Alternative Agricultural Water Transfer Methods – Competitive Grant Program
Water Activity Summary Sheet
Agenda Item 30.a.

Applicant: Conejos Water Conservancy District

Water Activity Name: Use of ATMs to Increase Supplies for Conejos Basin, Agricultural, Municipal and Environmental Purposes

Water Activity Purpose: Nonstructural Activity

Drainage Basin: Rio Grande

Water Source: Conejos River

Amount Requested: $124,124

Matching Funds: $13,792 (cash); $12,740 in-kind

Staff Recommendation
Staff recommends approval of up to $124,124 from the Alternative Agricultural Water Transfer Methods Program to help fund the "Use of ATMs to Increase Supplies for Conejos Basin, Agricultural, Municipal and Environmental Purposes" project contingent upon resolution of the items in the issues/additional needs section of this summary.

Water Activity Summary:
The Conejos Water Conservancy District (District) is located in Conejos County in southern Colorado in the Rio Grande Basin (Water Division 3). The District includes 88,000 acres of irrigated agriculture and the towns of Manassa, Romeo, Sanford, Conejos, Antonito, Ortiz and San Antonio. Another town, La Jara, is located just north of the District boundaries. Several of these towns rely upon partially or entirely on groundwater pumping for their water supply. The State of Colorado is in the process of developing rules and regulations for the Rio Grande Basin, which will require these towns to replace approximately fifteen to eighteen percent of their pumping (augmentation water). To meet their replacement requirements, the towns will look to agricultural water resources within the basin as there is not water available for appropriation under a new water right. Due to limited surface water supplies in the basin, these towns will have no choice but to directly dry-up irrigated land by purchasing agricultural water rights or indirectly dry up agriculture by competing for Platoro Reservoir project water currently used to irrigate agricultural lands. Acquisition of transbasin augmentation water diverted into the upper Rio Grande upstream of Creede is unlikely due to the completion and high transit losses incurred in transporting these augmentation supplies to the points of depletion from the municipal pumping.

Water stored in Platoro Reservoir (Project water) is allocated to lands within the District based on acreage. Platoro Reservoir is located on the mainstem of the Conejos river and serves a large part of the irrigated lands within the District. The District includes other water users on the San Antonio river, a tributary to the Conejos river. Agricultural irrigators on the San Antonio river within the District are entitled to a pro-rata share of project water in Platoro reservoir, but Project water cannot be delivered to these users by gravity flow or existing infrastructure. The purpose of this ATM project is to investigate the opportunities for the transfer of the allocation of San Antonio river agricultural water users' Project water to the Towns to meet their augmentation water requirement without loss or impact to the irrigated agricultural lands.

The Rio De Los Pinos is a tributary to the San Antonio river and is the second largest river in the system. Trujillo Meadows Reservoir is located near the headwaters of the Rio De Los Pinos in southern Colorado. Trujillo Meadows Reservoir is owned by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and is an on-channel reservoir used for recreation. The reservoir bypasses all inflows so as to maintain a constant pool elevation. Out of priority evaporation losses from Trujillo Meadows are augmented through releases by CPW from Beaver

Reservoir on the mainstem of the Rio Grande. The peak runoff in the Rio De Los Pinos is in early spring, usually a month before the Conejos and San Antonio rivers, generally occurring too early in the season for beneficial use by irrigated agricultural users diverting from the San Antonio. Enlarging Trujillo Meadows Reservoir would create enough storage space to re-time run-off in order to better meet agricultural irrigation needs, enhance stream flow for a longer period of time during the spring and provide reliable supply of agricultural water so that the San Antonio river irrigators can lease their Project water allocation to the Towns for the augmentation needs.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the feasibility of a unique ATM that involves enlarging Trujillo Meadows Reservoir that preserves agriculture in the District and provides a reliable supply of augmentation water for the Towns. In addition, the project will also evaluate the other multiple-objective benefits that are possible, such as enhanced recreational opportunity at Trujillo Meadows Reservoir, potential environmental benefits such as enhanced riparian habitat, re-timing of streamflows on the Rio De Los Pinos and the on the Conejos below Platoro due to the release of augmentation water to the Towns, and meeting Compact delivery requirements.

Discussion:
Staff believes that this project, if implemented, could help meet the water supply needs for a variety of sectors (agricultural, environmental and municipal) and prevent the dry-up of irrigated lands in this area. The CWCB, the IBCC and Basin Roundtables have all indicated that storage is a necessary component for helping meet Colorado's future water needs and this approach which seeks multiple partners, interests and purposes is directly in line with these policy statements. The CWCB has also indicated that they desire for the ATM program to help fund projects that are facilitating projects, agreements and pilot/demonstrations. While this request is for a feasibility analysis, it is focused on a real problem with the objective of finding solutions.

Issues/Additional Needs:
None identified.

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 Criteria and Guidelines of the Alternative Agricultural Water Transfer Methods Competitive Grant Program, 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.