



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **METRO DISTRICT PLANS SOUTH PLATTE AQUATIC LIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS**

**DENVER**, Sept. 13 — The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District is planning \$5.94 million in habitat improvements for a reach of the South Platte River near Henderson, CO. The improvements will go in the area between the Brantner Ditch diversion and Henderson Road.

Specific improvements include backwater pools, riffles, snags, spur dikes, and bank revegetation.

The first phase of these habitat improvements will be a pilot study to assess methods and impacts so Metro can determine what works and what doesn't for follow-on improvements to the river. This phase will span three years.

This reach has several diverse habitat elements that can be built upon. It also is bracketed by two other reaches that already have relatively good habitat and existing and future flow conditions.

Since 1992, Metro has spent \$1.5 million conducting scientific and engineering studies of the South Platte River. This research focused on a section of the river that extends 26 miles from the Burlington Ditch headgate at about 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Franklin to the confluence of Big Dry Creek and the South Platte River near Fort Lupton.

Metro's 1990s studies showed low levels of dissolved oxygen in this section of the river. The low dissolved oxygen levels hurt aquatic life.

Metro built four drop structures (low-head dams) between 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue at a cost of about \$4 million each to address the problem. These structures raise the dissolved oxygen levels by reaerating the water as it drops over the tops of the dams.

A couple of other habitat-improving ideas were also investigated but did not pan out.

One idea, flow equalization, is a pond or holding tank that would capture water the Metro District treats during high flow periods so it can be discharged during low flow periods, thus "equalizing" the water coming from Metro's outfalls. Studies showed it offered minimal potential for environmental benefit.

The other idea was fish entrainment screens installed at the headgates of irrigation ditches. Investigations showed these structures did not adequately protect fish in the early life stages and raised a number of questions as to constructability and operability.

The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District has 20 years of fish data and one of the most comprehensive stream monitoring programs in Colorado.

The Metro District is the largest wastewater treatment agency in the Rocky Mountain West. It treats about 130 million gallons of wastewater a day and serves 1.5 million people in a 380-square mile service area that includes Denver, Arvada, Aurora, Lakewood, part of Westminster, Wheat Ridge, and Thornton, together with about 40 sanitation and water and sanitation districts in the metropolitan Denver area.

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