



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

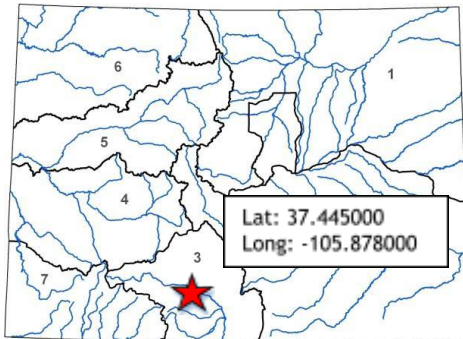
Department of Natural Resources

Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan Update

Alamosa County

September 2023 Board Meeting

Water Plan Grant Program Application



LOCATION

County:	Alamosa
Drainage Basin:	Rio Grande

DETAILS

Total Project Cost:	\$400,000
Water Plan Grant Request:	\$100,000
Recommended amount:	\$100,000
Other CWCB Funding:	\$0
Other Funding Amount:	\$150,000
Applicant Match:	\$150,000
Project Type:	Planning
Project Category:	Conservation & Land Use
Measurable Result:	16,746 Coloradans impacted by incorporating water-saving actions into land use planning and related engagement activities

Colorado Water Plan Grant funding will support Alamosa County in hiring a consultant to update their 2008 comprehensive plan with a specific focus on how dwindling water supplies will change land use practices in the San Luis Valley. Project activities include designing the planning process, engaging the community, drafting the comprehensive plan update, and securing its adoption by the County Commission.



This funding request was spurred by Alamosa County's participation in the 2022 Growing Water Smart (GWS) Workshop hosted in the San Luis Valley. The GWS Alamosa working group emerged with some key understandings of local and immediate needs, including intentional collaboration between the city and county at the interface of municipal and rural planning, especially within the areas that the city identifies as probable for annexation and connection to the municipal water system. In their letter requesting a county budget appropriation for this comp plan update, the Alamosa County Planning Commission stated:

We firmly believe that the continued availability and quality of water will have a tremendous impact on the growth and development potential of Alamosa County, yet this is not adequately discussed in our current plan. Not only does increased growth threaten a precious and limited resource, we expect our existing agricultural heritage will continue to be challenged with alternative uses for existing water resources, from both within and outside the San Luis Valley.

Alamosa County expects their comprehensive plan update process to engage voices and perspectives across the county around local, state, and regional water issues to sustain and enhance a vibrant and livable community based not only on agriculture, but also recreation, housing, and emerging economies. Alamosa County hopes to provide a template for other San Luis Valley communities to prioritize water in land use planning.

Alamosa County has secured a Colorado Department of Local Affairs grant for \$150,000 to support the comprehensive plan update. This project advances the Colorado Water Plan goal to have 75% of Coloradans living in communities that have incorporated water-saving actions in land using planning—and has the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable's support.

Funding Recommendation:

Staff recommends full funding of \$100,000 to Alamosa County for the Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan Update.

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Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Alamosa County	
Name of Water Project	Alamosa County Comprehensive Plan Update	
Grant Request Amount		\$100,000.00
Primary Category		\$100,000.00
<i>Conservation & Land Use Planning</i>		
Total Applicant Match		\$150,000.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>		\$150,000.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>		\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		\$150,000.00
<i>Department of Local Affairs</i>		\$150,000.00
Total Project Cost		\$400,000.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Alamosa County
Mailing Address: 8999 Independence Way, #100 Alamosa CO 81101
FEIN: 6,000,733

Organization Contact: Richard Hubler
Position/Title: Email: rhubler@alamosacounty.org
Phone: 719-589-3812

Organization Contact - Alternate: Roni Wisdom
Position/Title: County Administrator Email: rwisdom@alamosacounty.org
Phone: 719-589-8169

Grant Management Contact: Richard Hubler
Position/Title: Email: rhubler@alamosacounty.org
Phone: 719-589-3812

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Roni Wisdom
Position/Title: County Administrator Email: rwisdom@alamosacounty.org
Phone: 719-589-8169

Description of Grantee/Applicant

Alamosa County Government - Land Use & Building Department

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	37.445000
Longitude	-105.878000
Lat Long Flag	Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source	N/A - a combination of surface and groundwater sources scattered across the county.
Basins	Rio Grande
Counties	Alamosa
Districts	20-Rio Grande

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Education
Type of Water Project	Planning
Scheduled Start Date - Design	11/15/2023
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

Comprehensive Planning seeks to engage community residents and stakeholders in a process of future-thinking - to determine what values and resources are important, determine priorities among competing needs and interests, and establish a framework of goals and actions to aid current and future decision making. Such effort assesses the current physical, social, and economic environments to establish a baseline community identity, builds community capacity, and informs adaptation / mitigation. Per statute and our planned approach, Alamosa County will include thoughtful analysis and conversations around attainable housing, economic development, social justice and equity, the

planned expansion of the City of Alamosa and its overlap with infrastructure and development paradigms. Most importantly, as nothing can happen in the SLV without legally and physically adequate water supplies, a primary focus of our update will be a deep dive into water issues, building on 2022 Growing Water Smart.

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)

16,746 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning

16,746 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

This project will directly impact the roughly 16,000 residents of Alamosa County, and as a model for the San Luis Valley in years to come, it will indirectly impact many more.

Water Project Justification

The Rio Grande Basin has been referred to as “extremely over-appropriated” by the Division 3 Engineer, and it is subject to multiple management regulations and paradigms. This complex system determines the availability of water for all levels of development in Alamosa County, yet ongoing changes to the physically and legally available water supplies portends nothing short of a re-write of our local story. Long supported by robust agriculture and ranching operations and their related support economies, the San Luis Valley expects to see a substantial reduction in actively irrigated lands in the next decade.

The Rio Grande Basin section of the Colorado Water Plan perfectly summarizes this in stating , "Water management challenges in the Rio Grande Basin are centered around aquifer sustainability, maintaining and providing surface and groundwater supply for existing uses and new growth, and operating within the constraints of the Rio Grande Compact". The Alamosa County Comprehensive plan update is centered around an attempt to understand and strategically address the potential fallout to the local land use and development patterns and the local economies from changing watershed conditions, regulatory regimes, and increasing recreation and other commercial and residential development pressures.

In June 2022, Adams State University Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center and the Sonoran Institute and Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy hosted a Growing Water Smart Workshop for the San Luis Valley. Engaging stakeholders from across all 6 counties, this workshop provided incredible opportunities for conversation and education around the integration of water and land use planning. The Alamosa working group emerged with some key understandings of local and immediate needs, including intentional collaboration between the city and county at the interface of municipal and rural planning, especially within the areas that the city identifies as probable for annexation and connection to the municipal water system. Some of the resulting actions reflect best current practice in managing municipal use through education and conservation programs, and the City of Alamosa is already well engaged in these aspects. Alamosa County is taking the lead through our Comprehensive Plan update on tackling the city/county integration and we are jointly working, through a small grant from Growing Water Smart, to explore shared issues like stormwater management. The strong focus on

strategic water planning as part of updating the county comprehensive plan is defined and driven by the Growing Water Smart experience, and this focus supports the Colorado Water Plan Objective to have 75% of Coloradoans living in communities that have incorporated water-saving actions into land-use planning. In particular, Alamosa County expects our Comprehensive Plan Update Process to engage voices and perspectives across the county around local, state, and regional water issues in order to sustain and enhance a vibrant and livable community based not only on agriculture, but also recreation, housing, and emerging economies. What we do NOT expect to see is a panacea solution or a cookie-cutter approach imported from elsewhere, as we fully appreciate that our situation is unique and our plans and philosophies must reflect all that we value, starting with water and the natural and human environments it supports in this very arid high desert valley.

This is the basis of our request to CWCB for a Water Plan grant. The County has some funds set aside, and we have secured a partial grant from DOLA to address the basics required by state statute, DOLA funding regulations, and good planning industry practice relevant to long term land use plans. However, we see this process as an incredibly time relevant opportunity to further integrate strategic water planning into our land use plans and regulations, and to establish a template for other communities in the San Luis Valley and even, perhaps, across the state, to further integrate the principles in the Colorado Water Plan into more traditional land use and zoning practice and planning.

Related Studies

Recent CWCB efforts in Alamosa County with Wood Engineering identified a major opportunity with FEMA certification of the levee-system as it protects the City of Alamosa, and the neighborhood of East Alamosa, just outside city limits to the east of the Rio Grande and north of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. The Wood assessment has led into a multi-year, multi-million dollar project that is just starting, which will have a potentially major impact on the development within and adjacent to the city. Additionally, CWCB is currently working with FEMA to update FIRM maps last published in 1999, which do not completely consider the entirety of the Rio Grande river, or other drainages such as Rock Creek. In addition to challenges from shrinking groundwater and surface water irrigation availability, this current project to remap the flood plains in Alamosa County is expected to have far reaching impacts on long term land use planning.

Other relevant plans and studies that will inform the update to the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Current 2008 Alamosa County Master Plan
- Current Alamosa County Land Use Development Code
- Alamosa County Emergency Operation Plan (2023)
- Alamosa County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)
- SLVHC Valley Wide Housing Analysis & related action plan and local assessments (2021 & 2022)
- City of Alamosa Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan (2021)

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

Alamosa County "de-bruced" November 4, 1997.