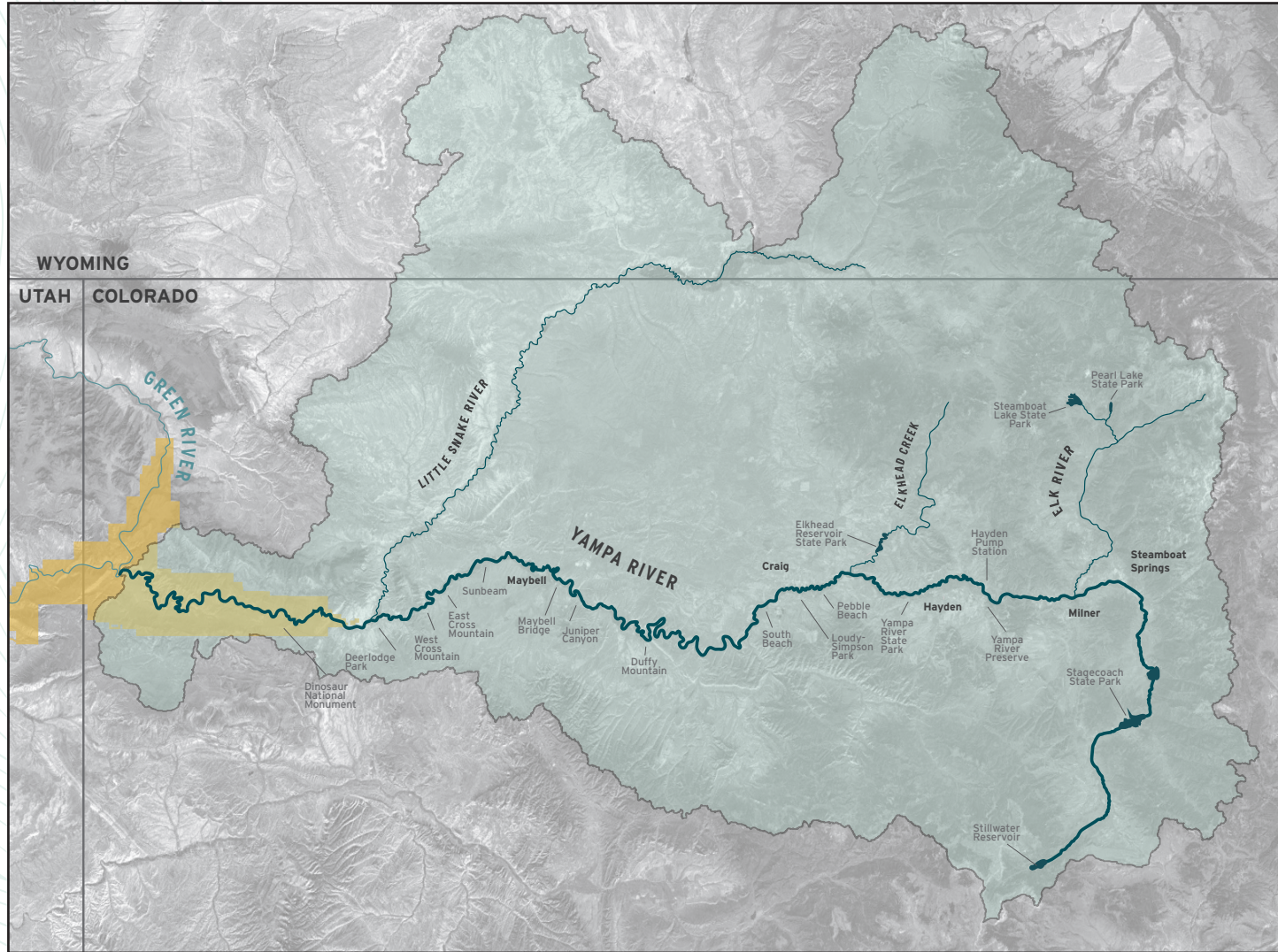


Friends of the Yampa
STRATEGIC PLAN
2024-2029




FRIENDS OF THE
YAMPA

Friends of the Yampa is a 501(c)(3) organization based in the Yampa Valley, Colorado.



Yampa River Basin
 Dinosaur National Monument

Learn more about the Friends of the Yampa team at [Friendsoftheyampa.com/about/who-we-are](https://friendsoftheyampa.com/about/who-we-are)




Friends of the Yampa ponderosa pine tree planting at Dr. Rich Weiss Park in 1997. (Photo: Peter Van De Carr)

- 1980** Formation of Northwest Rivers Alliance (NWRA) and inaugural Yampa River Fest and advocacy against Cross Mountain/Juniper Canyon Dam project.
- 1982** Friends of the Yampa forms.
- 1982** Dam project put on hold.
- 1982** Advocacy for Elk River Wild and Scenic status from NWRA and FOTY.
- 1994** FOTY and NWRA combine into one entity.
- 1997** Helped name Dr. Rich Weiss Park and secure funding for bronze statue.
- 1997** Planted 300 ponderosa pines at Dr. Rich Weiss Park in his memory.
- 1998** Fifth Street Wave and Double Z Wave created.
- 2003** Charlie's Hole built (C-Hole).
- 2004** Recreational in-channel diversion (RICD) at C-hole presented.
- 2005** RICD decreed.
- 2007** First Yampa River Awareness Project (YRAP) trip through Yampa Canyon.
- 2010** FOTY becomes a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- 2011** First Big Snow Dance (later to become Big Snow Bash).
- 2015** A Wave built.
- 2016** Toots Hole built.
- 2018** Completed strategic plan laying out growth and increased impact while also expanding focus on protection and enhancement of environmental aspects of the Yampa River watershed.
- 2019** FOTY hires an executive director, its first full-time employee.
- 2021** FOTY hires a part-time outreach coordinator.
- 2022** FOTY hires an environmental program manager, a full-time outreach coordinator, and Yampa River Fund manager.
- 2022** FOTY takes over management of the Yampa River Fund, which was previously managed by The Nature Conservancy.
- 2023** FOTY hires a conservation program manager.
- 2024** The 2024-2029 strategic plan completed. FOTY hires program and office assistant and development program manager.

What makes the Yampa River special?

The Yampa River is a symbol of natural resilience and vitality amidst a landscape where many rivers have succumbed to human intervention. Within Northwest Colorado and the broader Colorado River Basin, the Yampa River and its tributaries exemplify a healthy and robust river system. While numerous rivers have faced damming, over-diversion, and over-depletion, the Yampa remains largely unaltered by today's standards, fostering a rich diversity of aquatic and terrestrial life while accommodating various forms of recreation, environmental integrity, and responsible resource utilization.

What sets the Yampa apart is its remarkable integrity — a result of its headwaters boasting only small reservoirs and minimal water diversions. This unique attribute renders the Yampa one of the wildest rivers across the entire Colorado River Basin. In fact, many regard it as the last free-flowing river within this water-



shed. Even amid minor dams and diversions, the Yampa retains a natural hydrograph. The river annually floods its banks, scours its cobble, and creates habitat that supports biodiversity, including endangered species.

The rarity of such ecological dynamics

in today's world serves as a driving force for Friends of the Yampa. It compels us to safeguard the wildness and well-being of the Yampa River. As the looming threats of river depletion persist, our dedication to preserving this precious natural marvel remains unwavering.



Embracing a transformative vision

Over the last 150 years, the Yampa River system has navigated evolving dynamics, witnessing a surge in human presence and its consequential impacts on the watershed. While historical threats such as transbasin diversions loom, current concerns primarily stem from local sources. Additionally, broader regional and global negative impacts, notably from climate change, are a reality.

Amid these anthropogenic changes and the continual transfer of land ownership, we recognize the substantial repercussions on the river system. We staunchly believe that these changes need not translate into watershed degradation. Our commitment lies in the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the existing processes and attributes of the Yampa River. To achieve this, we advocate against human-driven impacts that undermine its integrity. This involves fostering a deep understanding through scientific insight and encouraging collaboration with landowners and land managers to safeguard the river's distinctive characteristics.

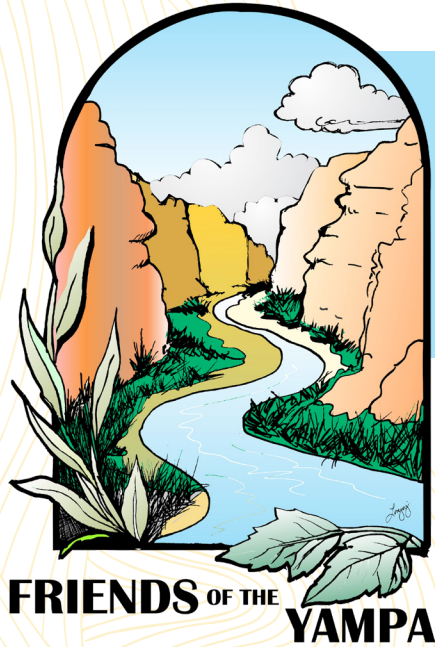
Moreover, we acknowledge the imperative for vigilance and passionate efforts to detect and confront persistent threats — both direct and in-

direct — that pose a risk of degrading the Yampa River. Our efforts aim not just to preserve but to elevate the Yampa River as a paradigm in the regional and national discourse on the essence of a river: a model, guiding conversation about what a river should be for generations to come.

Since its inception in the 1980s, Friends of the Yampa has realized momentous change, shifting from a purely volunteer-based entity to an organization propelled by dedicated staff, driven by a devotion to our cause. This evolution has been swift and transformative. Looking ahead, our focus remains on targeted expansion, refining our structural framework, and elevating our standards of professionalism. In the forthcoming five years, our aim is to become recognized for our technical expertise, regional leadership, visionary outlook, and ability to execute.

This plan highlights a continuing need: to advocate that science should drive policies that impact the river to ensure that the best available data identifies and informs projects on the river; to educate members, policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public on the importance of the river; and to focus on expanding partnerships and building a broad constituency for the Yampa.

FRIENDS OF THE YAMPA: What we do



VISION

We envision the Yampa River as a model of a wild and healthy river.

MISSION

Friends of the Yampa’s mission is to protect and enhance the environmental and recreational integrity of the Yampa River and its tributaries through education, stewardship, partnerships, and advocacy.

VALUES

Our collaborative efforts extend across federal, state, and local government agencies, along with many other stakeholders. Through our partners — non-profits, river users, and beyond — we foster relationships to champion solutions to preserve the vitality and wildness of the Yampa River. How we conduct our work holds equal significance to the work itself. Our guiding principles, shaping our interactions, are stated below:

RADIATE OPTIMISM: We nurture a joyful and inquisitive mindset, serving as a unifying force that bridges disparate perspectives and fosters unity amidst differences.

EMBRACE EVIDENCE-BASED SCIENCE: We steadfastly uphold the use of research-validated science as the guiding compass in our work, ensuring that decisions and actions align with verified data and scientific insights.

FOSTER COLLABORATION: We believe that collective efforts yield greater impact. We commit to engaging with all stakeholders connected to the river, amplifying our collective capacity for positive outcomes.

EMBRACE DIVERSITY: We cherish a rich array of voices and perspectives, actively listening, comprehending, and incorporating a spectrum of viewpoints into our work to ensure its richness and inclusivity.

CULTIVATE TRUST: By prioritizing integrity and transparency through both internal operations and external relationships, we build a reputation for honesty and reliability.

SHOW RESPECT: When viewpoints diverge, we navigate discussions and collaborations by honoring our shared humanity, exemplifying patience, and honoring a commitment to listen to other voices.

Looking ahead: The next 5 years

This strategic blueprint for the next five years expands our priorities, creates opportunities, and positions us for success. It charges us to do the following:



Education: Cultivate a community bond for preserving and improving the wild and healthy state of the Yampa River.



Stewardship: Sustain and improve environmental and recreational resources of the Yampa River through monitoring and action.



Partnerships: Amplify impact through collaboration.



Advocacy: Advocate for land and water management policies that elevate the health and recreational integrity of the Yampa River.



Organizational Health: Position the organization for sustainable growth.

How to read the plan

Our plan is broken up by the areas highlighted in our mission: education, stewardship, partnerships, and advocacy, with a final focus on organization vitality.

EDUCATION

Nurturing a community bond

Goal

Our goal is to instill the importance of preserving the Yampa River among decision-makers, residents, and visitors, emphasizing the uniqueness of the wild and healthy state of the Yampa River and cultivating a devoted community constituency.

Strategies

1 Youth engagement and empowerment: Provide hands-on, experiential opportunities for youth to inspire an enduring love for the river that will build a constituency dedicated to the preservation of the Yampa into the future.

2 Fostering awareness: Create, nurture, and expand recreational events that serve as educational platforms to solidify a community in Routt and Moffat counties committed to the preservation of the Yampa River's wildness and health.

3 Teaching responsible recreation: Educate all river users on responsible recreation practices that safeguard the health of all segments of the Yampa River.

4 Establish a river center: Broaden our reach and deepen our impact by creating a dedicated river center



to showcase the Yampa's significance, facilitate recreational use, and educate locals and visitors about conservation opportunities and potential threats.

5 Art and multimedia inspiration: Inspire widespread awareness regarding the pivotal importance of the Yampa River through art and multimedia initiatives.

Measuring success

- Complete a feasibility study for a proposed Yampa River Center, including capital and operations and maintenance costs, potential partners, land/building location and acquisition, financing options, and projected community impact.
- Grow educational programming by 50%.
- Ensure every youth living in the Yampa Valley is knowledgeable about the Yampa and has the opportunity to tangibly engage with the river.





Sustaining health & recreational attributes

Goal

Our goal is to measure and document the health of the Yampa River, identify collaborative opportunities to improve the health of the Yampa, and implement environmental projects and recreational enhancements.

Strategies

- 1 Scientific assessment:** Measure and document the river's health through data-driven approaches like the Yampa River Scorecard Project.
- 2 Catalyst for change:** Serve as a catalyst to identify opportunities that yield multibenefit outcomes for the river's health through the Yampa River Stewardship Program.
- 3 Threat identification:** Identify and assess threats to the Yampa River, aligning them with its essential needs — floodplain connectivity, water quality, biological community integrity, natural hydrology, and geomorphic processes.
- 4 Holistic conservation:** Preserve, safeguard, and enhance healthy riverine processes, recreational opportunities, and environmental attributes. This is achieved by conserving priority lands, enhancing public access strategically, and, when necessary, imposing



restrictions to protect environmental integrity.

- 5 Yampa River Fund management and leadership:** Operate the Yampa River Fund based on the entity's charter documents, serve active leadership roles on the board, steering committee, and technical advisory committee, and enhance

fundraising for the endowment and operations.

- 6 Flow preservation and enhancement:** Pursue opportunities to safeguard and enhance flows throughout the hydrologic cycle to sustain healthy riverine processes, recreational opportunities, and environmental attributes.

- 7 Implementation and leadership:** Implement river restoration projects identified through initiatives like the Yampa River Scorecard Project and Stewardship Program and other collaborative efforts.

- 8 Mobilizing volunteer corps:** Galvanize a dedicated volunteer corps to support our programming and champion river health.

Measuring Success

- Increase the overall health of the Yampa and its tributaries in two segments and two functional areas as measured by the Yampa Scorecard Project.
- Grow the Yampa River Fund endowment by 50%.
- Develop organizational structure and position to be able to identify, scope, fund, and deliver project implementation.
- Achieve meaningful gains in conservation designations of river segments and river corridor areas (i.e. Outstanding Waters, publicly held parcels, private properties held under conservation easements with river and riparian covenants).

Amplifying impact through collaboration

Goal

Our goal is to foster partnerships and align resources with other organizations and initiatives to amplify our efforts beyond what can be achieved alone.

Strategies

1 Coalition building: Leverage the Yampa River Collaborative to assemble a river coalition equipped to monitor policies, coordinate advocacy efforts, and execute projects that serve the watershed’s needs.

2 Collaborative water planning: Implement Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) and Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) priorities tasked to our organization, the locally based planning efforts generated from the Colorado State Water Plan. **>> LEARN MORE:** yampawhitegreen.com/iwmp

3 Partner identification: Identify organizations with overlapping goals and initiatives and strive to collaborate to maintain effective relationships, avoid duplicative efforts, and maximize impact.

4 Agricultural engagement: Cultivate and strengthen relationships with agricultural operators and



leaders in the watershed, recognizing their pivotal role in conservation efforts.

5 Expand geographic engagement: Expand our presence and deepen relationships in areas in need of greater Friends of the Yampa presence, such as Moffat County, Little Snake River Valley, Elk River Valley, and South Routt.

6 Organizational agency: Take proactive steps to position FOTY as an active agent-of-the-doing within the broader scope of collaborative watershed efforts.

7 Community Participation: Serve on other boards, committees, coalitions, and roundtables that may impact the Yampa River and its tributaries, such as the Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable, Routt Recreation and Conservation Roundtable, Northwest Colorado Outdoor Coalition, and the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District.

Measuring success

Collaborate in a meaningful way with five partner organizations outside of Routt County within the Yampa River Basin, including two agricultural entities.

Shaping policies for a vibrant Yampa River

Goal

Our goal is to successfully influence land and water management policies, planning efforts, and projects that enhance environmental health and uphold the recreational integrity of the Yampa River and its tributaries.

Strategies

1 Monitor policy shifts: Vigilantly monitor potential changes in land and river policies across federal, state, county, and local levels that impact the Yampa River corridor and its watershed to maximize positive outcomes and avoid negative consequences.

2 Amplify our public voice: Actively contribute visible and pertinent public commentary on updates to land and water management policies at federal, state, and local levels.

3 Cultivate relationships: Foster robust connections with federal, state, and local decision-makers and influencers to educate them on the importance of keeping the Yampa healthy and wild.

4 Secure river safeguards: Advocate for federal and state designations and policies, such as

instream flow rights and Outstanding Waters designations.

5 Mobilizing support: Grow and inform FOTY membership to activate a stronger and more vocal public front and show widespread support for policy changes that protect the Yampa.

6 Informed decision-making: Craft a decision-making framework rooted in actual threats, evidence-based science, and socio-economic factors to guide FOTY’s advocacy efforts.



Measuring success

- Increase FOTY’s recognition levels in local, state, regional, and national water circles.
- Triple FOTY’s membership by 2029, currently approximately 180.
- Develop a high-functioning, volunteer-based program where membership is actively engaged and is clearly and passively provided information for how they can be engaged.
- Influence key land and water policies that impact the Yampa.
- Achieve meaningful gains in conservation designations of river segments and river corridor areas (i.e., Outstanding Waters, publicly held parcels, and private properties held under conservation easements with river and riparian covenants).
- See notable staff involvement in key water policy and program development that affect the Yampa; be a regularly consulted, expert voice in issues related to watershed efforts.
- FOTY board and members will feel confident that organization is effectively monitoring watershed activities, providing meaningful engagement, and affecting outcomes in furtherance of organizational vision.

Fostering growth and sustainability

Goal

Our goal is to bolster Friends of the Yampa’s organizational health and sustainability, enabling the fulfillment of its mission and objectives while providing support to its staff and board members.

Strategies

1 Measurement and evaluation:

Establish clear benchmarks for success and implement an evaluation system that monitors FOTY’s progress and overall health annually.

2 Enhanced fundraising: Boost fundraising capabilities significantly to finance programs and expand resources and staff.

3 Professionalization of policies: Develop and refine employment policies necessary to ensure clarity, retention, and cohesive operations within the organization. Develop and refine financial and operating policies necessary for good governance at a board level.

4 Annual functional planning: Develop comprehensive annual plans for key functional areas — such as fundraising, communications, advocacy, and outreach.



5 Develop organizational chart for growth: Identify specific staff skills and roles essential to fulfill the growth goals of this strategic plan and increase organization productivity and performance.

6 Board optimization: Cultivate an engaged, cohesive, and responsive board of directors to effectively lead the organization and optimize governance practices. This work

includes reviewing board responsibilities, updating bylaws, enhancing recruitment and onboarding processes for new board members, and revisiting subcommittee structures and responsibilities

7 Professional development: Provide and encourage continuous professional development and skill-building initiatives for both staff and board members.

Measuring success

- Increase fundraising by 100% to roughly double capacity by 2029, from the current six staff members, to meet anticipated programming growth.
- Increase board of director membership to 12.

Upholding our commitment to the valley

Friends of the Yampa has a legacy of achieving ambitious goals dedicated to safeguarding the Yampa River. This strategic plan punctuates our ongoing commitment.

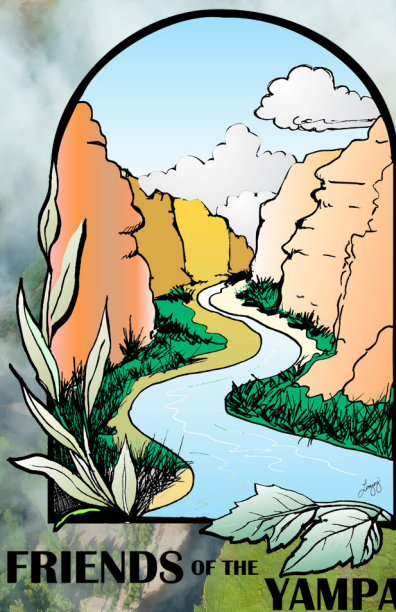
Our distinctive role as both a recreational entity and an environmental

steward presents FOTY with a unique opportunity to mobilize widespread public support for the river. Through evidence-based science and impactful projects, we aim to enhance the river’s health and safeguard its wildness.

FOTY stands resolute in fulfilling our

mission and objectives. We invite you to stand alongside us — as a donor, a volunteer, a champion, or an advocate — for the river’s preservation. Together, let’s ensure that the Yampa River endures as a testament to the value of the natural world. Respect the Yampa!





**FRIENDS OF THE
YAMPA**

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Photo by Noah Wetzel