

**Water Supply Reserve Account – Grant and Loan Program  
Water Activity Summary Sheet  
March 2012 Agenda Item 19.a**

**Applicant:** Blue River Watershed Group

**Water Activity Name:** Upper Swan River Restoration Project

**Water Activity Purpose:** Nonconsumptive

**County:** Summit

**Drainage Basin:** Colorado River

**Water Source:** Swan River

**Amount Requested:** \$30,000 (Colorado Basin Account)

**Matching Funds:** \$10,000 Town of Breckenridge; \$10,000 Summit County Open Space and Trails

<b>Staff Recommendation</b>
Staff recommends approval of up to \$30,000 from the Colorado Basin Account to help complete the Upper Swan River Restoration Project.

**Water Activity Summary:**

The Swan River drainage located east of Breckenridge and west of the Continental Divide, and its sensitive aquatic habitat, wetlands and riparian areas are identified as priority resources for protection and enhancement in Summit County Master Plans and U. S. Forest Service management plans. Summit County Government, the Town of Breckenridge, the U.S. Forest Service, and others have been working collaboratively to purchase and protect land in this watershed for over 15 years. The U.S. Forest Service has initiated a large-scale collaborative partnership effort to restore the entire Upper Swan River Watershed. The White River National Forest is pursuing landscape restoration as a top priority. The Blue River Watershed Group, (BRWG), working with these groups and others has made the Upper Swan River Restoration one of its major projects. It notable to have private property landowners working with local, county, state and federal government and other private groups such as Friends of the Dillon Ranger District and Trout Unlimited cooperatively.

The Upper Swan River Watershed is incredibly important due to the potential to restore hydrological function and water quality throughout a 24,000 acre watershed. A preliminary assessment of the watershed shows that restoration of 2.2 miles of the Swan River devastated by dredge mining in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century might provide stream continuity to 17 miles of habitat and significantly decrease unnatural rates of sedimentation. The 17 miles of reconnected stream would provide outstanding habitat for a reintroduced meta-population of Colorado River cutthroat trout. Currently, Colorado River cutthroat trout are struggling throughout the Colorado Basin as a result of habitat degradation and the invasion of non-native species. The overall project is expected to provide significant benefits to species as a whole throughout the Colorado Basin by providing additional habitat and by significantly reducing adverse impacts from sedimentation.

Summit County Government and the Town of Breckenridge completed a conceptual design for restoration of approximately 1.0 stream mile on their public properties in 2009, and more recently the BRWG undertook a master planning process focused on all private properties for approximately 1.2 miles upstream. The current request is for the critical funding required to integrate these two efforts into one plan. This integration will establish the key elevations needed for road crossings and advance the overall design to a level that necessary permit applications can be developed and submitted. This design effort, coupled with the ongoing design of gravel mining operations, will

allow cost estimates to be developed and a reclamation strategy to be finalized. This level of design will allow the participants to secure funding and begin implementation of this project on both public and private lands.

The design phase will begin as soon as funding is available. It is expected to last about four months. Much of the work will not require field access, but the current schedule looks like the design period will coincide with some of the summer's field season. Following the completion of this design, which will include a better idea of overall restoration costs, fundraising will begin in earnest. The overall schedule is integrally tied to the mining of the dredge materials. It is hoped that the project can be completed in 3-5 years. A more detailed schedule is not possible until more information is developed and is dependent in part on our ability to raise money for the actual restoration activities.

The consulting firm Ecological Resource Consultants, Inc. is just completing the conceptual design on the private lands. The next effort will advance that design and integrate it with the Summit County Open Space and Town of Breckenridge Open Space and Trails conceptual design, advancing both designs to a more detailed level. The cost estimate for this design work is \$42,000.00. With the appropriate management of the project by the Blue River Watershed Group and the need and desire to continue this effort collaboratively with multiple parties, the budget for this phase is \$50,000.00. The remaining \$20,000.00 will come from the Summit County Open Space and Trails and the Town of Breckenridge. There will be continued in-kind contributions from the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Friends of the Dillon Ranger District, Trout Unlimited, and the private landowners which are not included in this budget.

#### *Threshold and Evaluation Criteria*

The application/project meets all four Threshold Criteria. No Statewide funds are being requested, therefore the evaluation criteria does not apply.

#### **Discussion:**

This project will assist the Colorado Basin Roundtable in addressing important identified nonconsumptive needs within the basin. It will restore natural stream process to improve sediment transport, reduce erosion, improve water quality and create better-functioning in-stream and riparian corridor habitat. The Upper Swan River Restoration Project will directly implement the "Conserve, Protect, and Restore" strategy mentioned in SWSI II. In addition, the restoration of the natural function of the river will improve riparian and fish habitat, enhance recreational and educational opportunities. The Swan River has an instream flow right for 6 cfs. The project reach of the Swan River will make much better use of the instream flow once it is restored.

#### **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 will enroll the Swan River Project into the CWCB Watershed Protection Measureable Results Program. All channel surveys, i.e. cross sections, should comply with the Standard Operating Procedures: Topographic Survey of Stream Channels developed by the CWCB, Colorado Watershed Assembly, and the Water Quality Control Division.

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval of up to \$30,000 from the Colorado Basin Account to help complete the Upper Swan River Restoration Project.

All products, data and information developed as a result of this grant must be provided to 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 or certified by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Colorado to practice Engineering.