
KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM RIVER PARK BOATERS MEETING – JAN 19, 2017:

FOUR WAVES AND AN ISLAND

From upstream to downstream, the four features are labeled #1 through #4 on the design. They will offer different recreational experiences depending on the water level throughout the boating season. A bioengineered roughened riffle and armoring was added on far River Left in the top half of the reach. This forms a safe boater channel separated from the top two features by a constructed island. This island allows recreational rafters to safely navigate this steep reach, bypassing the big whitewater features on River Right. The island also allows fish to navigate upstream. The top feature is designed for expert boaters with the second wave for advanced boaters, downstream to intermediate wave #3 and #4 more ideal for SUPs and beginning boaters. Shipley suggested the sweet spot for the features will be about 1200 cfs and emphasized there will be different challenges at each flow. The island will be under water at moderate and high flows and visible at low flows. Shipley said the large eddy below feature #1 will be on River Right and have room for approximately 15 kayakers. The pool below each feature is about 120' long providing plenty of room for recovery. Access to private property will be discouraged.

ACCESS TO DIVERSION STRUCTURE & ROUGHENED RAMP

Water surface elevations leading into the whitewater park will be protected by new rock structures near the head gate of Eagle County's Neilson Ditch. In the earlier designs, details for this area were not shown because they had not yet been developed. After receiving Eagle County's input, Shipley determined the best approach was to use large boulders mostly buried in the riverbed. This is intended to reduce the need for future maintenance in the river by Eagle County. Shipley clarified how the roughened ramp and 'smiley face' semi-circle of boulders (shark's mouth) tilted downstream would have about a one-foot drop in the center at low flows. He explained this new configuration provides a more consolidated flow and safer entrance to the whitewater park reach than what exists there now. Access to the diversion structure for future maintenance includes a ramp. Matt Solomon suggested this area be modified to double as a low angle viewing area for judges during competitions. There was consensus for ensuring the park design should accommodate features like this for top quality boating competitions in the river and on the land.

A portion of the path that spans the full length of the park will likely be underwater for a couple of weeks during high flow years. According to the manufacturer, the "geo-cell" surface previously suggested for the path surface does not meet the technical criteria necessary to be underwater. Concrete surfaces are being considered alongside other products. The decision regarding which type of surface will be used is being researched. The materials for both the upland and riparian areas will be complementary. The path will be about 15' wide which will accommodate 10x10 exhibition tents for special events. During relatively high flows boaters will still be able to use the path, even when it's covered with several inches to a foot of water.

ADDED DOWNSTREAM SLOPED RAMP FOR ADA ACCESS

Below feature #4, at the west end of the park, there will be a sloped ramp that can be used for physically challenged recreation access to the water. Shipley envisions this will enable local programs such as Wounded Warriors and Vail Veteran's program to use the site. This area is still being designed as the upland park and the river features are further developed. Suggestions from the group included adding back the west end ramp connection to the upland area. Shipley agreed this was a good idea and would talk with Alpine/Zehren about this as well.

SLIGHT CHANGE IN SLOPE TO FIRST TWO WAVE FEATURES

The most discussion and concern during the evening was expressed by boaters after Shipley described a slight change in the slope of the top two drop structures. He explained the flow modeling showed this change was necessary to make the features safer for expert boaters as well as ensure the design doesn't create a rise in the floodplain. Local boaters felt this change would lower the quality of the most important expert wave. Shipley reassured the skeptical audience that the constructed top two waves would be exceptional. Boaters, including Shipley are committed to keeping the power of the river at a maximum in these features while balancing safety and floodplain concerns. The consensus was clear: No one wants to spend millions of dollars only to have a mediocre park in Eagle! With the island providing safe boater passage around the most challenging features in the park, there was a unanimous support for the Eagle River Park wave #1 to be a uniquely challenging park feature that sets the Eagle River Park apart from the unexceptional play parks popping up all over the country.

Vegetation will be planted to maximize riparian enhancements on the south bank. Additional riparian vegetation will also be added to the north bank to soften the visual appeal of so much rock. Care will be taken not to add vegetation in such a significant amount that it will cause boaters to have unsafe access to the river. (The tangled mass of vegetation downstream of the Glenwood wave was mentioned as an example to avoid replicating.)

PLANS FOR SPECTATOR EVENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

There was a consistent theme from the boater feedback that the fish habitat and fish passage should be protected. Shipley explained how the fish notch design took this into account.

The bank design will accommodate the large number of spectators that are expected during special events. The cottonwood grove was discussed and enough vegetation will be planted throughout the whole area to enhance the riparian habitat and meet permit requirements. The design for the upland park will also take into account this balancing act.

SLIDE SHOWS:

Photos from other whitewater parks in the region are being gathered to illustrate the shape of different types of waves. Pictures that show what it looks like to have a park under construction in the river will be added as well as photos that show how crowds are accommodated at other parks. If you have photos you're willing to share please send them to Morgan.landiers@townofeagle.org. We will provide you with photo credit!

January 24, 2017

Town of Eagle
200 Broadway
PO Box 609
Eagle, CO 81631

RE: Eagle River Park Boater's Meeting

Ms. Bradford, Mr. Boni, and Mr. Shipley-

Thank you for hosting the Eagle River Park Boater's Meeting this past Thursday. It was a much appreciated opportunity to learn about the latest design for the in-stream portion of the Eagle River Park and to provide comments on the design changes that have been made between 90% and 95% design. We are thankful for the time and resources invested to date and look forward to continuing to support this exciting and iconic amenity/gateway for residents and visitors alike.

While we did our best to provide some verbal feedback at the meeting, we thought it would be helpful to follow up with written comments on the new information provided. Based on Thursday's presentation/discussion, we have the following comments on the latest 95% in-stream design:

1. Please use the previous 90% design alternative for whitewater features 1 & 2 and the island:

In order to serve as a regional attraction, the whitewater features within the Eagle River Park **must be** unique and provide an experience that other whitewater parks in the state/country do not. The wave in Glenwood Springs is a good example of a whitewater feature that has garnered national/international attention because of the phenomenal boating/surfing experience it offers.

Many in the local boating community were excited by the prospects of the Eagle River Park because of the opportunity to create advanced, high-energy features. Very few river parks offer these types of features. With the safe boater bypass, we believe that these features can be designed as high caliber features while still allowing for safe downstream passage for novice river users. It was discouraging to hear Thursday night that the proposed design modifications to these features (and the island) were aimed at mellowing out their energy.

We would recommend that the design of whitewater features 1 & 2, and the island, remain as shown in the previous 90% in-stream design drawings. We believe that the 90% design created the best opportunity for the high energy wave features we desire. We believe that these whitewater features could be modified in the future to mellow out their energy (if need be). We are concerned that it may be less feasible to increase the energy level of these whitewater features if they start out as lower energy features. We have seen plenty of mediocre wave features in other river parks. Let's make this one special!

2. Please be careful with landscaping of the floodplain terrace and north riverbank:

Landscaping of the floodplain terrace and north riverbank was a new design element presented at Thursday's meeting. We agree that this could be a nice way to soften the boulder terracing along the river's edge. With that said, landscaping in this area presents a high flow safety concern if the wrong type of landscaping is installed. We would ask that landscaping in this area be limited to grasses, or similar "soft" landscaping materials. Woody landscaping materials (bushes or trees) present safety hazards to river users as they can create in-stream snags at high flows, which could potentially be fatal.

Furthermore, we believe that creating views of the river and an inviting rivers edge are important to the success of the Eagle River Park. Therefore, landscaping of the floodplain terrace and north riverbank should be installed in a manner that does not negatively impact river views or the experience for those hanging out along the river's edge.

3. Please allow island to be accessed at low flows:

The island is one of the most unique aspects of the Eagle River Park. It will serve as a wonderful attraction at low flows. It would be unfortunate and a missed opportunity if the island were modified to make it uninviting to park visitors.

We appreciate the private property trespassing concerns and absolutely agree that the adjacent property owners are entitled to peaceful enjoyment of their land. From what was presented on Thursday, it appears that the southern riverbank is going to be stabilized with vegetation. Therefore, we would encourage the Town to look at use of dense and/or thorny vegetation along the southern riverbank to mitigate private property trespass rather than compromising use of the island.

4. Please ensure that the design of the Nielson ditch diversion is river user-friendly:

Many of us came into Thursday's meeting with concerns regarding the design of the Nielson ditch diversion structure. However, based on the explanations provided, many of our concerns were quelled. Thank you for that. With that said, we wanted to re-emphasize the need for the diversion structure and roughened ripple to be designed in a manner that is river user friendly and provides a low-flow channel for downstream passage.

5. Please ensure that the Nielson ditch diversion is designed for longevity and that it meshes well with the whitewater park:

We appreciate that efforts are being made to improve the design of the Nielson ditch diversion through this project. This should mitigate the need for future improvements/repairs to be made. We are concerned that future work on the ditch diversion structure could adversely impact the whitewater park and we want to emphasize the importance of designing the ditch diversion for the long-term.

We also want to emphasize the importance of the ditch diversion meshing well with the whitewater park. The ditch diversion will serve as the entry feature to the whitewater park so we think it is crucial that the diversion structure works in conjunction with the in-stream features. In other words, the diversion structure is designed in a manner that does not negatively impact flows to the whitewater features or result in sedimentation of the whitewater park.

6. Please explore integration of judging/viewing locations and a second access point:

We appreciate that you are going to further explore integration of judging locations for each whitewater feature, in addition to a secondary floodplain terrace access point at the downstream end of the Park. We believe that these design elements will help improve the function of the Eagle River Park.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we are all looking forward to boating/surfing in Eagle in 2018!

Sincerely,

Members of the local boating/surfing community:

Adam Palmer
Amy Cassidy
Ben Zeeb
Geoff Grimmer
Jason Blevins
Ken Hoeve
Matt Farrar
Matt Solomon
Paul St Ruth
Scott Willoughby
Sean Glackin

cc: John Schneiger; Morgan Landers; Kevin Sharkey; Town of Eagle Board of Trustees