

# Old Snowmass Ranch Stream Restoration Guidance

Snowmass, Colorado



*From top: Landscape view of project area; Much of the tributary is disconnected from the floodplain.*

Located in the Roaring Fork Valley of central Colorado, the 957-acre Old Snowmass Ranch was once home to the Windstar Foundation, an environmental education and advocacy organization co-founded by John Denver. In its earlier history, the site had been used for agriculture, with a stream corridor providing water for irrigation. Over time the stream became channelized, severely eroded, and disconnected from its

*Scientific analysis and regenerative design support the restoration of function and beauty to a valley stream, pond, and wetland system impacted by agricultural use.*

floodplain. The current property owner wanted to restore stability, habitat, beauty, and function to the degraded stream corridor in a way that would allow some agrarian land use to continue.

Biohabitats provided an expert assessment of the existing conditions of the stream corridor, including the stream, ponds, and wetlands, to support Design Workshop in developing ecological restoration and enhancement plans for the property.

Biohabitats began by visiting the site to assess existing conditions and meet with the ranch manager to understand existing water uses. Using a rapid assessment approach that combined the Functional Assessment of Colorado Streams, Functional Assessments of Colorado Wetlands, and Biohabitats' Pond and Lake Assessment Methodology,

Biohabitats evaluated the hydrology, structure and stability of the channel, along with site geomorphology, wetland function, plant communities, and site stressors.

Biohabitats then produced a technical memo summarizing assessments and recommending restoration approaches to improve the health of the stream, ponds, and wetlands. Design Workshop used the recommendations to design a restoration approach that judiciously moved the channel, created new wetlands, and expanded riparian vegetation. The design, which was then reviewed by Biohabitats, received approval from Pitkin County and USACE permits to move forward.

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