



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	River Network
Name of Water Project	Enhancing Understanding of Environmental Flow Assessments & Tools
Grant Request Amount	\$153,697.00
Primary Category	\$153,697.00
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$17,554.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$2,500.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$15,054.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$76,114.00
<i>Colorado River Water Conservation District</i>	\$23,028.00
<i>Western Resource Advocates</i>	\$7,500.00
<i>Mighty Arrow Foundation</i>	\$15,000.00
<i>Western Resource Advocates</i>	\$18,848.00
<i>Colorado Water Trust</i>	\$11,738.00
Total Project Cost	\$247,365.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: River Network
Mailing Address: PO Box 21387 Boulder CO 80308
FEIN: 930,969,979

Organization Contact: Nicole Seltzer

Position/Title:

Email: nseltzer@rivernetwork.org

Phone: (970) 744-0324

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
- ☒ 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 40.015000

Longitude 105.270500

Lat Long Flag Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters

Water Source

Basins Arkansas; Colorado; Gunnison; Metro; Yampa/White/Green; Rio Grande; South Platte; Southwest; Nort...

Counties

Districts

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Environmental

Type of Water Project Capacity Building

Scheduled Start Date - Design 1/1/2024

Scheduled Start Date - Construction

Description

In 2022, River Network and the Colorado Water Conservation Board co-hosted workshops to gain insight on the barriers and opportunities for utilization and/or development of environmental & recreational flow recommendations within stream management plans. Among the ideas documented in the resulting white paper were to:

- Convene a cohort of river management planning practitioners that are navigating the flows recommendations process, providing skills growth and a place for peer and technical support as they advance their flow recommendations processes.
- Bolster education and training resources for coalitions on the technical aspects of the flow needs assessment and recommendations process.
- Enhance education and resources for coalitions on the stakeholder-driven aspects of the flow recommendations

process to bolster collaboration skills and ensure diverse perspectives are included.

Through jointly offering trainings, as well as developing a deeper learning cohort, to assess flow needs and to develop and meet environmental flow recommendations, River Network, Colorado Water Trust and Western Resource Advocates hope to grow local knowledge and capacity, connect coalitions working on similar challenges, and ultimately increase the number of rivers that have locally-driven environmental flow recommendations. The result of this project will be a replicable and scalable training program that can meet the needs of local coalitions for years to come.

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)
Length of Pipe, Canal Built or Improved (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
100 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other
No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

The 2023 Colorado Water Plan includes several recommendations that this proposal would support, including:
*Agency Action 3.7 "Reduce barriers to participation in the Instream Flow Program" by enhancing public understanding of the ISF Program, sharing examples of successful collaborative projects, providing guidance for initiating and navigating the process, and providing support and technical expertise for interested entities.
*Agency Action 2.3 "Expand the scale of collaborative water sharing agreements" by convening conversations, increasing knowledge sharing between current and potential CWSA participants, and attracting new and diverse CWSA participants.
*Agency Action 4.1 "Create a capacity-building hub to provide accessible educational opportunities" especially collaborative water sharing agreements and river health methodologies.
*Partner Actions for Thriving Watersheds (pgs. 205-206), including: Increasing the amount of stored water that augments or re-time stream flows in ways that enable water managers to provide recreational or environmental flows to communities; Developing flow enhancement projects that reconnect streams with their floodplains to improve habitat and water quality ; Support stream and integrated water management plans' efforts to identify needed flows; and Identify voluntary water acquisitions to improve stream flows.

In addition, many Basin Implementation Plans or Stream and Integrated Water Management Plans include goals and projects to restore flows that require deeper analysis and planning before implementation, including this small sampling from across the state:

*Projects in the Colorado BIP like "CO-2015-0015 Map of places where reservoir releases could help maintain minimum instream flows" and "CO-2015-0342 Coordinated flushing flows releases from upstream reservoirs".
*Projects in the Rio Grande BIP like "RG-2020-0066 Alamosa River Instream Flow Restoration"

*Projects in the Yampa IWMP like "Coordinate reservoir operations to meet irrigation and environmental shortages" and "Meet existing environmental flow targets & water rights".

*Strategies in the St. Vrain & Lefhand SMP like "Maintain baseflows and peak flushing flows in the creeks necessary to support ecological function and connectivity for native and sport fish, recreation, and diversions for beneficial use through filling data gaps and developing the framework for enhancing stream flows and establishing reservoir operation agreements."

This proposal will support the education and technical assistance needs of practitioners as they strive to implement these important projects.

Related Studies

In 2018, River Network formally launched a Peer Learning Network for those working on SMPs to improve planning outcomes through collecting and sharing best practices and connecting practitioners to each other. Through annual surveys and interviews of the SMP leads in 2017, 2019 and 2020, River Network has collected best practices and innovative approaches (coloradosmp.org), and tracked the progress of SMPs throughout the state. In 2020 River Network launched an outcome tracking tool to begin collecting data on the various outcomes that SMPs have achieved and documented the findings in the 2021 report Stream Management Plans in Colorado: Progress at Five Years. One finding of this work is that only 7% of SMP project recommendations to date include environment and recreation flow targets, a number that does not align with the original intended outcome of the SMP program.

River Network and the Colorado Water Conservation Board then co-hosted workshops in 2022 to gain insight on the barriers and opportunities for utilization and/or development of environmental & recreational flow recommendations within stream management plans. Workshop participants agreed an opportunity exists to increase the number of E&R flow recommendations that are produced within individual stream management plans. River Network documented these findings in the 2023 white paper: Flow Recommendations in SMPs –Opportunity Analysis.

In 2023, River Network conducted outreach and a follow up survey of coalitions to gauge interest in the idea of an Environmental Flows Cohort that would receive education and technical assistance to assess flow needs, develop new environmental flow recommendations, or identify strategies to meet existing environmental flow recommendations on their local rivers. Twenty practitioners responded and their ideas, desires and limitations were the backbone of this proposal. In addition, River Network recently completed an external evaluation of the SMP Peer Learning Network, and findings indicate that network members want us to consider ways to go deeper on topics, and the environmental flows cohort idea was mentioned several times as an example of how we could do that.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

River Network has no TABOR limitations