



April 15, 2024

Dear San Juan River Village Homeowner,

The San Juan River Village Property Owners Association's River Improvements Committee needs your input about a proposed river improvement project. Please read over the following proposal about this project and complete the survey. Owners may direct questions to the River Improvements Committee at the next POA Board of Directors Meetings on May 14th and June 11th.

Thank you for your time and opinion,  
San Juan River Village POA Board of Directors

## **San Juan River Enhancement Project Proposal**

### **SJR V River Enhancement Committee:**

Jeff Hester, POA Board; Dave O'Keefe, Committee lead; Leslie Hill, and Ernest Curtis; Committee.

### **General Information / Purpose:**

Educate SJRV property owners about potential funding options, project design elements, key stakeholders, project "pros and cons" and gauge support within the community for improving the river corridor via an owners survey. (Full project design narrative in appendix).

### **Project Funding:**

There are several options for funding that will be detailed later in this document. Options include grant monies (co-pay), "In-Kind" components, direct funding through SJRV property assessment and "non-money" contributions such as public access to the river at a designated location. **Read the FAQ for details.**

### **Project Cost Estimate (Subject to Change)\*:**

- Park Ditch Diversion Improvement (Rework diversion dam & stabilize bank slide area): \$650,000
- SJRV River Improvement Phase 1 (Flow and habitat work): \$86,000
- SJRV River Improvement Phase 2 (Flow and habitat work): \$586,000
- Public Access (Boat Ramp, Parking Area, New Access Road): \$203,000 (Optional)
- **Project Total:** \$1,525,000 (If all components & public access included)

\*The concept plan and these estimates were developed several years ago. The Plan was developed to obtain a preliminary idea of restoration work needed and resulting costs. If the public access component is included in the project, details of the arrangement allowing such access are still to be determined in conjunction with the SJRV POA (10 ft river easement) and Metro District (property for access road).

### **Project Summary:**

Dredging some areas of the river to remove gravel deposited in 2019, create numerous wing features (large rocks / boulders placed in formation similar to those through the Pagosa Springs downtown area) to create a healthier channel through our neighborhood, important during both “high flow” (runoff) and “low flow” periods. A healthier channel is expected to aid in erosion control, provide better wildlife habitat and improve the general health of the river ecosystem. Funding may also be allocated to rebuild our headgate for the ditch serving our ponds and stabilize the hillside just above our neighborhood (above diversion on SJNF). Work scope extends from just upstream from SJRV and extending through the neighborhood down to the “boneyard” area at the downstream end of SJRV boundary. Planned rock feature placements and design detail can be seen **HERE** or by typing this link into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/USJRIProject>

### **Project Timeline:**

TBD

### **Other Benefits / Assumptions:**

The river, as is aptly included in our neighborhood name, is a key driver of owner and visitor enjoyment and contributes largely to our overall quality of life. The Improvement / Enhancement plan outlined here would potentially have a positive impact on all SJRV property values. This collective value increase may outweigh the project costs borne by SJRV (if any). While no SJRV-specific study has been conducted, there are existing resources that support this assumption. A fairly recent study by West Virginia University was centered upon northern Colorado and the impact of similar stream restoration projects. The study can be found **HERE** or by typing this link into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/nocowvustudy>

### **Background:**

The Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership (WEP) is a community-based stakeholder group and Colorado Nonprofit based in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Its mission is to foster cooperative solutions to further the responsible use, management, and sustainability of streams within the Upper San Juan River Basin for the benefit of the community and the health of the environment. The WEP's current focus is developing and implementing cooperative, sustainable restoration projects that benefit multiple water uses within the Upper San Juan River Basin. The San Juan River Village POA (along with the SJRV Metro District) was contacted several years ago to see if there was support for making improvements within the SJRV river corridor. At the time the POA was involved in a Quiet Title Action to resolve ownership of the river corridor running through SJRV and the POA was not in a position to do anything conclusive. This title dispute was resolved in favor of the SJRV POA and with this resolved the POA would like to inform SJRV property owners and gauge support for participating in this project. More information on WEP can be found **HERE** or by typing this link into your browser: <https://uppersanjuanwep.com/>

### **Key Stakeholders:**

SJRV property owners, SJRV Metro and WEP Board of Directors are the main stakeholders currently. Early on in the “discovery phase” (a couple years back) of this effort, there was a “Local Steering

Committee” comprised of local business owners, engineers, PAWS, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Town of Pagosa Springs, etc., that lent their expertise to the project development.

**FAQ:**

***If SJRV were successful in obtaining grant funding for the project through WEP, does the grant money pay for the whole thing?*** No. Generally, for grant monies received, the grantee (SJRV) is required to pony up an amount equal to 25% of the grant funding.

***What monies would SJRV use to pay the 25% equivalent?*** There are two primary options: 1) SJRV could pay using funds derived via property assessment across all property owners, (this amount may be reduced by In-Kind contributions by SJRV and / or ad-hoc contributions), or 2) Include a public boating access as proposed in the preliminary plans.

***Tell me more about “In Kind” contributions. What are they?*** In-Kind contributions are “non-money” and examples are: Use of SJRV equipment, personnel hours, volunteer work, etc. There is also the possibility of additional grants from organizations such as Trout Unlimited.

***Why is there public and business access to SJRV being considered as part of the project?*** The public / business access is similar to “In-Kind” contributions and is an offset against actual funds that SJRV would pay to satisfy the 25% requirement.

***What exactly is included in public access?*** The access would be a gated road off Alpine Drive across from the mailbox kiosk (on Metro property). The access road would be 1000 feet of a new two-lane gravel road. Also, a 10,000 square foot trailer turn around/parking area and a designated boat ramp. (culminating at the “boneyard” next to the river) is included in the design.

***Will SJRV have control over public and business access?*** Yes. The public access is intended primarily for boater (rafting) access and includes or allows rafting tour companies access. This access is seasonal and would not be year-round. SJRV expects to have the ability to lock the ramp road access gate once river flows fall below optimum rafting levels (approximately 500 cfs), preventing outside access.

***Can the project go forward without public / business access in our neighborhood?*** Yes. SJRV would fund the 25% required to meet the grant requirements.

***Since they will benefit, will commercial rafting companies be required to pay for any of this project?*** At this time there is no plan to have them pay for any of the project.

***I understand the Park Ditch work may benefit SJRV, but why is the Park Ditch included in the SJRV plan and the cost borne by SJRV? Shouldn't that be “owned” by others?*** The Park Ditch improvements are a major part of the project as the bank stabilization has to be done in order to prevent a repeat of the 2019 runoff that filled our channel with gravel. These costs will be borne by others.

***I understand there are other nearby ( A portion of the San Juan River between SJRV and the Town of***

*Pagosa Springs) projects that WEP is working towards (AKA “Gateway Project”) that have no contributions by the land owners and no public access component. Why are they exempt?* The grants that are funding that project did require a 25% copay which was satisfied by in kind land donations from the Town of Pagosa Springs, funds from the Pagosa Area Town Tourism Board, and grants from eight different non-profits such as Trout Unlimited. There are portions of the river in the Gateway project that may be accessible by the public at several locations for a small fee (TBD). The Gateway project design originally included a new free public access point off of Highway 160 at Dry Gulch across from Weber’s gravel pit, but this has been tabled for now.

**How much does the 25% add up to for the SJRV proposal?** If the entire project, including the Park Ditch work were performed, the amount would be approximately \$ 330,000. If Park Ditch were excluded, the total cost of the project to SJRV falls to \$ 168,000. SJRV would be responsible for an estimated \$168,000 if we choose to proceed without a public access option.

*Once the project is completed, who is responsible to pay for maintenance and operational costs?* SJRV will be responsible for all on-going project maintenance related costs.

*Is there an estimate for these SJRV borne ongoing maintenance costs?* Not at this time

*Can I as a property owner contribute ad-hoc funds to the project?* YES!

*Can I as a property owner join the SJRV committee assigned to this project evaluation?* YES! Email Jeff Hester [esmpagosa@gmail.com](mailto:esmpagosa@gmail.com) or Dave O’Keefe [dokeefe79@gmail.com](mailto:dokeefe79@gmail.com) to volunteer.

### **SJRV Owners Survey:**

NOTE: If you have provided the POA with an email address, you will automatically receive this survey. [You can also follow this link to complete the survey](https://tinyurl.com/SJRVPOARISurvey) or by typing this link into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/SJRVPOARISurvey>. If you would like to mail your survey answers, please mail to: San Juan River Village POA, 135-F Country Center Drive, #146, Pagosa Springs, CO, 81147.

### **The Survey Questions Include The Following:**

- Please Provide Your Name & SJRV Street Address:
- In general, do you support the idea of the river improvement project? Y / N
- In general would you support the project if it required public access to SJRV as described? Y / N
- Would you consider agreeing to a property assessment (equal per lot) to fund the project and remove public access provision? (\$750 – \$1,500 per lot, assuming no In-Kind reduction) Y / N
- Would you consider an ad-hoc donation to offset the project cost? Y / N
- Do you have suggestions on alternative funding sources? Y / N

### **Upper San Juan River Improvement Project Design Narrative:**

Riverbend Engineering, LLC (Riverbend) was contracted by the Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership (WEP) to develop a concept level plan and cost estimate for a multi-faceted river improvement \_project located near San Juan River Village on the upper San Juan River. This location was identified to address water needs for a variety of user groups including agricultural,

recreational, environmental, and municipal. The key components of the project include:

- Landslide Bank Stabilization and Park Ditch Diversion Improvements
- Flood Conveyance Improvements and Habitat Improvements @ San Juan River Village
- River Access and Parking Improvements @ South Property Boundary

### **Park Ditch Diversion Improvements**

The existing diversion structure at the Park Ditch diversion consists of a combination of imported large rock, concrete rubble, wire mesh, and native river rock. Large annual flows can move portions of the diversion material requiring large machinery to enter the river and rebuild the structure. The existing configuration of material can create a significant hazard for boaters, fisherman, and swimmers, and in addition, the existing diversion may be a barrier to migration of native and nonnative fish species. Recent landslide events upstream of the structure could also contribute to changes in the main river channel alignment which would lead to difficulty in maintaining water delivery to the Park Ditch headgate.

The major goals of the proposed design are:

- 1) Remove all dangerous steel and concrete rubble from the river bottom;
- 2) Minimize the future required maintenance in the river channel by creating a stable diversion structure
- 3) Create interstitial space at the appropriate slope between large rocks adequate for fish passage;
- 4) Stabilize and revegetate the river banks near the diversion to maintain the bank integrity; and
- 5) Create a safe low flow channel for boater passage sediment transport through the diversion structure.

The existing diversion structure will be removed and a large rock and grout diversion structure will be installed at the diversion location. Adequate existing native material and imported large rocks will be used in the construction of the new diversion structure and the newly vegetated bench on the sides of the river bank. Non-native and potentially hazardous material excavated from the existing structure will be hauled away and disposed of properly.

As a result of saturated soils from a wetter than average winter in 2019, a significant soil failure occurred in the spring just upstream of the diversion on the south side of the river. As opposed to trying to remove the recently deposited soil and reestablish the previous river alignment the concept design advocates stabilizing the new land slide depositions in place, and make adjustments to the river's alignment and width, so that the system can be more self-sustaining over time. Rock sills and deflectors would be utilized to stabilize the new banks and to protect bankful bench floodplain areas from erosion.

### **San Juan River Village River Flood Conveyance and Habitat Improvements**

The proposed design approach is focused on two primary goals for restoration of this section of the San Juan River. The first is to restore the flood capacity that was significantly reduced during recent large sediment deposition events within the active channel. The second is to enhance the habitat component of the low flow channels. The foundation for success in aquatic and riparian restoration work is a functioning river system. This means transporting pulses of sediment, accommodating overbank floods, sustaining vigorous populations of fish, aquatic insects, and riparian vegetation. Riverbend's design encourages the river to maintain a stable condition, and we try to do this with limited amounts of obvious man-made structure. Our goal is to leave behind a naturally aesthetic and functioning riverine ecosystem, where natural channel evolution can proceed. In this location, where there is significant infrastructure near the river, we must balance the natural systems with protection of property and structures. The associated cost estimate for this portion is broken into two phases. The first phase would

be focused on restoring flood conveyance and channel efficiency and the second phase would be directed at enhanced fish habitat.

### **River Access Improvements**

The proposed new access portion of the project involves construction of approximately 1000 feet of a new two-lane gravel access road, 10,000 square foot parking area, and new boat ramp into the San Juan River. The access road would be entirely located on existing San Juan River Village Metro District property and would be constructed in accordance with Archuleta County Road and Bridge Design Standards. The overall road slope would be 8% or less and would be designed to try and balance the amount of soil cut and fill required. The access road would also create an additional ingress/egress for the over 50 properties located in the valley bottom.

The parking area would be a gravel surface directly connected to the boat ramp. The boat ramp would be orientated to the river to allow ease of use at a variety of river flows. The ramp would be defined by large boulders extending into the river with a compacted crushed rock surface.