

Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable

c/o San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
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Mr. Eric Hecox, Manager, Office of Interbasin Compact Negotiations
Colorado Department of Natural Resources

Mr. Todd Doherty, Intrastate Water Management & Development
Colorado Water Conservation Board

Reference: 2009 Rio Grande Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4

Gentlemen:

The Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable (R.G.R.T) has determined that the single, most critical water issue confronting the Rio Grande Basin is the current unsustainable management of surface and ground water. The R.G.R.T. has made the decision that water activities that address this issue be favorably considered for funding from the Water Supply Reserve Account, SB 2005 -179, providing the proposed water activities meet the SWSI findings for the Basin and the CWCB & IBCC Criteria and Guidelines for funding.

The total cost of the *2009 Rio Grande Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4* on the Rio Grande in Alamosa County, Colorado is estimated at \$500,000.00. The R.G.R.T. is requesting authorization and consideration for distribution of Funds pursuant to SB 2005 - 179, for Basin Funds of \$50,000.00 and Statewide Funds of \$98,000.00, the applicant is the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation. The balance of the required funds will come from a Colorado Non-Point Source grant of \$250,000.00 (administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment), plus \$100,000.00 from landowners, and \$2,000.00 from the RGHRP.

At the regular R.G.R.T meeting January 12, 2010, the majority of the members voted to request funding from SB 2005 - 179 funds for the *2009 Rio Grande Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4*. There were two (2) abstentions, Greg Higel, Member of the Board of the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, and Ms. Cindy Medina.

Ms. Medina voiced her concern that in the event this project was funded there would only be some \$87,000.00 remaining in the Rio Grande Basin account, and she felt that as the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project had received \$285,000.00 in 2008 through the Roundtable process, it would be appropriate to retain the monies currently requested to funding requests that might be forthcoming that had not previously received monies from this source. There was ensuing discussion of the matter and the appropriateness of allocating funds by various methods, such as type of water activity, location or sponsoring

organization. After the discussion Doug Shriver, Vice-Chairman, called for a motion regarding the funding request.

PROJECT AND AMOUNT REQUESTED		SOURCE SB 179
2009 RIPARIAN STABILIZATION PROJECT- PHASE 4	\$ 148,000.00	STATE
2008 RIPARIAN STABILIZATION PROJECT- PHASE 4	\$ 50,000.00	BASIN

In the event Statewide Funds are not available then Phase 4 will be scaled back to utilize as much of the Colorado Non- Point Source funds as possible while meeting the applicable non- federal funds match. The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, through the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, will complete riparian stabilization on property owned by up to seven (7) different owners in Alamosa County.

In 2001 a study was done, sponsored by the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District and funded through a \$200,000.00 CWCB grant. This study covered 91 miles of the Rio Grande from Del Norte to the Alamosa / Conejos County line. This is the reach of the river in Colorado most impacted by human intervention, including the operation of some 49 diversion structures, and the development of many riverside properties. The 2001 Study assessed conditions in terms of the following criteria:

- Provide access to the river for agricultural water diversions.
- Maintain and restore riparian habitat wherever possible.
- Protect lives and property.
- Ensure deliveries of Rio Grande Compact obligations.
- Protect channel and flood plain from flood damage.
- Maintain channel and over bank capacity.

The RGHRP has undertaken a number of activities. In 2004, the RGHRP received an EPA 319 Non – Point Source grant to work with NRCS to perform riparian restoration on properties of 17 landowners in Rio Grande County, Colorado. In 2007 the *Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Strategic Plan*, was completed. This *Strategic Plan* was partially funded through the Colorado Watershed Protection Fund and severance taxes, administered by CWCB, and an EPA 319 Watershed Planning grant. During this time the RGHRP has also engaged in education and outreach to landowners, county officials and the general public.

In 2008 the RGHRP received a Colorado Non-Point Source grant of \$250,000.00 for Phase 3 of this work, which was matched with a WSRA grant of \$285,000.00. In 2009, in addition to the \$250,000.00 Colorado Non-Point Source grant, the RGHRP was awarded a NRCS Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) grant of \$390,000.00.

The *2009 Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4* will contribute significantly to achieving *water sustainability* in the Rio Grande Basin. The deliverables from the *2009 Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4* stream bank / riparian restoration work on the designated riverside properties will include:

- Improved water quality in the form of reduced sediment loading of the river,
- Improved wildlife habitat and fisheries
- Increased sediment carrying capacity of the river
- Improved condition of historic water flows to support agriculture
- Increased efficiency in meeting the Colorado Division Engineer's Rio Grande Compact obligations
- Improved performance of the river in restoring the Basin's aquifers

The success of this on-the-ground project will be measured at each landowners' site for a number of years through a specific CDHP/ EPA approved monitoring program. This monitoring will include, but not be limited to, assessing the rate of stream bank erosion and the condition of the riparian areas.

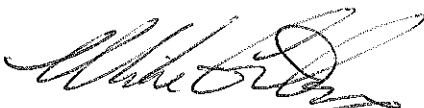
In addition, the *2009 Riparian Stabilization Project – Phase 4* will sustain important non-consumptive uses of water as addressed in the *"Water Supply and Needs Report for the Rio Grande Basin"* (SWSI) dated June 2006. Phase 4 will assist in achieving non consumptive, environmental goals by its basic activity of riparian stabilization, improved wildlife habitat, reduced sediment loading and hence improved fish habitat. Phase 4, through continuation of historical water management and utilizing the concepts of "conserve, protect and restore", will reduce the potential water supply gap for non-consumptive needs on the river.

On behalf of the R.G.R.T. Members, we appreciate the Board's consideration of this request and urge your support to the fullest extent possible.

By this letter, I am forwarding the application and supporting materials for the subject project. If you require additional information, please notify me accordingly.

The R.G.R.T. appreciates the support of the Department of Natural Resources, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Interbasin Compact Commission in assisting in meeting the needs of all users of Colorado's water and in fostering intrabasin and interbasin communications and discussions. We believe that the above project will assist in this effort.

Sincerely,



Mike Gibson
Chair, Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable

Enclosures (1)

C: Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project