

**Water Supply Reserve Account – Grant and Loan Program
Water Activity Summary Sheet
Agenda Item 14.d**

Applicant: Colorado Open Lands

Water Activity Name: Lake San Cristobal Inlet Preservation and Fishing Access Project

Water Activity Purpose: Implementation of Nonconsumptive Project

County: Hinsdale

River Basin: Gunnison

Water Source: Lake Fork Gunnison River

Amount Requested: \$150,300 (Statewide Account); \$16,700 (Gunnison Basin Account)

Matching Funds: Significant cash match. Total project costs exceed \$1,800,000 and this WSRA request comprises less than 10% of total costs.

Staff Recommendation
Staff recommends approval of up to \$16,700 from the Gunnison Basin Account and \$150,300 from the Statewide Account to fund the Arkansas River Basin Study.

Water Activity Summary:

Located approximately three miles south of Lake City in Hinsdale County, Lake San Cristobal is the second largest natural lake in the state of Colorado. The 320-acre lake and the majority of the surrounding lands are owned by Hinsdale County and the Bureau of Land Management, and Lake San Cristobal is a popular destination for fishing, boating, and camping. Hinsdale County manages several public sites on the Lake including a campground, a day-use picnic area, and a boat launch.

At the southern end of Lake San Cristobal is an expansive wetland delta formed by the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River as it empties into the lake. The delta is comprised of a complex of historic channels, remnant beaver dams, patches of open water, and diverse and largely intact montane wetlands, which all provide important habitat for a diverse array of wildlife species and provide critical water quality functions such as flood control and sediment filtration. The majority of this delta is privately owned (referred to herein as the Lake San Cristobal Inlet property).

The 116-acre Lake San Cristobal Inlet property contains approximately 79 acres of wetlands and 0.65 miles of the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. The Inlet property is completely surrounded by County and BLM land and is the only significant piece of private property at the south end of the Lake. The landowners have historically allowed the public to access the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River on the property for fishing through a handshake agreement with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife's District Wildlife Manager. The property is minimally signed and is not marked as open to the public, but still receives significant use.

The objective of the project is to protect the property from future development and inappropriate land management that could jeopardize its recreational, wildlife, and scenic characteristics, and to guarantee permanent public access to the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River for fly fishing. Many of the characteristics that make the property a high priority for conservation also align closely with the Gunnison Basin Roundtable's Non-consumptive Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment identifies Lake San Cristobal a "Major Recreational Segment" due to its "Highest Recreation and Fishery" attributes. This project ensures the protection of or directly enhances nearly all of the attributes identified in the Needs Assessment for Lake

San Cristobal. In addition, the project meets the Gunnison Basin Roundtable objective of “Preserving Open Space” in a highly sensitive scenic landscape. Using funding from Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s “Fishing is Fun” program, and the Gunnison Basin Roundtable, Colorado Open Lands will negotiate and bargain purchase a conservation easement and permanent access agreement from the landowners to ensure that the property’s conservation values are preserved and protected in perpetuity.

Threshold and Evaluation Criteria

The application meets all four Threshold Criteria.

The application articulates how the project meets the Evaluation Criteria as summarized below:

Tier 1: Promoting Collaboration/Cooperation & Meeting Water Management Goals & Identified Needs:

The project has a direct tie to the nonconsumptive needs identified in the Gunnison Basin Roundtable’s needs assessment. The project is a result of collaboration among numerous and diverse entities: the private landowners, Colorado Open Lands, the Lake Fork Valley Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited. Written support for the project has been provided by the Hinsdale Board of County Commissioners, the Trustees of the Town of Lake City, The Lake City/ Hinsdale County Chamber of Commerce, the Hinsdale County School District Re-1, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Lake City Downtown Improvement and Rehabilitation Team. As explained elsewhere, both the Board of the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund and Colorado Parks and Wildlife have made substantial financial commitments to the project.

Tier 2: Facilitating Water Activity Implementation:

This WSRA grant will help provide the necessary funding to implement this project. As mentioned prior, this request is only 10% of total costs. The applicant has described the urgency of providing the protection to this important parcel and the risks associated with not protecting this property in the near future.

Tier 3: The Water Activity Addresses Issues of Statewide Value and Maximizes Benefits:

The property is situated in a matrix of public lands owned by Hinsdale County and the Bureau of Land Management, both of which are under special conservation and management status. The project will protect scenic views from two Colorado Scenic Byways, the Alpine Loop Scenic Byway and the Silver Thread Scenic Byway as it traverses Slumgullion Pass. The property provides prime wildlife viewing opportunities for travelers on the Alpine Loop Scenic Byway. Moose, deer, elk, waterfowl, and bald eagle are commonly spotted on the property.

The property is the visual centerpiece for the general public recreating on and around Lake San Cristobal, which is a popular destination for fishing, camping and boating. This project will protect 2,175 linear feet of the shoreline of Lake San Cristobal from inappropriate uses and management, and will secure permanent public access to 0.65 miles of the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River that flows through the property for fly fishing. Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff estimate that as a result of the public access, the property will be used by 150 anglers per month (375 angler hours) during the summer months. The conservation easement and permanent public access agreement will ensure the protection of these critical natural and recreational resources.

The delta is comprised of a complex of historic channels, remnant beaver dams, patches of open water, and diverse and largely intact montane wetlands, with extremely high functional values and that support a diverse array of wildlife species. The Colorado Natural Areas Program has documented the presence of a thriving population of Northern Leopard Frog at this site, which is designated as a Species of Special Concern by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. The Colorado Natural Areas Program has also nominated the site for recognition as a Colorado Natural Area.

Discussion:

Staff believes this project is an collaborative project that helps meet an important identified need(s) in the Gunnison Basin. The applicant did a great job detailing how this project meets the evaluation criteria and how it meets the numerous criteria. Considering that this request is only 10% of total costs, staff believes this project is an excellent example of effective leveraging of other resources and collaborating with other partners.

Issues/Additional Needs:

None identified.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of up to \$16,700 from the Gunnison Basin Account and \$150,300 from the Statewide Account to fund the Arkansas River Basin Study.

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 and Final Deliverable: 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. 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.

Location Map:

(next page)

Lake San Cristobal Inlet Preservation and Fishing Access Project

Hinsdale County, Colorado

Area Map



Created by Colorado Open Lands, March 2012

Data Sources: Colorado Open Lands,
Colorado Ownership Management and Protection (COMaPv8)
USA Topo Maps - USGS

This map is not a survey and must not be construed as one.



0 0.4 0.8 1.6 Miles

