COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

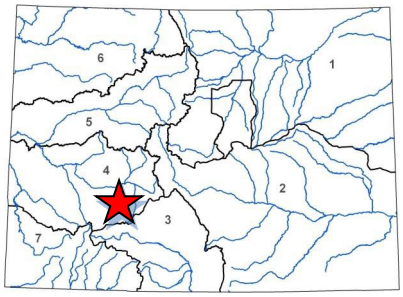
Water Plan Grant Application

Little Cimarron River Fish and Flow Bypass Project

Colorado Water Trust

March 2023 Board Meeting

Lat: 38.375740
Long: 107.496300



LOCATION	
Counties:	Montrose, Gunnison
Drainage Basin:	Gunnison

DETAILS	
Total Project Cost:	$417,115
Water Plan Grant Request:	$203,240
Recommended Amount:	**$203,240**
Other CWCB Funding:	$0
Other Funding Amount:	$185,000
Applicant Match:	$28,875
Project Type(s):	Construction, ATM
Project Category:	Agricultural
Measurable Result:	18,400 ft stream restoration, 1,158 acft shared through ATM/Water Sharing, connect McKinley Ditch project to Cimarron River

This project will implement a complete retrofit of the Collier Ditch Dam to provide for fish and instream flow passage on the Little Cimarron River allowing for full implementation of the McKinley Ditch Project. The updated infrastructure will rewater 18,400 ft. of stream through the McKinley ATM while providing for priority irrigation withdrawals on the Collier Ditch and facilitate fish passage upstream.

The applicant, Colorado Water Trust (Water Trust), has been working with partners in the Little Cimarron watershed for over a decade to implement the McKinley Ditch Project, a groundbreaking permanent split season ATM project designed to provide irrigation for agricultural use in the early summer and protect instream flows late in the irrigation season when the river typically has low flows or dewatered channels.

In 2018, the Water Trust and Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) were granted a decree to protect the acquired portion of the McKinley Ditch water rights for both agricultural uses and instream flow. Late in the irrigation season, the decree allows water to be used for instream flow (ISF) in over nine miles of the Little Cimarron and Cimarron Rivers, including three historically dewatered miles. A 2017 WPG funded $66,000 for the McKinley Ditch splitter box infrastructure to enable ISF. The Collier Ditch lies within this reach and its diversion infrastructure cannot currently bypass the instream flow and regularly dewaters the river. This project will install similar infrastructure to the McKinley ditch, connecting the dewatered portion of the river and allowing for ISF, fish passage, and full Collier Ditch withdrawals.

Water Plan Support: *Action Areas*- Robust Agriculture- Replace Diversion Structures, Conveyance Efficiently; Thriving Watersheds- Enhance Streamflows; *BIP IPP*- Little Cimarron Creek Instream Flow, McKinley Ditch Project; *Cimarron Valley and River Watershed Coalition*- Watershed Improvement Goals 1 & 3, McKinley Ditch Project

WPG Request 49%
Matching Funds: Resource Legacy Fund: $15,000; Lyda Hill Foundation: $40,000; Gates Family Foundation: $30.000; Resources Legacy Fund: $100,000; Colorado Water Trust: $28,875 (in kind)

Funding Recommendation: Staff recommends Board approval of $203,240 to the Colorado Water Trust for the Little Cimarron Fish and Flow Bypass Project through CWSA category.

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Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Colorado Water Trust
Name of Water Project	Little Cimarron River Fish and Flow Bypass Dam Retrofit
Grant Request Amount	**$203,240.00**
Primary Category	$203,240.00
Agricultural Projects	
Total Applicant Match	**$0.00**
Applicant Cash Match	
Applicant In-Kind Match	
Total Other Sources of Funding	**$213,875.00**
Resources Legacy Fund	$15,000.00
Colorado Water Trust	$28,875.00
Lyda Hill Foundation	$40,000.00
Gates Family Foundation	$30,000.00
Resources Legacy Fund	$100,000.00
Total Project Cost	**$417,115.00**

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Colorado Water Trust
Mailing Address: 1312 17th Street, #766 Denver CO 80202
FEIN: 841,606,567

Organization Contact: Tony LaGreca
Position/Title:
Email: tlagreca@coloradowatertrust.org
Phone: (720) 570-2897

Grant Management Contact: Tony LaGreca
Position/Title:
Email: tlagreca@coloradowatertrust.org
Phone: (720) 570-2897

Description of Grantee/Applicant

No description provided

Type of Eligible Entity

- ☐ Public (Government)
- ☐ Public (District)
- ☐ Public (Municipality)
- ☐ Ditch Company
- ☐ Private Incorporated
- ☐ Private Individual, Partnership, or Sole Proprietor

- [x] Non-governmental Organization
- [ ] Covered Entity
- [ ] Other

Category of Water Project

- [x] 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	38.375740
Longitude	107.496300
Lat Long Flag	Precise coordinates: Project coordinates are readily definable and precisely define the location of the project
Water Source	Little Cimarron River
Basins	Gunnison
Counties	Montrose; Gunnison
Districts	62-Upper Gunnison River

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Construction / Implementation
Scheduled Start Date - Design	12/1/2022
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	10/1/2023

Description

This project will implement a complete retrofit of the Collier Ditch Dam to provide for fish and instream flow passage on the Little Cimarron River, tributary to the Cimarron River and the Gunnison River (Figure 1). Fish in the Little Cimarron river have historically been impacted by a lack of longitudinal connectivity caused by irrigation diversions and infrastructure. In most years, irrigation withdrawals dewater miles of channel and the associated irrigation diversion infrastructure blocks fish passage. The Colorado Water Trust (Water Trust) has been working with partners in the Little Cimarron watershed for over a decade to implement the McKinley Ditch Project, a groundbreaking permanent split season ATM project designed to provide irrigation for agricultural use in the early summer and protect instream flows late in the irrigation season when the river typically has low flows or dewatered channels. In late 2018, the Water Trust and Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) were granted a decree to protect the acquired portion of the McKinley Ditch water rights for both agricultural uses and

instream flow. Late in the irrigation season, the decree allows water to be used for instream flow in over nine miles of the Little Cimarron and Cimarron Rivers, including three miles which has historically been dewatered. The Collier Ditch lies within this reach and its aging diversion infrastructure cannot currently bypass the instream flow and regularly dewaters the river. Furthermore, the structure is a velocity and jump height barrier to resident fish which limits upstream spawning migrations and overall fishery health. The Water Trust has partnered with the shareholders on the Collier Ditch, to replace the existing infrastructure with roughened rock ramp which will allow for volitional fish passage and a return flow channel to bypass instream flow, while maintaining Collier Ditch irrigation withdrawals in priority. To accomplish these goals, the Water Trust is seeking funding to undertake a complete retrofit of the Collier Ditch Dam to provide flow and fish passage improvements.

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)
18,400	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
	Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
1,158	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

No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

The Little Cimarron River Fish and Flow Bypass Project builds upon and is necessary to complete the work of the McKinley Ditch ATM project. The McKinley Ditch Project is a groundbreaking, collaborative water sharing agreement between agriculture and the environment and a model for future ATM projects across the state. Under this pioneering project, high value agricultural lands continue early season irrigation through June or July to maintain a viable agricultural operation while preserving local agricultural heritage and the rural/agricultural nature of the beautiful Little Cimarron Valley. Later in the summer, the protected instream flows will greatly improve water quality and aquatic habitat in a section of the Little Cimarron River that historically ran dry. In 2014, the Colorado Water Trust (Water Trust) purchased 1.5 shares of water in the McKinley Ditch and began the process of obtaining a first of its kinds split season decree which allowed for both agricultural and instream flow uses in the same season. The decree was awarded in late 2018 and provides a permanent protected supply of water for agriculture and the environment. With the decree in hand the Water Trust then conveyed to CWCB a permanent right to use those water rights for instream flow use under this proposed split-season operation. The CWCB Board voted unanimously to accept the offered water rights. Members commended the Water Trust for taking this novel idea from a “conversation to a concept”, and for helping the state realize the consumptive/non-consumptive partnerships envisioned by the Water Plan. In 2019, the Water Trust completed a “Grant of Irrigation Use” with the landowners of the irrigated area which solidifies the water sharing agreement and ensures continued agricultural use of the water. To fully implement the project, the Water Trust installed a splitter in the McKinley Ditch during the fall of 2021 which can return the decreed instream flows to the Little Cimarron River. To ensure that the McKinley ATM project provides the full instream flow benefit to the CWCB, and to meet the return flow obligations outlined in the decree; the Colorado Water Trust is working with the shareholders of the Collier Ditch to retrofit the existing Collier Dam to allow bypass of the senior instream flows

while maintaining irrigation withdrawals in priority. The Water Trust hopes this his permanent ATM project will serve as an example of how agricultural and environmental water uses can be balanced in the future.
The McKinley Ditch ATM and the proposed study will also help further the following goals from the 2022 Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan (BIP)

1. Protect water uses in the Gunnison basin.
2. Discourage conversion of productive agricultural land to other uses.
3. Quantify and protect environmental and recreational water users.
4. Describe and encourage the beneficial relationship between agricultural and environmental and recreational water users.
5. Restore, maintain and modernize critical water infrastructure.

Related Studies

No Related Studies provided

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

No Tax Bill of Rights provided