

CWCB Summary Report
Delta Conservation District
RCPP Irrigation Water Management Specialist/Soil Conservationist
CWCB PO #201700000789

Purpose & Need: Provide technical assistance and administrative support to local water user participants in the Colorado River Water Conservation District's (CRWCD) Regional Conservation Partnership Program project in the Gunnison River Basin entitled "Modernizing Agricultural Water Management in the Lower Gunnison River Basin: A Cooperative Approach to Increase Water Use Efficiency and Water Quality Improvement "

Responsibilities completed under this grant (IWM):

- A. Served as the local liaison and point of contact for landowners, ditch companies, districts that are involved in LGP RCPP-funded projects being managed by the River District.
- B. Served as a technical expert for NRCS rules, regulations and policies (e.g., EQIP, related compliance issues).
- C. Communicated regularly and effectively with Colorado River District project management and administrative staff and the local conservation districts.
- D. Assisted in the preliminary review of Conservation Activity Plans and engineered designs and facilitate submittal of designs to NRCS for functional review and approval.
- E. Participated in the ranking and selection committee for the award of on-farm contracts based on criteria that was compliant with both NRCS and CRD grant guidelines.
- F. Worked with River District staff to archive project documents consistent with NRCS and CRD practices;
- G. Assisted with the development and review of on-farm construction implementation contracts to ensure they are consistent with NRCS EQIP and regulatory guidelines, and the River District's Cooperative Agreements for RCPP funding and Alternative Funding Arrangement.

IWM RCPP Implementation and Technical Assistance Summary

Initially, coordinated with 23 awardees to acquire irrigation water samples for testing at Grand Junction Laboratories. Once the data was collected and the samples complete, provided feedback and analysis of the water results to the producers. And then advised the Delta Conservation District Board as well as the Shavano Conservation District Board of the water analysis findings for their perspective areas.

To complete the On-Farm land inventory and soil and water analysis portion of the CAP, the Colorado River Water Conservation District worked closely with the Delta and Shavano Conservation District staff.

Reviewed the 23 TSP-Conservation Activity Plan for all RCPP applicants, ensuring that it met the NRCS set criteria and deliverables for program payment.

A Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) can be developed for the producers to identify conservation practices needed to address a specific natural resource need. With a CAP plan, producers can then apply for financial assistance to implement the needed conservation practices.

The CAP's were developed for the RCPP applicants wishing to go forward with the on-farm program consisting of; on-farm soil health site analysis and sample collection, irrigation water sample collection and analysis, a land resource base inventory, and a preliminary engineered design. These 23 CAPs were then submitted to NRCS for approval.

Once the CAPs were approved, served on the ranking and evaluation team for RCPP applications for construction implementation. In an effort to award applications that met the LGP mission, the rankings were based on the Critical Conservation Area (CCA) resource concerns:

- Water Quality Degradation and Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife: (Excessive salts and selenium in surface and ground water), irrigation water samples were collected and analyzed from the 23 applicants
- Insufficient water: CAP proposed irrigation system improvements and delivery system efficiency were reviewed
- Soil Quality Degradation: (Concentration of salts and other chemicals), a soil health site assessment and samples were collected and analyzed from the 23 applicants
- Of those 23 applications; 10 were awarded funding at 75% cost share and 5 applications were beginner farmer, veteran, and socially disadvantaged participants granting them a higher 90% cost share incentive. These landowners constitute 528.45 Acres of improved water enhancements on agricultural land in the Lower Gunnison Project Area.

Developed an LGP-RCPP Construction Contract Template and a Construction Schedule of Operations template for all RCPP approved projects. These templates will act as the base for the final Contract platform between the CRD and the landowners. Attended contract meetings with CRD staff to ensure that all the legal components for their organization as well as the language the NRCS prefers is in the documents so that a more expediated process can progress forward.

The AFA between the CRD and the NRCS said the NRCS would be responsible for completing all the NEPA and Cultural Resources paperwork. Because the NRCS had a shortage in staff they were unable to get to the RCPP applications addressed in a timely manner

Coordination with the local Delta and Montrose NRCS offices was key to completing the Cultural Resource and NEPA documentation requirements to move forward with contract development on 15 awardees.

These 15 awarded applications have received their final engineering design allocations listed below and construction implementation is expected to commence in the Spring of 2020 with approval from the NRCS.

Focus Area	Acres	System
Uncompahgre	14	near farm delivery
Uncompahgre	37	gated, near farm delivery
Uncompahgre	188	center pivot, big guns
Uncompahgre	18.2	pod sprinklers
Uncompahgre	7.1	wheel-line
Uncompahgre	14	gated
Uncompahgre	39.95	center pivot, wheel-line
Uncompahgre	15	gated
Crawford	14.8	center pivot, solid set
Crawford	19.5	wheel-line
Crawford	17	center pivot, solid set
North Fork	46.5	center pivot, wheel-line, big guns
North Fork	17.5	gated, micro
North Fork	71.5	center pivot, wheel-line, hand-line
North Fork	8.4	near farm delivery
Total	528.45 Acres	

Education and Outreach

- Facilitated and presented at a RCPP producer contract informational meeting. Information about contract requirements including IWM record-keeping and soil moisture monitoring options for the producers based on their level management.
- Attended and facilitated two Delta Conservation District Annual Meeting for local producers.
- Attended the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan meeting
- Attended and facilitated the Delta Conservation District at the community Water Information Series public outreach meetings in Paonia and Delta.
- Presenter/Teacher for the Delta Conservation District at the Delta County Ag Days for 700 local 3rd-5th grader students.
- Presenter/Teacher at Paonia Conservation Days
- Attended State of the River meeting in Montrose
- Education was provided to RCPP participants regarding Irrigation Water Management (IWM) tools and record keeping options available to further the efficiency of on-farm irrigation practices.
- Submitted an article to the Gunnison River Basin on behalf of the Colorado River Water Conservation District on the status of the on-farm RCPP program and fiscal budget spent.

Other Duties as Assigned to Correlate with RCPP LGP Goals

- Participated on numerous inter-agency/Colorado River District teleconferences to facilitate RCPP implementation.
- Trouble-shoot individual producer contract questions and ongoing concerns.
- Facilitated between the federal government, RD and the producer when program guidelines came into question.
- On-going Contract development and workflow tracking for all RCPP approved applicants.

The work performed by the Irrigation Water Specialist/Soil Conservationist, in cooperation with the Delta Conservation District, expedited approximately \$1.2 in irrigation project in the designated areas.