

Water Supply Reserve Account – Grant and Loan Program
Water Activity Summary Sheet
Agenda Item 12f

Applicant: The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation and McDonald Ditch Company

Water Activity Name: The McDonald Ditch and Plaza Project, Phase I Planning

Water Activity Purpose: Study of structural, nonstructural, consumptive and nonconsumptive

County: Rio Grande

Drainage Basin: Rio Grande

Water Source: Rio Grande

Amount Requested: \$40,000 (Rio Grande Basin Account)

Matching Funds: \$7,100 cash (McDonald Ditch, et al), \$42,900 in-kind

Staff Recommendation
Staff recommends approval of up to \$40,000 from the Rio Grande Basin Account to assist in the funding of McDonald Ditch and Plaza Phase I Project contingent upon the resolution of the issues and additional needs identified in this summary.

Water Activity Summary:

The Plaza Project – Phase I is a 5-month collaborative analysis of potential restoration and structural approaches to rehabilitate the McDonald, Silva, Atencio, and Prairie ditch diversions and to address riparian degradation in approximately 2.8 miles of the Sevenmile Plaza reach of the Rio Grande. Conducted as a scoping and feasibility study, the Plaza Project – Phase I will gather stakeholders and analyze options available to meet the needs of the four ditch companies, while improving the condition and function of the riparian areas, bends, and main channel of the Rio Grande in this reach. The Planning Project will first determine how to integrate the rehabilitation of the McDonald Ditch Diversion with the multiple objectives of a 2001 study to analyze the condition of the Rio Grande, the restoration of the neighboring Silva, Atencio, and Prairie diversions, the stabilization of the surrounding riparian areas, and the best available science. The Plaza Project – Phase I will produce the Plaza Plan for implementation in Phase II, which may include replacing headgates, integrating micro-hydro power, restoring riparian areas, and stabilizing the main channel. The Plan will align future actions with the interests of landowners and residents in one of Colorado’s oldest communities, identifying and addressing the multiple objectives of stakeholders on the river.

The Partnership is requesting \$40,000 to conduct the Plaza Project - Phase I. These funds will be used to hire a Project Coordinator (Coordinator), to compensate the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) for its labor and direct costs, and to contract geomorphic and micro-hydropower engineering expertise. It is anticipated the NRCS will perform all necessary engineering and design associated with the Phase I - Planning and Phase II. Working for the Partnership, the Coordinator will organize the collaboration of stakeholders and facilitate communication between a diverse mix of governmental and community entities. The Coordinator will help to create “The Plaza Stakeholders” as a vital advisory arm to the Partnership, enabling the Phase I – Planning to meet multiple objectives and to address the diverse consumptive and nonconsumptive needs in this 2.8 mile reach of the Rio Grande.

The Plaza Project -Phase I will create the Plaza Plan, which will include the final design and implementation plan for the McDonald Ditch Diversion and preliminary designs for the other defined

elements. It will address multiple objectives in the 2001 Study, seek matching funds, and pursue supplemental grant funding for Phase II, ensuring the long-term capability to monitor and administer these projects and promoting the values of conservation and good river stewardship.

Discussion:

The Plaza Project is a two phase Project where functional and environmental issues will be identified and addressed on four ditch companies' headgates and the riparian areas within a 2.8 mile stretch of the Rio Grande near the Sevenmile Plaza in Rio Grande County, CO. According to the RGHRP 2001 Study, this area is within Reach C, which ranks "poorest" in channel stability and condition of the floodplain and was identified as high priority for restoration (see "Exhibit 8 Subreach Rating Criteria"). The channel in this area is greatly impacted by structures and land use activities. Specifically, piers and concrete rubble from the old Sevenmile Plaza Bridge were left in the channel to form part of the McDD diversion, obstructing flood flows, causing channel movement and instability, and negatively impacting downstream reaches. Furthermore, other nearby diversions have been identified as vulnerable to sediment buildup and as contributing to streambank instability.

Staff supports the efforts of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project. In the past, RGHRP has received funding from the CWCB through the Water Supply Reserve Account and the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund. Past grants have addressed river restoration projects in priority reaches identified in the 2001 Study, which was funded by a \$200,000 grant from the CWCB. RGHRP continues to demonstrate an ability to restore the priority reaches of the Rio Grande through collaborative efforts with the CWCB, local landowners, Federal Agencies, and other State Agencies.

Issues/Additional Needs:

- Staff will work with the applicant to ensure that all applicable requirements in the CWCB Rules and Regulations for Regulatory Floodplains in Colorado are satisfied.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of up to \$40,000 from the Rio Grande Basin Account to assist in the funding of McDonald Ditch and Plaza Phase I Project contingent upon the resolution of the issues and additional needs identified in this summary.

All products, data and information developed as a result of this grant must be provided to the 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.

In accordance with the revised WSRA Criteria and Guidelines, staff would like to highlight additional reporting and final deliverable requirements. The specific requirements are provided below.

Reporting: The applicant shall provide the CWCB a progress report every 6 months, beginning from the date of the executed contract. The progress report shall describe the completion or partial completion of the tasks identified in the scope of work including a description of any major issues that have occurred and any corrective action taken to address these issues.

Final Deliverable: At completion of the project, the applicant shall provide the CWCB a final report that summarizes the project and documents how the project was completed. This report may contain photographs, summaries of meetings and engineering reports/designs.

Engineering: All engineering work (as defined in the Engineers Practice Act (§12-25-102(10) C.R.S.)) performed under this grant shall be performed by or under the responsible charge of professional engineer licensed by the State of Colorado to practice Engineering.