



# Colorado Water Conservation Board

Celebrating  
75 Years

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## Environment

### Instream Flow Program

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## Instream Flow Program

In Colorado's semi-arid environment, water is scarce with many competing demands placed on it by an ever-increasing population. Recognizing the need to correlate the activities of mankind with the reasonable preservation of the natural environment, the CWCB is responsible for the appropriation, acquisition, protection and monitoring of instream flow (ISF) and natural lake level water rights to preserve and improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree.

### What is an instream flow or natural lake level water right?

These water rights are nonconsumptive, in-channel or in-lake uses of water made exclusively by the CWCB for minimum flows between specific points on a stream or levels in natural lakes. These rights are administered within the state's water right priority system to preserve or improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree.

### What is the purpose of this type of water right?

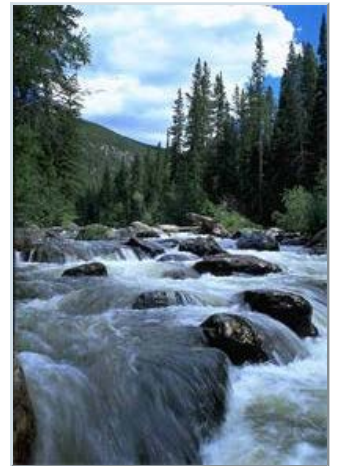
The CWCB's instream flow and natural lake level water rights protect diverse environments in Colorado including:

- Coldwater and warm water fisheries (various streams and lakes)
- Waterfowl habitat (Gageby Creek)
- Unique glacial ponds and habitat for neotenic salamanders (Mexican Cut Ponds and Galena Lake)
- Riparian vegetation, unique hydrologic and geologic features (Hanging Lake and Deadhorse Creek)
- Critical habitat for threatened or endangered native fish (Yampa and Colorado River)

### Status of the CWCB ISF Program

Since 1973, the CWCB has appropriated instream flow water rights on more than 1,500 stream segments covering more than 8,500 miles of stream and 477 natural lakes. The CWCB has completed more than 20 voluntary water acquisition transactions. For more information about these activities, select an option below:

- [Instream Flow Appropriations](#): Includes details about the appropriation recommendation process, as well as proposed and contested instream flow appropriations.
- [Water Acquisitions](#): Includes details about the voluntary program that allows existing water rights to be donated, sold, leased or loaned to the CWCB.
- [Monitoring and Enforcement](#): Includes details about how the CWCB protects the state's ISF water rights.



### Additional Information

- [San Miguel River Contested ISF Hearing](#)
- [Instream Flow Water Rights Database](#)
- [Instream Flow Statutes](#)
- [Instream Flow Rules](#)
- [2005 Adopted Strategic Plan](#)
- [ISF Program FAQs](#)
- [Agreements with Federal Agencies Regarding Water Management](#)
- [R2CROSS](#)
- [Cost Savings Associated with the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program, Instream Flows, and Prospects for the Future](#)
- [CWCB Acquires Water for Instream Flow Use on Washington Gulch and the Slate River](#)
- [Map of Streams Included in Colorado's Instream Flow Program](#)
- [Colorado's Instream Flow Program - How It Works and Why It's Good for Colorado](#)

### Questions?

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