

## May-June CO WRAN News:

### It's river season! Send us your best river pictures!

As the rivers and temperatures rise it's time to get out and enjoy river season. What rivers are you heading out on this season? Whether you are hiking, tubing, kayaking, or rafting send [Abby Burk](#), Western Rivers Outreach Specialist for Audubon Rockies, your best river season pictures. At the end of summer Audubon Rockies will highlight your river pictures in a "Rivers of 2016" online gallery. When submitting your picture, please be sure to include: name for picture credit, and what river you are enjoying. See you on the river!

### 2016 Colorado Legislative Session Highlights – What a last minute ride!

In a flurry of last minute bills, the 2016 Colorado legislative session has come to close. Here are a few water related highlights from in the 70<sup>th</sup> General Session. Thank you for your watchful engagement! **Together, we are helping to protect rivers, birds and other wildlife, and the habitats we all need.**

**HB16-1005, Rain Barrels** – After a two year fight, starting August 2016 rain barrels are finally legal in Colorado! Audubon was an official HB16-1005 supporter. HB16-1005 permits capture of precipitation using up to two rain barrels with a maximum capacity of 55 gallons each. The water captured may be used for outdoor purposes only. Audubon feels that rain barrels are a major win for expanding urban water stewardship practices and water appreciation. So, get out there and plant your native habitat gardens and water your plants with your rain barrel collected water!

**SB16-200, Water Project Coordinator** – SB16-200 creates a new cabinet position, Water Project Permitting Coordinator. As introduced, the bill required the new coordinator to intervene in all applications requiring permits from either the State or Federal government. This would include all proposed reservoirs, as well as updates or improvements to existing reservoirs, drinking water or wastewater treatment facilities, and even stream enhancement projects. Supposedly, they would be responsible for "streamlining" the permit process and could reduce public input and environmental regulation or mitigation.

**Thank you!** With just four days left in the legislative session, **WE** successfully amended SB16-200 to address the harmful provisions. Your action in contacting your state legislators made **the** positive difference necessary to change SB16-200.

In its amended form, SB16-200 ensures:

1. that the new state official created by the bill has no authority to change the current water project permitting process,
2. that the new position be funded within existing resources, rather than taking money from other permitting resources, and
3. that the new position is repealed in two years so that we can review the effectiveness of the program.

These are significant changes that make this bill much more palatable and continue to protect the environmental review and public input processes. **Thanks to more than 730 responses from Audubon's Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN) in under 48 hours, the legislature heard our concerns, and responded to them.** Audubon, through WRAN, provided the leverage necessary to greatly improve this once dangerous water bill.

**SB16-174, Projects Bill** - This year's projects bill included a number of good provisions. Specifically, it includes \$1M for stream management plans (we'd like more, but that's a good start); \$500,000 for watershed restoration; \$200,000 for Windy Gap bypass; and \$1M for Statewide Water Supply Initiative 2016 continuation. On the down side, it does replenish the litigation fund (\$600,000). Overall, there is significantly more to like than to dislike. **Thank you to 700 WRAN for activists for responding in March to secure the \$1M for stream management plans!**

That is the shortlist of water bill successes. Several positive water bills were moved from the 2016 legislative session to be discussed in committee hearings over the summer. Stay tuned for how you can be involved helping water and river stewardship across Colorado!

### [June River and Wetland Projects in Colorado—Want to Get Outside and Help?](#)

Audubon is partnering with Wildlands Restoration Volunteers this year by offering a variety of fun volunteer events. [Join us for some environmental therapy and help restore a river or wetland](#), benefiting habitat for birds and wildlife. No experience required, all physical levels welcome.

**June 4<sup>th</sup> Big Thompson Flood Restoration.** In 2015, Wildlands Restoration Volunteers began a massive 2 1/2 mile river restoration project along the North Fork of the Big Thompson River, which was severely impacted by the September 2013 flood. Construction is complete and the dam has been removed! Now join us as we finish this project by restoring the riparian corridor, a stone's throw from Rocky Mountain National Park.

Volunteer activities will vary throughout the year, including: planting of native grass seed, trees, shrubs, willows, and wetland plugs; and installation of erosion control products. Our objective is to restore and enhance geomorphic and ecosystem function in the canyon, including the ongoing re-grading of stream banks and the stabilization of banks by installing erosion control products and planting native trees, grasses, and shrubs whose roots naturally armor stream banks and provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

Visit the "River Events" page for more about restoration projects, events, river trips, and more!