

Colorado Watershed Restoration Program

Grant Program Guidance

August 2020

A. Background

House Bill 20-1403, passed by the 2020 Colorado General Assembly, establishes funding for Watershed Restoration. The allocation for the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program is **\$4,000,000**. The legislative declaration states:

SECTION 10. Continuation of the watershed restoration program - appropriation. (1) For the 2020-21 state fiscal year, \$4,000,000 is appropriated to the department of natural resources for use by the Colorado water conservation board. This appropriation is from the Colorado water conservation board construction fund created in section 37-60-121, C.R.S. To implement this section, the Colorado water conservation board may use this appropriation to provide planning and engineering studies, including implementation measures, to address technical needs for watershed restoration and flood mitigation projects throughout the state; aquatic habitat protection; flexible operations for multiple uses; restoration work; quantification of environmental flow needs; and monitoring efforts to support watershed health goals outlined in the state water plan.

(2) The money appropriated in subsection (1) of this section remains available for the designated purposes until it is fully expended.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is the state executive branch agency responsible for state water policy and planning. The Board's mission is to conserve, develop, protect, and manage Colorado's water for present and future generations. Its major program sections include Watershed & Flood Protection; Water Supply Planning; Finance; Stream and Lake Protection; and Intrastate & Federal. More information about the CWCB and its sections can be found at <http://cwcb.state.co.us/>.

The purpose of this Grant Program Guidance is to establish and describe the program for the issuance and administration of grants from the CWCB Watershed Restoration Program.

B. Grant Approval Criteria

1. Competitive Process

The Board will select the projects to fund from applications that best meet the basic application (B.2) and evaluation criteria (B.4). CWCB staff reserves the right to negotiate with successful applicants to modify the scope and/or budget of their projects to better meet CWCB objectives and fund availability. An evaluation team will review the applications and recommend projects for grant funding. The evaluation team will consist of at least four members, including CWCB staff members, a Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff member, and possibly an environmental or volunteer organization member, if available. The Watershed and Flood Protection section chief will have approval authority for funding recommendations less than \$100,000. Staff will submit funding recommendations for grants greater than or equal to \$100,000 for Board action at the January CWCB meeting.

2. Grant Categories

Four categories of grants will be available under the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program:

- Watershed/Stream Restoration and/or Protection (Restoration) Grants
- Flood Mitigation Grants
- Stream Management Plan Grants
- CWCB Monitoring Projects

Restoration, Flood Mitigation, and Stream Management Plan grants are available to qualified applicants outside of the CWCB (see basic applicant qualifications). Applications that integrate multiple objectives in restoration, flood mitigation, and stream management are highly encouraged.

CWCB staff may initiate studies or demonstration projects (restoration or flood mitigation) utilizing up to 25% of the annually authorized Program funding amount.

Watershed/Stream Restoration Grants

Projects and plans designed to protect or restore watershed health and stream function are considered in this category. This may include projects and plans designed to stabilize perennial, ephemeral, & intermittent stream channels, provide habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species, re-vegetate riparian areas, reduce erosion in upland and riverine environments, improve recreational opportunities, provide fish passage, and improve channel/floodplain connectivity. Restoration is a general term that may include the restoration, reconfiguration, rehabilitation, or resurrection of stream channels and floodplains. More background information on watershed health can be found in Chapter 7.1 of the Colorado Water Plan.

Flood Mitigation Grants

Flood Mitigation Grants include many of the same elements as Restoration Grants. In addition, they include elements that protect life and property. Applications for planning or project implementation should consider the watershed's hydrologic function and flow regime in its approach to flood mitigation. This includes channel design that contemplates low flow channels, average high water (bankfull) channels, flood prone benches, transitional zones, and 100 year or greater recurrence interval floodplains. In extreme cases, the amount of the

required cost-share for each project can be reduced. CWCB staff will take into account benefits to the State with a strong emphasis on public health, safety, and welfare.

Stream Management Plan Grants

Well-developed Stream Management Plans should be grounded in the complex interplay of biology, hydrology, channel morphology, and alternative water use and management strategies. They should also consider the flow and other structural or management conditions needed to support both recreational uses and ecosystem function. A stream management plan should: (1) Involve stakeholders to ensure their acceptance of the plan; (2) assess existing biological, hydrological, and geomorphological conditions at a reach scale; (3) identify flows and other physical conditions needed to support environmental and recreational water uses; (4) incorporate environmental and recreational values and goals identified both locally and in a basin roundtable's BIP; and (5) identify and prioritize alternative management actions to achieve measurable progress toward maintaining or improving flow regimes and other physical conditions. For basin roundtables, local stakeholder groups, and decision makers, such plans can provide a framework for decision-making and project implementation related to environmental and recreational water needs.

The necessary steps for the development of a stream management plan include: (1) Gathering stakeholders to participate in plan development; (2) identifying the plan's objectives; (3) identifying and prioritizing ecological and recreational values; (4) establishing goals for flows and other physical conditions in order to protect or enhance environmental and recreational attributes on streams and rivers within a given watershed; (5) collecting and synthesizing existing data describing flows for river ecosystems, boating, or other needs in the watershed; (6) assessing existing physical conditions of stream reaches, including geomorphological and riparian conditions; (7) selecting quantitative measures that can be used to assess progress made toward articulated goals; (8) determining what new information is needed and the best methods for obtaining that information; (9) quantifying specific numeric flow recommendations (or ranges of flow) and physical conditions and assessing the potential for channel reconfiguration to support environmental and recreational values; (10) identifying temporal, geographical, legal, or administrative constraints and opportunities that may limit or assist in the basin's ability to meet environmental and recreational goals; and (11) implementing a stakeholder-driven process to identify and prioritize environmental and recreational projects and methods. Stream management plans should provide data-driven recommendations that have a high probability of protecting or enhancing environmental and recreational values on streams and rivers. More information on environmental and recreational projects and plans can be found in Chapter 6.6 and 7.1 of the Colorado Water Plan.

CWCB Monitoring Projects

CWCB may reserve 10% of the annually authorized Program funding for monitoring and evaluation of existing projects.

3. Cost-Sharing

Restoration, Flood Mitigation and Stream Management Plan grants will be funded by the CWCB on a cost-share basis. CWCB funds from the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of the individual plan or project. Other CWCB funds may be used for plans and studies, but the total CWCB funding shall not exceed 75% of the total cost. CWCB contributions to federally sponsored studies or plans shall not exceed 50% of the total cost.

Costs associated with forest health project initiatives, e.g. forest fuels mitigation, can be used as match for projects having components that qualify for Watershed/Stream Restoration or Flood Mitigation Grants.

Project costs may consist of a combination of in-kind and cash match, but no more than half of the match may be in the form of in-kind services.

Cash Match

Actual expenditures paid directly with cash funds from the grantee to a vendor. Examples are supplies, services, and necessary equipment purchase or rental.

In-Kind Match

Services and labor provided by the paid staff of the grantee to perform all or part of the approved project scope of work, including necessary project administration. This can include standard direct and indirect personnel fringe benefits. Volunteer services provided at no cost to the applicant by firms or individuals consistent with the approved scope of work will be valued for in-kind match at local prevailing wage rates. Project specific land acquisition or access agreement costs may also be claimed as in-kind contributions and credited against the minimum requirement. Costs that CAN NOT be considered include: general organization operating costs such as utilities, operating supplies and services, amortized costs or rental costs for buildings and equipment used for the general operation of the organization, and general property and liability insurance costs, nor will overhead percent charges to cover such items be allowed. These business expenses are NOT reimbursable costs and may not be claimed as matching contributions.

4. Eligible Entities

Established non-profit organizations, watershed coalitions, State of Colorado departments and agencies, local governments, conservation and water conservancy districts, and Colorado's two Ute Tribes are eligible. Federal agencies and private landowners are not eligible to receive grant funds; however, projects may be conducted on private, state, or federal lands with appropriate permissions and under the sponsorship of an eligible entity. The CWCB will strive to achieve geographic diversity by approving qualifying projects west and east of the continental divide.

5. Application Requirements

The Colorado Watershed Restoration Program (CWRP) objective is to provide planning, engineering, and construction services for watershed restoration and protection plans and projects. CWRP also provides support for flood mitigation, stream management plans, and

project monitoring. Planning and project efforts that integrate multiple objectives in different grant categories will score higher than single category applications.

Basic Applicant Qualifications

Grant applicants must demonstrate:

- a commitment to collaborative approaches, involving locally and/or regionally based diverse interests within the watershed in question, with participation open to all interested persons in the watershed. Basin roundtable support is encouraged but not required;
- a commitment to restoring or protecting ecological processes that connect land and water while protecting life and property from flood hazards;
- that the purpose of the application is to implement or plan for a project intended to (1) restore and/or protect the water, lands and other natural resources within the watershed, (2) mitigate flood hazards, and/or (3) integrate a multiple objective approach;
- a broad based involvement in or support for the grant application, including relevant local, state, or federal governmental entities; and
- an ability to provide the appropriate in-kind and cash match for the activities proposed.

Grant applications that do not demonstrate the above criteria will be disqualified from the application review process.

6. Application Evaluation Criteria

As a threshold matter, only grant applications that conform to the Application Requirements set forth above in section B.1 will be considered. Grant applications that meet these qualifications will then be evaluated with respect to the following three factors:

- How *well* does the applicant fit the qualifications test?
- Does the applicant organization have the capability to *accomplish* the proposed work?
- How effective is the proposal at accomplishing the goals of restoration, stream management, or flood mitigation?

Applications will be evaluated and ranked to determine grant funding based on the following criteria and rating system:

Qualifications Evaluation (Maximum of 20 points)

- Identify the lead project sponsor and describe the other stakeholders' level of participation and involvement. 10 points

- Specify in-kind services and cash contributions (match) amount for the proposed activities. See section B.2 of the grant program guidance to determine match funding requirements. Discuss whether other funding sources are secured or pending. 10 points

Organizational Capability (Maximum of 30 points)

- What is the applicant organization's history of accomplishments in the watershed? Provide several past project or planning examples. List partner organizations and agencies with whom applicant worked to implement past projects or planning efforts. 10 points
- What level of staffing will be directed toward the implementation of the proposed project/planning effort? Discuss the number of staff and amount of time dedicated for the project. Will volunteers be utilized, and if so, how? Include brief resumes for each member of the active project team. 10 points
- Demonstrate that the project budget and schedule are realistic. Please use the budget/timeline spreadsheet attached to the application. Please note that the start date will take place after funding awards are announced and grants are contracted. 10 points

Proposal Effectiveness (50 points)

- What information is the project sponsor using to develop the proposed plan or project? Include any relevant information regarding existing watershed plans, stream management plans, geomorphic assessments, flood studies, fire protection plans, riparian conditions assessments, aquatic/terrestrial habitat conditions, wildlife studies, and/or river restoration reports. 10 points
- Discuss the multiple objective aspects of the project and how they relate to each other. Describe similar activities in the watershed and how this project or plan complements but does not duplicate those activities. Multiple objectives may include (but are not limited to) channel stabilization, riparian re-vegetation, habitat improvement, recreation opportunity enhancement, natural hazard reduction, flood mitigation, water supply delivery improvement, fish migration improvement, ephemeral/intermittent channel stabilization, and upland erosion mitigation. 30 points
- Describe the proposed monitoring or implementation plan. How will the project or plan measure success of its objectives? 10 points

C. Grant Program Administration

1. Application Timeline

The timeline for the grant application cycle is:

Applications available	August 5, 2020
Deadline to submit applications	Nov 5, 2020
Applications reviewed and approved	January 29, 2021
Grant award announcement	January 29, 2021
Progress reports due	Every six months starting from date of contract

2. Payment Procedure

The CWCB will make between 1 and 4 payments, as requested by each grantee. The individual payments do not need to be equal. All payments will be based on invoices for work already completed.

The final payment will be at least 10% of the total grant award, which will not be released until full completion of grant and upon preparation and approval of a final report.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Interested parties are strongly encouraged to call the CWCB to discuss potential applications.

For more information, please contact:

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