

About YStew

The Yampa River Stewardship Program (YStew) is an initiative of the Yampa River Collaborative, led by Friends of the Yampa, that provides support, resources, and training to landowners, land managers, and practitioners to better steward the Yampa River.

A Collective Vision

In early 2025, YStew hosted community meetings in Yampa, Steamboat Springs, and Hayden to identify the community's vision for the river's future. This brochure summarizes the stakeholders' collective vision for the **Big River Valley**, where the Yampa runs through a wide agricultural valley.



Photo by Kim Lennberg

The **Big River Valley** represents the broad agricultural valley section of the river where the river is wide, carries lots of water, and forms big meanders, split-flow channels, islands, and oxbows. Here, the river braids through rich grazing lands, hayfields, mature riparian forests, and wetlands. The desired future conditions focus on maintaining current river health while making improvements, such as reconnecting the river to its floodplain where appropriate, improving irrigation infrastructure, and addressing accelerated streambank erosion.



Photo by River Network

ENVISIONING A RESILIENT YAMPA

Planning a Project?

YStew is here to help! We've developed comprehensive resources to help landowners complete a project or implement new land management practices. Resources include a guidebook with practical, how-to tips for planning, design, and construction, as well as support for finding funding and connecting with technical assistance. Whether you plan to upgrade your irrigation infrastructure, have concerns about bank erosion, want to improve wildlife habitat on your land, or something else entirely, YStew can provide support. Please reach out using the contact information below.

Your YStew Partners



The Yampa River Stewardship Program is funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Walton Family Foundation.

Contact:

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Big River Valley Watershed Zone

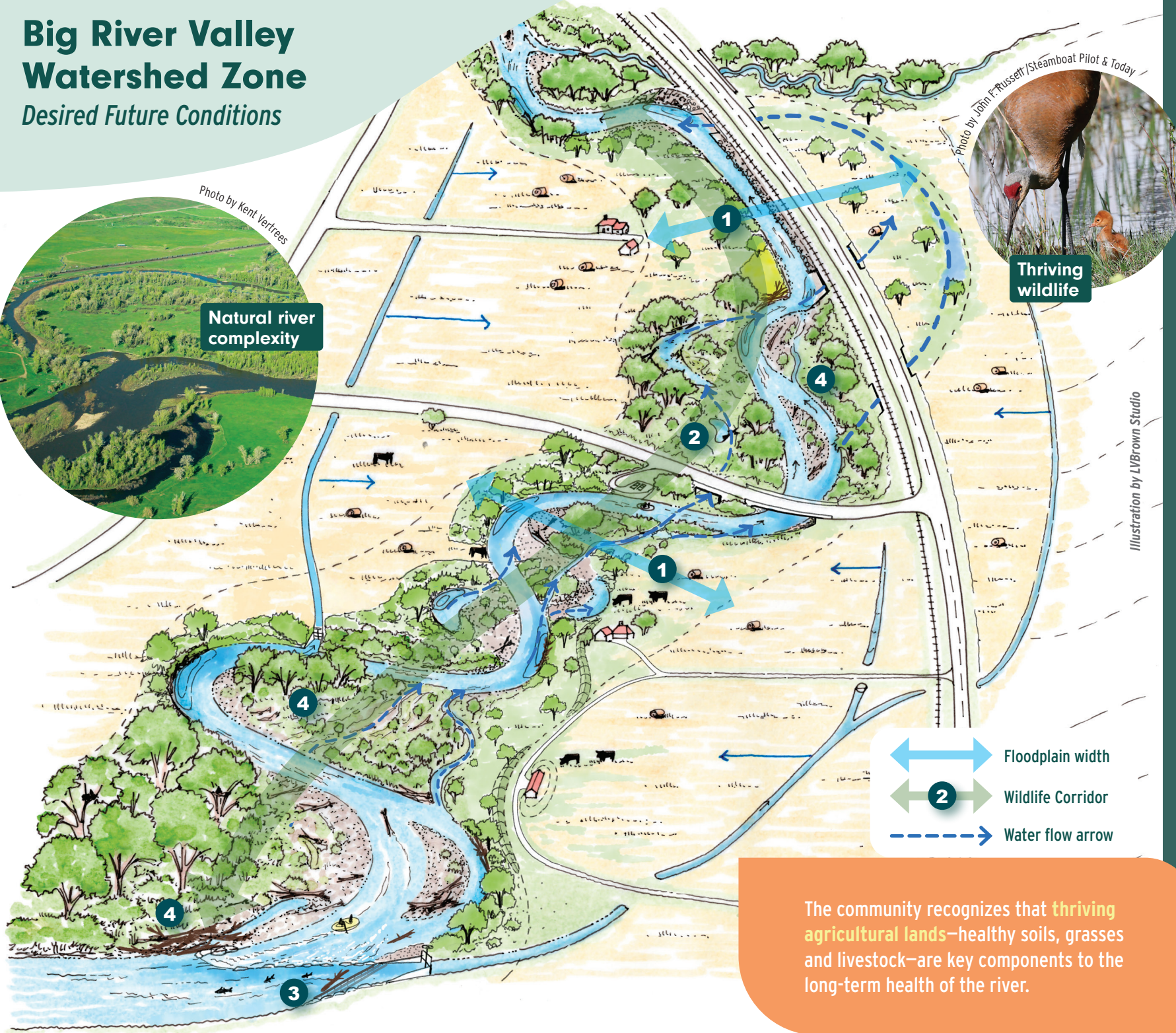
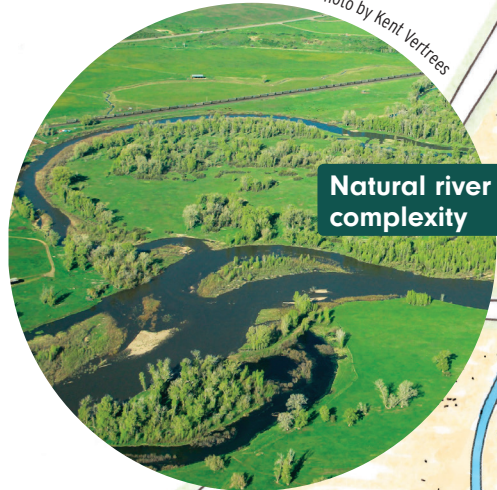
Photo by Mike Laughlin



YAMPA RIVER
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM

Big River Valley Watershed Zone

Desired Future Conditions



The community recognizes that thriving agricultural lands—healthy soils, grasses and livestock—are key components to the long-term health of the river.

Our Focus for the Future

- 1 Balance land use and natural flooding**
Where landowners are willing and land uses are compatible, allowing the river to migrate across the valley and overtop its banks replenishes topsoil, improves riparian condition, and benefits river health.
- 2 Create a connected wildlife corridor**
Stakeholders want to conserve and connect riparian forests and wetlands to promote diverse vegetation that shades the river, naturally strengthens streambanks, supports river health, and provides habitat for Yampa Valley wildlife. There is also a desire to manage invasive plants and noxious weeds like leafy spurge.
- 3 Design diversions for fish movement**
Improving and modernizing irrigation diversion infrastructure is a shared goal, thereby increasing the reliability of water delivery, decreasing maintenance, and allowing for the passage of fish, aquatic organisms, sediment, wood, and recreationists.
- 4 Preserve the wild river**
Preserving a diversity of river features to maintain the river's natural complexity is desired. Complex riverbed and streambank features include islands, split flow channels, gravel bars, accumulated wood and log jams, backwater habitats, wetlands from relic channels, and beaver dams and canals.



Seasonal overbanking and flooding are critical for the health of both the river and the riparian zone. Photo by Kent Vertrees.