

Dolores River Boating Advocates
Dolores River Instream Flow Water Right Information
(From just below the confluence with the San Miguel River to the town of Gateway)

May, 2018 - Based on recent news reports, we have been receiving numerous questions related to the Dolores River instream flow that spans the river from the confluence with the San Miguel to above the town of Gateway. In an attempt to answer those questions we have compiled this basic information. Please feel free to contact us with any further questions (amber@doloresriverboating.org).

Location: This instream flow right runs from the confluence with the San Miguel River to just above the town of Gateway, approximately 33 miles.

Date: This instream flow water right is a 2015 right that was decreed by the water court on April 10, 2018.

Dolores instream flow water right amounts:

- 900 cfs April 15 – June 14
- 400 cfs June 15 – July 15
- 200cfs July 16 – August 14
- 100 cfs August 15 – March 15
- 200 cfs March 15 – April 14

Status of the right: The right is junior to all water rights filed prior and senior to all water rights filed after. Flows from the San Miguel River, including those protected by a 2011 instream flow right on the San Miguel, contribute to the Dolores River instream flow right, which begins just below the confluence with the San Miguel. San Miguel River flows were taken into consideration when determining whether water is available for the Dolores River instream right.

Theoretically, if there were ever a call to enforce this right, it could implicate both the San Miguel and the Dolores Rivers. However, because this right is junior to all of the rights associated with McPhee Reservoir, it could not compel a release from McPhee.

What does this mean for boating?

- This instream flow right does not impact the stretch of river from below McPhee Reservoir to the confluence with the San Miguel River.
- This instream flow right will prevent new water rights from further diminishing flows below the levels indicated above in the future which is great news for boating the Dolores River below the confluence with the San Miguel.
- However, this does not mean that these flows are guaranteed at all times, depending on the water year:
 - This right is junior to all water rights that came before it and those rights must be fulfilled first.
 - In drought years it is common that many water rights, including this one, may not be fully met if the water simply isn't available.
- Always pay attention to stream gauge information before you go boating!! You can access this information from the USGS website, or find links on our website:
<https://doloresriverboating.org/dolores-river-flows/>