

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Chris Sturm, Stream Restoration Coordinator
Watershed Protection and Flood Mitigation Section

DATE: November 8, 2013

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 28b, November 19-20, 2013 Board Meeting**
Finance – Construction Fund Non-Reimbursable Investment - Referred
Colorado Watershed Restoration Program

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

James Eklund
CWCB Director

Introduction

Staff is requesting from the CWCB Non-Reimbursable Investment Program an appropriation of \$500,000 for the continuation of the Watershed Restoration Program. CWCB supports watershed restoration projects presented by multiple stakeholders with diverse interests. The results are plans and projects designed to satisfy a range of non-consumptive and consumptive water use objectives. Many of these efforts are completed on small budgets funded through several sources of local, state and/or federal funds. There is often a community volunteer component that contributes in-kind services through donated materials and time. The Colorado Watershed Restoration Program (CWRP) has funded 32 projects with over \$1,000,000 since its first grant cycle in January 2009. The projects have leveraged \$6.50 for every \$1.00 contributed by CWRP.

In recent years Colorado has experienced mega-fires that have severely burned portions of watersheds critical to water supply. Post-fire soils are often hydrophobic, and this results in increased runoff after a rain event. Post-fire runoff has mobilized massive amounts of sediment to reservoirs and depositional stream reaches below burn areas. Many ephemeral drainages and perennial streams continue to contribute inordinate amounts of sediment after the forest begins to heal. The incised channels do not dissipate flood energy well, and the stream banks become a source for increased sediment loading. Staff is requesting more money for the program this year in order to address post fire restoration efforts. Priority will be given to those burn areas with the greatest potential to adversely affect water supplies.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve this request the General Assembly to authorize this project and appropriate \$500,000 from the Construction Fund to the Department of Natural Resources for allocation to CWCB for the Watershed Restoration Program.

CWCB Water Project Non-Reimbursable Investment Program

Project Data Sheet

Sponsor: Colorado Water Conservation Board

Location: Statewide

Project Name: Colorado Watershed Restoration Program

Project Type: Watershed Protection

Drainage Basin: All Colorado River Basins

Water Source: Various

Total Project Cost: Up to 50% Cost Share

Funding Source: Construction Fund

CWCB NRI: \$500,000

Type of Grantee: State Agency & Watersheds

The Program objective is to provide funding for watershed restoration studies and projects. Special consideration is given to projects that reduce flood hazards, protect infrastructure, stabilize post-fire watersheds, and increase benefits for water supply. Past projects successfully completed with aid from the Construction Fund include post-fire channel stabilization on Trail Creek in the Hayman burn area, channel stabilization and restoration on the North Fork Gunnison River in Paonia, and channel design planning on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. Program funding has also been used in conjunction with funding from the Water Quality Control Division to develop a Measureable Results Program (MRP). Studies and projects resulting from this program can have far reaching benefits for water supply, flood protection, forest restoration (including post-fire), enhancement of aesthetic and environmental quality, recreation, and increased economic benefit. The CWCB has not had access to a regular and reliable source of funding for this Program in past years. Instead, special allocations on an annual basis from Severance Tax and Construction Fund investments have provided support for the Program. The Program has funded 32 projects since the first grant cycle in January 2009. Total project funding exceeds \$1,000,000. The projects have leveraged \$6.5 for every \$1 contributed by the Program. Twenty-three of the thirty-two projects funded have been mapped with focus areas identified in the Non-Consumptive Needs Assessment. The Program is intended for statewide benefit. The map below displays projects funded since 2009.

Colorado Watershed Restoration Program Grant Projects 2009 - 2012

