

River restoration under way

Crews work on project to improve aquatic habitat, recreation

Scott Franz
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

The city of Steamboat Springs is starting to see the benefits of hefty grants from Great Outdoors Colorado and the Bureau of Land Management as crews work this week to restore a stretch of the Yampa River just west of town.

Steamboat Springs Parks, Open Space and Recreational Services Department supervisor Craig Robinson said Wednesday that crews with Nordic Excavating and Ecological Resource Consultants have embarked on a month-long project that will install boulder clusters and shape channels in the river to improve its aquatic habitat and make it more habitable to fish and anglers alike.

"These improvements will benefit everybody," Robinson said, noting that as a secondary benefit the project should improve recreational opportunities on the stretch of the river that has suffered from severe bank erosion.

Because of a conservation easement, the city-owned stretch of river that runs between Snow Bowl and the KOA Campground is not open to commercial angling, tubing and rafting.

But Robinson said it has been open to all forms of private recreation.

The city acquired the stretch of river in 2006 when it purchased the 13-acre Yampa River



SCOTT FRANZ/STAFF

Crews with Nordic Excavating work Wednesday to restore a stretch of the Yampa River west of Steamboat Springs. The project aims to improve instream aquatic habitat and recreation in the river and stabilize highly eroded river banks.

West open space parcel.

In addition to the restoration project, the city has plans to add paved access and a parking lot to the piece of open space for use by anglers and kayakers.

Grant funding also will cover revegetation in the area.

In June, the city received a \$2.4 million grant from GOCO to fund the river restoration project and also to help secure a conservation easement south of city limits.

"We were one of the few small communities to receive any funding to these projects," Robinson said. "This is all great for Steamboat."

Robinson said the city hopes to also improve river access at Bear River Park, along Yampa Street, and at Rich Weiss Park by the end of fall 2013.

Work on the Yampa also is supported by a \$150,000 grant from the Bureau of Land Management through the America's Great Outdoors program.

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