

Yampa River Stewardship Program

Scope of Work

6/20/2023

Introduction and Background

The Yampa River Stewardship Program emerged as one of 20 implementation project recommendations from the Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) process. The Yampa IWMP committee members agreed that there is a need for collaborative development of a Yampa River Stewardship Program (referred to as a “recommended practices manual” in the IWMP) to serve as a set of guiding principles and resources for landowners and land managers whose actions and decisions impact the Yampa River riparian corridor.

In the fall of 2022, Friends of the Yampa (FOTY) and The River Network hired a consultant team led by The Watershed Center to develop a scope of work to implement this recommendation from the IWMP, and to develop a proposal for a stewardship program. To begin the process, FOTY and River Network formed a program committee to help guide the development of this scope of work. Additionally, during the development of this scope, the consultant team began an outreach process to engage a larger audience of stakeholders in order to obtain feedback on this scope.

The scope of work herein describes the Yampa River Stewardship Program target audience, draft vision statement, and the potential administrative program structure, tasks, deliverables, and budget for implementing the program. Program implementation will occur in phases based on geography in alignment with the Yampa River Scorecard Project. The program will begin focusing on the Middle Yampa River segment, the initial focal segment of the Yampa River Scorecard Project. As the Scorecard Project completes surveys and reporting on additional river segments, the Stewardship Program can expand to other geographies using the process defined in this scope.

Program Target Audience

The target audience for the Yampa River Stewardship Program are the resource management agency staff, conservation practitioners, and landowners with potential to implement river-health related projects in the Yampa River basin, as well as those with potential to fund projects and/or consult with landowners on Yampa River stewardship projects.

Yampa River Stewardship Program Vision Statement

Yampa River Stewardship Program Vision and Goals:

Ultimately, in the pursuit of the program goals described below, the Yampa River Stewardship program will help meet the IWMP vision: *A Yampa River that maintains intact ecological function, an agricultural economy, municipal and industrial needs, and thriving communities that rely on the river for recreation and quality of life.*

The Yampa River Stewardship program aims to:

1. Provide landowners, land managers, and practitioners with river stewardship resources, information, and programming in order to increase the capacity of the stewards in the Yampa watershed. The stewardship program will:

- serve as a “tool box” of ideas and practices that can address common issues such as those identified through IWMP stakeholder surveys (e.g., bank retreat, invasive species, conflicts among user groups, water management infrastructure) while conserving, maintaining, or enhancing a healthy, functional river ecosystem;
 - support process-based, low-tech, economically sustainable techniques and practices that can meet multiple management objectives;
 - provide opportunities for landowner and practitioner education and outreach to improve collective understanding of river health and function, and ways that projects can meet multiple community needs through collaboration and innovation; and
 - include demonstration projects that exemplify the major program elements.
2. Provide a process to collaborate on the best available science to understand the conditions of the river and best river stewardship methods and practices to undertake in the Yampa basin.
 3. Provide funding entities with guidance on stewardship projects and practices that help inform funding decisions in the Yampa basin.
 4. Establish an adaptive approach where the program is evaluated annually and adapted over time to fit current needs and integrate new information.

Yampa River Stewardship Program Structure

The Yampa River Stewardship Program is a project recommendation in the IWMP and an initiative of the Yampa River Collaborative. The Yampa River Collaborative consists of a group of local non-profit organizations that are working to meet the needs of a balanced river and human users, given the future reality of climate impacts and population growth. FOTY is the lead coordinating entity for the Yampa River Stewardship Program and is responsible for key coordination, administrative, and fundraising tasks. The Yampa River Stewardship Program also includes a stewardship committee that is responsible for overseeing (and co-creating) discrete program deliverables and the long-term adaptive management process. (Figure 1). An annual workplan for the stewardship committee will be created by FOTY in collaboration with the Yampa River Collaborative and will occur in the beginning of each calendar year (coinciding with the release of Yampa River Scorecard Project results for that year’s segment). The stewardship committee chair will be a rotating position to ensure a shared leadership approach among participating entities. FOTY will maintain a staff liaison in the committee at all stages to ensure program continuity and sustainability. Appendix A lists potential members of the stewardship committee.

The stewardship committee will have a flexible membership that comes together and then disbands based on the current phase of program development. For example, during development of the desired future conditions, the committee will consist of regional representatives in the field of watershed science (utilizing the Scorecard technical committee), restoration practitioners, and representative landowners. During the development of the outreach tools, the committee will consist of regional communications and outreach experts, entities that will be implementing outreach, and representative landowners that might utilize the program’s resources. In this way, we will be able to maximize the efficiency of individual members’ time commitment to the program. Participating entities that will be involved in the committee include Friends of the Yampa, River Network, Community Agriculture

Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, Routt County Conservation District, Colorado First Conservation District (Moffat County), Trout Unlimited Colorado, Yampa Valley Sustainability Council, and other agencies, entities, and individuals based on the needs of the program (Appendix A).

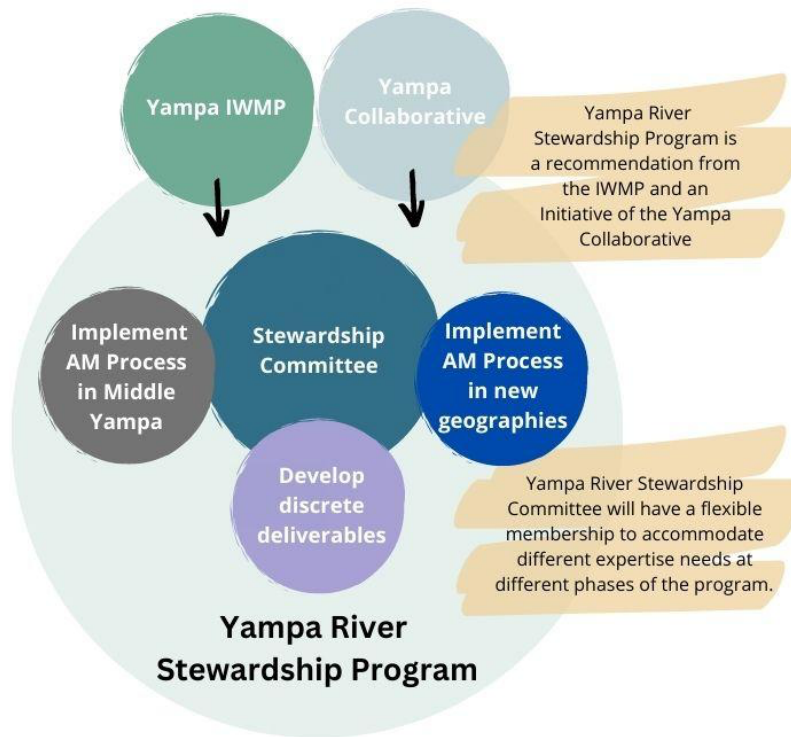


Figure 1. Proposed Yampa River Stewardship Program Structure and Workflow. The Stewardship Committee will work to (1) develop discrete program deliverables (2) implement the Adaptive Management (AM) Process described below for the Middle Yampa (3) Implement the AM process in new geographies as the Yampa River Scorecard project establishes reports in new geographies.

Yampa River Stewardship Program Tasks & Key Deliverables

The Yampa River Stewardship Program tasks and key deliverables are described below. Appendix B includes a list of potential funding sources that could be used to implement the program. Appendix C includes the program budget.

PROGRAM STEPS/PHASES	PHASE I: Short Term (12-18 Months)	PHASE II: Long Term (18 M-beyond)
Implement AM Process in the Middle Yampa	Implement steps 1-3 in Adaptive Management Process for Middle Yampa segment. Key Outcomes: 1. Desired Future Conditions (DFC) 2. DFC- Current Conditions comparison assessment 3. DFC achievement strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement steps 4-5 of AM process for the Middle Yampa. ● Continue AM cycle for Middle Yampa in line with Scorecard data updates, other relevant

		data sources, or as discrete monitoring needs arise.
Develop Discrete Deliverables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Memos for steps 1-3 above 2) Develop outreach tools 3) Develop practitioner guidance document 4) Host practitioner trainings 	Update tools as needed based on new information. Host additional outreach events and trainings in new geographies as needed.
Evaluate success of Middle Yampa AM process	At the conclusion of steps 1-3, debrief on successes, challenges, and things to do differently in the Steamboat Segment	Evaluate and adjust at each step of the AM process.
Implement AM Process in other Scorecard segments	N/A	Initiate AM process in new geographies as Scorecard data becomes available. (Steamboat segment data expected in early 2024. Other relevant data sources will also be used in AM process)
On-going related initiatives	Integrate existing initiatives and projects into the AM process. Fast-track through AM steps as needed/desired. This could include (1) Yampa Valley Sustainability Council Riparian Buffer program (2) Yampa River Leafy Spurge biocontrol (3) Elkhead Creek project (4) TU diversion selection tool and more	Continue to fast-track the AM process for new initiatives, issues and/or projects based on needs of the basin.

Table 1. Phases of the Yampa River Stewardship Program

PHASE 1: Implement Steps 1-3 in the Adaptive Management Process for the Middle Yampa.

Consultants will develop the process and tools for using data and observations to identify issues and potential actions, with a clear connection between the DFCs, monitoring indicators, and potential actions. This adaptive management process will utilize the Scorecard project data and other existing or planned datasets to assess where we are in relation to the DFCs. Figure 2 illustrates the potential adaptive management process steps. In Phase 1, consultants will complete steps 1-3 in the Adaptive Management Process (Figure 2) for the Middle Yampa.

Yampa River Stewardship Program Adaptive Management Process

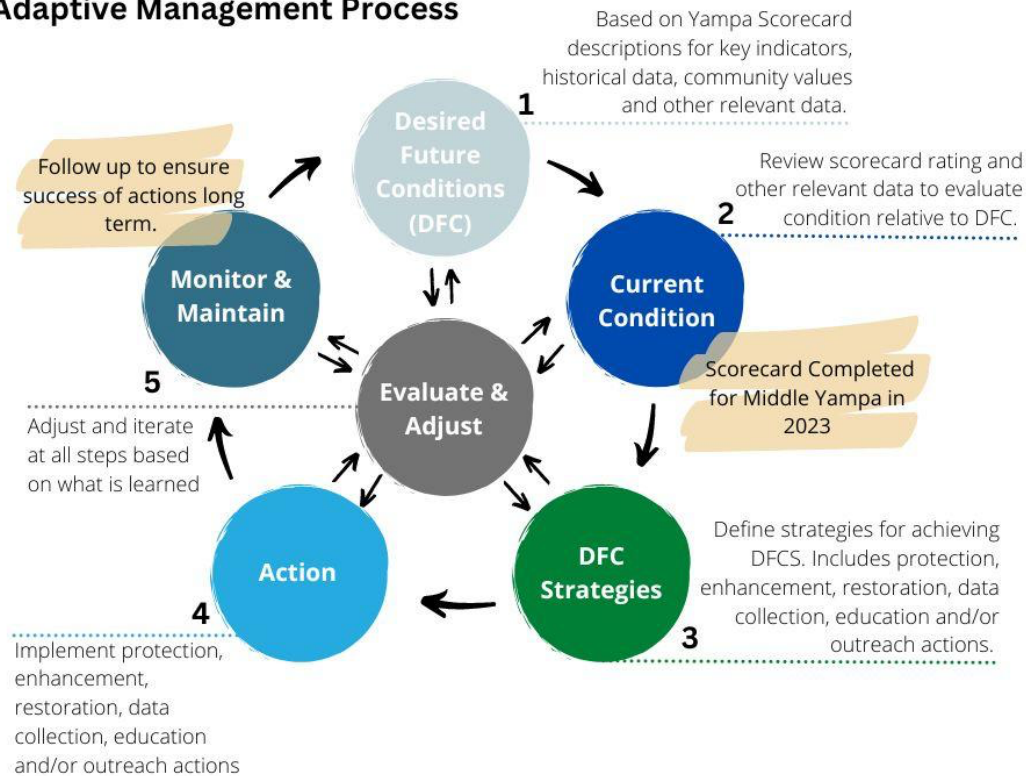


Figure 2. Yampa River Stewardship Program Adaptive Management Process Diagram

1. Define Desired Future Conditions for the Middle Yampa River Segment

FOTY will work with members of the stewardship committee and hired consultants to define the past, present, and future conditions of the Middle Yampa River corridor. Steps include:

- **Data Review.** Review Yampa River Scorecard data and other information (historical photos, oral history) to better understand past, present, and potential future conditions within the target geography in the Yampa. Consider historical conditions, known present day issues, and potential future impacts such as flood, fire, and drought. Review existing data, visit sites with typical and “reference” conditions to build better understanding of potential and desired future conditions and threats that could directly affect stakeholder values and vision for the landscape.
- **Stakeholder Visioning.** Starting from the IWMP vision statement and “Characteristics of a Balanced System” of the IWMP final report (page 6), conduct outreach to key stakeholders within the target geography to develop a draft collective landscape and/or site scale vision and community values considering the future of the Yampa. (This task is underway via stakeholder meetings.)
- **DFC Development.** Develop conceptual illustrations and written descriptions of desired future conditions that aim to meet the stakeholder vision, utilize best available science, and the projected future conditions within a subset of typical conditions found in the watershed or within target geographies. The DFC descriptions will be developed by starting from the IWMP

vision statement and “Characteristics of a Balanced System” (page 6 of the IWMP) and the Yampa Scorecard Project Indicator Scoring Criteria. Additionally, projected climate change impacts, historical data, oral history, and stakeholder values will be used to develop descriptions. Illustrations and descriptions should reflect past, present, and potential future conditions while focusing on memorializing the collective desired future conditions. Periodic updates of the DFCs are expected over time in order to integrate new information and fit current needs. Examples of what the DFC conceptual illustrations might look like can be found on The Watershed Center’s website: [River example](#), [forest example](#). While this task may initially focus only on Middle Yampa, conceptual illustrations for representative conditions within the entire basin may be developed as funding allows.

Key deliverables: DFC concept models and descriptions for the Middle Yampa segment. As funding allows, develop DFC concept models for representative conditions across entire basin.

Timeline: 3-6 months from program initiation.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Data Review	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)
Stakeholder Visioning	Community Ag Alliance (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)
DFC Development	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)
Key Deliverables: DFC Concept Models & Descriptions	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)

2. Assess current conditions compared to the DFC. Within this step, the stewardship committee and its consultants will review the Scorecard Project data and other relevant data and observations to evaluate current conditions relative to DFCs. Consultants will identify the data and knowledge gaps, and define the methods for additional data collection. Current known issues identified in the IWMP that will be considered in this step include bank retreat, invasive species, conflicts among user groups, and water management infrastructure. Current known issues identified in the Scorecard project include temperature, aquatic connectivity, riverscape connectivity, riparian condition, and invasive species. During this task, consultants will also define a process to incorporate data collection and/or project development in areas outside of the Middle Yampa in order to allow for flexibility and/or to take advantage of external momentum and/or address discrete issues as appropriate and as needed (see Figure 3 for potential process).

Key deliverables: 1) Memorandum comparing the Scorecard data and other relevant data and observations to the DFCs. Include discussion of known data gaps, and details on recommended methods

for filling data gaps, and process incorporating data collection or project development in areas outside the Middle Yampa.

Timeline: 3-6 months from program initiation

Roles and Responsibilities:

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Assess Current Condition compared to DFC	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)
Key Deliverables: Memo Comparing Scorecard data and other relevant data and observations to the DFCs. ID known data gaps & methods for filling data gaps.	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)

3. Define DFC Achievement Strategies. Within this step, the stewardship committee and its consultants will develop recommendations for the strategies necessary to achieve DFCs. Strategies may include protection, enhancement, restoration, climate resilience, data collection, education and outreach strategies. Protection strategies may include recommendations for future land use policy, data collection methods to track changes over time, and/or identification of target locations for landowner education/outreach. Climate resilience strategies may include restoration methods to be able to prepare for future flood, fire, and/or drought. Restoration and enhancement strategies may include invasive species management, riparian planting, floodplain restoration, and more. Strategies may also include discrete monitoring tasks to investigate issues upstream or on tributaries of the Middle Yampa.

Key deliverables: Memorandum documenting the recommended DFC strategies for the Middle Yampa. Include map of areas targeted for each strategy.

Timeline: 6-12 months from program initiation

Roles and Responsibilities:

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Define DFC Achievement Strategies	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)
Key Deliverables: Memo documenting recommended DFC strategies for the Middle Yampa.	FOTY (with Stewardship Committee & consultants)

4. Integrate Existing Initiatives into Adaptive Management Process. Within this step, partners can integrate existing initiatives and projects into the AM process as needed, desired, and/or as recommended by the Stewardship Committee or Yampa River Collaborative. This could

include (1) Yampa Valley Sustainability Council Riparian Buffer program, (2) Yampa River Leafy Spurge biocontrol, (3) Elkhead Creek project, (4) TU diversion selection tool, and more. Tasks include developing a fast-tracked process of the Adaptive Management Process steps to meet the needs of the initiative or project. For example, Yampa Valley Sustainability Council plans to take a fast-tracked approach to this process, building off an effort already underway, to focus on developing a collaborative riparian buffer program. Note: this task is not included in the budget as we assume the initiatives would be funded separately.

Timeline: on-going/as needed

Roles and Responsibilities:

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Integrate existing initiatives/projects into AM process	Varies by initiative

PHASE 1: Discrete Deliverables

1. Develop Outreach Tools

Participating entities will work with the stewardship committee and hired consultants to develop outreach tools to help with initial and ongoing outreach and stakeholder engagement. Key deliverables and tasks include:

- **Target Audience Identification.** Further refine the target audience for the outreach deliverables, including the mailer. Develop mailing list with names/addresses for sending the mailer.
- **Story Map or Website.** Within three to six months of initiating the Stewardship Program, consultants will develop an informational story map or website to begin highlighting the early stages of development of the Yampa River Stewardship Program and invite participation from all interested parties. Regular updates will be made to the story map as the program is underway.
- **Mailer.** Within three to eight months of initiating the program, CAA will develop and distribute a mailer to target audience members in order to build awareness of the program. The mailer will (1) invite them to an upcoming stakeholder engagement opportunity (see task 2 below) and (2) invite them to join the stewardship program mailing list. A second mailer will be sent by participating entities that are ready to conduct individual landowner outreach using practitioner guidance document developed in task 3 below.
- **Informational Guide.** Within 6-12 months of initiating the program, CAA will develop an initial draft informational guide (outreach booklet) for the stewardship program, utilizing content developed in DFC memos above. The informational guide will describe the purpose and need for the program, what the program hopes to achieve through outreach and stewardship, and the ways to get involved. A second version of the guide will be developed following completion of Task 4 to highlight content from the practitioner guidance document as appropriate.

Key deliverables: Mailing list, Storymap/website, Mailer, Informational Guide. Periodic updates to story map, informational guide, and DFCs as needed.

Timeline: 3-12 months from program initiation

Roles and Responsibilities:

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Target audience identification (develop mailing list)	Community Agricultural Alliance
Story Map or Website	Community Agricultural Alliance
Mailer	Community Agricultural Alliance
Informational Guide	Community Agricultural Alliance
Periodic Updates to outreach tools as needed.	Community Agricultural Alliance

2. Develop Stewardship Practitioner Guidance & Trainings

Within this step, participating entities will work with the stewardship committee and hired consultants to develop a practitioner guidance document that illustrates key examples of the DFC strategies. The document will illustrate and describe key examples of existing conditions found in the Middle Yampa and associated DFC strategies. The practitioner guidance document will be used for practitioner trainings and by practitioners when conducting landowner outreach. The document will help guide practitioners in appropriate problem identification, protection, and enhancement recommendations. Upon completion of the document, consultants will host two 1-day trainings with practitioners.

Key Deliverables: (1) Stewardship practitioner guidance document with examples of existing conditions and key DFC strategies to address common issues. (2) Two one-day trainings for practitioners

Timeline: 12-18 months from program initiation

Roles and Responsibilities

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Stewardship practitioner guidance document	FOTY
Two one-day trainings for practitioners	FOTY

PHASE 2: Implement Steps 4-5 in the Adaptive Management Process for the Middle Yampa.

- **Implement actions within priority geographies.** As priority geographies, issues, and opportunities are identified in phase 1 above, Participating entities will target individual outreach within priority geographies. Participating entities will rely on trusted individuals and entities to make initial introductions and utilize outreach tools developed above to gauge interest

in participating in stewardship and the need for implementing projects. Participating entities will implement DFC actions and begin developing program success stories (and lessons learned).

- **Monitor & maintain.** After actions are complete, participating entities will develop monitoring and maintenance approach to continue to ensure project success.
- **Evaluate & adjust.** At each step in the process, evaluate and adjust approach as needed. After completion of the Middle Yampa segment, debrief on successes, challenges, and things to do differently in the Steamboat Segment.

Key deliverables: (1) Stewardship Program annual report documenting number of landowners engaged, workshops developed, meetings held, and projects implemented. (2) Develop new stewardship program outreach handouts and or/videos that highlight key success stories, demonstration projects, best management practices and/or highlights information from stewardship committee deliverables described above.

Roles and Responsibilities

Task/Deliverable	Lead Entity
Implement actions within priority geographies (project development and implementation)	TU, TNC, YVSC, NRCS, FOTY
Monitor & Maintain	TU, TNC, YVSC, NRCS, FOTY
Evaluate & Adjust	Yampa River Collaborative
Success Stories Deliverables (annual report, demonstration projects, storytelling videos, etc)	Yampa River Collaborative

PHASE 2: Implement AM Process in Other Geographies

- **Transfer the process to new geographies.** As the Scorecard project completes surveys in new geographies, apply the ongoing collaborative and science-based process used in the Middle Yampa in new geographies. Apply a flexible approach to the adaptive management process in order to incorporate data collection and/or project development in areas outside of Scorecard Project geographies in order to allow for flexibility and/or to take advantage of external momentum and/or address discrete issues as appropriate and as needed.

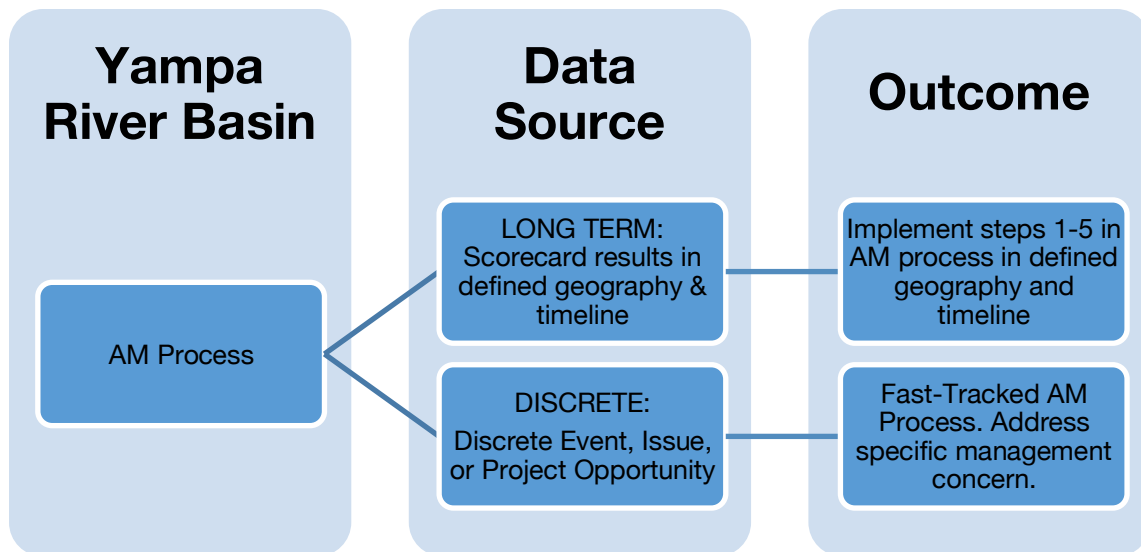


Figure 3. Flexible adaptive management approach

Timeline: Begins 12-36 months from program initiation (once the Scorecard project completes reports within new geographies). Ongoing tasks thereafter.

Task Lead: Shared among partners as described in tasks above.