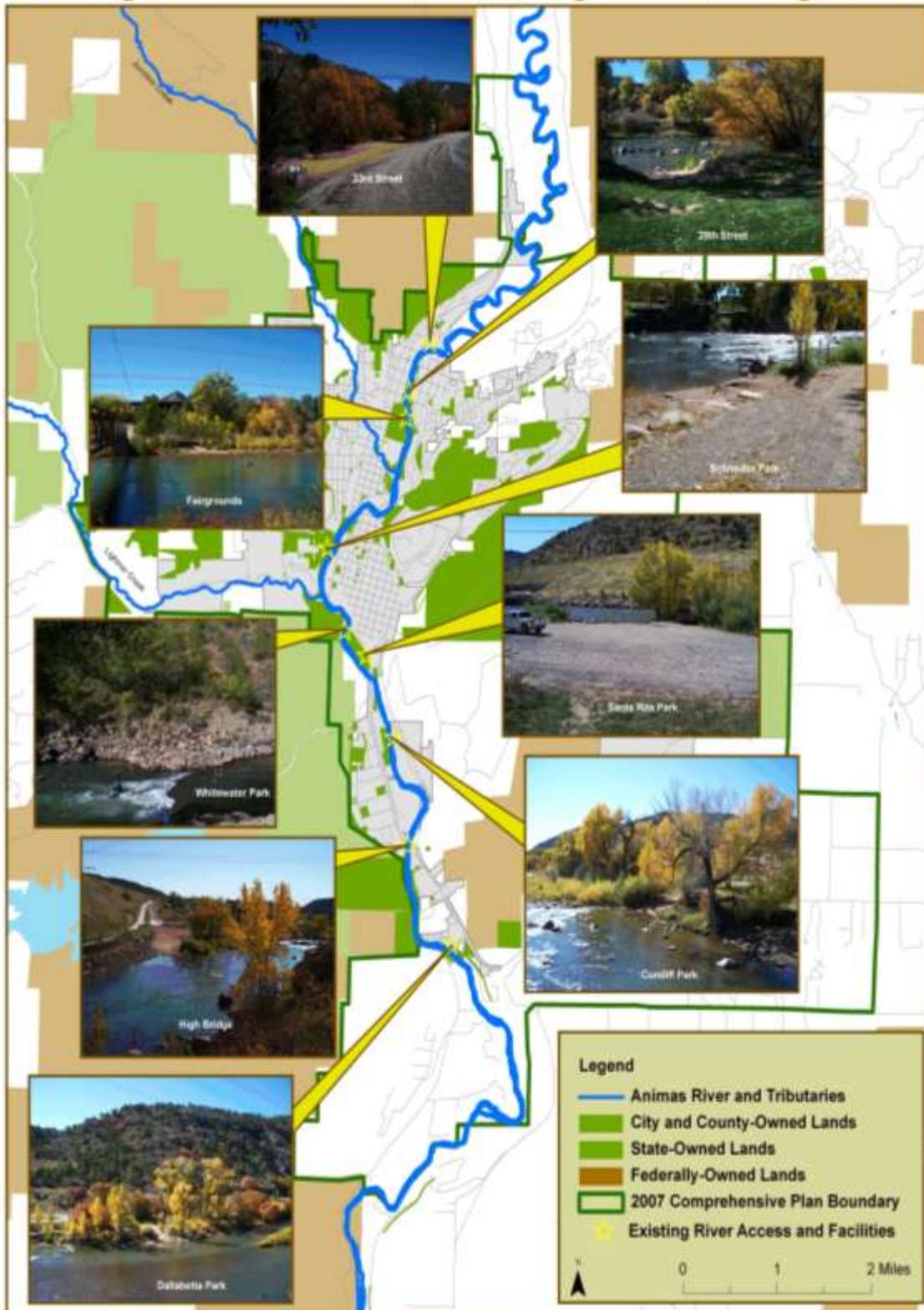
Survey information and casual observation indicate that use levels are not evenly distributed along the river. Use levels are correlated with the availability of developed public access points and to some extent access point preference by user type is a function of social factors (historical use), amenities (i.e. boat ramps), and desired experience (play boating versus rafting).

Limited access locations and increased recreational use of the river corridor could result in a degraded user experience, negative impacts to the immediate neighborhood, and detrimental impacts to the health of the river ecosystem.

Management strategies to alleviate congestion at access points and subsequently distribute user activity throughout the river corridor are described in Chapter III: Management Goals. Additional recommended river access improvements are also addressed in subsequent chapters.

The following map depicts the existing primary river access locations.

Durango Animas River Corridor Management Planning Area



Map 2 – River Access locations in Durango

Land Use

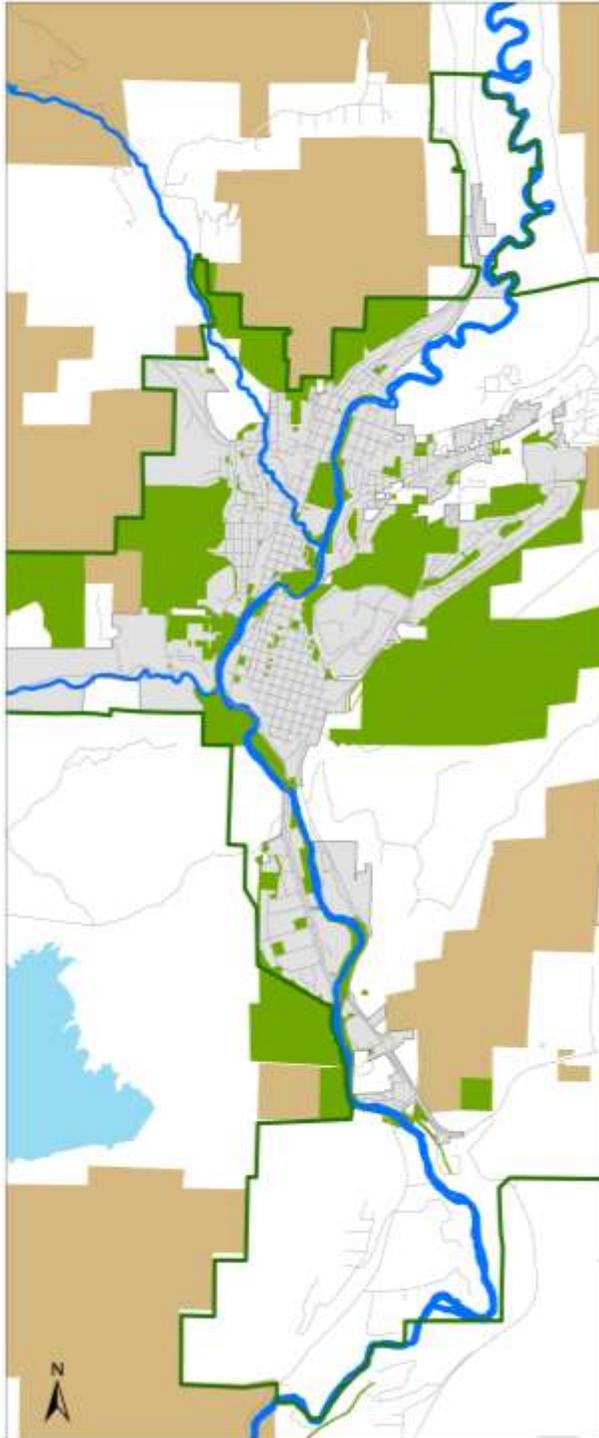
Open space and parks are the largest single land use along the 7.5-mile reach of the Animas River corridor within the City limits. There is 251 acres of riverfront acreage, of which 6.06 miles on river right and 4.95 miles on river left are publically accessible in the City. Beyond the north and south City limits but still within the 16.27-mile planning area, there is no City owned property or public access points along the river.

Public lands within the river corridor that are used extensively by the community include:

- 33rd Street River Access
- Memorial Park
- Fairgrounds and Recreation Center
- Rank Park
- Public Library
- Rotary Park
- Riverfront Park
- Iris Park
- Schneider Park
- The Off-Leash Area
- Whitewater Park
- Santa Rita Park
- Cundiff Park
- High Bridge
- Dallabetta Park



Durango Animas River Corridor Management Planning Area Land Ownership/Management



Length of Animas River*

Through Planning Area: 16.3 Miles
Within City Limits: 7.5 Miles

Publicly Accesible Shoreline*

In City Limits:
River Right: 6.06 Miles
River Left: 4.95 Miles

Outside City Limits within
Planning Area: 0 Miles

City-Owned Riverfront Acreage*

In City Limits: 251 Acres

Outside City Limits within
Planning Area: 0 Acres

Legend

- Animas River and Tributaries
- City- and County-Owned Lands
- Federally-Owned Lands
- 2007 Comprehensive Plan Boundary
- City of Durango
- La Plata County

* Distances are Approximate
City-owned lands do not include Road ROW acreage

Map 3 – Public Lands in the Planning Area

Geomorphology of the River

The Animas River consists of both an active river channel and a surrounding floodplain. A natural erosion and deposition cycle associated with flooding is important to the health of fisheries and riparian ecosystems, including cottonwood regeneration. Sugnet and Associates conducted a hydro-geomorphic characterization of the Animas River in 1996. The reach of the Animas River downstream of 32nd Street that traverses through the City of Durango is characterized by slope, velocity increase and the river is down cutting. The river in this reach has a very steep gradient, about 48 feet per mile, and a correspondingly high velocity and ability to move coarse debris. The high velocity, and associated whitewater and habitat features are what make this reach popular with rafters, kayakers and fisherman.

Consistent with river systems in urban settings, the character of the river differs from upstream to downstream. Previously the upper portions of the river were only slightly entrenched, had an intact and largely undeveloped floodplain, and contained meander patterns commonly found in a U-shaped glacial valley. These areas included point bars on the inside of bends and deep pools along the outside, providing quality fish habitat. In the past decades, the river has become very entrenched with more development in the river corridor. It now takes a 10-year flood frequency to fill to bank full stage, whereas, it used to be a 2-3 year event. Fish habitat is very limited due to the sandy substrate in this section. The lower portion of the river, beginning in about the center of Durango, has a significantly different character. The channel in these areas is highly entrenched and less sinuous, with slopes much greater than upstream areas. Reaches of the river further downstream (below Dallabetta Park) return to a more natural state, with river morphology characteristics similar to the north Animas Valley. In the upstream areas above the 33rd Street river access, the flow for in-stream recreational activities is identified as Class I, transitioning into Class III in downstream areas through Smelter Rapids in Whitewater Park.

Water Flow

The hydrologic regime (timing and amounts of flow over the year) of many rivers in the west has been modified. These changes are typically caused by damming and diversion projects. The Animas River and its major tributaries have relatively few dams and diversions from the headwaters to its confluence with the San Juan River.

Based upon a review of the historic flows of the Animas River at the Durango U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) gauge station, the flow regime in the early 1900's appears to be relatively similar to those seen in the present day. Therefore, many of the physical forces of the river that influence plant and animal communities in the past continue today. Chart 1 below compares recent versus historic hydrographs, showing that the flow regimes are very similar with a notable exception in the past decade due to drought conditions. During the past 100 years, peak summer flows tended to range from 2,000 to 3,000 cfs.

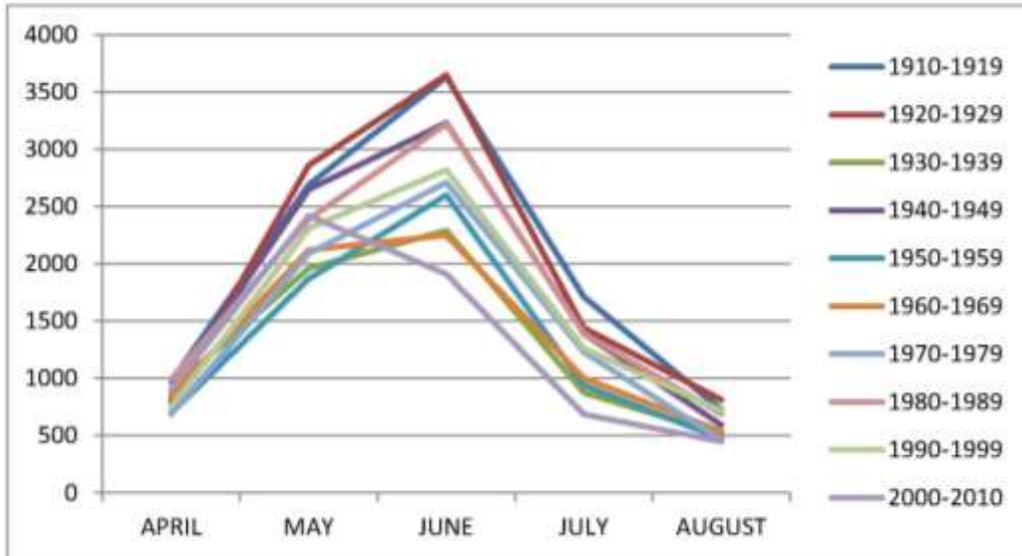


Chart 1 – Comparison of Average Summer Flows over the Past 100 Years



Water Rights

Presently, the City owns a variety of water rights on the Animas River and the Florida River for municipal purposes including drinking water, irrigation and snowmaking. In 2007, the City obtained conditional Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD) water rights for boating on the Animas River from the District Court, Water Division Number 7, and State of Colorado. The recreational water rights protect against possible future diversions upstream of the City. In-stream improvements at Whitewater Park involving 1,183 linear feet of the Animas River must be developed to be recognized by the District Court as a beneficial use of water under Colorado Law to make the RICD water rights absolute.

Below is a summary of the RICD water rights:

TIME PERIOD	FLOW RATE (in cfs)
January 1 through March 14	185
March 15 through March 31	250
April 1 through April 14	400
April 15 through April 30	850
May 1 through May 31	1200
June 1 through June 14	1400
June 15 through June 30	1200
July 1 through July 14	850
July 15 through July 31	600
August 1 through August 14	400
August 15 through September 30	300
October 1 through December 31	185

Chart 2 – RICD Water Rights on the Animas River

Fisheries

Game fish species found in the Animas are brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. Non-game native fish species include mottled sculpin, bluehead sucker and flannelmouth sucker. White sucker, carp, and Iowa darters are some of the notable non-native fish species.

The State of Colorado has designated the 3-mile reach of the Animas River from Lightner Creek upstream to the 32nd Street Bridge to be managed as a Standard Regulation water (4 trout/day; bait allowed).

The State of Colorado has also designated the 4-mile reach of the Animas River from the Rivera Bridge (behind Home Depot) upstream to Lightner Creek to be managed as Gold Medal water (2 trout 16 inches or longer per day; artificial fly and lure only).

The Animas River is one of ten Gold Medal waters across the state. Gold Medal water consistently produces abundant large trout and attracts anglers from across the State and nation. Standardized metrics for Gold Medal designation are 60 lbs. of trout per surface acre and 12 fish equal to or greater than 14 inches per surface acre.

The Animas River is stocked with about 20,000 brown trout and 20,000 rainbow trout “fingerlings” each year to compensate for annual mortality and lack of suitable spawning conditions through town. Natural reproduction of trout in the Animas River is limited by heavy metal toxicity, chiefly during spring snowmelt runoff and seasonal peak flows.

The average angler spends about \$47 per day (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Study 2006). In 1997, approximately 3,630 anglers fished the Animas River for a combined economic impact of \$170,610. Non-residents spent \$109/day suggesting the economic impact is higher. Angler user-days on the Animas River are also undoubtedly higher today than in 1997.

The Animas La-Plata Project that created Lake Nighthorse will impact flow conditions and trout habitat in the Animas River below Santa Rita Park. Currently, normal “base flows” in the Animas range from about 250-500 cubic feet per second (cfs). To protect the fishery while honoring water rights, the following minimum flows are in place:

- When flows are above 500 cfs in the river, project operators can't increase pumping more than 50 cfs/hr or ramp down (i.e., take the pumps off-line) faster than 100 cfs/hr.
- When flows are below 250 cfs, operators can't pump down the river faster than 25 cfs per hour or drop off pumping more than 50 cfs when taking the pumps off line.
- No pumping below 225 cubic feet per second (cfs) from April 1st to September 30th
- No pumping below 160 cfs from October 1st to November 30th

- No pumping below 125 cfs from December 1st to March 31st
- The Bureau of Reclamation mitigates the loss of fish habitat by annually stocking 20,000 5-inch rainbow trout from 32nd Street Bridge to Dallabetta Park in the Animas River.

Native fish species (bluehead and flannelmouth sucker and roundtail chub) are managed under a “Rangewide” Conservation Agreement. Colorado and six other states, multiple agencies including the Bureau of Reclamation, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations have signed the agreement aimed at conserving these 3-species before Federal protection measures may be needed.

Lake Nighthorse is connected biologically to the river. Despite a 3/32 inch fish screen at the Animas River water intake, larval fish and immature aquatic nuisance species will end up in Lake Nighthorse eventually. The reverse is not necessarily true: a deep water release from the bottom of the reservoir and a fish killing “sleeve valve” will keep the vast majority of fishes contained in the reservoir and out of the river.

About 70% of anglers “catch and release” their fish including the section where bait fishing is allowed (1997 survey).

The most notable invertebrate community is a spectacular hatch of caddis flies in mid-late June.

In addition to natural mineralization, the Animas River continues to have degraded water quality associated with hard rock mining that has occurred over the last 120 years. Dissolved heavy metals limit the survival of fish and developing fish eggs. However, today the Animas River through town is much cleaner than it was 50+ years ago when there were significant local sources of sewage and industrial waste entering the river.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is concerned about native and non-native (i.e. Trout) upstream fish passage through whitewater parks. CPW is currently investigating whitewater park features for upstream fish passage across the State.



Water Quality

In the early 1900's, miners near Silverton dumped all of their mill tailings and mine waste directly into the Animas River which removed most aquatic life from the river and caused Durango to pipe water from the Florida River as a drinking water supply. In the 1930's, mills began to construct tailings ponds which greatly improved water quality. In the late 1970's, the last remaining large mine installed water treatment facilities. That mine ceased operation in 1991.

Beginning in 1994, the Animas River Stakeholders Group has worked to reduce metal loading from inactive and abandoned mines in the Animas River headwaters. Approximately 50 mine remediation projects have been undertaken in San Juan County over the past 20 years. While metal loading to the Animas River has been reduced enough to see improvements in aquatic life all the way down to Durango, there have been some recent setbacks which have offset the gains seen by remediation. The group is currently working on these new problems. Metal concentrations in the Animas River currently meet all aquatic life standards in Durango.

Since the 2002 drought when a lot of algae appeared in the river, another stakeholders process has formed to examine nutrient issues from Bakers Bridge down to the San Juan River. This group is made of entities in Colorado, New Mexico and includes the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the City of Durango. There are currently no numeric nutrient standards for the Animas River in Colorado, but there may be in the future.

Metal concentrations in the Animas River have been monitored generally monthly for the past twenty years at Silverton, Bakers Bridge, Trimble Lane, 32nd Street Bridge, Ninth Street Bridge, the High Bridge, and Weaselskin Bridge, mostly by Colorado RiverWatch through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This organization is now also monitoring nutrients. Other entities that periodically monitor water quality in the Animas River include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Society, Colorado Water Quality Control Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, the Animas River Stakeholders Group, and the Animas Watershed Partnership.

While there are no sediment standards in Colorado, nutrients and sediments are closely related. Most projects which reduce sediments will also reduce nutrients, so minimizing sediment loading can be doubly important.

Drawing on the interests and desired experiences of all -plan participants, community members collaboratively developed sets of recommendations and goals for river management. The management recommendations were developed by the public who participated in the process of developing the Plan and not City staff or the National Park Service who facilitated the public process.

The planning process revealed areas of agreement among plan participants and where further exploration and discussion was needed. There was broad agreement upon the following management principles:

- Protect property owners from negative impacts
- Keep the river clean – no trash
- Provide more information and education regarding river user etiquette, the Animas River ecosystem, and other interpretive and general river information

There were many other issues that the community explored together and through collaborative discussion and understanding of the complexity of issues and river users' interests, a series of management recommendations and goals have been established to balance recreation and conservation in the river corridor.

There are three primary areas of emphasis for the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan Goals:

I. Recreation Goals

The Recreation Goals pertain to river access, in-stream recreation, and shoreline recreation adjacent to the river.

II. Conservation and Habitat Goals

The Habitat and Conservation Goals pertain to water quality and quantity, terrestrial and aquatic habitat and criteria for future project evaluation.

III. Regulation and Education Goals

The Regulation and Education Goals pertain to regulation, law enforcement, education and community outreach.

In each section below, recommended community goals are identified, followed by an evaluation of current conditions and recommendations for improvement.

I. Recreation Goals

River Access

In the development of the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan, the discussion relating to the river access points garnered the greatest interest with diverse opinions. The collaborative planning process enabled extensive community dialogue which resulted in general agreement with the principles advanced pertaining to river access points in Durango.

River Access Goals include:

- 1.1 The City will provide formalized river access points to meet the needs of all types of river users. River access locations will be appropriately dispersed in the river corridor to minimize congestion and promote safety for all users, particularly children.
- 1.2 Minimize adverse impacts to adjacent landowners.
- 1.3 River access sites will be developed and maintained in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner. Natural areas should be protected to the extent feasible and designs should be appropriate to the site and intended use.
- 1.4 Design and develop river access sites to maintain and enhance safety for trail users passing through the access area to minimize pedestrian/bicyclist/vehicle/boater conflicts.
- 1.5 Where feasible, river access sites will be in a park-like setting with the following amenities: designated launch points; adequate space and circulation for a bus and trailer; providing a circular turn-around to minimize vehicle backing; toilets; adequate parking; trash and recycle facilities; changing rooms; riparian buffer zones; buffer to adjacent property owners; native landscaping; signage; picnic tables; fishing access; bike racks; separate loading/unloading, staging, rigging, waiting and safety talk/PFD fitting areas; Transit stop and connection to public transportation where appropriate; and meet State and Federal accessibility guidelines and requirements.
- 1.6 Continue to offer a fee-based program for river access to commercial users and charge no fees to private users.
- 1.7 Continue to explore additional opportunities for dispersion of pedestrian-oriented tuber and kayak/raft access.
- 1.8 Prioritize river access improvements at 29th Street, Cameron/Sterk property and 33rd Street.

Each of the existing access points was evaluated to identify existing conditions and recommendations for improvements.

Dallabetta Park

Existing Conditions: The City developed Dallabetta Park in 2006 as a new downstream river access to provide an important in-town river take-out to improve user distribution

and environmental quality. The improvements were funded in part by a grants provided by the Bureau of Reclamation and Great Outdoors Colorado.

Positive attributes identified at Dallabetta Park include the existing picnic area; native landscaping; drive around access; toilets; improvements located out of the floodway; and the separate overflow parking area adjacent to La Posta Road.

Attributes that could be improved upon include the steep slope and gravel surfacing of the boat ramp; the eddy at the boat ramp is undersized and not appropriately located; and there is a lack of bike racks. Additionally, the tight curves on the access drive from the top of the hill were identified as problematic.

Recommended Improvements: Resurface the boat ramp, improve the in-stream eddy and add bike racks.



Dallabetta Park



High Bridge

High Bridge

Existing Conditions: The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the City of Durango collaborated in the provision of the High Bridge river access. The City has a License Agreement from CDOT to enable the community to utilize this area as a take-out. Access road improvements were completed with the assistance of grant funds provided by the Bureau of Reclamation as well as during the installation of the Animas River Trail through this area in 2010.

Positive attributes identified at High Bridge include its location; it is a popular take out area; it is possible to get a trailer to the river; the site has connection to the Animas River Trail; and the access is not adjacent to a neighborhood.

Attributes that could be improved upon include the limited parking; the size of the site is too small and requires backing of trailers; the closest Transit stop is at Wal-Mart; the

gravel access surfacing needs routine maintenance; the site is not park-like; and there is no signage, bike racks, toilet or trash and recycling facilities.

Recommended Improvements: Improve the access road; add parking; and provide signage, bike racks, toilet, trash and recycling facilities.

Cundiff Park

Existing Conditions: The Cundiff Park site was purchased by the City in 1997 with the assistance of Great Outdoors Colorado funds. The acquisition of the property preserved the historic river access use by the community and enabled the development of the BMX track by Durango BMX. Minimal improvements have been completed by the City at this site and it is slated for future development as a park in the City's Capital Improvement Plan, pending the availability of funds.

Positive attributes identified at the Cundiff Park site include its excellent location as one of the most popular river accesses; getting to the site does not require travel through an existing neighborhood; fishing is good; as is the connection to the Animas River Trail.

Attributes that could be improved upon include: the put-in/takeout area surfacing can get muddy and/or dusty; vehicular circulation is poorly defined; the annual snow dump is problematic and brings trash to the area; the ramp is small; the site is not formally designed or organized; the distance between the parking area and river requires a longer haul of boats and equipment; access crosses the Animas River Trail, creating higher potential for user conflicts, and there is no longer boat trailer access; the parking and turn-around conflicts with BMX parking; the toilet(s) are shared with BMX users; access through the Wiley property is not permanent and can be revoked; the river bank near the launch area is heavily eroded and negatively affecting the riparian vegetation; the site is not on the Transit route; and the area is not park-like.

Recommended Improvements: Develop Cundiff Park to provide a park-like setting with appropriate river access amenities.



Cundiff Park



Santa Rita Park

Santa Rita Park

Existing Conditions: As the most popular park in the Animas River Corridor, Santa Rita Park hosts multiple community events each year. The adjacent Whitewater Park must be redeveloped to meet the requirements of the City's Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD) water rights.

Positive attributes of the park include: on-site restrooms; put-in/take out accommodates a wide variety of crafts including fishing boats; the access is not in a neighborhood; the location is ideally suited for variable trip durations depending on the river level; and the Animas River Trail passes through the Park.

Attributes of the Park that could be improved upon include: landscaping at the put-in/takeout is limited, needs trees, is not a park-like, and has a dirt surface which can become dusty and/or muddy resulting in a poor transition to the river; there is old metal embedded in the river banks; the site needs changing rooms and additional restrooms closer to the river access; there are conflicts with families and children using the area as a beach; there is no designated parking at the put-in/take-out area resulting in circulation problems; there is a lack of signage and poor visibility at the intersection with the Animas River Trail; parking is frequently congested near the restrooms; no bike racks; ramp is eroded from stormwater run-off; and the site frequently smells bad due to its proximity to the wastewater treatment plant.

Recommended Improvements: Develop Whitewater Park to permanently protect the RICD water rights. Improve the river access near the playground including a beach/play area with day use picnic tables; enhance signage and parking; and provide changing rooms.



9th Street

9th Street

Existing Conditions: Bank stabilization and shoreline improvements were completed by the City with the assistance of a Colorado Parks and Wildlife Fishing is Fun grant and community partners in 2009.

Positive attributes of the site include: the current low use and its convenience for kayaks and tubes; one of the two access points that provides boat trailer access above the best whitewater sections in the City (33rd Street is the other); the 2009 bank stabilization and improvement work; the access is not in a neighborhood; convenient Transit stop and close to the Transit Center; close proximity to the Animas River Trail; close to downtown; and room for expansion.

Attributes that could be improved upon include: the limited parking needs to be formalized/designated; there is a lack of toilets; no bike racks; limited signage; and the steep river access needs routine maintenance.

Recommended Improvements: Improve parking, provide toilets and enhanced signage.

Schneider Park

Existing Conditions: The construction of the Animas River Trail through Schneider Park in 2001 included access improvements to the river for kayaks/tubers.

Positive attributes of the site include: the park-like setting and restrooms; the connection to the Animas River Trail; it is a good location for kayaks; the site is not in a neighborhood; the site works well as overflow to Santa Rita Park allowing a commercial outfitter to stage a shuttle bus at Schneider Park, timing the group's arrival at Santa Rita Park to minimize bus waiting time at Santa Rita Park.

Attributes that could be improved upon include: providing a designated turn around; add bike racks and additional signage; and improve the stairs to the river.

Recommended Improvements: Improve river access and enhance signage.



Fairgrounds

Fairgrounds

Existing Conditions: The Durango Community Recreation Center was opened to the public in 2002 at the north end of the La Plata County Fairgrounds property. The site provides ample parking and conveniently located public restrooms with walking access to the river.

Positive attributes of the site include: Ample developed parking taking access directly from north Main Avenue; size of site provides opportunity for pedestrian staircase, boat ramp and tuber access to river; and it is public land. Additionally, the 2010 City promotion of this site for tuber parking and access was successful. Designation of this site as a commercial boating access would require a City Code amendment and could increase conflicts of vehicles on a highly utilized spur connect to the Animas River Trail.

Attributes that could be improved upon include: the lack of vehicle access to the river limits opportunities for boaters; and parking can be limited when school is in session.

Recommended Improvements: Continue to promote use of the Transit with the “T for Tubing” program to the Recreation Center as a primary put-in for tubers.

29th Street in Memorial Park

Existing Conditions: Located at the 29th Street trailhead of the Animas River Trail, this put-in is located in a residential area and is heavily used throughout the summer season for boating and tubing access. It is well integrated into Memorial Park with irrigated turf, parking, picnic tables, restrooms and two river access points.

Positive attributes of the site include: adequate space available to allow for expansion; the park-like setting and the restrooms; parking lot and Animas River Trail connection. The site provides an alternative to the busy 33rd Street river access. There is also parking along East Third Avenue.



33rd Street

33rd Street

Existing Conditions: Located on narrow strip of land between East 3rd Avenue and the Animas River in a residential area, this put-in/take out is the most heavily used in the community due to its location at the top of the town run and the flat water adjacent to it. The site is used for both downstream and upstream activities. Due to the constrained nature of the site, only minimal improvements have occurred over the years including boulder placement for bank stabilization; site re-vegetation and access road maintenance.

Positive attributes of the site include: its location as the top of the run in town; access to upstream flatwater; opportunity for site improvements; the circular access requires minimal backing; and the existing slalom course.

Attributes that could be improved upon include: seasonal portable toilets could be replaced with permanent toilets; there is insufficient trash/recycling facilities; limited boat parking on the street; the lack of site organization makes it inefficient; boat ramps are not vehicle or trailer friendly; there are no ADA accessible facilities; it is not park-like; signage is inadequate; and parking management and law enforcement is limited. Improvements to the 33rd Street River Access are planned to be included in a future Capital Improvement Program.

Recommended Improvements: The 33rd Street River Access is identified as a priority access improvement area following completion of improvements at the 29th Street River Access and at the Cameron-Sterk property. Recommended design elements include a boat ramp, river map signage, bike rack, restroom, changing room, rigging area and trash and recycle facilities. The design should accommodate circular vehicular flow and accommodate separate commercial and private access locations. Explore on-river staging with stakes to tie to away from the ramp. Manage night time access and parking. Evaluate decreased volume by dispersion of users. Incorporate traffic and speed control measures, such as speed humps. Evaluate the feasibility of including a Transit stop at 32nd Street and East Third Avenue. Consider conservation of the riparian habitat in

future development of the site and determine extent of development following river access improvements to 29th Street and the Cameron-Sterk property. If it is determined that the footprint should be expanded, preserve the City (Bennett) open space property immediately adjacent and downstream of the site to the extent feasible.

Cameron/Sterk Property

Existing Conditions: Located approximately ¾ mile north of the 33rd Street put-in with road access from Animas View Drive, the 43.71 acre Cameron-Sterk property is located primarily in the floodplain which experience occasion inundation during peak flows. The property is undeveloped and has significant riparian vegetation, river frontage and a large beach area with southern exposure.

Positive attributes of the site include: access to flat water to provide family access, a learning opportunity for beginners, and opportunities for boater and environmental education. Access to flatwater could be used as an out and back trip with one vehicle parking as compared to shuttle vehicles on other sections of the river. Creating a river access point here could reduce pressure and congestion at the 33rd Street River Access. There is an opportunity for separate designated uses including conservation and river access. City ownership of the Cameron-Sterk property would allow for formalized and controlled access. It is a unique section of the river corridor providing significant biodiversity. Providing river access would be relatively easy due to the close proximity of the river to the adjacent road system. Because the site has never been developed, it provides a clean slate to properly design and develop the river access in a way that is aligned with community values and river users' needs. The property is not within the City limits and could have possible issues with law enforcement unless annexed. The property would be an additional area for the City to manage.



Map 5 - Conceptual Plan of Potential Cameron/Sterk River Access

Recommended Improvements: Complete the design and development of the Cameron/Sterk River Access in an environmentally sensitive manner following the completion of the improvements at the 29th Street River Access. The property is identified as a priority improvement area with the following river access design elements envisioned: Approximately 3 acres of the 43.71 would be identified for development of the river access improvements, with the balance of the parcel managed primarily as undeveloped open space. A conservation easement held by a third party would be placed across the entire property to ensure permanent protection of the conservation values. Parking should include areas designated for long-term and short-term parking. The site should be day use only. The launch and staging area should be separated and no motorized craft should be permitted. There should be a designated soft surface trail, fence and signage encouraging respect for private property. Signage should include a river map with river distances and the location of other public access points. Site design should include bike racks, connection to the Transit, restroom, changing room, and trash and recycle facilities. The design should incorporate circular flow and keep as much of the wild and natural landscape as possible. The river access should be located on the southern portion of the property. Evaluate an in-river eddy and manage night access.

Overall River Access System

In considering the whole system of river access points, river management could be improved with signage and education. The Animas River could be branded to accommodate different uses for various sections of the river. This branding could encourage use such as flatwater paddling and tubing. Overall, the river access system should provide parking at the put-in, formalize access to the river, include efficient design, as well as provide restrooms and trash/recycling facilities. A park-like setting with facilities and good improvements would encourage good behavior. The protection of existing and future vegetation in the vicinity of the put-ins is essential. Prior to development, a baseline assessment of existing plant and animal species should be completed to minimize environmental impacts.

Potential solutions to meet the needs and objectives of the put-ins include the acquisition and development of the Cameron-Sterk property as a river access designed in an environmentally responsible manner. Design and redevelop the 29th Street put-in and the 33rd Street put-in. Continue to explore opportunities for dispersion of pedestrian, tuber and kayak access. Potential opportunities for dispersed access include Animas City Park, Memorial Park, Behind North City Market, and the Recreation Center/Fairgrounds.

To alleviate congestion at the popular 33rd Street and 29th Street River Access, the City developed a program “T for Tubing” to encourage users to ride the public Transit for the recommended tubing route. Tubers are encouraged to put-in at the Demon Pedestrian Bridge behind the Fairgrounds or 29th Street River Access and take-out at 9th Street in Schneider Park

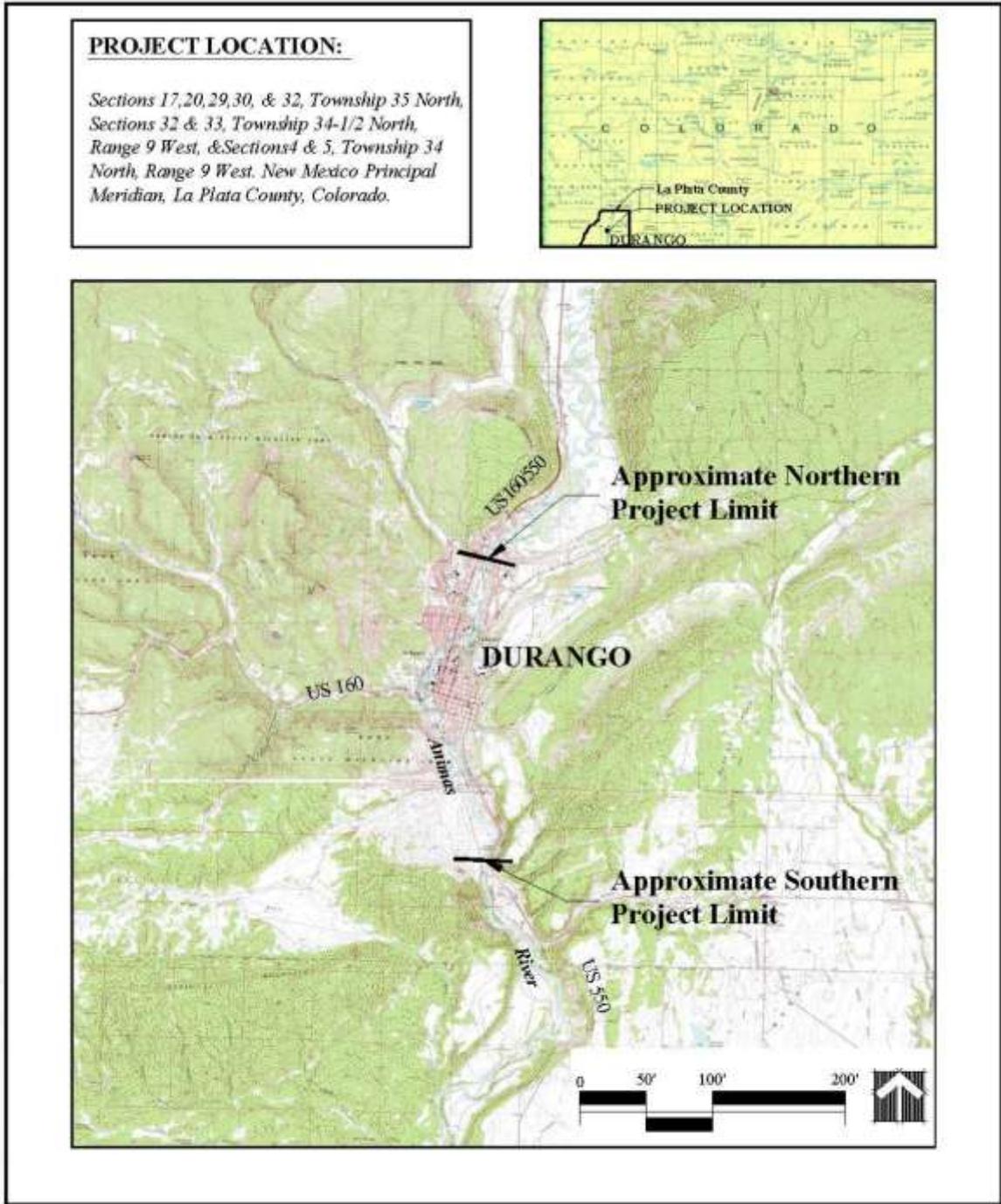
In-stream Recreational Amenities

The Animas River Task Force was formed in 2003 and the volunteer group is comprised of recreational and competitive paddlers, commercial outfitters, anglers, and environmentalists. The Task Force developed the Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan in 2008 and submitted the plan to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Task Force was instrumental in the City securing the conditional Recreational In-Channel Diversion water rights in 2007 on the Animas River.

In-stream Recreation Goals include:

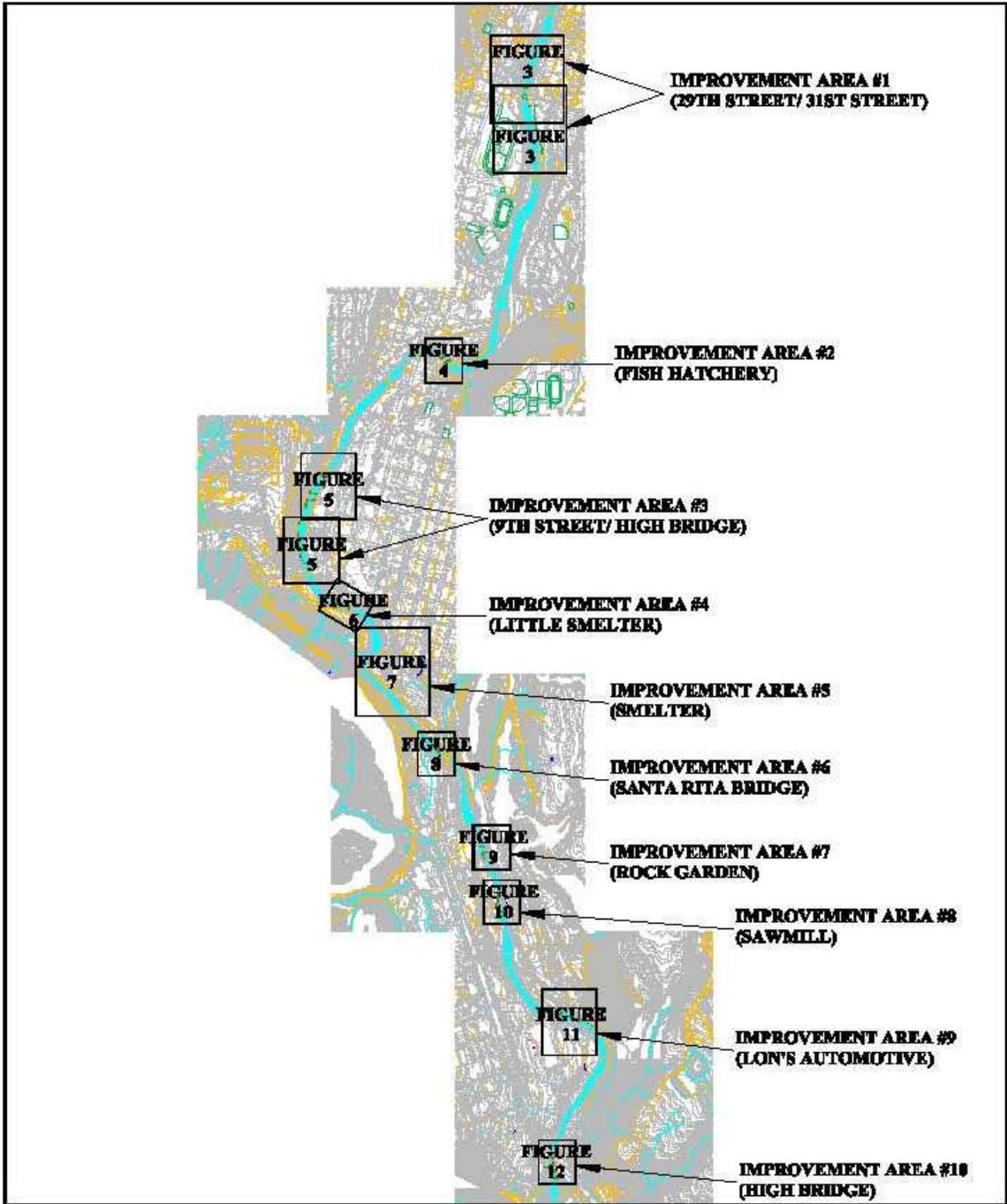
- 1.1.1 Continue to support non-motorized recreation on the Animas River and provide in-stream recreational improvements to enhance the user experience while conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 1.1.2 Limit the use of grout for in-stream rock features and minimize the need for in-stream maintenance to the extent feasible.
- 1.1.3 Incorporate in-stream river work with nearby river access improvements.
- 1.1.4 Prioritize and implement the Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan.
- 1.1.5 Develop the in-stream improvements in Whitewater Park to permanently protect the Recreational In-Channel Diversion water rights.
- 1.1.6 Provide for a family friendly and fully accessible beach at appropriate locations in the Animas River corridor.

Below is the Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan, which depicts improvements in the Animas River corridor in Durango.



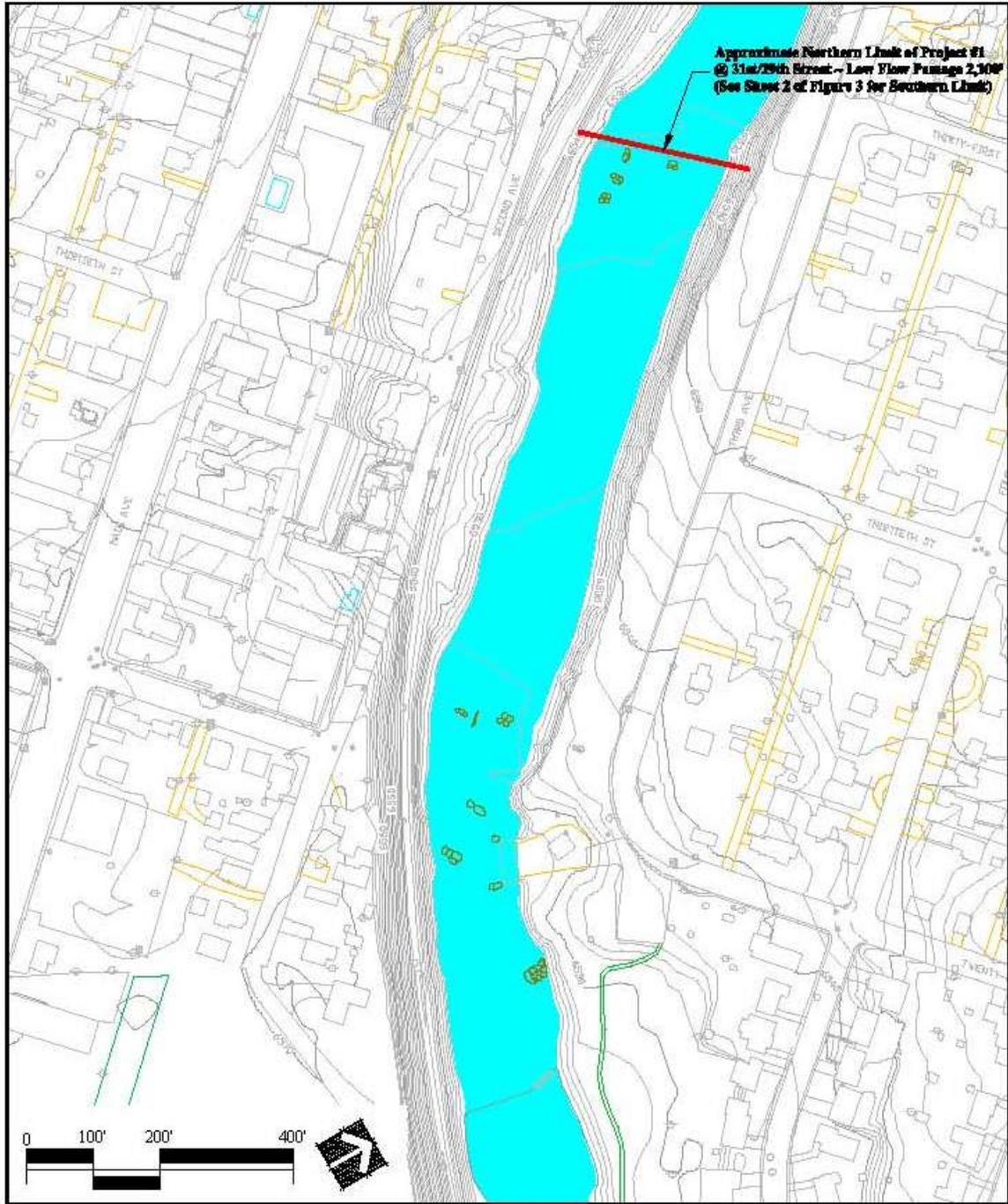
	<p>PROJECT LOCATION</p> <p>ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS</p>	<p>FIGURE 1</p> <p><i>Source: Durango East & West, Colo. 7.5' USGS Quadrangle.</i></p>
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Figure 1 – illustrates the location and general vicinity of the Animas River improvements in Durango

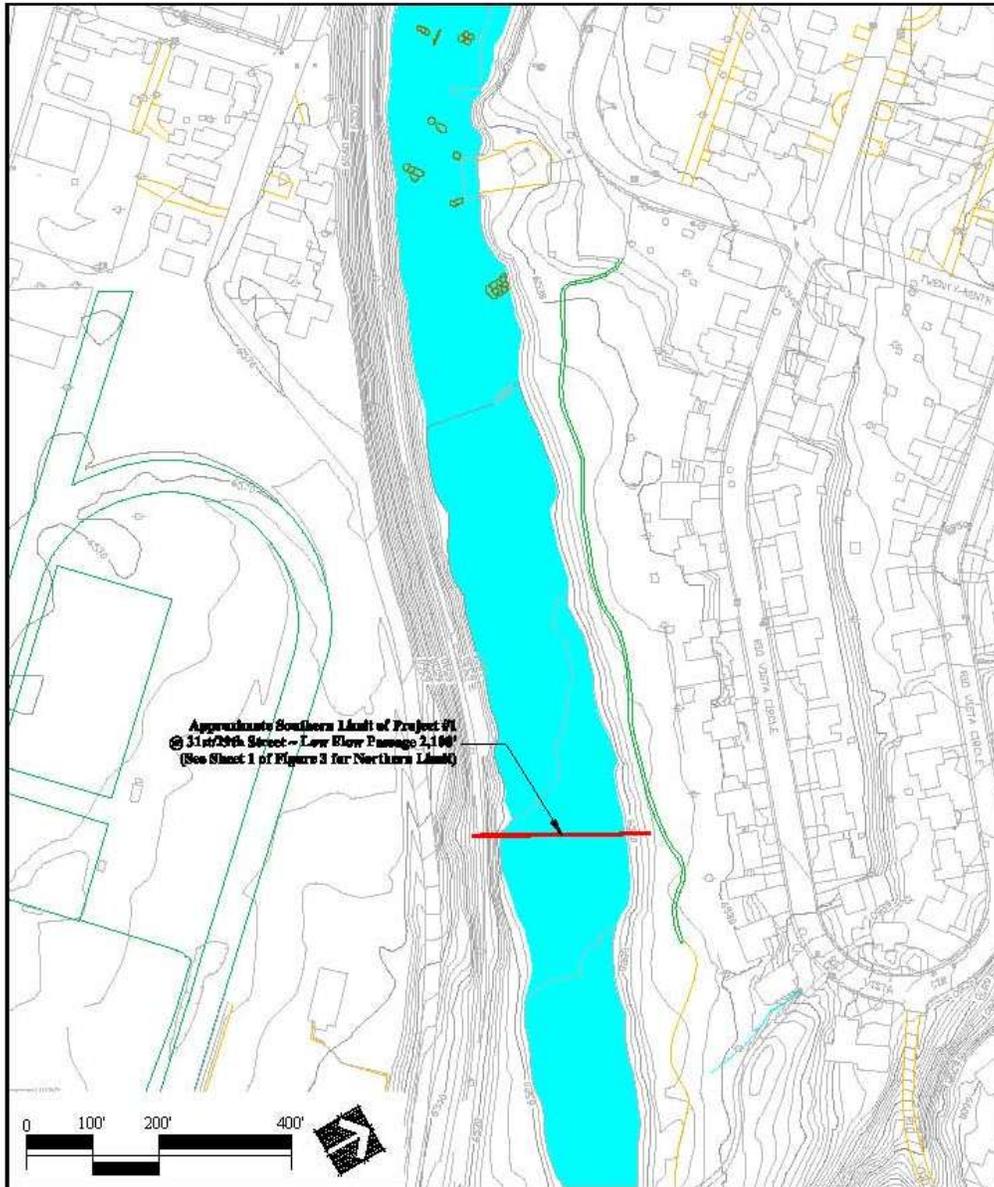


	SHEET LAYOUTS	FIGURE 2
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	<i>Source: City of Durango</i>

Figure 2 - Improvement area location map and index of subsequent improvement areas



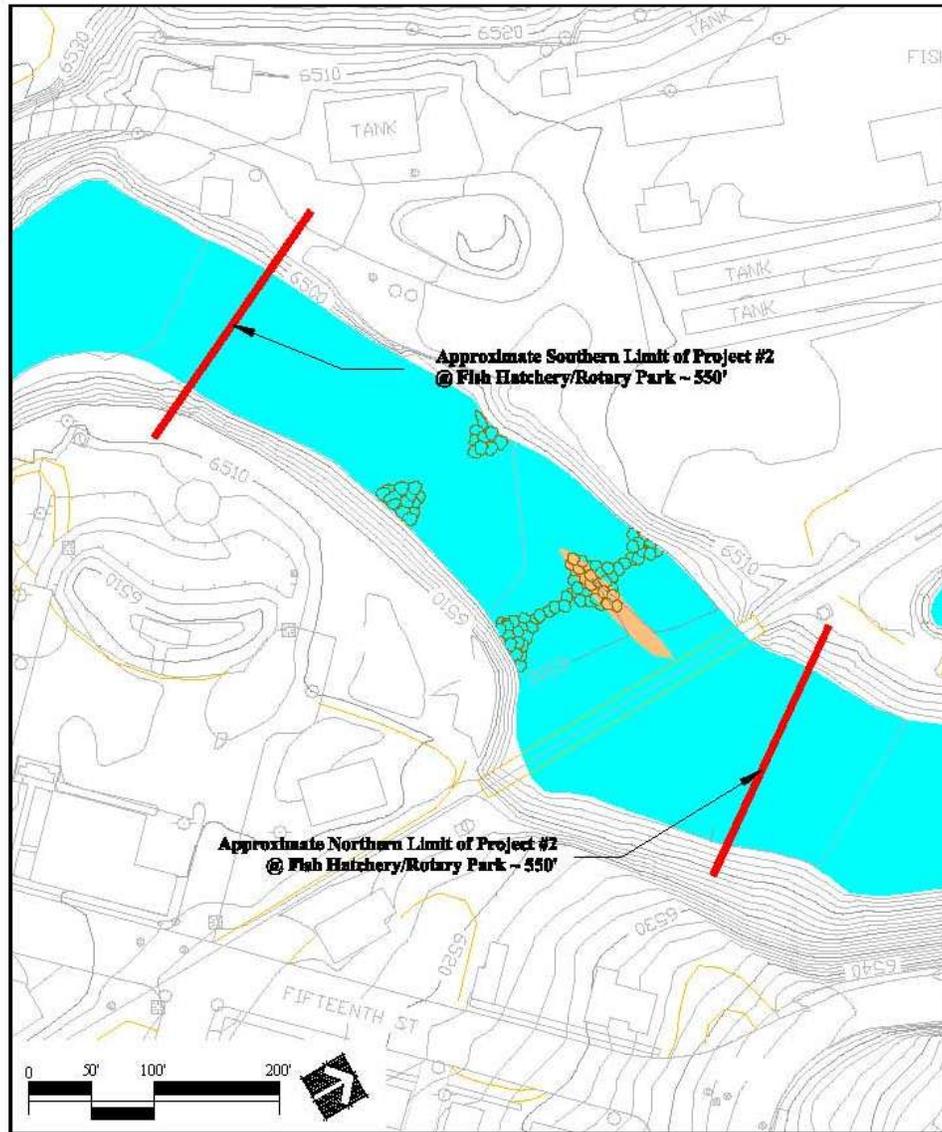
	IMPROVEMENT AREA 1 (29TH STREET/31ST STREET)	FIGURE 3 <small>SHEET 1 OF 2</small>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	<small>Source: City of Durango</small>



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 1 (29TH STREET/ 31ST STREET)	FIGURE 3 <small>SHEET 2 OF 2</small>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	<small>Source: City of Durango</small>

Figure 3 A & B: 31st/29th Street Low Flow Passage

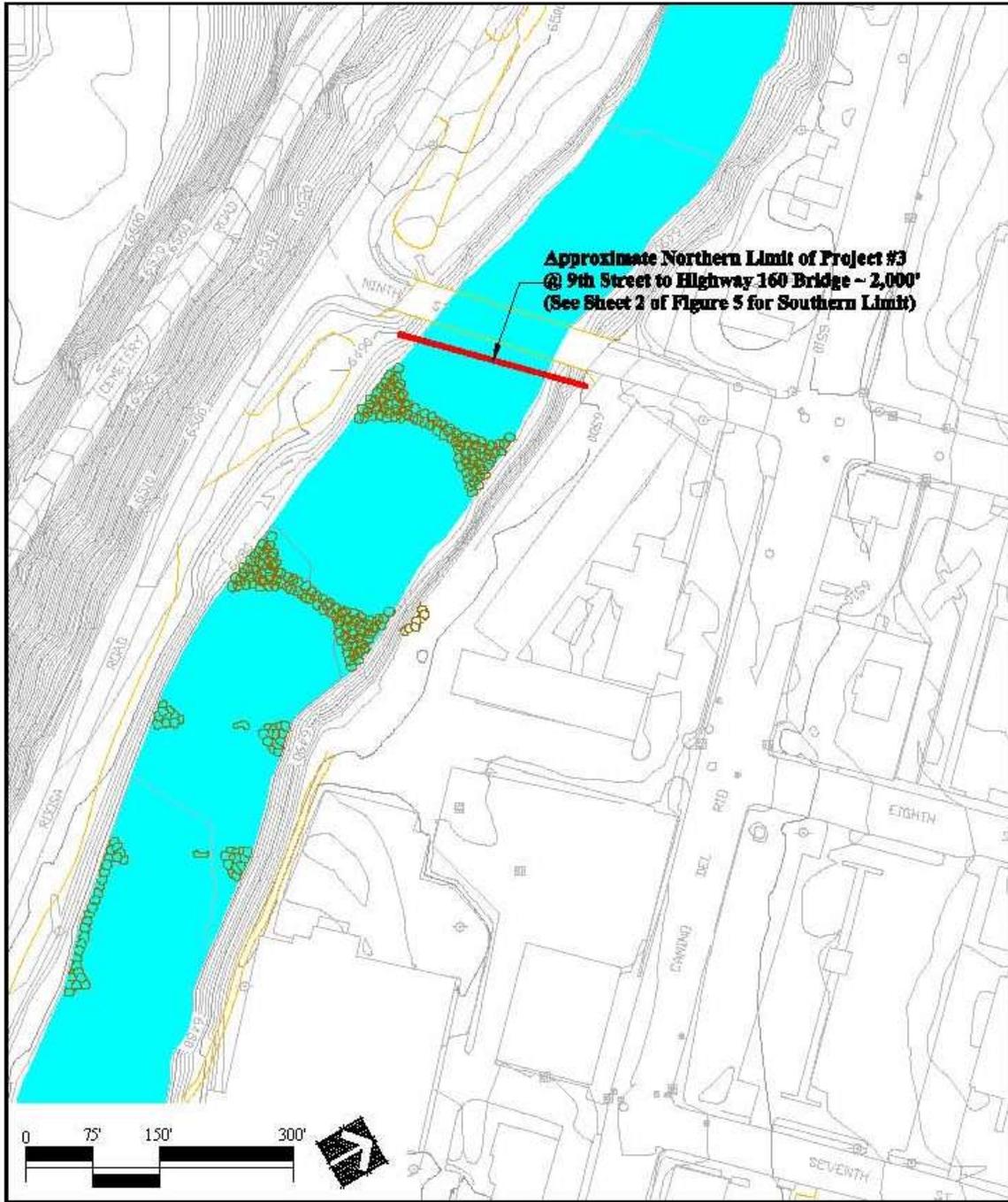
The river widens and becomes very shallow in this area. In-stream wing walls are needed to create a low flow passage for rafts, inner tubes and drift boats while improving fish habitat. Large boulders are located throughout this area so navigating this technical stretch at low flow can be very difficult for larger river craft (i.e. rafts and dories). Many rafts are often stuck in this area and need to be pulled through by hand. This action will also hopefully spread-out the congestion at the 29th Street put-in to the 33rd Street put-in at low flows. The project area is approximately 2,100 linear feet long in the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 2 (FISH HATCHERY)	FIGURE 4 <small>Source: City of Durango</small>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 4: Fish Hatchery/Rotary Park

A wing-wall is proposed in this area to divert flow back into the main channel and reduce flows along the bank. This addition will have many benefits including reduced erosion, bank stabilization and tree stabilization which is needed since the southern river bank in this area has significantly eroded over time. The berm will create an eddy which will deposit sediment over time and build up along the river's edge. The feature will also provide needed river ingress/egress, especially for rookie boaters that need to walk around the Main Avenue Bridge which can become hazardous at higher flows. Fishermen will also be able to access the area. A small play feature is currently located in this area and will be improved by the additional flow over the area. The project is approximately 550 linear feet long within the river channel.



**Approximate Northern Limit of Project #3
@ 9th Street to Highway 160 Bridge ~ 2,000'
(See Sheet 2 of Figure 5 for Southern Limit)**

	IMPROVEMENT AREA 3 (9TH STREET / HIGH BRIDGE)	FIGURE 5 <small>SHEET 1 OF 2</small>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	<small>Source: City of Durango</small>

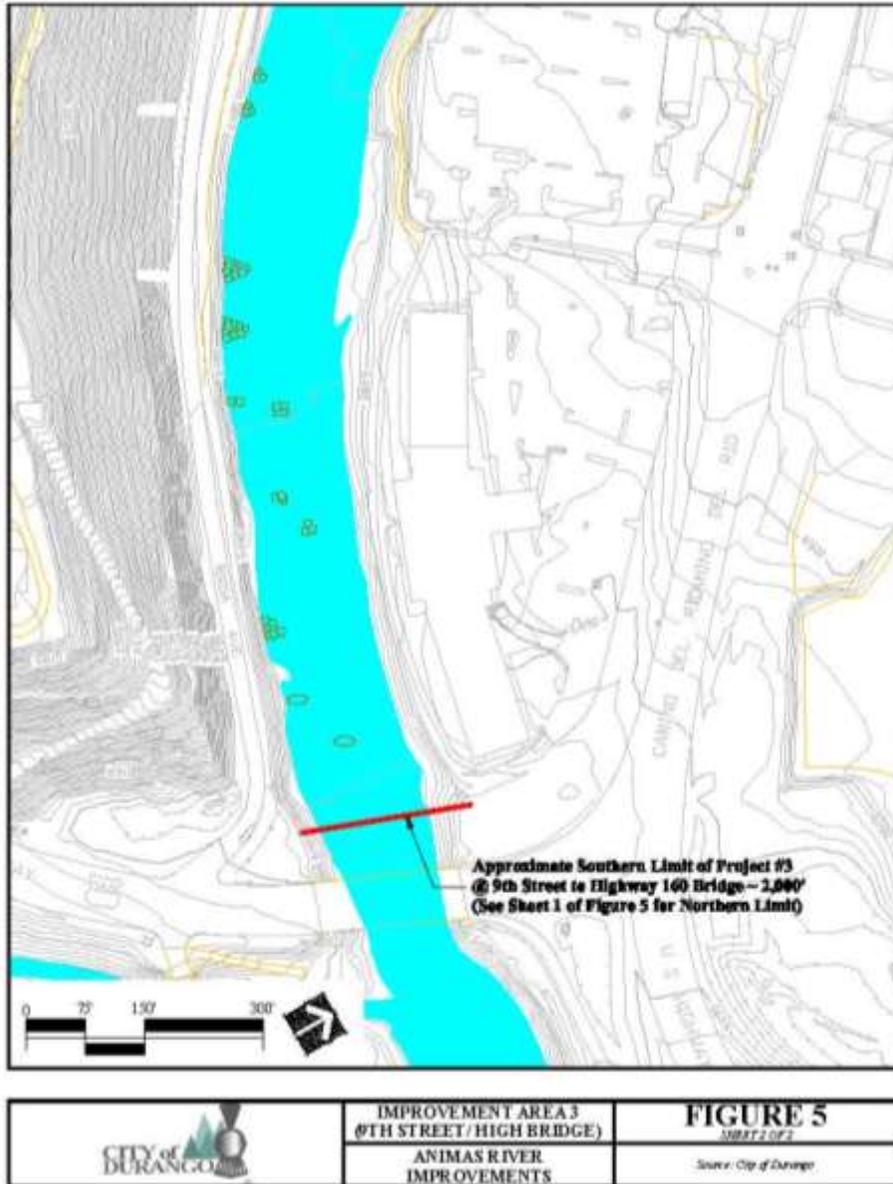
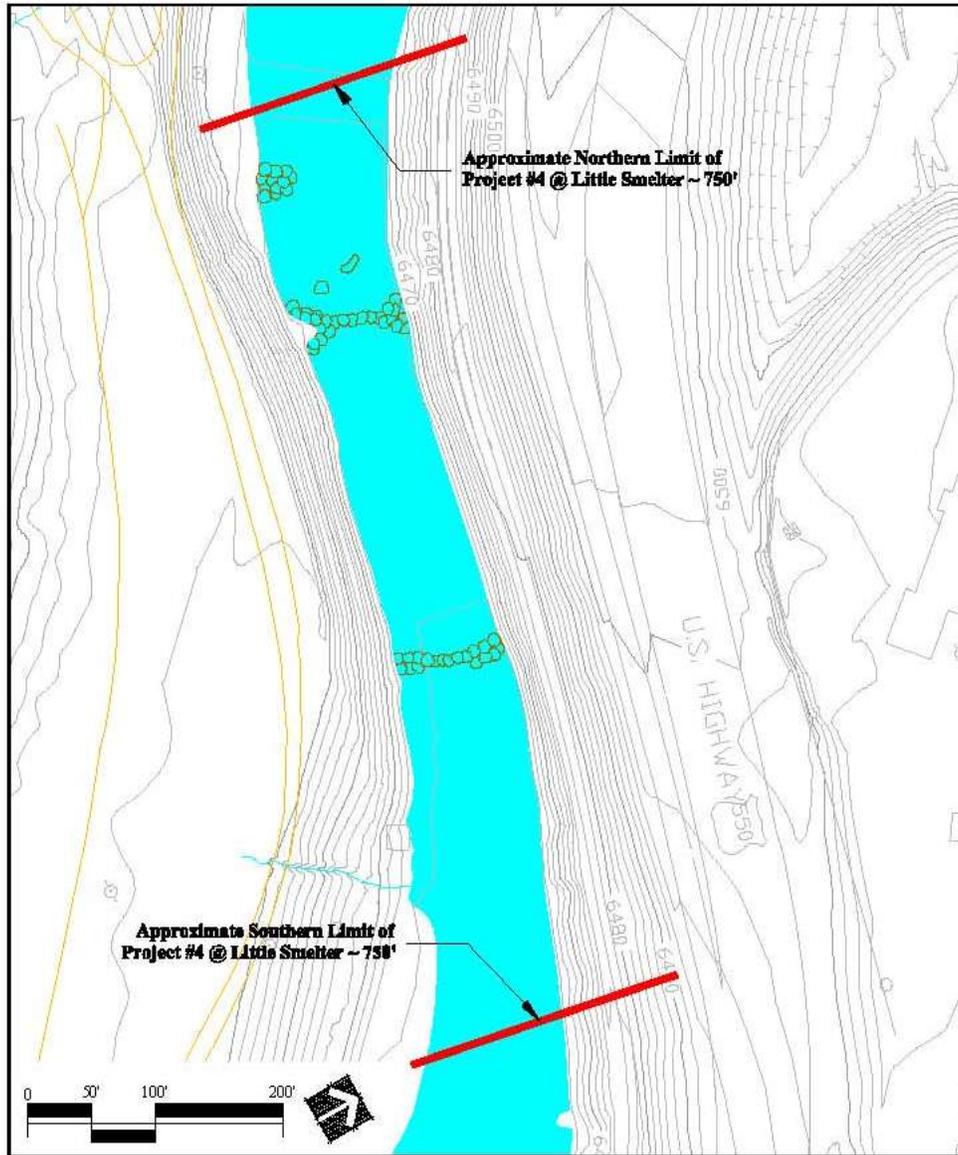


Figure 5 (A & B): Schneider Park/9th Street to Highway 160 Bridge

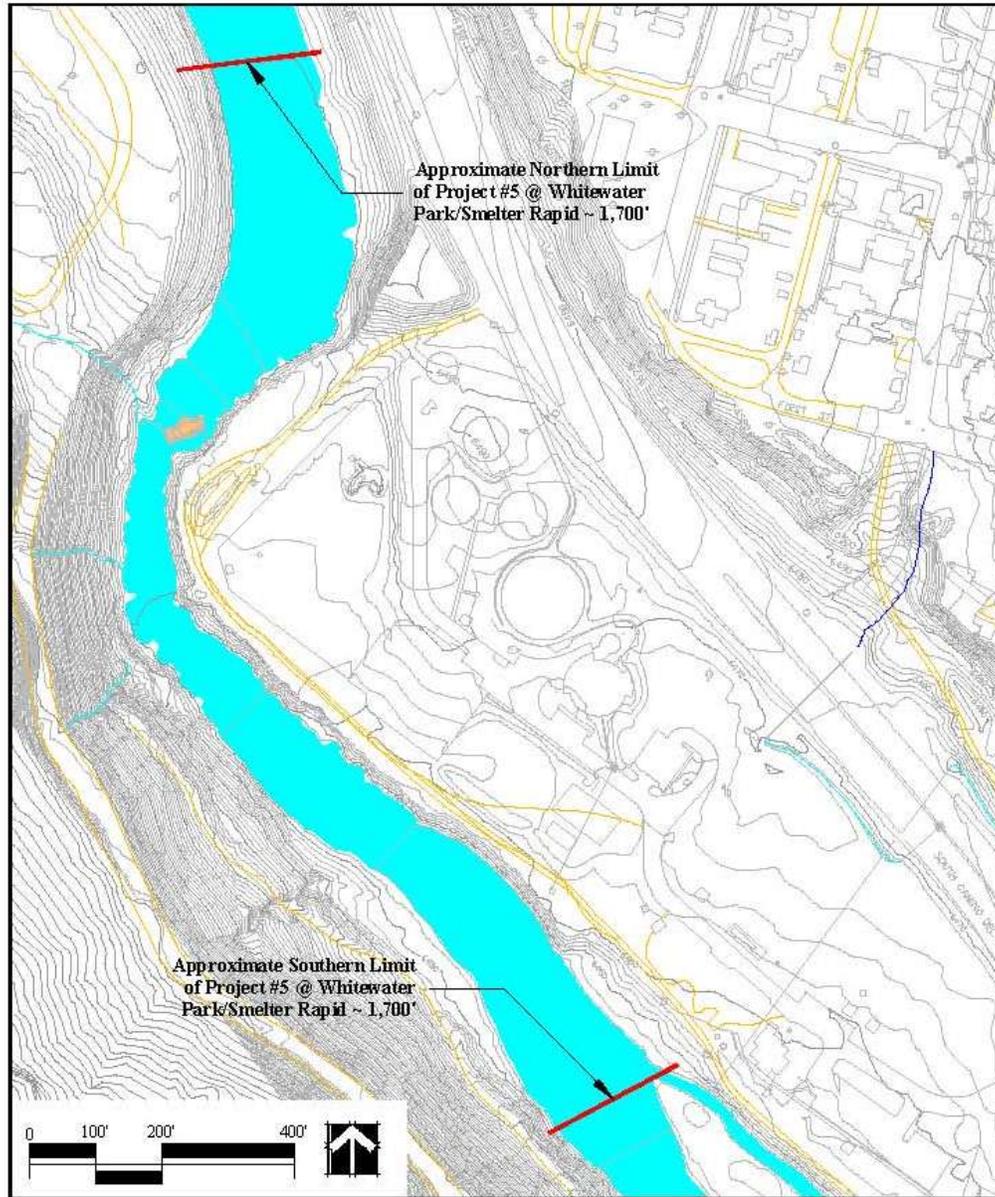
The Animas River adjacent to Schneider Park is a popular recreation area. Two “U” shaped small drop structures are proposed downstream of the 9th Street Bridge to create better pools and boating features. Other smaller eddy features will be created to improve fish habitat and boating opportunities. Existing material will be used to enhance these features within the river as much as possible. There will be no use of concrete since natural rocks will be placed in an interlocking fashion to increase their stability under higher flows. Additionally, modifications to this section completed by Trout Unlimited and the City included bank and tree stabilization to protect the existing cottonwood and willow trees on both sides of the river. This will also help the put-in and take-out access along Roosa Avenue which is a high erosion area. Maintenance to these improvements will be long-term. The project area is approximately 2,000 linear feet long.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (LITTLE SMELTER)	FIGURE 6 <i>Source: City of Durango</i>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 6: Little Smelter (Downstream of Highway 160 Bridge)

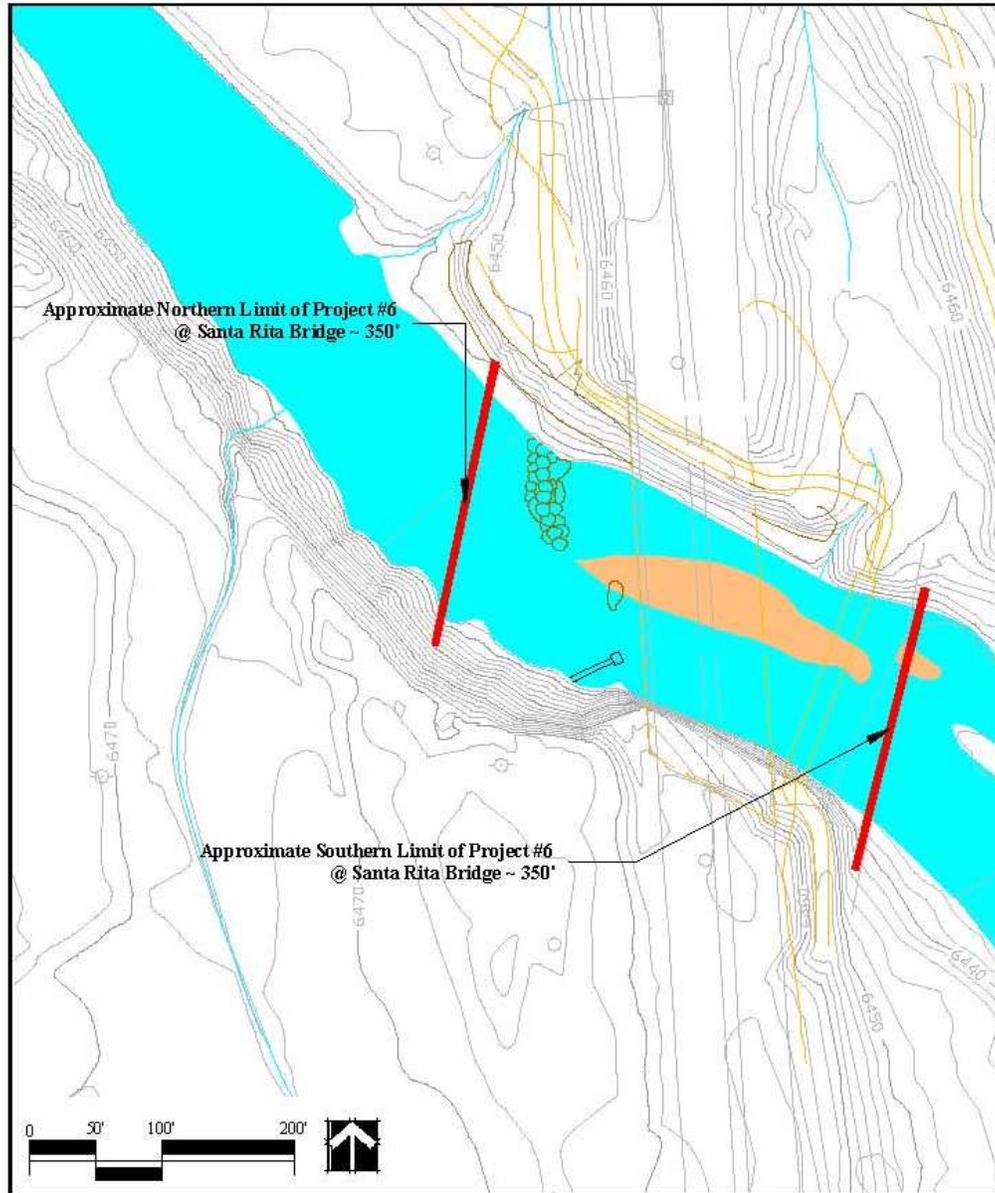
Wing-walls or berms will be placed on either side of the river to concentrate flow. This improvement would create a much needed low flow or rookie play feature to reduce crowding at Smelter Rapids. It is one of the only good locations above the Animas-La Plata Project (ALP) diversion that fits the criteria for a good play feature with steep gradient to provide the sufficient velocities and a narrow channel to provide sufficient water volumes. Current access located at the Off Leash Area (dog park) should reduce crowding at other locations. Long-term fishery habitat will also be enhanced. This project has broad support as a priority and the area is approximately 750 linear feet within the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (SMELTER)	FIGURE 7 <i>Source: City of Durango</i>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 7: Whitewater Park/Smelter Rapids

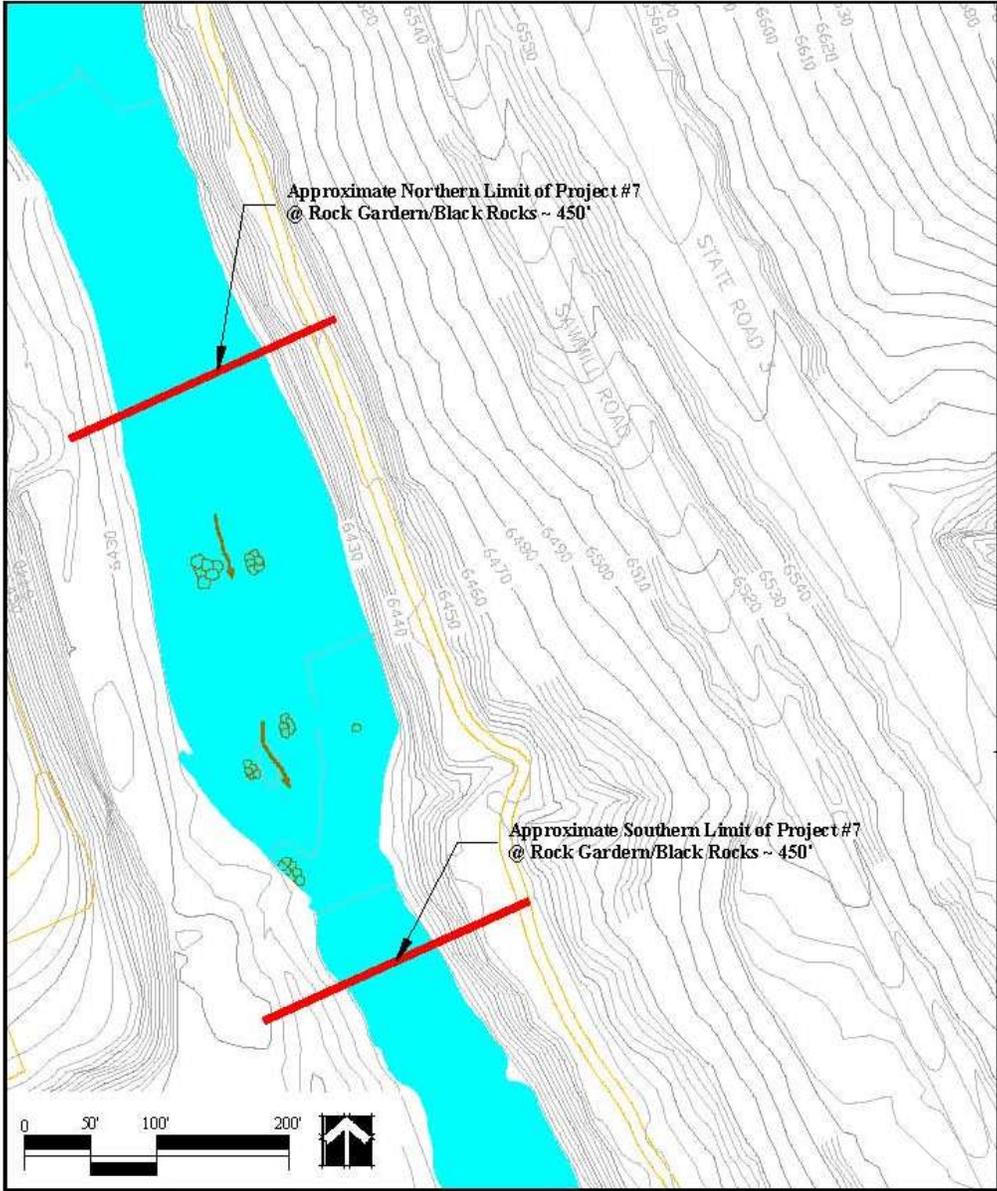
This area has been improved many times over the years to create the most popular section of the river in the region. It is popular for kayakers, rafters and fishermen and the location of the U.S. Olympic kayak slalom training course and numerous whitewater competitions. Continued maintenance of existing features is needed since high flows alter this area yearly. Included in the improvements will be multiple in-stream features including four bank to bank U structures stabilized with grout, safe eddies for swimmers, improved river access, bank stabilization and riparian enhancement. The project area is approximately 1,700 linear feet long within the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 6 (SANTA RITA BRIDGE)	FIGURE 8 <i>Source: City of Durango</i>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 8: Santa Rita Bridge

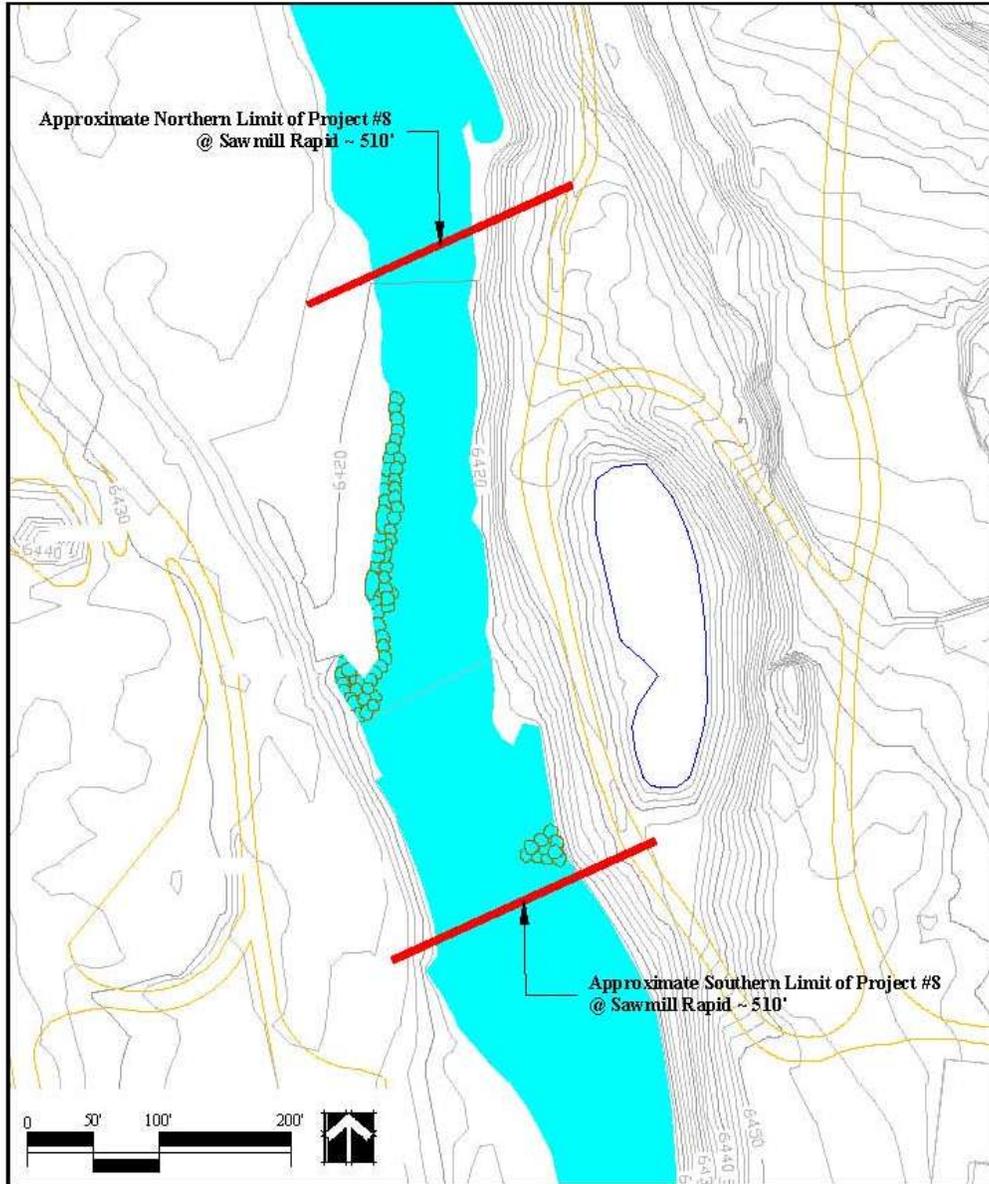
A berm is proposed on the east side of the river just up-stream of the Highway 160/550 bridge. The feature will have continuous flow through so as to not dry up the left river channel and overflow above 2,000 cfs. This will aid commercial rafters and improve existing play features when ALP lowers flow volumes. The berm will also provide eddies for fish habitat. The project area is approximately 350 linear feet long within the river channel. In-stream improvements were completed in 2011 by CDOT. Additional work is needed to remove metal debris and improve the access point.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 7 (ROCK GARDEN)	FIGURE 9 <small>Source: City of Durango</small>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 9: Rock Garden/Black Rocks above Sawmill Rapid

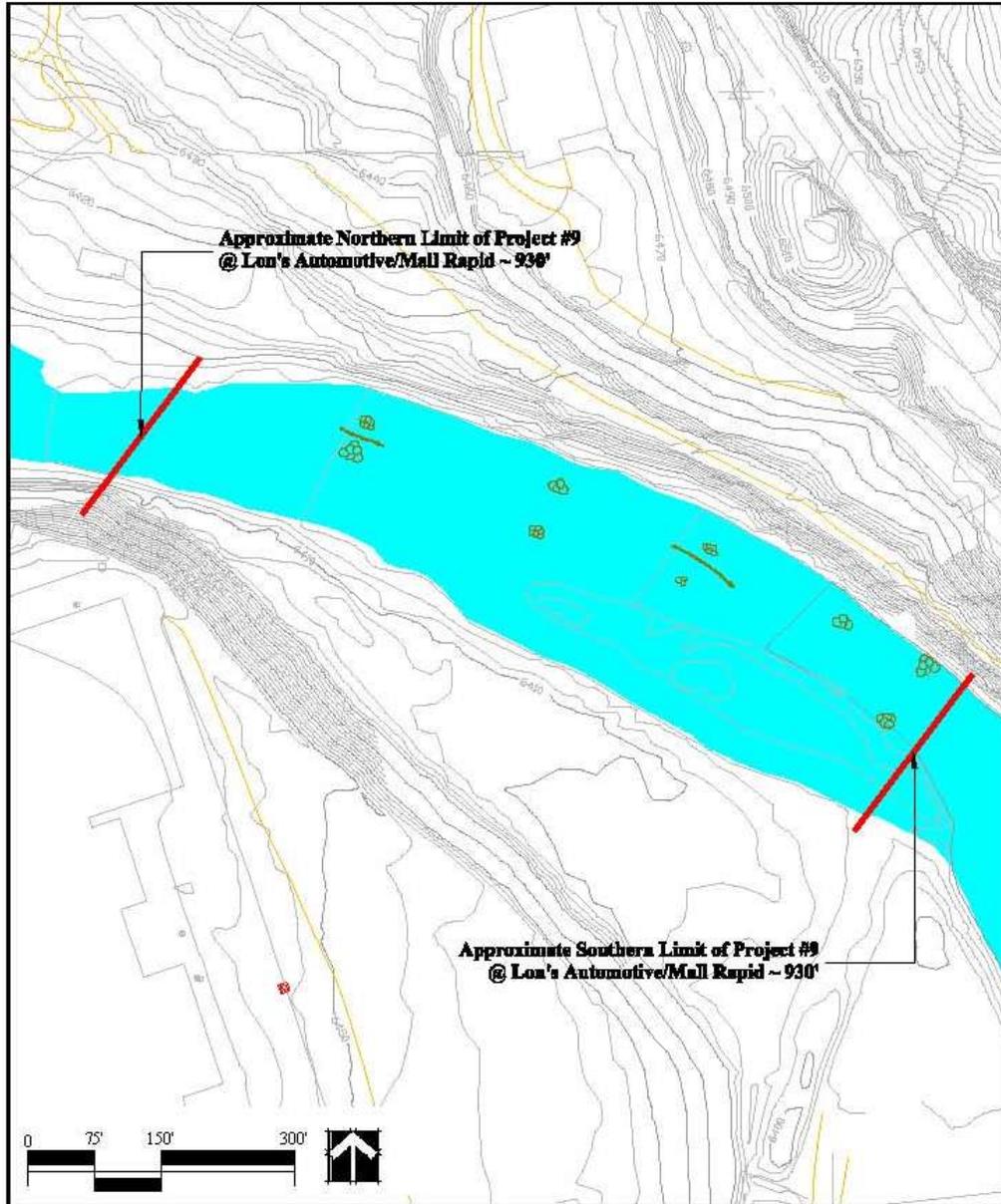
This area is similar to the 29th Street passage in which a low flow channel is needed for rafts, inner tubes and dories. This portion of river is very wide which lowers the river and exposes a rock garden that is difficult to navigate. Additionally, ALP will lower flows in this area so that the improvement will improve fish habitat and overall river safety. The project area is approximately 450 linear feet long within the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 8 (SAWMILL)	FIGURE 10 <i>Source: City of Durango</i>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 10: Sawmill Rapid

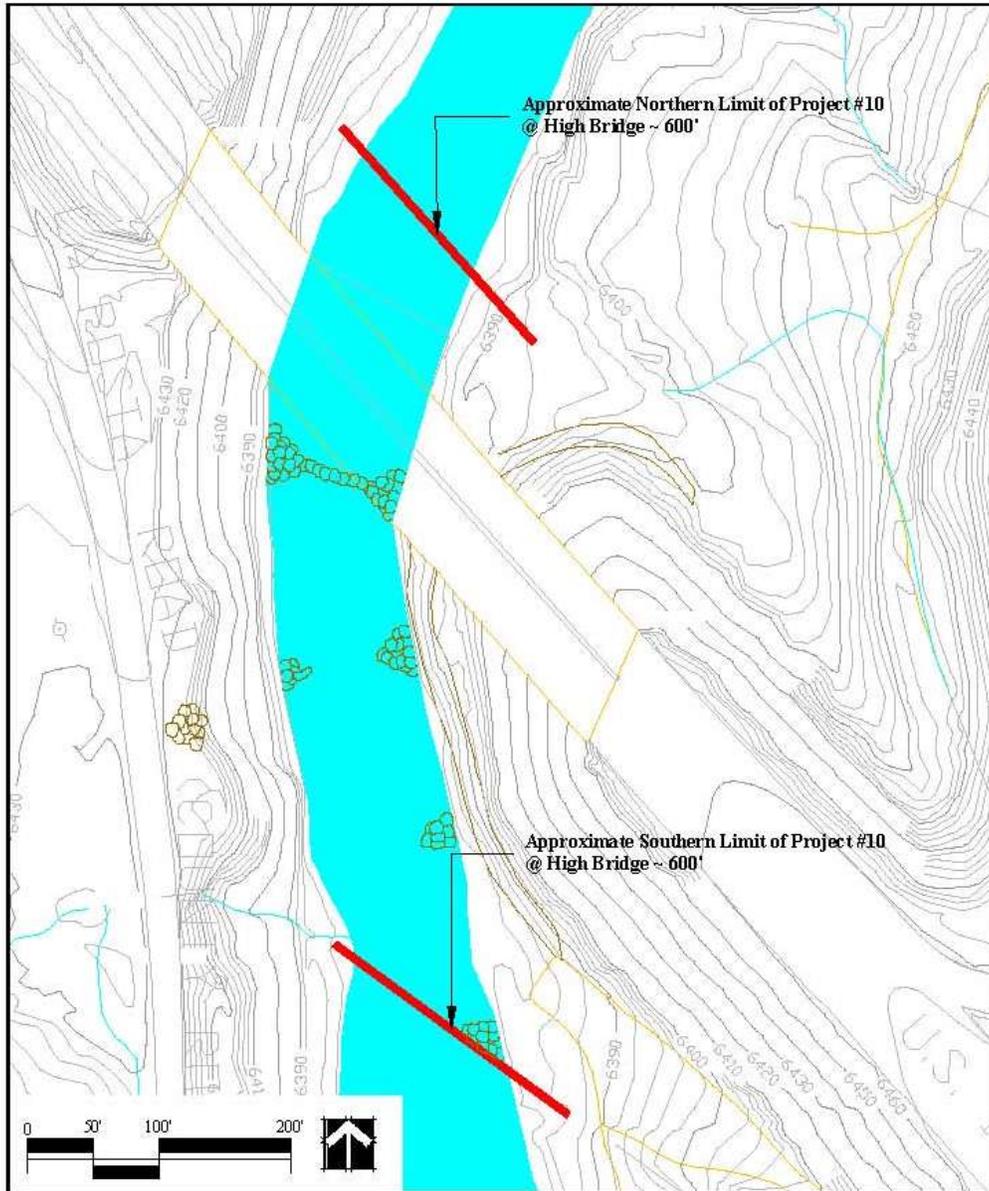
The purpose of this work is to place material along the west side of the river to improve existing play features. ALP will lower flows in the area so a narrower channel will increase the volume of water over the features in the center of the river. This addition will also improve the water depth for fish. The project area is approximately 510 linear feet long within the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 9 (LON'S AUTOMOTIVE)	FIGURE 11
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	<i>Source: City of Durango</i>

Figure 11: Lon's Automotive/Durango Mall Rapid

This area is similar to the 29th Street and Rock Garden/Black Rocks section in which a low flow channel is needed for rafts, inner tubes and dories. This feature will improve use of the river after ALP lowers flows and improve fish habitat. The project area is approximately 930 linear feet long within the river channel.



	IMPROVEMENT AREA 10 (HIGH BRIDGE)	FIGURE 12 <i>Source: City of Durango</i>
	ANIMAS RIVER IMPROVEMENTS	

Figure 12: **High Bridge**

This proposed feature is a wing wall on the east side of the river to create a low flow feature for commercial outfitters. This should ease the overcrowding at Smelter Rapids. Additionally, the eddy will improve fish habitat at a location that has excellent access for fishing. The project area is approximately 600 linear feet long within the river channel.

The priority Animas River improvement area is Whitewater Park at Smelter Rapids. The in-stream improvements are required for the Recreational In-Channel Diversion water rights and below is the concept plan for the project slated for future development.



Map 6 – Conceptual Plan for Whitewater Park at Smelter Rapids

The Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan as put forward by the Animas River Task Force should be implemented with one exception: the low flow passage from the High Bridge to Dallabetta Park is omitted due to its potential impact on the user experience of the angling community. All efforts must be made to avoid the need for periodic in-stream maintenance. Efforts should be made to limit grouting of the in-stream rock structures associated with the Whitewater Park improvements at Smelter Rapids. Each location identified in the Animas River Improvement Master Plan will require detailed design, further community vetting and appropriate 404 permitting by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The in-stream improvement sites should be prioritized by the City and Animas River Task Force and plans made to move forward with funding and implementation. A family friendly and fully accessible beach area would be a community oriented improvement. In-stream improvements should be incorporated in river access locations, particularly at 29th Street, Demon Bridge behind the Fairgrounds, Rotary Park, 9th Street, Cundiff Park and the High Bridge. Due to the quality native fish habitat and trout spawning areas, no river improvements would be permitted from the Demon Bridge to the Fish Hatchery. River work should be completed at the same time as the river access improvements.



Shoreline Recreation

Discussion of the Animas River Trail was not included in the development of this Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan. However, the Animas River Greenway links thirteen (13) parks and recreation areas within the City. The Animas River Trail provides connectivity to these greenway parks and river access locations.

Shoreline Recreation Goals include:

- 1.1.1.1 Implement the adopted 2010 Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Plan goals including the completion of the Animas River Trail and providing trail connectivity to new and existing developments.
- 1.1.1.2 Continue to develop and enhance City parks and recreation areas adjacent to the river.
- 1.1.1.3 Provide for active and passive recreation along the river corridor.
- 1.1.1.4 Provide for formalized shoreline river access to discourage the development of social trails and disturbance of riparian areas.
- 1.1.1.5 Provide un-impacted riparian seclusion areas for wildlife as a balanced approach to development and enhancement of recreation areas.

II. Conservation and Habitat Goals

River systems are deeply affected by what happens upstream; and what happens in a community deeply affects the river system downstream. The Animas River is a continuum that connects multiple areas and a natural resource not only for Durango, but for communities both up and downstream. In order to conserve the habitat and river values of the Animas for residents and visitors of the City of Durango, it is necessary to advocate for the responsible stewardship of the resource from communities upstream to the headwaters near Silverton, and recognize our role and responsibility in ensuring the quality and quantity of the water that reaches our downstream neighbors.

Conservation and Habitat Goals include:

Water Quality and Quantity

There is a clear nexus between water quality and quantity, environmental health, human health and recreational experience. Water quantity and quality is a key component of river conservation, riparian and wetland functions and values, and terrestrial and aquatic habitat

- 2.1 Maintain and secure water rights associated with the Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD).
- 2.2 Pursue and secure a minimum biological in-stream flow water rights through the Colorado Water Conservation Board downstream of the RICD.
- 2.3 Design features in the floodplain to minimize degradation.
- 2.4 Relocate the snow storage area further from the river corridor and remove this operation out of Cundiff Park to an alternative location to be determined by the City.

- 2.5 Ensure rapid and responsive actions when accidents or problems occur (i.e. sewage leak, stormwater runoff).
- 2.6 Provide for a sustainable fishery with natural reproduction.
- 2.7 Provide clean water for swimming and wading for children and their families and boating.
- 2.8 Encourage basin-wide planning with Silverton, Durango, La Plata County, San Juan County, S. Ute Indian Tribe and New Mexico.
- 2.9 Work with La Plata County, Colorado Department of Transportation, and local ditch and irrigation companies to ensure Best Management Practices are used to monitor and maintain water quality and riparian habitat.

Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitat

In general, riparian corridors are centers of biodiversity. Approximately 95% of Colorado's wildlife species depend upon riparian corridors during some part of their lifecycle. The riparian areas through the planning area are not in a pristine condition; efforts should be undertaken to enhance, restore, create, and conserve functions and values of the riparian habitat. Specific goals include:

- 2.1.1 Riparian areas and wetlands should emphasize native species, species diversity, and age structure (Cottonwoods);
- 2.1.2 Actively remove non-native and invasive species such as weeds, tamarisk, Russian Olive, and aquatic nuisance species;
- 2.1.3 Where possible and practical, promote and allow geomorphic process of the river; i.e. meandering, oxbow creation, natural flood flows, natural floodplain functions, etc.
- 2.1.4 Actively pursue opportunities for acquisition of key parcels along the Animas River to protect, restore, and enhance riparian and aquatic habitat.
 - 1. Initial parcels include Cameron/Sterk and the adjoining Romad Investments property;
 - 2. Parcels acquired should have conservation easements or other deed restrictions that protect the conservation values of parcels with appropriate building envelopes and river access. Prohibit the disposal and conversion of such parcels to other uses (i.e. Kentucky bluegrass softball field);
 - 3. Existing riparian areas should generally be enhanced and protected from development with impacts to habitat. Specifically the area between 29th Street to Junction Creek confluence and the area between Lon's Automotive to the High Bridge should be enhanced as riparian habitat.
- 2.1.5 Brown Trout and non-game native fish regularly spawn in the Animas River corridor through Durango. However, there are a few key spawning areas and Colorado Parks and Wildlife should be consulted prior to in-stream development projects. Efforts, including user education, should be made to protect spawning habitat and activity.
- 2.1.6 Maintain and restore habitat terrestrial and aquatic habitat (fish passage) connectivity through the planning area.

Projects Evaluation Criteria

Project planning and development projects that occur in or adjacent to riparian areas or the Animas River should include strategies for habitat and species protection, creation and/or enhancement. Specific goals include:

- 2.1.1.1 Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitat. These may include species or habitat specific mitigation components to restore, create, or enhance habitat or in combination thereof;
- 2.1.1.2 Projects should avoid hard bank stabilization and implement vegetative stabilization;
- 2.1.1.3 Projects should avoid impermeable surfaces and implement porous surfaces;
- 2.1.1.4 Hardened access points, impermeable surfaces, and hard bank stabilization may need to be incorporated into the developed access points;
- 2.1.1.5 Each project that should occur, must consider:
 1. Impacts to wildlife: How can the project promote wildlife habitat;
 2. Impacts to migratory birds: How can the project promote migratory birds habitat;
 3. Impacts to fish habitat: How can the project promote fish habitat, spawning, summer and winter refuge, connectivity and forage areas;
 4. Impacts to water quality: What tools can the project implement to protect and improve water quality;
 5. Impacts to water quantity: How can the project assist in ensuring continued water quantity through the planning area;
 6. Impacts to the floodplain: How can the project implement natural floodplain functions, i.e. no rise in floodplain elevation, protect and plant native vegetation, protect and enhance wildlife habitat;
 7. Impacts to geomorphic characteristics of the river: Projects should not force the river to meet a use rather should promote natural river functions; and
 8. Impacts to the riparian area: How can the project enhance, restore, and protect riparian areas.

Protected values for Habitat and Conservation include:

- Plant species diversity including age and species diversity and the absence of invasive species
- Fish diversity and population health
- Existence of native ecosystems, particularly riparian zones
- Function of the flood plain
- Reduced frequency of in-channel maintenance



Areas of concern

- Identify and pursue areas including riparian zones to preserve, protect, enhance and restore
- Identify prime fishing areas to prevent conflicts
- Reduce impervious surfaces within the floodplain and riparian areas

Projects should consider fish habitat, bird habitat, terrestrial habitat, water quality and quantity, floodplains, geomorphic character of the river, riparian values, Conservation Easement in open space, and native vegetation.

In summary, the protected values include native plant species and biodiversity, fish, sediment retention, and the riparian system. The City should identify areas to enhance, restore and protect in the river corridor.

Multiple local agencies monitor water quantity and quality in the river corridor. The City of Durango should continue to work collaboratively with these agencies to promote and protect water quality in the Animas River.

Additional recommendations pertaining to water quality include:

Metal loading

- City participation in Animas River Stakeholders Group process
- Political engagement with San Juan County, Silverton, Bureau of Land Management, Southwestern Water Conservation District, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (RiverWatch Program), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Colorado Water Quality Control Division
- City should actively monitor and guide water quality issues

Sediment loading

- Identify major sources of runoff and sediment loading within City limits
- City to develop a plan to address sediment loading problems
- Snow pile in Cundiff Park needs evaluation of discharge
- Increase street sweeping frequency
- Reduction of sediment at boating access points; consider engineered permeable parking and hard surface ramps; define vegetated areas to limit access
- Strictly enforce City stormwater regulations
- City to create a floodplain management plan
- Sediment retention in Lightner Creek drainage
- Bank erosion and minimal hardscaping (promote floodplain function)

Nutrient loading

- Continue participation with the Animas Watershed Partnership
- Prepare for possible new state standards (reduce nonpoint sources of nutrients to reduce potential costly upgrades of the wastewater treatment plant)
- Baseline testing to determine nutrient levels

- Evaluate, protect, maintain riparian areas and wetlands near the river

Public Health

- Testing for bacteria during summer months
- Provide restroom facilities at access points to be used by river users
- Source water protection plan for Durango’s drinking water intakes on the Animas River

Education

- Informational website
- Develop weblinks and partnerships with entities that have public databases of all existing studies and river data
- Public outreach regarding water quality; and importance of water quality to the community

Existing conditions: The Animas River corridor in Durango has been disturbed due to development. Due to numerous factors, some riparian areas within the river corridor exist in a more natural state than others.

Recommended improvements: Partner with local agencies, including Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Fort Lewis College, to complete a baseline assessment of the Animas River Corridor to document existing conditions. Identify areas to enhance, restore and protect and implement with river corridor related projects.



III. Regulation and Education Goals

Problems to address include drunkenness and excessive alcohol use, trespass, littering, disorderly conduct, obscene behavior, parking and traffic congestion, property and habitat damage, dogs at large, harassing behavior, noise and public nudity.

Regulation and Law Enforcement Goals include:

- 3.1 Create a culture of respect for the river environment and an atmosphere of voluntary compliance with existing laws and regulations.
- 3.2 Increase efficiency of law enforcement, fines and community service requirements.
- 3.3 Increase enforcement during favorable water level and temperature conditions with saturation patrols in high use areas along the shoreline.
- 3.4 Implement the River Ambassador Program.

Existing conditions: Enforcement and compliance with existing regulations are lacking due to limited resources and low police priority. There are gaps relative to resources, priorities, compliance, education and facilities. Several actions were taken by the City to address concerns associated with high recreational use in the Animas River Corridor beginning in 2010. The City expanded the Park Ranger Program to include River Rangers as well as increased patrols by the Police Department.

Recommended improvements:

- Utilize Code Compliance Officers and Commissioned Police Officers to issue citations and target law enforcement in high use and high traffic areas.
- Provide Park Rangers as River Ambassadors to enhance community education and stewardship of the river corridor.
- Educate with improved signs regarding property issues, alcohol, no glass on river, and respectful behavior.
- Improve facilities for trash, restrooms with changing rooms, and access points. Having the proper facilities in place will make it easier for river users to comply with the law.
- Develop north of 33rd Street as a conservation and nature corridor to encourage respectful behavior and river stewardship. Downstream focus on whitewater in the river corridor.

Targeted law enforcement:

- The Beach (Cameron-Sterk property), 33rd Street, 29th Street and Paradise Island downstream of the Demon Bridge
- Litter in the river corridor
- Monitor and remove homeless encampments

The City should consider restructuring fees for commercial outfitters and explore a per user fee to replace the existing flat fee. The Animas River is a public resource, with costs, being used for profit which includes rentals. Restructuring the fees could dedicate money to river corridor improvements, such as more policing, restrooms, river improvement

projects, trash removal, etc. More amenities on the river could help avoid non-compliance. Fees for private users on the Animas River are not recommended.

River Ambassador Program

Additional river personnel could be modeled after the Durango Mountain Resort (DMR) “mountain safety” staff. Utilize three to four river ambassadors that are paid staff and/or volunteers that are acknowledged by the City with complimentary Recreation Center passes similar to the existing Parks and Recreation Volunteer Program. The river ambassadors would be on-duty during the peak season and during busy hours. River ambassadors could provide a public outreach program:

- Promote a culture of respect and stewardship on the river
- Be informative and not authoritarian
- Wear a recognizable uniform
- Be helpful, informative and provide education at put-ins in a positive manner
- Offer an air pump
- Provide information on location of amenities such as distance to the next restroom and the location of private property
- Provide information on what’s allowed and not and what’s safe
- Encourage use of PFDs by river users
- Encourage others to watch their language and promote a positive river ethic
- Help if someone needs assistance
- Provide tips on habitat highlights and protection
- Be positive, provide a helpful message and have a presence
- Encourage everyone to be an ambassador of the river

Examples of heavily used river recreation areas include the Arkansas River and Ocoee River. On the Arkansas River, users are allotted two minutes per boat/raft to get the boat off the trailer and into the river. The Ocoee River put-in and take-out are similar sized facilities to 33rd Street, and experience about 250,000 users per year. It is managed for high turnover due to peer pressure and a ranger. Only short term parking is permitted during the peak season. These are examples of how optimization of traffic flow can enable the put-in and take-out to function more efficiently.



Education and Community Outreach

A variety of educational and community outreach methods are recommended to inform the public about appropriate river etiquette and community expectations.

Education and Community Outreach Goals include:

- 3.1.1 Implement a variety of informational tools to educate the community about management of the Durango Animas River corridor.
- 3.1.2 Develop improved signage clarifying river management objectives.
- 3.1.3 Promote river conservation and the designation of the Animas River in Durango as a National Water Trail.

Informational Tools

Recommended informational tools include signage, website, brochure, interpretive guide, outreach to schools and the college, mobile links (scan for Animas River flow chart), sponsorships, radio, TV and YouTube. The message should be general feel good and promote branding that is supported by the community.

Signage

A series of signs at all designated access points branded carefully to reflect the spirit and character of the Animas River corridor. Signage should contain: a brief overview of the river, safety, interpretation, history and culture, emphasis of non-motorized recreation on the Animas River, stewardship and outdoor ethics, amenities, best practices, encourage recycling, mobile links to associations, river flows and rapids with QR codes. Private property information as well as miles/time from each location should be provided. The signs should have unique site design with art to encourage interest since signage is the number one form of education. Additional educational signage should be provided at key points along the river corridor.

Website

The City should continue to provide an easy to access river website that is updated regularly. Information on the website should include maps of the river corridor and the public river access locations, river etiquette, and considerations for the safe enjoyment of the river. It should include media links including Herald editorials, public service announcements and links to public radio announcements.

Brochure

The City should provide an informative brochure that would provide similar information to what will appear on the signage. The brochure should be distributed to various locations around town with a primary purpose of promoting the Animas River to visitors and tourists.

Interpretive areas/trail system

An aide to enhance navigation into the natural, cultural and historical attributes of the area with the goal of enticing users to become stewards of the Animas River corridor.

Outreach to schools

School District 9R and Fort Lewis College outreach could entail walking field trips to study the natural wildlife, flora, fauna, fisheries, and historic settlements. The goal of student outreach would be to create future stewards of our local treasure.

Sponsorship

Seek sponsorships to promote education and community outreach with the local art community, Durango Nature Studies, Discovery Museum, rafting companies, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and organizations such as the Boy/Girl Scouts.

Educational Needs

The Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan is intended to be a catalyst for protecting and maintaining the health of the local waterway and surrounding lands.

Promote River Conservation

Across the country, river communities are promoting conservation and recreation on waterways by developing rivers as a Blueway, Blue Trail, Water Trail, and/or Paddling Trail. The National Water Trails System is administered by the National Park Service and Water Trails are designated by the Secretary of the Interior. Water Trails are recreational routes on waterways with a network of public access points supported by broad-based community partnerships. Water Trails provide both conservation and recreational opportunities. The City should explore the designation of the Animas River as a National Water Trail.

Benefits of National Water Trails System Designation

- National promotion and visibility
- Positive economic impact from increased tourism
- Mutual support and knowledge-sharing
- Assistance with stewardship and sustainability projects
- Opportunities to obtain technical assistance and funding
- Increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and water resource protection
- Contribution to public health and quality of life
- Promotes best management practices

Educational opportunities

Targeted on-river areas for environmental education include: Cameron/Sterk; 33rd Street; 29th Street; behind the Fairgrounds and High School; Fish Hatchery; Santa Rita Park at the Chamber of Commerce building; and Schneider Park.

Live River Fund

The City should consider creating an opportunity for the community to donate to a Live River Fund that could include a yearly membership with a nominal fee of less than \$5. Contributors could receive a sticker, hat, sweater, or wrist band, etc. The contributors

would receive email notifications, and access to website information. The program would be locally promoted to encourage ownership of the resource.

Existing Conditions: The City provides routine law enforcement by the Police Department as well and Park and River Ranger public outreach to regulate use of the river. There is signage in the river corridor and river information on the City webpage.

Recommended improvements: Enhanced public outreach with the implementation of the River Ambassador Program, continued law enforcement and upgraded signage and public education on river etiquette.

Documents
 I WANT TO...
 Services

Apply for...
 Find...
 Pay for...
 Register/Enroll...
 Report...
 Request...

MEET OUR CITY COUNCIL

CITY of DURANGO
 949 E 2nd Ave
 Durango, CO 81301-5109
Office Hours:
 Monday - Friday
 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Cashier and Court:
 Monday - Friday
 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
 970-375-5000 Phone
 970-375-5098 Fax
 info@ci.durango.co.us

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Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan

Envision the future of the Animas River Corridor in Durango

VIEW DRAFT PLAN
 Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan - Draft
 Questions & Answers | Public Comments

View the PowerPoint Presentation on the Durango Animas River Corridor Draft Management Plan

Previous Meeting Information
 Issues Workshop January 4 & 5, 2012 - Meeting Summary

PUBLIC DIALOGUE
 Public Comments | Questions & Answers

INFORMATION FROM NOVEMBER 10, 2011 COMMUNITY MEETING

Animas River Corridor Land Ownership	Plan Overview
River Length Plan Area	The River Facts
Why is Durango Doing a Plan?	

ANIMAS RIVER TASK FORCE RIVER IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Concept Plan
 Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Concept Plan **MAPS**

Economic Benefits of Whitewater Recreation
 Animas River Water Quality Information

There were over 400 responses to the on-line survey on usage of the Animas River within the City limits. To view the results of this survey, open link below:
 Survey Monkey Results On Animas River Usage

For more information, contact Cathy Metz, Director of Parks and Recreation, at (970) 375-7329 or by email at metzcl@ci.durango.co.us

Related Links:
 Animas River
 Animas River Trail Map
 Whitewater Park

Other Related Links:
 Open Space
 Parks & Recreation Home
 Trails

2700 Main Ave
 Durango, CO 81301
 970-375-7300
 rec@ci.durango.co.us

Figure 13: City of Durango website www.durangogov.org

Chapter IV – Implementation and Monitoring the Plan

In cooperation with other City departments, elected and appointed officials, and the community, the Parks and Recreation Department will have the primary responsibility to implement and monitor the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan. Implementation of the plan will encourage public input and participation of interested members of the community. Monitoring the plan will provide a means of measuring the performance of the Plan's implementation, ensuring that recreational uses of the river are developed and managed at sustainable levels that protect the health of the river, the user experience, and the community. Key indicators such as river related law enforcement calls and public concerns will be monitored to determine if recreation experiences and the condition of the natural environment are consistent with the vision and planning objectives outlined in this plan. If conditions are inconsistent with these objectives, additional studies, minor amendments to the plan or a comprehensive update may be conducted. In order to promote community involvement and stewardship of the river, appropriate groups, such as the Animas River Task Force, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board, will be given responsibility to assist the City with monitoring the plan to prevent degradation of water quality, aquatic resources, recreational experiences and neighborhoods in the planning area. Both the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board participate in the review of City projects affecting the river corridor. In addition to the review of individual projects, the Boards will annually participate in an overall review of the Animas River corridor in relation to goals of the Management Plan.

The primary categories found in the Management Chapter of this Plan will be monitored: (1) Recreation Goals including River Access Points; In-stream Recreational Amenities and Shoreline Recreation; (2) Conservation and Habitat, including Water Quality; and (3) Regulation and Education including law enforcement and community outreach. Implementation of the community recommendations and goals will be contingent upon available funding for projects and necessary resources for programs.

Key indicators will be monitored to achieve the plan goals as follows:

River Access Points

Prior to development or redevelopment of river access points, the planning process will include additional opportunities for public input and review of site specific improvements. Future improvements will be guided by the recommendations of the Management Plan.

Key goals for implementation include the development of river access improvements at 29th Street, Cameron-Sterk property and 33rd Street.

In-stream Recreational Amenities

Prior to the development or redevelopment of in-stream improvements, the planning process will include additional opportunities for public input and review of site specific improvements. Future improvements will be guided by the recommendations of the Management Plan.

Key goals for implementation include the development of in-stream improvements consistent with the Animas River Enhancement and Restoration Conceptual Plan prepared by the Animas River Task Force.

Conservation and Habitat

The City will partner with local agencies, such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Fort Lewis College, to continue to monitor wildlife and the health of the fishery as well as inventory City properties in the river corridor. Projects will be reviewed with appropriate permitting by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Key goals for implementation include an emphasis on conservation and responsible stewardship of the Animas River corridor. The City will continue to identify priority areas and implement projects to enhance, restore and protect in the river corridor.

Water Quality

The City will continue to monitor water quality and partner with the many local, state and federal agencies involved in water quality to insure protection of aquatic species, recreational amenities, drinking water supplies, and public health.

Key goals for implementation include continuing to work collaboratively with local, state, and federal agencies to promote and protect water quality in the Animas River.

Regulation and Law Enforcement

The effectiveness of City regulations and law enforcement will continue to be monitored by the Durango Police Department and the Park and River Rangers Program. The nature and extent of calls for assistance and enforcement will be documented and analyzed to appropriately target and manage the Animas River corridor.

Key goals for implementation include promotion and implementation of the River Ambassador Program.

Education and Community Outreach

The City will provide on-going education and community outreach consistent with the recommendations of the Management Plan.

Key goals for implementation include the promotion of river conservation by the designation of the Animas River in Durango as a National Water Trail.

Conclusion

The development of the Durango Animas River Corridor Management Plan was achieved through an inclusive and collaborative community process. Thoughtful and supportable community recommendations have been incorporated into the Plan. The City of Durango appreciates the time and contributions of many community members to ensure the success of this planning effort. The Animas River is a vital resource for the community and there is broad community support for recreation, conservation and stewardship.

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