



Grant Final Report  
To the  
Colorado Water  
Conservation Board

January 2022

**PROJECT NAME:** Ensuring Effective Stream  
Mgt Plans

**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$139,400

**GRANT CONTRACT NO:**  
POGG1,PDAA,202000002139

## BACKGROUND & PROJECT GOALS

Colorado's Water Plan offers specific guidance to protect and enhance stream flows, primarily through Stream Management Planning. Since 2016, River Network has lead a project to help CWCB and Colorado communities meet the Water Plan goal of 80 percent of locally prioritized rivers covered by Stream Management Plans by 2030.

River Network directly assisted scoping of six SMPs, and mentored many more. Of the \$8 million in total project costs (CWCB grants plus matching funds) in the 2018-2021 grant cycles, River Network-supported projects accounted for 44% of the total.

In addition to directly supporting coalitions in scoping SMPs, River Network has worked to build and improve the practice of SMPs in Colorado. Through dozens of presentations, workshops and articles, River Network created a network of professionals working on SMPs and improved planning outcomes through collecting and sharing best practices.

Meeting the Water Plan goal and measuring the impact of SMP grants requires continued investment. This project continued important work to provide early support to get SMPs off the ground, grew adoption of best practices through widely sharing lessons learned and tracked implementation of SMPs and defined their success to help CWCB demonstrate the effectiveness of its grant funding, and encourage other funders to support them.

The overall goal of this work is to support the emergence of a more effective, capable and connected network of coalitions across Colorado that are interested, ready and capable of undertaking effective stream management plans. The objectives of this project were to:

- Document and share SMP best practices in a variety of ways that will result in more effective and implementable SMPs over time,
- Establish a method to track completion, implementation and success of SMPs so that CWCB can efficiently demonstrate effectiveness of grant funding, and to encourage other funders to invest in SMPs.



### To assess success, River Network monitored:

The number of SMP grant applications received by CWCB, and the number of potential future applications.	CWCB received and funded 31 SMP grants in 2018-21, for a total of \$2.7million in grant funding. Each year between 7 and 9 grants were funded. River Network maintains a list of prospective applicants.
Feedback from workshop, field trip and webinar participants	Feedback from the 17 Peer Learning Network events highlighted that events were well organized, applicable and pertinent to the needs of SMP leads. Participants stated that their knowledge and confidence on the topic increased, that they were likely to apply the information, and they felt more connected to peers. Outcomes listed under Task 1 provide details.
Website metrics for the on-line SMP Resource Guide	Between June 1, 2019 and Oct 30, 2021 the Colorado SMP Resource Guide had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8,300 users</li><li>• 10,810 sessions</li><li>• 17,640 unique page views</li><li>• Top 3 Pages: Current Completed SMPs, SMP Nuts and Bolts, and Community and Learning</li></ul>
Surveys from the selected coalitions to gauge how their organization directly benefited from the assistance provided in Task 3	Coalitions that received River Network support were interviewed as part of Task 1.1. The support of both state agency staff and larger NGOs (including River Network) were mentioned as vital to the success of SMPs.

## TASK 1: DOCUMENT AND SHARE SMP BEST PRACTICES

### Task 1.1: Interviews of SMP leads

#### **Work Completed:**

River Network surveyed/interviewed all (22) SMP/IWMP leads in both 2020 and 2021. These surveys/interviews captured SMP best practices and approaches for the completion, implementation, and success of SMPs. Results from these surveys/interviews were used in a variety of ways, including:

- Updating all SMP Fact Sheets and posting them to the [ColoradoSMP Resource Library](#);
- Completing substantial updates to the [ColoradoSMP](#) Resource Library. Updates included development of a [new page](#) that focuses on the benefits for agricultural producers to participate in SMPs; adding examples of approaches and best practices throughout the website; and links to outside resources, such as toolkits, presentations, and data sources. In particular, substantial updates were made throughout the Assess Conditions and Risk [pages](#) to capture new methodologies;
- Selecting relevant topics for peer calls, Ask a Practitioner interviews, workshops and field trips. Recordings and notes from past events can be found on the ColoradoSMP website;
- Compiling the [SMP 5-year progress memo](#) that highlights the accomplishments that SMPs have made over the past five years.

#### **Impact:**

Interviewing the SMP leads allows the River Network team to stay current on approaches, challenges and opportunities to support practitioners. We maximize the impact of this information by sharing it back out to practitioners, funders, and the broader water community to demonstrate the value of undertaking an SMP, leading to more and better SMPs over time.

As an example, River Network used the interviews to update fact sheets on all current and completed SMPs. This page is consistently the most visited in the Resource Library. Fact Sheets provide an overview of each SMP including their approaches, funding sources, timelines, involved stakeholder groups, project goals, and more. We've heard that these are helpful resources for coalitions interested in undertaking an SMP as they quickly summarize the wide variety of goals, approaches and tasks that are possible.

The memo [Stream Management Plans in Colorado: Progress at 5 Years](#) was the result of three years of conversations and surveys with SMP coalitions, as well as interviews with state agency staff, nongovernmental organizations and funders. It compiled recommendations to maximize the impact of SMPs throughout Colorado from all of these entities, with the goal of demonstrating the effectiveness of CWCB grant funding in meeting goals in Colorado's Water Plan.

## Accomplishments

Interviews conducted:	50
Peer Learning Network events:	17
Attendees at events:	443
Likely to apply knowledge gained:	87%
Increased connection to peers:	81%
Users in online community:	55
Unique views on coloradosmp.org:	17,640



## TASK 1: DOCUMENT AND SHARE SMP BEST PRACTICES

### Task 1.2: Best Practices Trainings

**Work Completed** Since 2018, we hosted 17 peer learning events, reaching 551 attendees (an average of 32 attendees per event). Peer learning events include the annual training for current and potential SMP leads at the Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference. Topics included:

- \* Flow targets (2021)
- \* Developing a targeted stakeholder engagement plan (2020)
- \* Identifying geographic scale (2018)
- \* Diversion structure assessments (2020 & 2019)
- \* How to engage agriculture (2019 & 2018)
- \* How to phase approaches for SMPs (2018)
- \* Troubleshooting common challenges (2020)
- \* How to assess flows (2019)

In August of 2021, we hosted a field trip to Salida, CO for 30 SMP leads and community stakeholders on fluvial hazard zone mapping and stream health assessments along the South Arkansas. Two field trips were planned for 2020, however they were replaced by Peer Learning Calls due to Covid19.

Since 2018 we hosted seven peer calls for SMP leads. Our “SMP 101” provided 57 attendees an overview of the history and goals of SMPs, approaches to conducting assessments, and examples from different SMPs. Topics for peer calls included:

- \* SMP 101 (2021)
- \* How to identify, evaluate and prioritize potential actions (2020)
- \* Selecting objectives and measurable results (2020)
- \* Pilot and demonstration projects (2021)
- \* SMP planning in a pandemic (2020)
- \* Data assessment (2019)
- \* Community engagement (2021)

In addition to the peer calls, we created three Ask-A-Practitioner interviews on data management, using citizen science and performing recreation user assessments. To be the long-term home of all Peer Learning resources, River Network created a Community & Learning page on coloradosmp.org and we started an on-line community for SMP practitioners in early 2021. We regularly post information and discussions on the platform. We currently have 55 members.

**Impact** In-person events are valued by SMP leads to gather, network, and learn from one another. Virtual gatherings are an important tool to maintain regular touch points, but it’s clear that SMP leads have missed the opportunity to connect with their peers in-person.

The in-person events and peer calls have helped SMP leads build strong and meaningful relationships with each other, resulting in knowledge sharing and increased confidence. This creates coalitions that are interested, ready and capable of undertaking SMPs. Sharing innovative practices and advice on what works and what doesn’t has resulted in strong connections between coalitions across the state, increased the number of coalitions undertaking SMPs, resulted in more effective SMPs, increased implementation of multi-beneficial projects, and diversified funding sources for SMPs.

## TASK 1 DELIVERABLES

Summary sheets for each SMP on the SMP Resource Guide website	Complete
Updates to the content on the SMP Resource Guide website	Complete
Two workshops in conjunction with Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference	Three workshops completed in 2019, 2020 (three-part virtual series) and 2021
Two site visits to explore assessment results and project implementation	2020 site visits cancelled due to corona virus concerns and additional Peer Learning Calls were held instead. Completed a field trip in August 2021 to Salida, CO.
Six webinars/ phone calls for SMP leads to discuss what’s working and what isn’t	Complete

## TASK 2: ESTABLISH METRICS OF SUCCESS

### Task 2.1: Create reporting tool

#### **Work Completed:**

River Network created a simple reporting tool for SMP leads to easily upload and store information on SMP progress and implementation actions. We developed a detailed database to document and track the outcomes of each SMP. The tracking database allows CWCB (and others) to summarize the number of projects conceived (and eventually implemented) as a result of SMPs, and to generate summary statistics associated with the overall grant program.

River Network held several meetings with CWCB staff in 2019 and 2020 to better understand how the reporting tool could align with other CWCB efforts (BIP Updates and grant portal development). A final tool, example reporting data and a memo on progress was sent to CWCB in November, 2020.

### Task 2.2: Pilot and launch reporting tool

#### **Work Completed:**

After developing the reporting tool, River Network piloted it with three completed SMPs and revised it based upon their feedback. . Revisions will be incorporated and the reporting tool was formally launched in Winter 2021. We submitted a technical memo summarizing the findings in February 2021.

#### **Impact:**

Beginning in early 2020, several SMPs that received funding in 2017 and 2018 were completed. Many of these projects will return to the Basin Roundtables and CWCB for implementation funding. River Network's database and 5-Year Progress Memo helped establish a method to track completion, implementation and success of SMPs to help CWCB demonstrate the effectiveness of its grant funding, encourage other funders to support them, and inform the 2022 update of Colorado's Water Plan.

Moving forward, River Network is working with CWCB to institutionalize the outcome reporting from SMPs so that results can be easily compiled at any interval.

As a result of the outcome reporting tool and memo, several state agencies and NGO partners have made progress in implementing the recommendations. For example, River Network is working on developing a method to prioritize locations for new SMPs and, with the Colorado Water Trust, is convening a workshop on how to increase the number of SMPs that result in environmental flow targets. Audubon Colorado and CWCB's Watershed and Flood Protection section are both working on developing guidance for data collection methodologies to inform SMP design.

## Accomplishments

\$ invested in SMPs:	\$8million
# completed SMPs:	11
# projects in completed SMPs:	269
# recommendations in memo:	38
# outreach events on memo so far:	5

## TASK 2 DELIVERABLES

Draft reporting tool and associated database in 2020	Complete
Feedback from pilot, updates to reporting tool	Complete
Draft Reporting Memo	Complete
Formal launch of reporting tool in 2021	Complete
Memo documenting success of the SMP program from 2016-2020	Complete

## TASK 3: DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR SMP SCOPING

### **Work Completed:**

River Network provides direct support to emerging and existing coalitions through support from our staff, additional paid consulting, and the network of experts that we've developed since 2017. River Network supported three coalitions in 2019 with capacity and financial assistance. Two of those (Mancos River, Purgatoire River) submitted successful SMP grants in 2019. River Network supported two coalitions in 2020. Both (Upper Arkansas and White) submitted successful grants to CWCB in late 2020. In 2021, River Network supported a successful SMP application for a coalition from West Plum Creek.

Originally, River Network envisioned supporting three coalitions per year, however covid-related travel restrictions and capacity limitations impacted our ability to reach that goal.

River Network also provided additional technical assistance to the Purgatoire Watershed Partnership by creating a database and dashboard of water quality monitoring stations in the basin.

### **Impact:**

River Network's early assistance to coalitions as they convene stakeholders, set goals, and scope tasks has been crucial to the success of Colorado's Stream Management Plan program. In locations without existing coalitions, or locations where coalitions have never conducted river assessments, a Stream Management Plan can feel overwhelming. Coalitions have repeatedly told us that the up-front support River Network provides is what helped them be successful.

In addition to capacity and technical assistance, River Network granted \$95,000 in private donor funds to coalitions to support their leadership of SMPs. Funding was used to pay staff salaries, hire consultants and facilitators, and in a few cases as grant match. That assistance resulted in almost \$1million of new funding for river health, including applications for \$625,000 in CWCB grants.



## Accomplishments

# of groups directly supported	5
\$ of technical/capacity funding	\$95,000
# of SMP applications submitted	5



## TASK 3 DELIVERABLES

Stream Management Plan grant applications from three coalitions in 2019 and three in 2020

River Network's support resulted in two applications in 2019, two in 2020 and one in 2021.

## FINANCIALS

Below is the project's budget and expenses through November 30, 2021 both by task and by expense line.

Task	Description	Total Budget/ Grant Funds	Invoiced	Percent Complete
1	Document and Share SMP Best Practices	\$ 58,960	\$ 59,397	100%
2	Establish metrics of success	\$ 55,491	\$ 54,972	100%
3	Direct Assistance for SMP scoping	\$ 24,925	\$ 25,005	100%
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>100%</b>

	Total			
	Actual	Budget	Over Budget	% of Budget
<b>Revenue</b>				
5 Government Contracts/ Fees	139,376	139,376	0.00	100.00%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
7200 Payroll Expenses	48,988	55,926	-6,938	87.59%
7500 Contract Services	78,746	63,950	14,796	123.14%
8100 Operating Expenses	1,610		1,610	
8300 Travel and Meetings	10,032	19,500	-9,468	51.45%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 139,376</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>