

PUBLIC ACCESS AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

THE ECONOMICS OF COLORADO RIVER ACCESS



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Every few years Coloradans face a renewed political debate about public access to privately-owned streams.

In Colorado, the waters of the state belong to the people of the state, but the land under the streams belongs to the adjacent landowners. If legislators or voters want to change the law to make all floatable streams public land, the cost of purchasing those river miles could be in the billions.



3% Less than **3%** of private land river miles in Colorado are floatable.

Colorado has **107,000 – 110,000** miles of rivers and streams

- Roughly half - **55,000 – 65,000 miles** - are on private land
 - *Of that land, about **1,375 – 1,700 miles** are floatable*



Losing exclusive stream access would hurt property values and tax base.

- River access often drives most of a property's value
 - The 1,375 – 1,700 estimated floatable private river/stream miles alone are worth at least **\$2.75 billion to \$3.4 billion.**

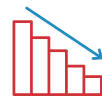


Changing Colorado law would likely trigger takings claims.

Takings claims could potentially cost the state of Colorado at least **tens of billions of dollars.**

Any new right to float or wade would:

- Require a complex navigability process
- Likely face constitutional takings litigation



Even limited loss of exclusivity can sharply reduce value.

- On Tarryall Creek, a limited private fishing easement reduced river value by **65%.**
- On that same Tarryall property, moving from restricted private access to unrestricted public access reduced river value nearly **75%.**