

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 **Upper Valley**, where streams descend from the high country to agricultural valleys.



Stakeholders' desired future conditions for the **Upper Valley** include preserving the good, such as sustainable agricultural practices, a wild river and beavers in the headwaters, large sections of natural river form and riparian forest, and landowners committed to finding a balance between river health and consumptive water use. It also includes making improvements to ensure a flowing river year-round to support aquatic life and native fish, as well as managing the stream edge to allow for both a natural riparian buffer and water access for livestock.



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



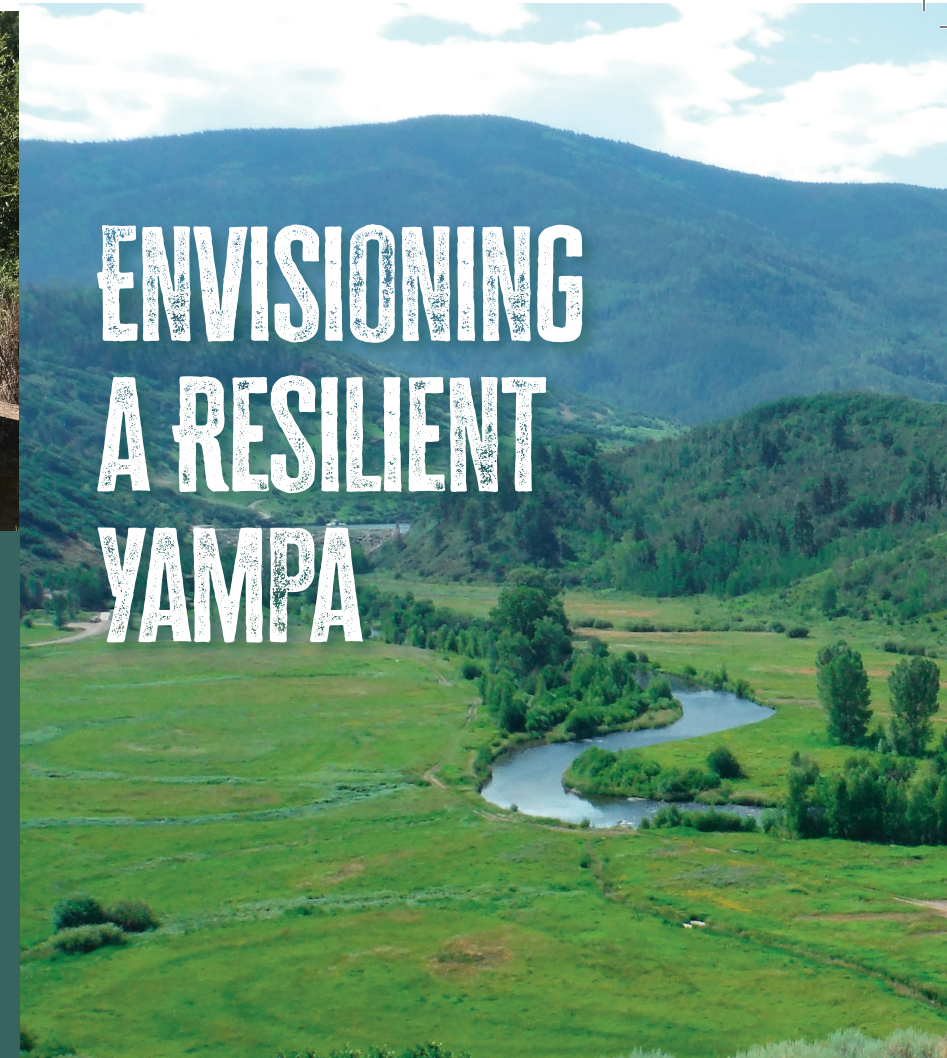
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ENVISIONING A RESILIENT YAMPA



Upper Valley Watershed Zone

Photo by Kim Lemberg



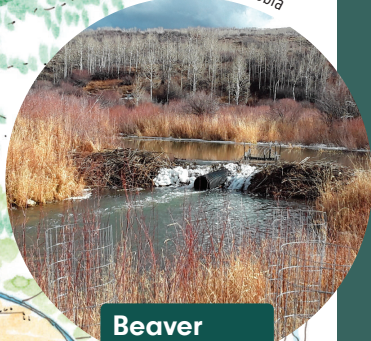
YAMPA RIVER
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM

Upper Valley Watershed Zone

Desired Future Conditions



Healthy fisheries



Beaver coexistence

Healthy riparian vegetation

- ✓ Filters pollution
- ✓ Provides fish cover
- ✓ Mitigates erosion
- ✓ Keeps river cool
- ✓ Provides wildlife habitat



Photo by Emily Burke / FOTY

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 **Ensure a running river year-round**
Stakeholders want to eliminate dry-up points and maintain river baseflows throughout the year. There is a desire to balance water diverted for agriculture with flows to support aquatic life.
- 2 **Mitigate algal blooms**
Toxic algal blooms are a growing concern in the Upper Valley reservoirs, impacting the clarity of the river, fishery health, and recreational opportunities. We need to learn more about the causes to develop solutions.
- 3 **Increase the natural stream edge**
There is support for protecting existing intact riparian areas, as well as for restoring riparian areas where land uses have encroached into the stream corridor. Healthy, intact riparian forests provide many benefits, including naturally stabilizing streambanks, boosting water quality, and providing wildlife habitat.
- 4 **Promote a wild river where possible**
Balancing a natural river with existing land uses is desired. Where it's supported by landowners and won't impact infrastructure or land use, leveraging opportunities for natural river processes like flooding and channel migration is a focus.



Where feasible, keeping large wood in the river helps maintain natural river dynamics and provides important fish and wildlife habitat. Photo by Zenobia Consultants

Illustration by LVBrown Studio