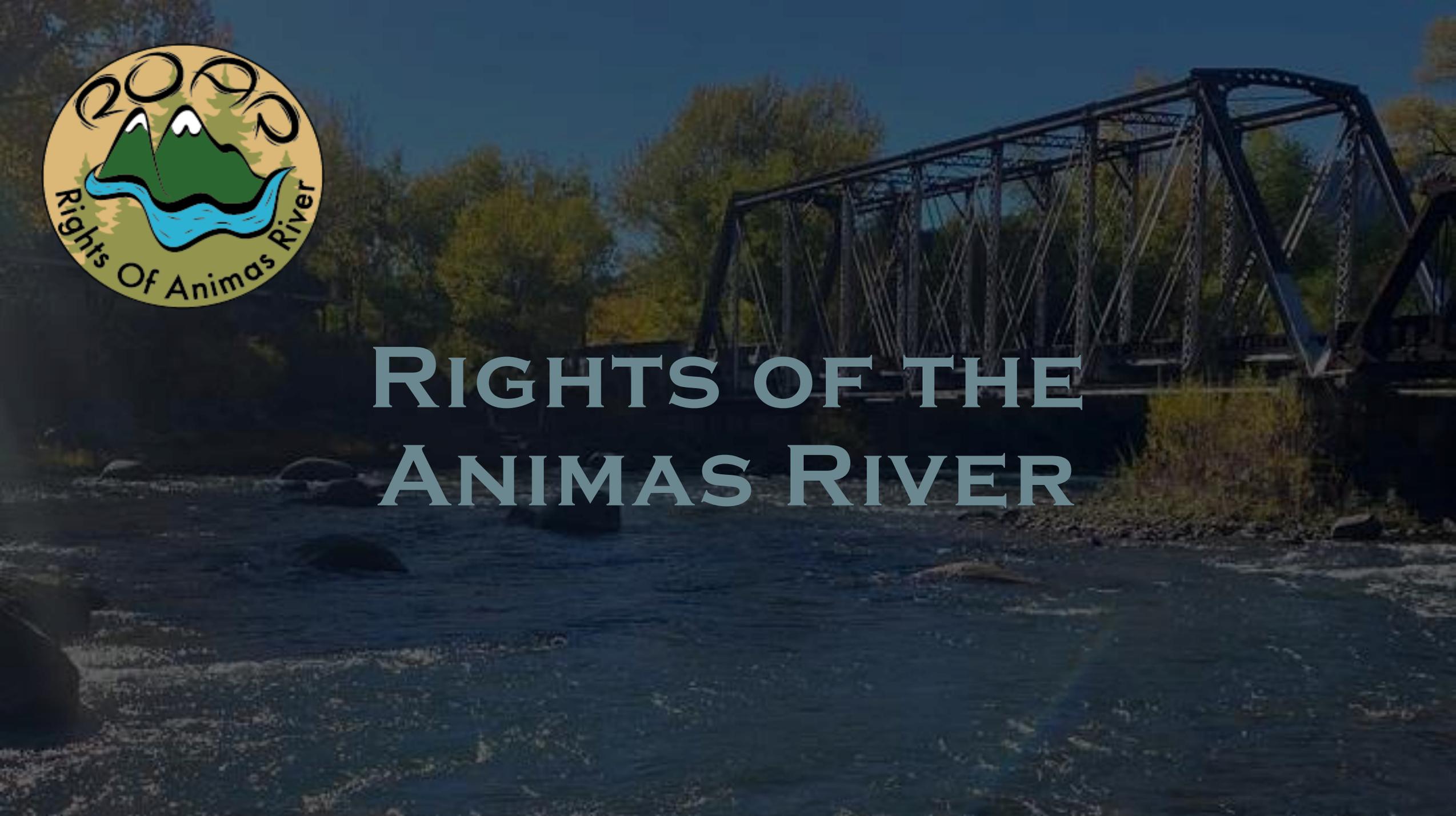


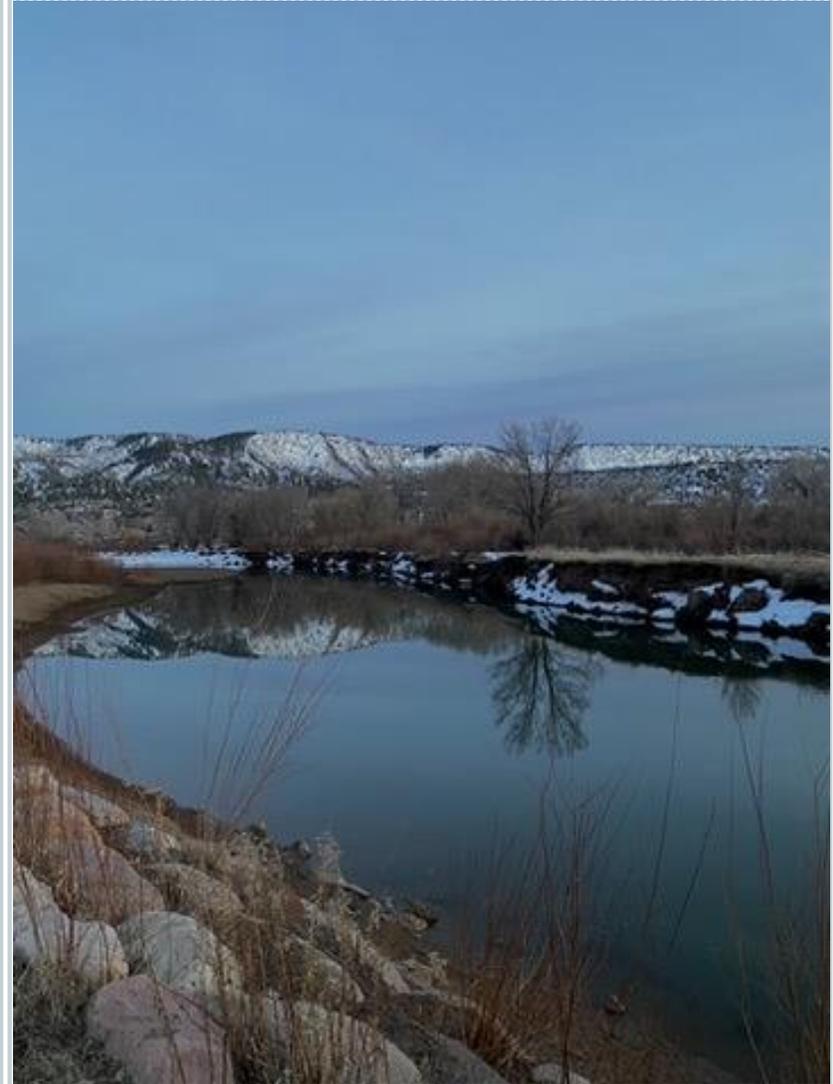
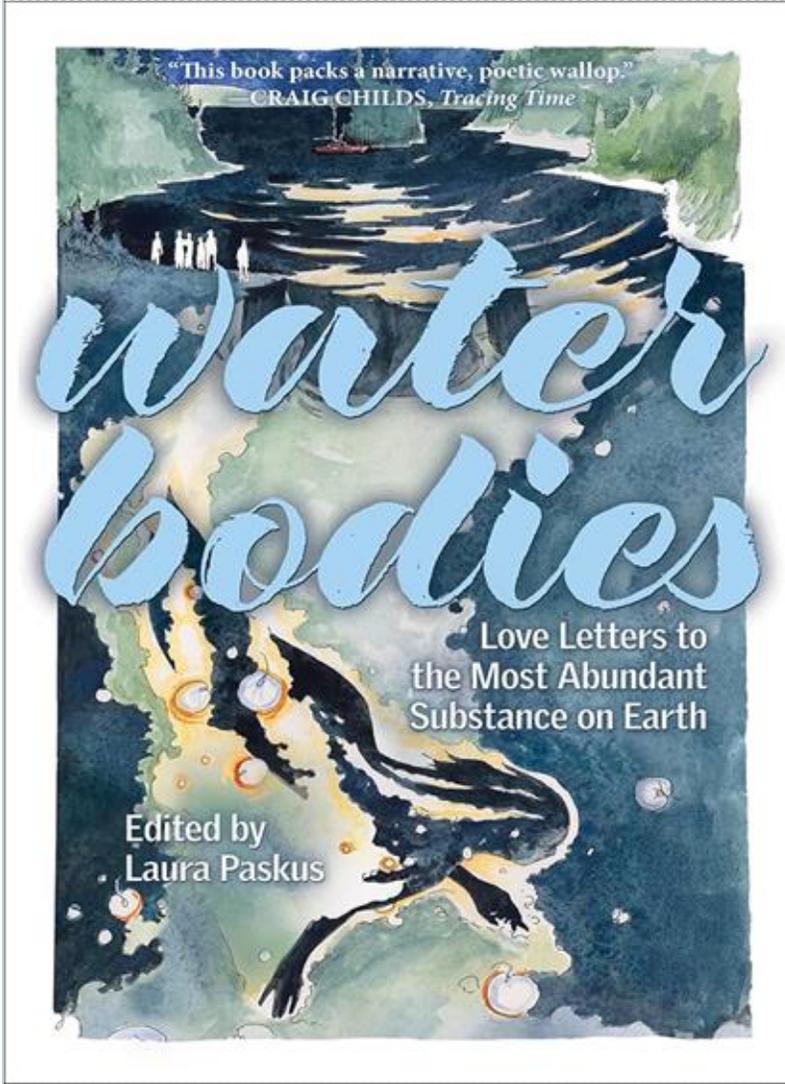


RIGHTS OF THE ANIMAS RIVER





BUILDING A FOUNDATION





DEVELOPING WORKING GROUPS

Local Government: town and gown relationship

Public Engagement and Outreach

Communications: message development

Data Collection: survey, case study & literature review

Graphic design: logo, sticker, flyer



SOC 370: Water Justice



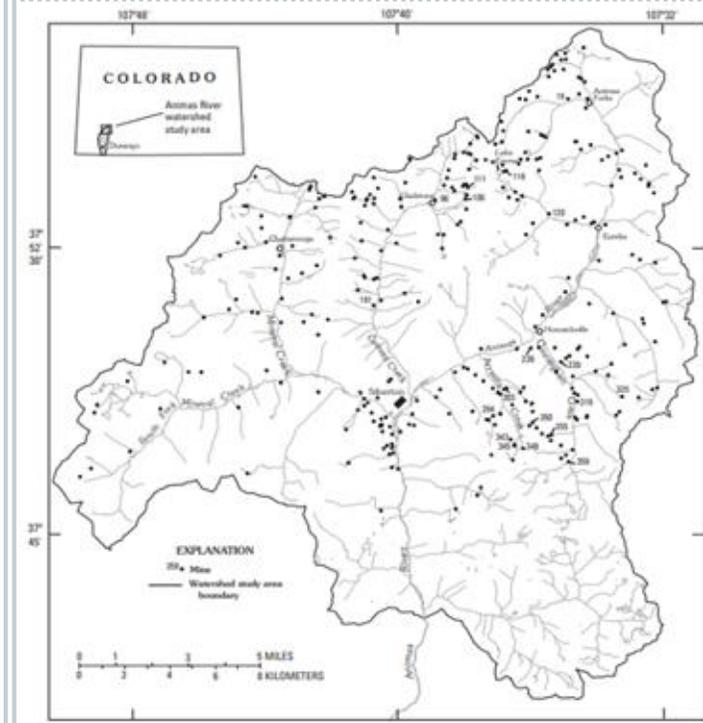
WHY NOW? THE GOLD KING MINE SPILL

Bonita Peak Mining District: 1871-1991, Animas Rivers headwaters located within BPMD

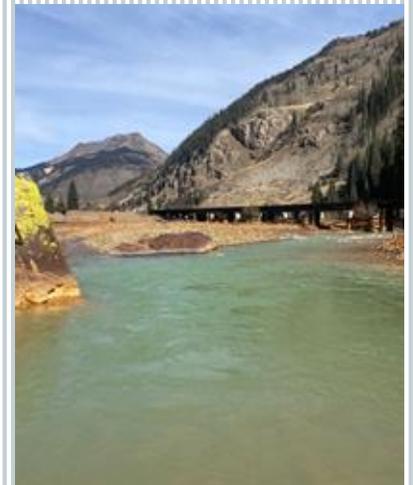
Acid mine drainage: heavy metals leach into watersheds

Gold King Mine Spill 2015: mass release of wastewater.

New Framework: The GKMS gave residents of Durango a new perspective on the threats that face the Animas and the impacts upstream systems have on downstream neighbors. Led to rethinking ecocentric, justice-oriented approaches to protecting natural systems.



USGS





CASE STUDIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Ridgeway, Colorado: The Uncompahgre River

- Resolution recognizing the rights of the Uncompahgre River, its tributaries, and the watershed.



Montana: Snake River

- Nez perce tribe (Nimiipuu) passed a Resolution recognizing the Rights of the Snake River in 2020.





COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Fort Lewis College Water Week
- Durango City Council meetings

Water Justice
SOC-370

Rights of Animas River
ROAR

Please fill out our survey and take a sticker!
Advocating for Rights of Nature for the Animas River
Help us spread our voices!



CELEBRATE WATER WEEK

NOV 6TH-14TH

EVENTS

Nov 6th Water Connections
Community Event Register:
5:30-8:00pm SU Ballroom

Nov 12th Water Bodies
Free Book Signing
Doors @ 5:30 event @ 6pm
Noble Hall 130

Nov 13th Water and
Business Pannel
12:30-2:00pm @ CSWS Lyceum

Nov 14th Tribal Water
Media Fellowship Showcase
6-8pm @ SU Ballroom



Register For Water
Connections



DATA COLLECTION



Our survey collected data from **70 participants**. **98%** of those surveyed **agreed** with the following statements in our resolution:

- Durango City Council should include the Animas River as a factor in relevant decision making.
- The Animas River should have the right to be free from pollution and other harms.
- The Animas River should have the right of integrity to maintain its natural cycles.
- The Animas River should have the right to exist, flow free, and flourish



RIGHTS OF THE ANIMAS RIVER RESOLUTION

Rights of the Animas River:

The Right to flow free and flourish

The Right to support essential functions within watershed

The Right to maintain integrity of the natural cycles and providing adequate habitat for plants and animals

The Right to be free from pollution and other harms

The Right to river restoration and preservation

Responsibilities of the City of Durango:

Develop policies and programs necessary to recognize the rights of the Animas River.

Oppose or mitigate actions or activities that would clearly violate the rights of the Animas River.

Coordinate with the FLC Four Corners Water Center to prepare a yearly report of health of the Animas River for the community.

RESOLUTION



CITY COUNCIL MEETING NOVEMBER 18TH 2025



‘Water justice’ delivered to Animas via resolution

FLC students spent months preparing river presentation

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fort Lewis College students successfully convinced Durango City Council to support a resolution acknowledging river rights for the Animas River on Tuesday.

Students of FLC professor Becky Clausen’s Water Justice class described their success as “inspirational,” “heartwarming” and “incredibly impactful.”

The students spent about three months researching, drafting a resolution and preparing for a presentation before City Council.

Clause said her assignment – timed with the 10th anniversary of the 2015 Gold King Mine spill

that drew international attention to Durango’s river water quality – empowered students and exposed them to civic processes.

“The unanimous vote to approve the Rights of Animas River resolution is an example of college and community collaboration,” she said. “It shows the power of experiential education and ‘learning-by-doing’ that transforms academic coursework into meaningful community impact.”

Student Jazlyn Quintana said the assignment – which Clausen described as a “community group research project” – provokes thoughts about water rights and could encourage other communities to consider how to preserve their water sources.

“It is unbelievable in a way that we as a class were able to accomplish this, but I am grateful for all that I’ve learned and that we accomplished our goal,” she said.

She said case studies of other U.S. and Colorado communities granting their rivers and bodies

of water legal rights drove the resolution home Tuesday.

Riley Latus said the assignment pushed the class to work with “diverse worldviews, cultures, ideas and studies,” and students’ passion for “environmental, cultural and water justice propelled our project to center stage of city hall and Durango.”

Clausen said the assignment included gauging the community’s acceptance of “rights of nature” concepts that natural ecosystems have a right to exist and to flourish, as described in the resolution passed Tuesday.

“It can feel overwhelming and depressing learning about all the disparities of the world,” said student Hailey Chandler. “This Water Justice movement for the Animas River has brought me hope and has inspired me to think creatively. Everyone is connected to water. We are water protectors.”

Student Park Donnelly said it was “deeply poignant” to participate in the class project.

She said she was optimistic about the Animas River water justice resolution passing, but she was struck by Council voting unanimously in its favor.

The resolution, she said, is just the first step, and she feels “empowered” and “energized” to continue pushing for crucial change.

“This project was grounded in reciprocity,” she said. “It is about recognizing the forces – both human and inhuman – that contribute to our well-being. We want to recognize the immensely positive role of the Animas River in our community and reciprocate the respect she gives us. This resolution is the initial effort to ward honoring and protecting the water body that fills us and all of Durango.”

Clausen said the assignment centered Indigenous knowledge that inherent relationships between people and nature exist, and that knowledge can guide a community’s practices in how it relates to rivers.

“The project shows the power

of a diverse group of people collaborating together on an issue they care about for the greater good of our community,” she said. “Students were from a range of different majors, represent diverse cultural backgrounds, and have varying life experiences. And because of all these differences they could bring their own unique skills, knowledge and passions to the table to contribute to the larger mission of recognizing the inherent rights of our river.”

Councilor Dave Woodruff, who introduced the resolution to City Council, said the project was a great process for college students.

Councilor Kip Koso said he appreciated the acknowledgment of the city’s and community’s duty to protect the Animas River so that children have the same opportunity to enjoy the river as those that came before them.

Mayor Gilda Yazzie said it is difficult to present before City Council – at public meeting – and she is proud of the students for their efforts.

Montgomery sheriff's office

Mni Wicóni

Tó éí íná



Agua es Vida

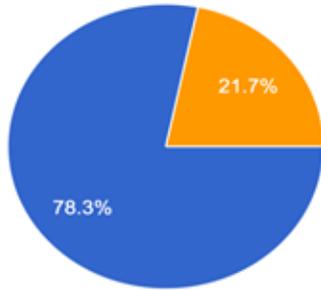
Water is Life



WHAT'S NEXT FOR ROAR?

Would you like to learn more about the water issues regarding the Animas River?

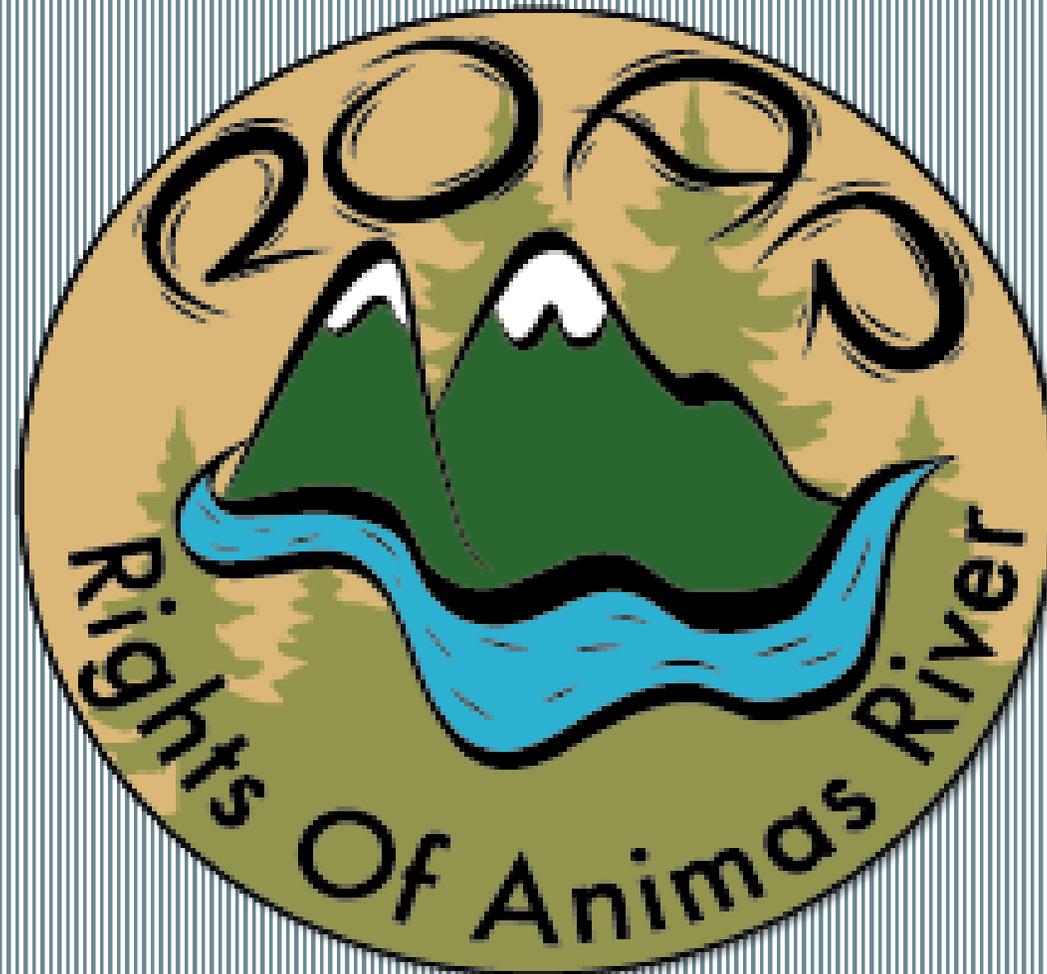
69 responses



- Yes, I would like to learn more.
- No, I don't want to learn more.
- Maybe, I'm not sure.



QUESTIONS



Junipermauble@gmail.com