**From Cary Denison (Trout Unlimited) re: Water Court application for Cow Creek/Rams Horn Reservoir March 2, 2020**

In summary the water court application is requesting 3 things:

1. Added uses to a conditional (not yet real or perfected) storage right on Cow Creek know as Rams Horn Reservoir. It is currently decreed on public lands upstream of where the county road crosses the creek. There is a stipulation that if the reservoir is constructed in its decreed location there will be no public access. The right is from the late ‘50s when the US Bureau of Reclamation was looking into reservoir sites for the Dallas Creek project which led to Ridgway Reservoir. Of note there is unused water in Ridgway Reservoir so the idea of another one seems like a solution looking for a problem.
2. The application also requests a right to divert 20 cfs from Cow Creek near county road 8 and 8a and Enchanted mesa to deliver water to Ridgway reservoir. The idea is that “extra” water would then be used to offset shortage above the reservoir. As I mentioned above there is water in the reservoir that could be used to do just that but the county and others haven’t pursued that avenue. Cow Creek in that area is already seriously impacted by low flows and high temperatures. Colorado Parks and Wildlife was about to request an instream flow right for the lower section of Cow Creek (Billy Creek SWA to the confluence) to protect that stretch. The water court application was rushed to court to get in front of this instream flow application. CPW has done some investigations into lower Cow Creek and found it to be a dynamic fishery that supports wide variety of fish and wildlife.
3. The last request is an exchange upstream of the reservoir on Dallas creek and Uncompahgre River and Cow Creek, which would allow junior uses to occur during a period of a Call (downstream senior user asking for water). There are other alternatives to this that would actually protect these sections of creek that are not being explored as vigorously.