

**Water Supply Reserve Account – Grant and Loan Program
Water Activity Summary Sheet**

Applicant: Colorado River Water Conservation District

Amount Requested: \$200,000.000

Water Activity Name: Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program – Alternative Analysis

Source of Funds: Statewide Account

Water Activity Purpose: Study or analysis of non-consumptive water activity To address a long-term water supply to help address past and future depletions in the Colorado River drainage as required under the Colorado River Recovery Program. The study seeks to identify a long-term source of 10,825 acre-feet of water to help meet flow recommendations under the Recovery Program.

County: Multiple - Colorado River Watershed

Drainage Basin: Colorado – potential beneficiaries also include the South Platte, Metro, and Arkansas basin/areas

Water Source: To be determined – most likely the Colorado River and/or its tributaries

Water Activity Summary:

The Sponsoring Organization, the Colorado River Water Conservation District, is the principal water policy and water development agency for Western Colorado, representing the drainages of the Yampa, White, Colorado and Gunnison/Uncompaghre. The River District is a political subdivision of the State of Colorado, and is authorized to perform all activities necessary for the appraisal, development, operation and delivery of water supplies in Western Colorado. The Colorado River Water Conservation District was established in 1937, pursuant to Articles 37-46-101 through 37-46-151. With a staff of 21, consisting of Engineers, Hydrologists, Attorneys and other support professionals, the River District has the expertise and experience to fully accomplish this undertaking, in cooperative with the other cooperating agencies and related consulting professionals.

The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program has been developed to aid the recovery of four species of fish that have been listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The four species occupy the Colorado River in the "15-Mile Reach," a segment of the river that extends from the confluence of the Gunnison River upstream 15 miles to the Grand Valley Irrigation Company Diversion Dam near Palisade, Colorado. In 1999, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service completed the "Final Programmatic Biological Opinion for Bureau of Reclamation's Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River Above the Confluence with the Gunnison River" (also referred to as the "15-Mile Reach Programmatic Biological Opinion" or the PBO).

The PBO requires the State of Colorado to provide 10,825 acre-feet of water per year (10,825 Water) to the 15-Mile Reach during low flow years in the summer and fall months when the stream flow within the 15-Mile Reach is substantially impacted by upstream water diversions. The commitment to provide 10,825 Water is divided equally between East Slope and West Slope water users, with each responsible for 5,412.5 acre-feet per year. Currently, the 10,825 Water is provided on an interim basis by Denver Water And the Colorado River Water Conservation District (River District).

The purpose of this study is to study alternatives that can:

- provide the 10,825 Water to the 15-Mile Reach on a permanent basis, and

The study will be designed to provide a preliminary assessment of the outcome of an alternatives analysis that is consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines under the Clean Water Act.

For this study, the Consultant will develop and evaluate alternatives that meet the following project objective:

- Provide a permanent supply of 10,825 acre-feet of water annually to meet the West and East Slope requirements for the Colorado River Recovery Program. The water must be provided to the 15-Mile Reach, in all year types, during low flow periods in the summer and fall months.

This project is intended as a joint project of the Colorado, South Platte, Metropolitan Area and Arkansas Basin Roundtables, in that water users in each of these Roundtables have responsibility for ensuring the continued compliance with the Programmatic Biological Opinion for the Colorado River Fishes.

In particular, it is anticipated that financial and technical assistance will also come from Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, Denver Water, Southeastern Colorado Water Conservation District, Colorado Springs Utilities and Aurora Water Utility.

Task 1.0—Identify Potential Project Alternatives

Subtasks

- 1.1 Identify potential alternatives that may meet all or part of the purpose and need objectives. Project alternatives could consist of one or more elements, or separate projects. Consultant should consider each objective individually and identify alternatives and elements in general categories (or concepts), such as operational modifications or improvements, releases from existing storage, new storage projects, etc. Potential elements that should be analyzed include, but are not limited to:
 - Sulphur Gulch Reservoir
 - Wolcott Reservoir
 - Webster Hill Reservoir
 - Buzzard Creek Reservoir
 - Orchard Mesa Irrigation District Water Management
 - Wolford Mountain Reservoir Enhancements
 - Reudi Reservoir Releases
- 1.2 Determine the potential feasibility of elements and alternatives with conceptual-level analysis, including definition of operation, engineering feasibility, and potential environmental or institutional fatal flaws.
- 1.3 Prepare preliminary long list of alternatives and elements for further analysis.
- 1.4 Conduct meeting with stakeholders to develop concurrence on which elements should be carried forward to next level of analysis.

Task 2.0—Evaluation of Alternatives

Subtasks

- 2.1 Develop a description of the operation of each alternative/element and a conceptual layout of facilities required for each.
- 2.2 Develop preliminary estimates of capital and O&M costs for each.
- 2.3 Identify potential environmental impacts and issues, including impacts to wetlands, aquatic habitat, and threatened or endangered species with particular emphasis on impacts caused by changes in streamflows.
- 2.4 Assess potential impacts to water quality in affected reservoirs and streams including evaluation of changes in sediment load, TDS, and selenium.
- 2.5 Evaluate and compare each alternative/element in relation to the purpose and need objectives. Develop a short list of alternatives for each purpose and need objective that may be suitable to carry forward into the NEPA/permitting phase of the project.

- 2.6 Identify data gaps and any additional work required to carry each alternative forward into the NEPA phase.

Task 3—Prepare Report and Presentation to Stakeholders

Subtasks

- 3.1 Prepare a written report documenting the results of the study.
- 3.2 Develop a presentation to present to the stakeholders in a workshop setting. The goal of the presentation and workshop is to facilitate a decision by stakeholders on how to proceed with the project.

Task 4—Project Management and Meetings

Subtasks

- 4.1 Provide administrative management of the project, including tracking schedule and budget.
- 4.2 Provide technical management of the project, including review of work products.
- 4.3 Attend study team coordination meetings as required.

Discussion:

Staff is somewhat familiar with the Upper Colorado Recovery Program which benefits many Colorado water users in multiple basins. Addressing the needs of the Recovery Program was identified in the Statewide Water Supply Initiative as an important need for consumptive and non-consumptive needs. While the study participants have the ability to fund the project that are broader statewide benefits of addressing depletions and endangered species needs.

Issues/Additional Needs:

The application is incomplete:

- The application does not fully describe the goals of the project and how they get accomplished.
- The application does not provide a sufficient level of detail to fully understand the specific logistics of implementing the study and how the issues outlined in the application will be resolved.
- The scope of work appears to have been taken from other studies and is not specific enough for the proposed study.
- The application does not adequately describe who is doing the work.
- There is no detailed budget for the study. There is no schedule.

- The WSRA evaluation criteria are not specifically addressed. Eligibility criteria 4 is not addressed.
- The scope does not include a study area map or description.
- There is no specific description of the financial and technical assistance that will be provided by the participant and how this will occur.
- The study outlines that there is broad support from other roundtables but there is no support information substantiating this.
- Potential Tabor Issues are not addressed.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of up to \$200,000.00 for completion of the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program – Alternatives Analysis. This approval is conditioned based on successful resolution of the information requested in the issues/additional needs section.

All products, data and information developed as a result of this grant must be provided to CWCB in hard copy and electronic format as part of the project documentation. This information will in turn be made widely available to Basin Roundtables and the general public and will help promote the development of a common technical platform.