

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Chris Sturm, Stream Restoration Coordinator
Watershed Protection & Flood Mitigation Section

DATE: March 6, 2009

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 12, March 17-18, 2009 Board Meeting**
Fish and Wildlife Resources Fund Grant Application

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

Harris D. Sherman
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

Dan McAuliffe
CWCB Deputy Director

Introduction

The Fish and Wildlife Resource Fund (FWRF) was established by the Legislature in 1987, and it was amended in 2002 to help mitigate the impacts of existing water facilities. The San Juan-Rio Chama Diversion Project came on-line in 1971. Since then, the Rio Blanco has experienced reduced flows, resulting in a wide and shallow channel. The Lower Blanco Property Owners Association (LBPOA) and the San Juan Water Conservancy District (SJWCD), in cooperation with the CWCB, have had past successes in obtaining grants from the FWRF for restoration activities on the Rio Blanco.

Discussion

On behalf of the LBPOA, CWCB is submitting a request for funding from the FWRF for continued restoration activities on the Lower Rio Blanco. The restoration goals include improving channel stability, fish habitat, floodplain function, and riparian health. Past restoration activities have been funded by the CWCB, NRCS, EPA, and other local sources. These activities have been successful in creating a narrower, deeper flowing channel capable of transporting natural sediment loads. Aquatic and terrestrial habitats for wildlife and riparian vegetation have also improved. The LBPOA and SJWCD have completed 4 Phases of restoration on the Lower Blanco. Phase 5 is projected to restore another 1.4 miles of the river channel. The LBPOA will continue to monitor Phase 5 for one year after project completion. Parameters for monitoring will evaluate channel stability, sediment movement, erosion damage, pool depth, riparian transplant survival rate, and new riparian vegetation colonization.

Staff Recommendation

Staff has reviewed the LBPOA's FWRF application and found it in conformance with Board Policy 15. Staff recommends that the Board approve a \$132,000 non-reimbursable expenditure from the Fish and Wildlife Resource Fund for the purpose of providing matching dollars for Phase 5 of the Lower Rio Blanco Restoration Project. This amount represents 36% of the total Phase 5 cost.

Rio Blanco River Archuleta County, Colorado

