

CONTACT: Rob White, 719-539-7289, [rob.white@state.co.us](mailto:rob.white@state.co.us)  
Deb Frazier, 303-866-3203 ext. 4342, [deb.frazier@state.co.us](mailto:deb.frazier@state.co.us)  
This news release is also available at [www.colorado.gov/parks](http://www.colorado.gov/parks)

**For immediate release: November 26, 2010**

## **“River Watch” Partnership in the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area**

SALIDA - The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA), co-managed by Colorado State Parks and the Bureau of Land Management, is located in the upper Arkansas River valley and is recognized as a spectacular recreation destination. The focus of the AHRA is the Arkansas River itself which provides important recreational opportunities; critical wildlife habitat and water supply; and serves as an important riparian floodway. Over the decades natural and man-made events have caused increased erosion and sedimentation in the river, so AHRA State Parks Manager, Rob White, initiated a collaborative partnership to lead a pilot stream restoration project. The Hecla Junction Recreation Site, 10 miles north of Salida, was chosen because of its extensive natural drainage system, the constant recurrence of sedimentation and resulting harm to general water quality, and the high amount of recreation use.

Colorado State Parks worked with the Colorado Water Conservation Board through the Healthy Rivers Fund to design a stream restoration plan for Hecla, and funding for this plan was secured from the Environmental Protection Agency. The stream restoration project is scheduled



to start construction in spring of 2011, and requires pre and post project water monitoring through the Colorado Division of Wildlife’s “Riverwatch” Program. AHRA staff and the

Horizon Exploratory Academy are monitoring the success of the project and the first set of sampling was completed the week of November 15th. Horizon Exploratory Academy teacher, Rob Redmond, is excited to have an opportunity to expose students to hands-on applied research and science to better understand the results of the stream restoration project and establish “lessons learned” that can be applied in other at-risk tributaries in the AHRA.

Last week, students sampled chemical, physical and biological indicators including metals, nutrients, macro invertebrates, and physical habitat. The information generated will be submitted to Colorado State Parks for use in their monitoring progress reports compiled by Carolyn Browning, watershed restoration ecologist with ICF International, and submitted to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Water Quality Control Division.

The proposed development of a comprehensive watershed plan to enhance water quality within the upper Arkansas River and its tributaries may be something that is looked at next. This plan would potentially incorporate previous studies and efforts by the Lake County Open Space Initiative, Colorado Mountain College, Lake Fork Watershed Working Group, Front Range Water Protection Data Refinement Working Group, and others if possible.

The primary goal of a watershed planning effort would be to develop a 5-10 year action plan for funding and implementation of prioritized stream restoration and sediment reduction projects along the upper Arkansas River basin within the AHRA, using lessons learned from the pilot restoration project at Hecla Junction as well as other local stream restoration projects.

Questions, comments, and interests for involvement should be directed to Carolyn Browning at ICF International. [cbrowning@icfi.com](mailto:cbrowning@icfi.com), (303)792-7802.

Attracting nearly 12 million visitors per year, Colorado's 42 State Parks are a vital cornerstone of Colorado's economy and quality of life. Colorado State Parks encompass 224,531 land and water acres, offering some of the best outdoor recreation destinations in the state. Colorado State Parks is a leader in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, protecting the state’s favorite landscapes, teaching generations about nature and partnering with communities. Colorado State Parks also manage more than 4,000 campsites, and 57 cabins and yurts. For more information on Colorado State Parks or to purchase an annual pass online, visit [www.colorado.gov/parks](http://www.colorado.gov/parks).

#####