

Healthy Rivers Fund

2008 Annual Report

October 17, 2008

The Healthy Rivers Tax Check-off Fund experienced a lot of activity in 2008. The official name was changed from Colorado Watershed Protection Fund to Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund (CHRF) through a legislative action in May. The intent of the name change is to make the fund more identifiable to the general public, thus increasing donations. Staff intends to market the program more aggressively for the upcoming tax season. Ideally the marketing campaign will increase funding, marking the first year of an upward trend in donations. The January – September donations totaled approximately \$76,000, indicating another year of dwindling donations. The donations for this time period must exceed \$75,000 or CHRF will be dropped from the Tax Check-off Program.

Currently, there are 18 active grants funded through CHRF. Ten of these were awarded in September. They are in the contracting process. The other eight grants are at various levels of completion. One grant was completed in 2008. A brief project description and progress report for each of these grants is included below starting with the recently completed project and followed by the eight active projects.

Colorado Watershed Network – Macroinvertebrate Sampling

\$18,000 grant awarded September 2007. Project complete, final report available on CWCB Laserfiche Weblink: <http://cwcb.state.co.us/Home/PublicRecords/> Go to Watershed Protection.

Uncompahgre River Stewardship Alliance – Uncompahgre River Watershed Plan

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2007.

The primary goal of this planning effort is to address the need for greater understanding of water-quality and riparian habitat issues within the Uncompahgre basin through continued community involvement and the development of a comprehensive watershed plan. The Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the Uncompahgre Watershed Sustainability Initiative was approved by the EPA and the State WQCD on September 29th. The \$10,000 from the CHRF will be used as match for the EPA 319 grant. Sarah Sauter, the new project coordinator, will begin using that money as described in the CHRF grant work plan beginning on or about October 27th.

The watershed plan is designed to be a model planning process that will develop and strengthen collaborative ties between citizen groups and more traditional water user groups such as the water conservancy district, the water users association, the conservation districts, local governments and several state and federal agencies. The plan will be used to identify new partnerships to improve water quality, conservation and environmental health and is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

Colorado Storm Water Council – E. coli Assessment and Management Plan

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2007. \$5,127 invoiced.

Roughly 22 stream segments throughout Colorado are currently identified as “impaired” by elevated *E. coli* on Colorado’s 303(d) list (+16 being monitored). Watershed groups, local governments, regional planning agencies, and the Water Quality Control Division are working to address this statewide issue. For these entities to successfully work towards restoration and/or realistic goal setting for watersheds designated as “impaired” by elevated *E. coli*, they need to be equipped with a sound understanding of *E. coli* sources, control methods, monitoring approaches to properly identify sources, and factors that affect *E. coli* viability. If these subjects are not properly understood, then effective, practical plans to manage and protect watersheds and address *E. coli* 303(d) listings cannot be developed.

E. coli Assessment and Management Project funded under the CRRF is approximately 80% complete and has benefited from the investment of approximately 100 hours by stakeholders, including local governments, the Colorado Water Quality Control Division and EPA. A draft annotated bibliography of existing *E. coli* resources is complete. Stakeholders have seen a detailed powerpoint presentation evaluating an EPA report entitled *Experts Scientific Workshop on Critical Research Needs for the Development of New or Revised Recreational Water Quality Criteria*. The presentation examined the report as it relates to Colorado stream segments listed as impaired for *E. coli*. A draft spreadsheet summarizing 303(d) listed segments for *E. coli* is complete. Meetings have been held to discuss the issues and approaches to TMDLs. Findings have been presented at the Water Quality Forum.

Friends of Bear Creek – Bear Creek Watershed Plan

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2007, extension approved September 2008.

The key of this planning effort is to reach out to all major conservation and recreational groups, civic and merchant groups, parks, open-space, and transportation agencies to focus them on collaborative watershed planning. The stakeholder group will work together to develop common goals in watershed planning and create a procedure and database for a future full scale watershed plan.

Progress has been made towards assembling a stakeholder group united under common goals. An extension was granted so the funds can be used as match in a pending EPA 319 grant application.

Boulder Creek Watershed Initiative (BCWI) – Water Quality Monitoring Project

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2007. \$8,337 invoiced.

The purpose of this Project Grant is to create two citizen volunteer water quality monitoring “Stream Teams”. Stream Team Program Objectives include:

- Educate people about their relationship to streams and watersheds.
- Provide public involvement opportunities to protect local streams.
- Protect water resources through pollution prevention and water conservation.

Work accomplished to date to satisfy grant requirements:

- Two agency meetings
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Purchase of *three* sets of water quality equipment

- *Five* volunteer trainings
- *Three* volunteer certifications
- Three sampling sessions

Roaring Fork Conservancy – Roaring Fork River Watershed Plan (Phase II)

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2007.

Building on the work completed in Phase I-fostering stakeholder involvement and the State of the Watershed Report, Phase II will cultivate discussion among Roaring Fork citizens and stakeholders, and technical advisors to develop a comprehensive and prioritized set of goals and objectives and strategies and recommendations, which will be used to protect and sustain the economic and ecological resources provided by the watershed. The success of Phase II depends on the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders and technical advisors. Phase III is the compilation of a draft watershed plan and completion of a final watershed plan.

Phase II will begin late 2008 or early 2009 in cooperation with the Ruedi Water and Power Authority. The plan will be funded with CHRF, Water Supply Reserve Account funds, and other local sources.

Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) – Watershed Restoration

\$25,000 grant awarded September 2006. \$9,500 invoiced.

The Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) has been in a transition period, with Executive Director, Jonathan Bruno, moving to a new job outside the nonprofit sector, and previous Executive Director, Carol Ekarius, returning to the helm. Due in part to the transition, a portion of the grant work as agreed to has been completed, and some work is still progressing. CUSP has already used its CHRF grant to match sources of funding to complete the Environmental Education and Green Forest treatment portions of the grant in 2007.

During that period CUSP's Environmental Education Coordinator, Theresa Springer, conducted programs with 887 students who received 4357 contact hours. The programs are designed to engage students' imaginations and thirst for learning. For example, the program with the Woodland Park School District's Environmental Education class was an intensive education program that consisted of eight classroom events and two field seminars with natural resource professionals from the United States Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. The students learned about what interventions must be used to correct ecosystem problems, such as sediment loading in rivers and invasive species on land (focused on the Happy Meadows river restoration site). They also learned how to translate the data that they collect in the field into 3-dimensional scaled-relief models and complete a model of a specific natural area within the USFS Pike National Forest or other public land site. The project wrap-up was a presentation, by students, for dignitaries such as Congressional staffers, the Mayor, school board members, and the resource professionals who helped guide the project.

CUSP's Green Forest Health Program is an on-going project that grew out of the ashes of the Hayman Fire. In the months after the fire was controlled, CUSP dedicated efforts to helping restore healthy forest conditions in the Upper South Platte Watershed as a method of reducing the likelihood of future catastrophic fires within the watershed. Grant funds helped support the 2007 Neighborhood Fuels Reduction project, which brings communities together to create defensible spaces around valuable resources (ranging from homes to riparian areas), and to reduce fuel density in Red Zone areas of the

watershed. In 2007 the CUSP crew worked on 236 sites around the watershed, treating 619 acres, and engaged landowners and volunteers to put in over 12,000 hours toward cleanup efforts.

The funding for the USFS Rampart Range Motorized Recreation Area (RRMRA) project and the South Platte River Restoration at Happy Meadows Campground were both held up by the time it took the USFS to move the projects forward. However, CUSP believes that the funding from the grant for these projects will be utilized over the next few months. The RRMRA funds depended on work being completed by the USFS, and that work is just being completed, so the plan is to do a portion (seeding, tree planting, and fencing out decommissioned trails with volunteers) to be completed in October and November of this year if weather cooperates. If winter weather sets in early, this work may need to be completed in April of 2009.

The Happy Meadows work has taken an exciting turn, and we are planning to use grant funds to take advantage of this opportunity: One of the contributors to high sediment loads in the Happy Meadows area is a diversion dam that was built in the 1960s. This structure is failing in its purpose of efficiently delivering diversion water to the Sportsmen's Paradise water rights, and at the same time blocks fish passage and creates sediment problems. Sportsmen's is working with CUSP to do planning for river restoration through their portion of the South Platte (immediately downstream from Happy Meadows) and at the same time has agreed to work with CUSP on the correction of the diversion system to meet multiple objectives, including the efficient use of Colorado's precious water. Grant funds will be used to hire a consultant, Jeff Crane, to oversee this portion of the project. Jeff has worked on similar projects around the State of Colorado, and he is one of the most knowledgeable consultants for this type of project. He will design a new and improved diversion structure, and supervise the reconstruction of the diversion.

San Juan Resource Conservation & Development Council – Animas River Watershed Plan

\$15,000 grant awarded September 2005, extensions approved August 2006 & April 2008. \$3,228 invoiced.

The San Juan Resource Conservation & Development Council includes the Animas River Nutrient Work Group. The Work Group has identified nutrients enrichment in the Animas Basin by sampling low water from 2003 – 2005. The grant focus is to expand the base of stakeholders and develop a geographic database. Both of these objectives are complete. The grant is also awarded to develop a draft watershed plan under EPA guidelines. The grantee has an extension because of project management staffing issues. Ecosphere Environmental Services is effectively managing the project as of Spring 2008.

Ecosphere Environmental Services currently has the contract to coordinate stakeholder meetings and maintains a subcontract agreement with BUGS Consulting (BUGS) to complete the watershed management plan. To date, BUGS has completed the watershed management plan through a draft of Section 2. Comments received at the September meeting will be incorporated for review during the October 15 meeting. The stakeholders have reviewed the strategy document. The revised completion date for the watershed plan has been extended to February 2010.

Grand County Water Information Network (GCWIN) – Algae Monitoring Project

\$10,000 grant awarded September 2005, extension approved December 2006. \$8,000 invoiced. Final report overdue, draft received October 2008.

The purpose of the Grand County Water Information Network (GCWIN) Algae Monitoring Project was to quantify the existing algae problem and potential health risks in Grand County through a watershed-specific approach. The primary algae and algae toxin concerns in the Three Lakes area are: 1) *drinking*

water concerns due to the algal toxins; 2) *recreational concerns* due to the extensive use of the lakes for fishing, swimming, kayaking, water skiing, jet skiing, and sailing; and 3) *aquatic habitat and wildlife concerns*. The primary algae and algal toxin concerns in the Fraser River and Colorado River Basins are: 1) *drinking water concerns* due to taste and odor problems from the algae and potential algal toxins; 2) *water quality concerns regarding water used for agriculture, irrigation, and livestock purposes*; and 3) *aquatic habitat and wildlife concerns*. Empirical data were greatly needed to quantify the extent of alga colonies. Tracking and quantifying the increased alga growth in Grand County's lakes and rivers can be used to help decision-makers implement watershed improvement goals and objectives and improve in-situ water quality.

The CHRF grant goals were to 1) quantifying algal productivity (cell count by species); 2) a rapid analytical method to determine if toxin was present in drinking water resources; and 3) mapping the locations and concentrations of algae in Grand County. Algal productivity was quantified by cell count and monitored temporally and spatially. Staff anticipates a final report before the end of the year.