

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board

FROM: Steve Miller, Interstate & Federal Section

DATE: November 1, 2011

RE: **Agenda Item 18a, November 15-16, 2011 Board Meeting**
Non-Reimbursable Investments – CWCB
Tamarisk Cost-Sharing Grant Program – Phase II

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

Introduction

This application requests that the Board continue "on-the-ground" tamarisk control efforts with a Phase II after successful implementation of the initial \$1 million grant program authorized by HB08-1346. The Finance Committee referred this proposal to the full Board for further consideration with a request that Board staff provide additional discussion about program modifications to be implemented if Phase II is authorized. A brief history of the Board's involvement with tamarisk control prior to 2008 is provided below. The anticipated federal funding to assist in this effort never materialized, but significant local government and non-profit group funding has been utilized in Phase I of the program allowing CWCB funds to be leveraged at an estimated minimum rate greater than 2:1, (\$1 CWCB + \$2 non-CWCB = \$3 project cost).

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board request that the General Assembly authorize an additional \$1,000,000 from the Construction Fund to be appropriated to the CWCB to fund another round of cost-shared control grants through the CWCB – Tamarisk Cost-Sharing Grant Program – Phase II. CWCB staff will be available to answer questions about this proposal.

Discussion

Tamarisk (also known as salt cedar) and Russian olive are well known invasive (non-native) phreatophyte ("water loving") vegetation that have massively displaced native riparian vegetation throughout most watersheds in Colorado over the last 50 years. More recently an invasive subspecies of common reed or phragmites has made inroads in eastern Colorado. Negative impacts of these species include lost habitat values, reduced public access to stream corridors, degradation of river channels and reduction in flood conveyance capacity, and non-beneficial consumption of scarce water supplies.

The \$1 million authorized in HB08-1346 was allocated to grantees in a competitive process in the spring of 2009. A list of the funded projects and current estimated per cent complete is shown below. All funded projects will be completed by June 30, 2012. These projects have been extremely successful in assisting local communities to address infestations along their waterways, but the amount of remaining work is still enormous. By authorizing a Phase II of the grant program the Board can build on the momentum developed during Phase I and keep newly established local efforts moving forward.

The new Phase II program would build on experience learned in Phase I and utilize revised grant criteria with a more “holistic” approach to woody invasive control emphasizing coordinated riparian restoration elements. Staff will first coordinate closely across sections, particularly with the Watershed and Flood Protection Section. We would then convene one or two workshops this winter, possibly at the February 2012 Tamarisk Coalition Symposium in Grand Junction. The purpose of the workshops would be to seek input from current grantees, riparian and watershed restoration experts, and other interested parties on how best to utilize limited State funds in helping to address the significant problem of riparian vegetative invasives. Specifically we would consider the following:

- Which species would be eligible for control grants, all aquatic invasive vegetation or just woody invasives such as tamarisk, Russian olive, and phragmites.
- Whether exiting local invasive control plans are adequate or need to be updated before serving as a basis for implementing grant funded activities.
- How best to incorporate bio-control and the successful spread on the tamarisk leaf beetle into a grant program.
- What rate of State cost-sharing is appropriate.
- How to coordinate with other CWCB grant programs, such as WSRA.
- How to coordinate with other DNR agency programs, such as Parks and Wildlife.
- How best to coordinate and leverage with federal programs such as USDA-EQIP.
- How to simplify budget and billing procedures, perhaps by providing an incentive type payment as opposed to the current reimbursement of eligible expenses model.
- Whether, and how to prioritize projects most consistent with Board missions. For instance should projects that provide measurable flood protection benefits be favored over projects that improve recreational access.
- What types of lands should be eligible for treatment: federal, state, local government, and/or private.
- Are a few larger, targeted projects more beneficial than scattered small demonstration projects that provide more communities an opportunity to participate in CWCB funded invasives control.

Staff would compile the results of the workshop and then work with a smaller group of experts in grant management and invasives to develop new grant criteria which would be presented to the Board at the March or May 2012 meetings. After comment by the Board and necessary modifications the criteria would be finalized and a competitive grant process conducted in the summer of 2012.

Statewide Interest

The problem of tamarisk and/or Russian olive infestation reaches into all watersheds of the state. The grant program proposed herein would continue to be available statewide. As noted below, past Gov. Owens issued an Executive Order mandating the elimination of tamarisk from all public lands in Colorado by 2013. While this goal will never be achieved, it does remain State policy to provide leadership on control efforts.

Tamarisk Control Cost-Sharing Grant Program 2007 Background

HISTORY – CWCB's involvement has been substantial in developing a well planned strategy to solving Colorado's tamarisk problem. A brief history of CWCB's actions is provided below.

1. Recognizing the severity of this problem, Executive Order D00203 directs *DNR, the Dept. of Agriculture, and any other state agency ... to take measures necessary to eradicate tamarisk on public lands within 10 years ...* and to *"submit a report ... outlining a viable plan. . .*
2. In January 2004 DNR submitted the required plan to Governor's office and it was accepted. The plan recommends a local watershed based approach to tamarisk control, with the state providing a technical assistance and coordinating role. CWCB took on this challenge.
3. On Oct. 11, 2006 the President signed the *Salt Cedar and Russian olive Control Demonstration Act, PL 109-320*. Sponsors included Rep. Udall and Salazar, and Sen. Allard and Salazar. The Act authorizes matching funding for large-scale demonstration projects. Colorado is now in the best position of any state to access this grant program when federal funding becomes available.
4. In 2006 and 2007 CWCB completed the statewide mapping and inventorying of tamarisk.
5. In 2007 the *Colorado Headwaters Invasives Partnership (CHIP)* plan was completed for the Colorado, Gunnison, and Dolores rivers and endorsed by Governor Ritter. Currently, companion plans for the Arkansas, Purgatoire, White, San Juan, Republican, and Yampa rivers are in various stages of completion. All are being completed through a grant for technical assistance from CWCB.
6. A little over one year ago DNR Director Russ George was adamant that the state needed to "stop talking and start doing" something about the tamarisk problem in Colorado. CWCB is ready to move into "on-the-ground" tamarisk and Russian olive control efforts.

COST-SHARING GRANT PROGRAM DETAILS –

CWCB has included a provision in its 2008 "Projects Bill" to allocate \$1,000,000 from the severance tax trust fund operational account to the Board's Construction Fund to be used in implementing a Cost-sharing Grant Program for Tamarisk Control. CWCB's intent for these funds is:

1. Tamarisk and Russian olive control, revegetation, and monitoring to ensure successful restoration of riparian lands.
2. Local match of a minimum of one half of the costs of restoration as non-state cost-sharing, which may consist of a combination of in-kind and cash match.
3. Grants available to communities, conservation districts, non-profits, and other eligible entities through a competitive process with input from the Colorado Department of Agriculture.
4. A portion of the appropriated fund, not to exceed 10 percent, will be used for grant program administration, scientific research, and monitoring to better target projects and assess their effectiveness. The supervisory financial management role shall remain with the CWCB.
5. Use the Cost-sharing Grant Program as seed funds to take full advantage of other grant programs from Federal sources such as EPA, Corps of Engineers, and USDA; and from private foundations. It is CWCB's intent that upon demonstration of the grant program's success, the CWCB will request additional funding in future fiscal years.

CWCB Construction Fund – Tamarisk and Russian Olive Control Grant Program – Phase 1

In FY2010-11 grantees made significant progress on implementing their control projects. Projects were initially planned to be completed by June 30, 2011, but many requested additional time and were approved for extensions through June 2012, primarily to reflect the seasonal nature of the control work, but also to more effectively utilize their grant funds. It appears that the CWCB funds have on average been leveraged with other funds at a ratio of 1:2 at a minimum, meaning each dollar from the CWCB has produced at least \$3 of control work.

Control Project Grants				
App #	Applicant	Project Name	Grant Amount	Est. % Complete
NW2	City of Grand Junction	Watson Island Complex Restoration	\$100,000	25
SE3	Branson-Trinchera Cons. Dist.	Purgatoire River Watershed Riparian Restoration	\$100,000	75
NE4	Yuma County Pest Control Dist.	Republican River Watershed Riparian Restoration	\$100,000	90
SW3	The Nature Conservancy	Dolores Restoration	\$100,000	80
SW1	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe	Ute Mountain Tribe TRO	\$75,000	25
SE4	Sangre de Cristo RC&D	Upper Arkansas Watershed Riparian Restoration	\$75,000	75
NE1	Boulder County Parks & Open Space	Boulder County Collaborative TRO	\$85,000	95
NW1	Delta County Noxious Weed Program	Delta County River Restoration	\$40,000	90
NW3	Western Colorado Conservation Corps	Island Acres TRO	\$10,000	100
NE2	Sedgwick County Cons. Dist.	TRO Removal, Wildlife Approval	\$10,000	75
SW2	Dolores Cons. Dist.	McElmo Creek Tamarisk Removal	\$25,000	50
NE3	Weld County Weed Div.	TRO - Cache La Poudre River	\$30,000	95
SE1	SE Colorado WCD	ARKWIPP Riparian Restoration	\$150,000	95
Subtotal control projects = \$900,000				
Science & Administration Projects				
	Tamarisk Coalition	2010 Grand Junction Symposium	\$5,000	100
	Tamarisk Coalition	Reno Research Symposium	\$5,000	100
	Tamarisk Coalition	Technical services for grant administration	\$25,000	100
	Sangre de Cristo RC&D	CSU Feasibility/Monitoring Study	\$25,000	50
	Tamarisk Coalition	Salt Wash Monitoring & Demo	\$25,000	10
	CSU Weed Lab	Knapweed strategies for reveg areas	\$15,000	50
Subtotal science projects = \$100,000				
Program Total Cost = \$1,000,000				

Water Project Construction Program - Project Data

Non-Reimbursable Investment

Grantee: CWCB Internal Program
County: Statewide
Project Name: Phreatophyte and Riparian Woody Invasives Control Grants
(Tamarisk and Russian Olive Grants – Phase II)
Project Type: Cost-shared demonstration grants for riparian restoration
Drainage Basin: Statewide
Water Source: Statewide
Total Project Cost: \$1 Million CWCB funds, leveraged 2:1; total estimated program value = \$3 Million
Funding Source: CWCB Construction Fund
Type of Grantee: Local government conservation, land management, and weed control agencies and non-profits.
CWCB Non-Reimbursable Investment: \$1,000,000

SUMMARY

In 2008 the CWCB created a \$1 million tamarisk and Russian olive control demonstration, cost-shared grant program. In 2009 14 control projects were funded with a total dollar value of \$900,00 and an additional 5-6 research activities were funded for \$100,000. Many of those projects will be completed in 2011, with several carrying over to June 2012. The volume of non-State cost-sharing leveraged with those grants is in excess of 2:1. The amount of control work remaining is enormous and the potential for earmarked federal funds has not materialized. By offering additional cost-sharing grants the CWCB can address a serious ongoing need and stimulate matching funds from federal, local government and private land owners.