COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: May 2021

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan Grant Application

Instructions

To receive funding for a Water Plan Grant, applicant must demonstrate how the project, activity, or process (collectively referred to as "project") funded by the CWCB will help meet the measurable objectives and critical actions in the Water Plan. Grant guidelines are available on the CWCB website.

If you have questions, please contact CWCB at (303) 866-3441 or email the following staff to assist you with applications in the following areas:

Water Storage & Supply Projects	Matthew.Stearns@state.co.us
Conservation, Land Use Planning	Kevin.Reidy@state.co.us
Engagement & Innovation Activities	Ben.Wade@state.co.us
Agricultural Projects	Alexander.Funk@state.co.us
Water Sharing & ATM Projects	Alexander.Funk@state.co.us
Environmental & Recreation Projects	Chris.Sturm@state.co.us

FINAL SUBMISSION: Submit all application materials in one email to *waterplan.grants@state.co.us* in the original file formats [Application (word); Statement of Work (word); Budget/Schedule (excel)]. Please do not combine documents. In the subject line, please include the funding category and name of the project.

Water Project Summary	
Name of Applicant	Colorado Department of Agriculture
Name of Water Project	Advancing Soil Health through Technical Assistance and Producer Incentives in the Republican River Watershed

CWP Grant Request Amount	$298,467.00
Other Funding Sources: Gates Family Foundation	$50,000.00
Other Funding Sources: Colorado State University	$60,000.00
Other Funding Sources: Conservation Partners Program	$265,812.60
Applicant Funding Contribution	$35,000.00
Total Project Cost	$709,279.60

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Applicant & Grantee Information
Name of Grantee(s): Colorado Department of Agriculture
Mailing Address: 305 Interlocken Parkway, Broomfield, CO
FEIN: 84-0644739
Organization Contact: Ryan Taylor
Position/Title: Soil Health Administrator
Email: ryan.taylor@state.co.us
Phone: (970) 591-2626
Grant Management Contact: Nikki Brinson
Position/Title: District Operations Manager
Email: nikki.brinson@state.co.us
Phone (303) 842-3108
Name of Applicant (if different than grantee)
Mailing Address
Position/Title
Email
Phone

Description of Grantee/Applicant
Provide a brief description of the grantee's organization (100 words or less).
Colorado Department of Agriculture is the state agency dedicated to strengthening and advancing Colorado agriculture, promoting a safe and high-quality food supply; protecting consumers; and fostering responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources.

	Type of Eligible Entity (check one)
X	Public (Government): Municipalities, enterprises, counties, and State of Colorado agencies. Federal agencies are encouraged to work with local entities. Federal agencies are eligible, but only if they can make a compelling case for why a local partner cannot be the grant recipient.
	Public (Districts): Authorities, Title 32/special districts (conservancy, conservation, and irrigation districts), and water activity enterprises.
	Private Incorporated: Mutual ditch companies, homeowners associations, corporations.
	Private Individuals, Partnerships, and Sole Proprietors: Private parties may be eligible for funding.
	Non-governmental organizations (NGO): Organization that is not part of the government and is non-profit in nature.
	Covered Entity: As defined in Section 37-60-126 Colorado Revised Statutes.

	Type of Water Project (check all that apply)
	Study
	Construction
x	Other

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Category of Water Project (check the primary category that applies and include relevant tasks)		
	Water Storage & Supply - Projects that facilitate the development of additional storage, artificial aquifer recharge, and dredging existing reservoirs to restore the reservoirs' full decreed capacity, multi-beneficial projects, water sharing agreements, Alternative Transfer Methods, and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap. Applicable Exhibit A Task(s): Note: For Water Sharing Agreements or ATM Projects - please include the supplemental application available on the CWCB's website.	
	Conservation and Land Use Planning - Activities and projects that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, water efficiency, and drought planning. Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):	
	Engagement & Innovation - Activities and projects that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts. Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):	
X	Agricultural - Projects that provide technical assistance and improve agricultural efficiency. Applicable Exhibit A Task(s): 1, 2, 3, 4	
	Environmental & Recreation - Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation. Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):	
	Other	Explain:

Location of Water Project	
Please provide the general county and coordinates of the proposed project below in decimal degrees. The Applicant shall also provide, in Exhibit C, a site map if applicable.	
County/Counties	Sedgewick, Phillips, Logan, Washington, Yuma, Kit Carson and Lincoln counties
Latitude	40.12
Longitude	-102.72

Water Project Overview
Please provide a summary of the proposed water project (200 words or less). Include a description of the project and what the CWP Grant funding will be used for specifically (e.g., studies, permitting process, construction). Provide a description of the water supply source to be utilized or the water body affected by the project, where applicable. Include details such as acres under irrigation, types of crops irrigated, number of residential and commercial taps, length of ditch improvements, length of pipe installed, and area of habitat improvements, where applicable. If this project addresses multiple purposes or spans multiple basins, please explain. The Applicant shall also provide, in Exhibit A, a detailed Statement of Work, Budget, Other Funding Sources/Amounts and Schedule.

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This project will advance soil health in the Republican River Watershed in Eastern Colorado through an innovative soil health program that includes technical assistance, producer incentives, soil health testing, and participation in the STAR program. The goal of this project is to increase participation in the EQIP program by lowering the barrier to entry for implementing soil health BMPs over a three-year period. In doing so, this project will help sustain water supplies for the Republican River Watershed and the Ogallala Aquifer. Improving soil health in this watershed on croplands and grazing lands will benefit ecosystem function and resilience, including the potential to improve water quality and water conservation by decreasing irrigation needs and reducing nutrient runoff. Through this project, we will work with multiple local organizations, including conservation districts, watershed associations, and non-profits, to identify and enroll producers in the soil health program. Water Plan grant funding will provide for producer incentive payments and research typing adoption of soil health practices to water availability outcomes. Matching funding from Gates Family Foundation, Colorado State University, and the Conservation Partners Program will also provide for technical assistance, grant administration, project development and oversight.

Measurable Results		
To catalog measurable results achieved with the CWP Grant funds, please provide any of the following values as applicable:		
	New Storage Created (acre-feet)	
	New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive	
	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)	
	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)	
	Efficiency Savings (indicate acre-feet/year OR dollars/year)	
	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)	
	Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement	
10	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning	
24	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity	
15.36 billion gallons of water conserved annually	Other	Soil Health Institute estimates .01cm water/cm soil conserved with soil health BMPs implemented. .01cm water/cm soil *15cm soil * 10,000m2/hectare * 100cm2/m2 *1mL/cm3 * 1L/1000mL * 1 gallon/3.78L * 1 hectare/2.47 acres = 16 million gallons water/acre. Calculations performed by Dr. Jim Ippolito.

Water Project Justification
Provide a description of how this water project supports the goals of Colorado's Water Plan, the Analysis and Technical Update to the Water Plan, and the applicable Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan and Education Action Plan. The Applicant is required to reference specific needs, goals, themes, or Identified Projects and Processes (IPPs), including citations (e.g. document, chapters, sections, or page numbers).

The proposed water project shall be evaluated based upon how well the proposal conforms to Colorado's Water Plan Framework for State of Colorado Support for a Water Project (CWP, Section 9.4, pp. 9-43 to 9-44;)
This project supports the goals of the Colorado Water Plan to meet the water supply and demand gaps and explore financial incentives. It also addresses many of the challenges described in the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan including a limited native water supply; successive use, conservation, and reuse; groundwater and aquifer storage and recovery; and water quality issues. This project will support Colorado Water Plan goals and address challenges described in the South Platte BIP by implementing soil health BMPs over a three year period and increasing participation in the EQIP program. This will happen through technical assistance, incentive payments for producers, enrollment in the STAR program, use of the farmOS tool and partial budget analysis, free soil health testing, education and demonstration. Finally, this project will help sustain water supplies for the Republican River Watershed and the Ogallala Aquifer. Previous research from Soil Health Institute (SHI) suggests that adopting soil health BMPs can result in significant water conservation. This project will focus on the following metrics to evaluate progress: - Number of people targeted will be 24 which is the sum of program and research-focused fields. Each local partner will target five producers to take part in the program and will identify one additional producer to participate in the research component. - Number of BMPs implemented will be assessed according to the practices implemented on both program and research-focused fields. These will be recorded through submission of consultation forms by conservation districts to the Department. - Number of people with changed behavior will be assessed in year three according to the number of participants adopting soil health practices on new fields or applying for EQIP funds related to soil health. The goal of this project is for at least 10 participants to adopt practices on additional fields or apply for EQIP funding to do so. - Lbs N avoided (annually) will be assessed by analyzing mineralizable nitrogen through soil health testing. - Lbs P avoided (annually) will be assessed by analyzing the availability of phosphorus available in the system through soil health testing. - Gallons water conserved per year will be assessed using soil moisture probes on research-focused fields and field- level operational data on program-focused fields. Together, this will produce a statistically significant data set that can be used to model outcomes for the project.

Related Studies
Please provide a list of any related studies, including if the water project is complementary to or assists in the implementation of other CWCB programs.
"Water Quality, Soil Health and Regenerative Agriculture: A Nexus for Sustainability" (Section 319 project led by Dr. Ippolito)

Previous CWCB Grants, Loans or Other Funding

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List all previous or current CWCB grants (including WSRF) awarded to both the Applicant and Grantee. Include: 1) Applicant name; 2) Water activity name; 3) Approving RT(s); 4) CWCB board meeting date; 5) Contract number or purchase order; 6) Percentage of other CWCB funding for your overall project.
Not applicable.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights
The Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) may limit the amount of grant money an entity can receive. Please describe any relevant TABOR issues that may affect your application.
Not applicable.

Submittal Checklist	
x	I acknowledge the Grantee will be able to contract with CWCB using the Standard Contract.
x	Statement of Work(1)
x	Budget & Schedule(1)
	Engineer's statement of probable cost (projects over $100,000)
x	Letters of Matching and/or Pending 3rd Party Commitments (1) – SEE CPP APPLICATION
x	Map (if applicable)(1) – SEE CPP APPLICATION
	Photos/Drawings/Reports
	Letters of Support (Optional)
	Certificate of Insurance (General, Auto, & Workers' Comp.) (2)
	Certificate of Good Standing with Colorado Secretary of State(2)
	W-9(2)
	Independent Contractor Form(2) (If applicant is individual, not company/organization)
Water Sharing Agreements and Alternative Transfer Methods ONLY	
	Water Sharing Agreements and Alternative Transfer Methods Supplemental Application(1)

(1) Required with application.
(2) Required for contracting. While optional at the time of this application, submission can expedite contracting upon CWCB Board approval.

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Colorado Water Conservation Board
Water Plan Grant - Exhibit A

Statement Of Work	
Date:	**6/29/21**
Name of Grantee:	**Colorado Department of Agriculture**
Name of Water Project:	**Advancing Soil Health through Technical Assistance and Producer Incentives in the Republican River Watershed**
Funding Source:	**Gates Family Foundation, Colorado State University, Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Conservation Partners Program**
Water Project Overview:	

This project proposes a multi-pronged approach to increase the voluntary adoption of soil health practices in the Republican River Watershed with the goal of setting producers up to participate in EQIP and conserving water supplies for the Ogallala Aquifer. This approach includes technical assistance, incentive payments for producers, enrollment in the STAR program (see below for more information), use of the farmOS tool and partial budget analysis, free soil health testing, education and demonstration. These activities will be delivered to producers by local partners with assistance from soil health specialists from the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) and by CDA directly, working in coordination with local NRCS staff. The idea is to give participants three years to try out new soil health practices on a field of their choice as they develop familiarity and expertise with new production methods. At the end of the three years, producers will be in a position to consider adopting these practices across their operation, applying for EQIP funding or other conservation financing, and participating in new markets or revenue streams such as payments of ecosystems services. Finally, this project will increase the capacity and responsibility of conservation districts by providing a new way to engage with landowners, along with new funding and assistance from CDA soil health specialists.

The Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources (STAR) program sits at the center of this new programming. STAR is a practice-based ranking system to educate producers, provide public acknowledgment of producer achievements, and structure conversations around soil health improvements. STAR also has potential to evolve as a market signal and provide an on-ramp for new revenue streams. Several supply chain partners have already committed to purchasing products grown on STAR fields; we will pursue more of these partnerships in coming months. STAR was originally developed in Illinois, where more than 215 producers have participated and adopted BMPs across more than 83,000 acres. STAR is now active and growing in IL, IN, IA, and MO. Over the last 9 months, CDA has worked with researchers and practitioners to adapt STAR evaluation forms for the diversity of Colorado agriculture, including conditions in the Southern Great Plains. Relevant metrics have been developed and piloted in preparation of incorporating STAR into a Colorado Soil Health Program.

This project will also investigate the link between the adoption of soil health practices and water conservation and water quality outcomes. This work will be led by Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller, distinguished scientists from Colorado State University. Four research fields will be split into control and treatment and monitored using soil moisture probes and robust soil sampling. Along with these research-focused sites, program-focused fields will contribute data on soil health to allow for a statistically rigorous scientific investigation. All participants will use farmOS or other means to collect practice-based data, including their STAR rating, that can be used to drive research. This will build on existing work by Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller and will serve to validate the structure of the soil health program as it is developed. Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller will also analyze field-level data to measure carbon and water benefits and report on metrics for this project.

Education and outreach are a key component of this project. Annual field days will be held for program participants and other members of the community. Research-focused fields will be excellent sites for field days and demonstration since the difference between conventional and regenerative practices can be easily compared. Educational resources will also be created by CDA soil health specialists and online curriculum will be made available to participants.

Project Objectives:

The goal of this project is to increase participation in the EQIP program by lowering the barrier to entry for implementing soil health BMPs over a three-year period. Project outcomes include implementation of soil health practices on at least 24 fields over a three-year period (# of people targeted, # of BMP's implemented) with at least 10 producers choosing to adopt these BMPs across additional fields at the end of the program (# of people with changed behavior). Progress towards these outcomes will be measured by continued participation in the program and number of EQIP contracts applied for relating to soil health.

Another goal of this project is to sustain water supplies for the Republican River Watershed and the Ogallala Aquifer. Previous research from Soil Health Institute (SHI) suggests that adopting soil health BMPs can result in significant water conservation. SHI estimates that adopting soil health BMPs can conserve .01cm water/cm soil. At that rate, adopting soil health practices across the 960 acres enrolled in this project would result in 15.36 billion gallons conserved (see notes in Tracking Metrics section for these calculations). Similarly, research at CSU's Agriculture Research Development Station (ARDEC) estimates that adopting soil health BMPs can result in avoided nitrogen and phosphorus between 1-4 lbs/acre and 1-2 lbs/acre respectively. Using median values, we estimate that this project would reduce nitrogen runoff by 4,800 lbs/year and phosphorous runoff by 960 lbs/year. Although this research suggests that the implementation of soil health BMPs will lead to significantly improved water conservation and water quality benefits, quantification of these benefits is a key aspect of this project. Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller will use the results of soil health tests and soil moisture monitoring to measure progress towards hydrology outcomes (gallons of water conserved per year) and water quality outcomes (reduced nitrogen and phosphorus runoff).

These outcomes are both achievable and critical to this rural, agriculturally dependent economy. Interest in soil health and regenerative agriculture is growing quickly amongst producers, supply chain partners, and the public. Still, many producers in the area are waiting for the economic case to be made for their region and to see proof that these practices can work in their arid region. This project will give participants a chance to try out new practices at a reduced risk while providing

technical assistance, education, and the community support to forge ahead. It will also create proof points across the Republican River Watershed to showcase these practices to the broader community and provide much needed data for researchers to understand these outcomes and relay their benefits to others.

Tasks
Task 1 – Producer incentive payments
Description of Task:
Participants will receive an incentive payment each year for three years. Incentive payments are meant to reduce the risk of foregone income from trying new practices. Incentive payments are $75/acre with a minimum of $1000 and a maximum of $5000. To ensure that producers have skin in the game, incentive payments will be matched with an equal contribution from the participant.
Method/Procedure:
Incentive payments will be paid to conservation districts upon receipt of a producer match form that include receipts for equipment, seed, gasoline, and other verifiable costs associated with the implementation of new practices. Conservation districts will dispense incentive payments to producers.
Deliverable:
Producer match forms

Tasks
Task 2 – Soil health and water availability research
Description of Task:
This project will investigate the link between the adoption of soil health practices and water availability outcomes. This work will be led by Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller, distinguished scientists from Colorado State University.
Method/Procedure:
Four research fields will be split into control and treatment and monitored using soil moisture probes and robust soil sampling. Along with these research-focused sites, program-focused fields will contribute data on soil health to allow for a statistically rigorous scientific investigation. All participants will use farmOS or other means to collect practice-based data, including their STAR rating, that can be used to drive research. Drs. Ippolito and Machmuller will also analyze field-level data to measure carbon and water benefits and report on metrics for this project.
Deliverable:
Final project evaluation report

Last Updated: May 2021

Tasks
Task 3 – Technical Assistance
Description of Task:
Technical assistance will be provided by conservation district staff with assistance from CDA soil health specialists and by CDA directly. Consultations will occur in years 1 and 3 and will include soil health testing and enrollment in the STAR program.
Method/Procedure: In year one, local partners will perform consultations with all participants. Consultations are opportunities for local partners to provide technical assistance around soil health practices that work well for the specific geography, climate, and type of production of program participants. Consultations start off as a conversation with the landowner about previous experience with soil health, goals and interest in new practices. Then, conservation district staff and producers choose a field to try new practices, take a soil sample to get a baseline assessment for that field, and fill out a STAR form. They will then make a plan together for which BMPs will be implemented over the next three years. This is also an opportunity to begin tracking operational data and economic outcomes by using the farmOS tool or other means so that profitability and water utilization can be compared over the next three years. Consultations are also a chance to connect producers with soil health resources, NRCS and Extension support, as well as education and demonstration opportunities that are a part of this project. In year three, a second soil sample will be taken to see changes to the soil and a new STAR rating will be assigned. Operational data from farmOS will be used to conduct a partial budget analysis to compare profitability with emphasis on water utilization outcomes. Local partners will draw on this information to conduct a second consultation with producers focused on comparing outcomes across fields. This is an excellent opportunity to prepare participants to adopt these practices across their operation and consider applying for EQIP funding, conservation financing, or to participate in new revenue streams. Assistance will be provided to participants interested in applying for EQIP funds with a goal of 10 producers adopting BMP's across additional acreage and/or applying for EQIP funding to do so.
Deliverable:
Consultations forms in years 1 and 3.

Tasks
Task 4 – Project administration and management
Description of Task:
Colorado Department of Agriculture will administer and manage this project with help from Ground Up Consulting.
Method/Procedure:

A .5 FTE grant administrator position will coordinate contracting with conservation districts, collection of consulationat and producer match forms, and distribution of capacity support and incentive payments. Ground Up Consulting will hold quarterly meetings with all project partners.

Deliverable:

Progress reports and final report.

Budget and Schedule

This Statement of Work shall be accompanied by a combined Budget and Schedule that reflects the Tasks identified in the Statement of Work and shall be submitted to CWCB in excel format.

Reporting Requirements

Progress Reports: The applicant shall provide the CWCB a progress report every 6 months, beginning from the date of issuance of a purchase order, or the execution of a contract. The progress report shall describe the status of the tasks identified in the statement of work, including a description of any major issues that have occurred and any corrective action taken to address these issues.

Final Report: At completion of the project, the applicant shall provide the CWCB a Final Report on the applicant's letterhead that:

- Summarizes the project and how the project was completed.
- Describes any obstacles encountered, and how these obstacles were overcome.
- Confirms that all matching commitments have been fulfilled.
- Includes photographs, summaries of meetings and engineering reports/designs.

The CWCB will pay out the last 10% of the budget when the Final Report is completed to the satisfaction of CWCB staff. Once the Final Report has been accepted, and final payment has been issued, the purchase order or grant will be closed without any further payment.

Payment

Payment will be made based on actual expenditures and must include invoices for all work completed. The request for payment must include a description of the work accomplished by task, an estimate of the percent completion for individual tasks and the entire Project in relation to the percentage of budget spent, identification of any major issues, and proposed or implemented corrective actions.

Costs incurred prior to the effective date of this contract are not reimbursable. The last 10% of the entire grant will be paid out when the final deliverable has been received. All products, data and information developed as a result of this contract must be provided to as part of the project documentation.

Performance Measures

Performance measures for this contract shall include the following:
(a) Performance standards and evaluation: Grantee will produce detailed deliverables for each task as specified. Grantee shall maintain receipts for all project expenses and documentation of the minimum in-kind

contributions (if applicable) per the budget in Exhibit C. Per Water Plan Grant Guidelines, the CWCB will pay out the last 10% of the budget when the Final Report is completed to the satisfaction of CWCB staff. Once the Final Report has been accepted, and final payment has been issued, the purchase order or grant will be closed without any further payment.

(b) Accountability: Per Water Plan Grant Guidelines full documentation of project progress must be submitted with each invoice for reimbursement. Grantee must confirm that all grant conditions have been complied with on each invoice. In addition, per Water Plan Grant Guidelines, Progress Reports must be submitted at least once every 6 months. A Final Report must be submitted and approved before final project payment.

(c) Monitoring Requirements: Grantee is responsible for ongoing monitoring of project progress per Exhibit A. Progress shall be detailed in each invoice and in each Progress Report, as detailed above. Additional inspections or field consultations will be arranged as may be necessary.

(d) Noncompliance Resolution: Payment will be withheld if grantee is not current on all grant conditions. Flagrant disregard for grant conditions will result in a stop work order and cancellation of the Grant Agreement.

COLORADO
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Department of Natural Resources

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Water Plan Grant - Exhibit C
Budget Template Instructions

**** Please select the most appropriate budget template for your project from the worksheet tabs below. A general budget template is provided, as well as templates for studies, construction, and engineering projects.****

COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan Grant - Exhibit C
Budget and Schedule

Prepared Date: 6/29/21

Name of Applicant: Colorado Department of Agriculture

Name of Water Project: Advancing Soil Health through Technical Assistance and Producer Incentives in the Republican

Project Start Date: 1/1/22

Project End Date: 12/31/24

Task No.	Task Description	Task Start Date	Task End Date	Grant Funding Request	Match Funding	Total
1	Producer incentive payments	1/1/2022	12/31/2024	$131,000	$85,000	$216,000
2	Soil health and water availability research	1/1/22	12/31/24	$167,467	$60,000	$227,467
3	Technical assistance	1/1/22	12/31/24	$0	$36,000	$36,000
4	Project adminstration and management	1/1/22	12/31/24	$0	$229,813	$229,813
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
						$0
			Total	$298,467.00	$410,812.60	$709,279.60

Matching contributions:
CSU ($60,000); Gates Family Foundation ($50,000); Colorado Department of Agriculture ($35,000); Conservation Partners Program

COLORADO
Department of Agriculture
Conservation Services Division

Colorado State Conservation Board
305 Interlocken Pkwy
Broomfield, CO 80021

June 29, 2021

Dear Colorado Water Conservation Board,

The Colorado Department of Agriculture is proud to submit this Water Plan Grant Application as part of our Conservation Partner Program proposal to launch a Colorado Soil Health Program in the Republican Watershed. We commit to contribute $35,000 in cash and $50,000 previously given to CDA from the Gates Family Foundation as matching contributions for this project. In total, $85,000 would be contributed by the Department.

This Conservation Partners Program project is specifically focused on expanding new soil health programming to the Republican River Watershed and would allow 24 producers to take part in the Colorado Soil Health Program. CPP funding would pay for technical assistance, project administration and management; Water Plan grant funding would provide for producer incentive payments and soil health research focused on water availability.

Soil health is important for our rural economy and the environment. Soil health practices like no/low till, cover crops, crop rotation, and incorporating livestock are good for farmers and ranchers' bottom line, the soil, and the environment. This programming will build on Colorado's strong history of land stewardship by ensuring the sustainability of our soils, improving drought resilience, increasing agricultural productivity, and promoting sustainable agriculture across Colorado.

A Colorado Soil Health Program will increase the capacity of conservation districts and other entities to provide technical assistance, reduce the risk of trying new practices through incentive payments, and help growers understand the state of their soil through soil health testing. The STAR (Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources) program will also provide a mechanism for local implementation, increase the visibility of soil health practices and provide new revenue streams for products grown using soil health practices. Research on the connection between implementation of soil health practices and water utilization outcomes will help practitioners and policy makers understand how to make soil health practices work in Colorado. Likewise, economic research and partial budget analysis will help all Colorado farmers and ranchers understand the on-farm economics of these practices. Finally, robust communication, education and outreach will encourage widespread adoption across the state.

We are proud to contribute $85,000 in matching funds to support this application.

Sincerely,

Cynthia L. Lair

Cindy Lair
Director
State Conservation Board