



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	American Rivers	
Name of Water Project	Uncompahgre River Multi-Benefit Project	
Grant Request Amount		\$71,446.00
Primary Category		\$71,446.00
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>		
Total Applicant Match		\$43,100.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>		\$31,000.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>		\$12,100.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		\$43,100.00
<i>Colorado River Water Conservation District</i>		\$25,000.00
<i>Ward Water Group</i>		\$6,000.00
<i>American Rivers</i>		\$6,000.00
<i>Ward Water Group</i>		\$6,100.00
Total Project Cost		\$157,646.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: American Rivers	
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FEIN: 237,305,963	
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Grant Management Contact: Fay Hartman	
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Description of Grantee/Applicant

American Rivers protects and restores rivers and clean water for people and nature.

Type of Eligible Entity

- ☐ Public (Government)
- ☐ Public (District)
- ☐ Public (Municipality)
- ☐ Ditch Company
- ☐ Private Incorporated
- ☐ Private Individual, Partnership, or Sole Proprietor
- ☒ Non-governmental Organization
- ☐ Covered Entity
- ☐ Other

Category of Water Project

- ☐ Agricultural Projects
Developing communications materials that specifically work with and educate the agricultural community on headwater restoration, identifying the state of the science of this type of work to assist agricultural users among others.
- ☐ Conservation & Land Use Planning
Activities and projects that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, and drought planning.
- ☐ Engagement & Innovation Activities
Activities and projects that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts. Please fill out the Supplemental Application on the website.
- ☒ Watershed Restoration & Recreation
Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation.
- ☐ 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 and Multi-beneficial projects and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap.

Location of Water Project

Latitude 38.000000
Longitude -107.000000
Lat Long Flag
Water Source
Basins Gunnison
Counties Ouray
Districts

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type

Type of Water Project Planning (e.g. watershed)

Scheduled Start Date - Design 10/1/2022

Scheduled Start Date - Construction

Description

This project will develop designs to improve habitat, water quality and water management along an incised, degraded stretch of the Uncompahgre River near Ouray. Components include infrastructure upgrades, river channel improvements, and floodplain restoration.

The one-mile segment of the Uncompahgre River between the Ward Ditch Diversion and County Road 23 bridge has been heavily impacted by development , dredging and riprap/levees, causing the river to be incised, unnaturally straight, disconnected from the floodplain, and lacking in diverse habitat. Native riparian trees are dying, and invasive trees are establishing. The lack of organic matter, riparian habitat, pools, fish refugia and high levels of iron oxide/aluminum have contributed to this reach being almost devoid of fish and aquatic invertebrates. In addition, nearby wells have run dry, and the Ward Ditch, which serves 4 parties irrigating 30 acres of hay meadow, is unable to divert water when river flows are below 250 cubic feet/ second.

This project will utilize CWP funds to:

- Design and engineer headgate and ditch improvements.
- Design and permit river channel improvements.
- Conduct HEC-RAS analysis to optimize channel improvement design and avoid flooding impacts.
- Conduct well testing for baseline data on groundwater levels and water quality.

Measurable Results

New Storage Created (acre-feet)
 New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive
 Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
 New Storage Created (acre-feet)
 Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
 Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
 Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
 Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
 Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement (acre-feet)
 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

This project aims to restore 1 mile of the Uncompahgre River

Water Project Justification

This project supports the watershed health and agricultural water supply/ viability goals of statewide and Gunnison basin water planning efforts, as well as the Uncompahgre Watershed Plan, in the following ways.

Colorado Water Plan

CO Water Plan goals related to watershed health and agricultural viability are both supported by this project.

Watershed Health

Section 7.1, Page 7-3 of Colorado's Water Plan articulates the following goal:

Colorado's Water Plan promotes watershed health and supports the development of watershed coalitions and watershed master plans that address the needs of a diverse set of local stakeholders.

Section 10.3 (Critical Goals and Actions), subsection F (Watershed Health, Environment, and Recreation) on page 10-12 includes the critical goal to:

Protect Healthy Environments: Understand, protect, maintain, and improve conditions of streams, lakes, wetlands, and riparian areas to promote self-sustaining fisheries and functional riparian and wetland habitat to promote long-term resiliency.

By designing projects to restore connectivity to the floodplain and instream habitat, this project directly supports the general goal of promoting watershed health, as well as the more specific goals to improve conditions of streams and wetlands and promoting self-sustaining fisheries and functional riparian and wetland habitats.

Agricultural Viability

Section 6.5.2 (page 6-138) on Agricultural Viability notes that upgrading irrigation and diversion systems is among the actions that can support the goal of agricultural viability. By upgrading the Ward Ditch headgate and associated ditch will enable water delivery under a broader range of flow conditions than is now possible, supporting agricultural irrigation.

CO Water Plan Updated Action Area Information Sheet for Thriving Watersheds

This information sheet opens with the following statement:

Watersheds face a number of pressures from competing water needs to climate-stressed hydrologies which have cascading impacts for - among other things - stream function, forest health, aquatic species, and wildlife.

This statement underscores the importance of the kind of stream and floodplain restoration work this project will design.

Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan

The 2022 Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan includes the following goals (page 13):

- Improve agricultural water supplies to reduce shortages
- Quantify and protect environmental and recreational uses.
- Maintain or, where necessary, improve water quality throughout the Gunnison Basin.
- Describe and encourage relationships among agricultural and environmental recreational water uses.

This project responds to the first three of these goals by designing measures to improve access to irrigation water and improve an impaired section of stream. It responds to the fourth by demonstrating how agricultural water users can collaborate on a project that benefits both water access and watershed health.

Uncompahgre Watershed Plan

The Uncompahgre Watershed Plan also seeks to address both water supply and watershed health concerns. Problems and relevant critical areas identified in the 2018 Uncompahgre Watershed plan include:

- Problem: State water planners have forecast gaps in water supplies which may impair existing water uses (Section 8, page 8-1), with “irrigation inefficiencies” listed as a source of the problem, and Ouray County and agricultural areas listed as critical areas.
- Problem: Altered sediment dynamics lead to river instability (Section 8, page 8-15), with the Uncompahgre River from Ouray to Ridgway (project is in this area) and the KOA near Ouray (adjacent to the project) listed as critical areas.
- Problem: In-stream and riparian habitat are limited (Section 8, page 8-16), with the Uncompahgre River from Ouray to Ridgway (pools and stream cover) listed as a critical area.

This project will directly address these problems in an identified critical area by designing irrigation infrastructure and river channel improvements, as well as improving the connection to the floodplain, which will also benefit riparian habitat.

Colorado's Water Plan Framework for State of Colorado Support for a Water Project

This project is well-aligned with the framework in the following ways:

- It demonstrates a commitment to collaboration through the project partnership involving landowners, the

Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership, Trout Unlimited and American Rivers.

- It meets demonstrated water gaps identified in both the Gunnison BIP and the Uncompahgre Watershed Plan through plans to address both irrigation water needs and habitat needs in alignment with the Basin Implementation Plan and Uncompahgre Watershed Plan.
- It demonstrates sustainability by addressing watershed health and modernizing agricultural infrastructure.
- Fiscal and technical feasibility are supported by the expertise of the project team and the capability of the project partners to manage and carry out substantial portions of the work.

Related Studies

The study most directly related to this project is the 2018 Uncompahgre Watershed Plan, completed by the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership. The Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership is part of the project team and, as noted above, this project will support addressing several problems related to watershed health and irrigation improvements identified in the plan, in a critical area.

The plan is available at:

<https://www.uncompahgrewatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Uncompahgre-Watershed-Plan-2022.pdf>

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

None