



**Final Report**  
**October 2021 – June 2022**

**PROJECT NAME:** Piloting Multi-Benefit Project Coordinators - Readiness Assessment Supplemental Ask

**GRANTEE PRIMARY CONTACT:** Nicole Seltzer, River Network

**GRANT AMOUNT:**  
\$32,439.00

**GRANT CONTRACT NO:**  
POGG1,PDAA,202200002467

## **I. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT GOALS**

River Network identified significant demand by local agriculture organizations to become effective advocates for projects that integrate irrigation water management, irrigation infrastructure improvements, river flow restoration or leases, and management of private riparian lands. These local organizations need additional support to overcome challenges such as lack of capacity to conduct meaningful outreach to landowners, lack of knowledge of available funding sources and how to combine them, and lack of access to appropriate technical skills to develop project plans.

In response to this need, River Network teamed up with the Community Agriculture Alliance in Steamboat Springs and the Mancos Conservation District in southwest Colorado to conduct a two-year pilot that provides resources to increase the quantity and quality of multi-benefit projects on private lands. A Colorado Water Plan grant in the amount of \$133,179 approved on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, provides partial funding.

As originally envisioned in the March 2021 CWP grant, River Network scoped a coarse review of local ag organizations at the HUC-8 scale to classify their desire and readiness to implement similar work. Through subsequent conversations with CWCB staff and the Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance, the original task was expanded to help identify locations throughout the state that are ripe to scale up this pilot project and place future agricultural coordinators. The expanded scope includes development of an interactive map of findings, a technical memo outlining methods and results, and a resource hub and directory that will provide resources for ditch companies, irrigators, and other stakeholders seeking assistance in improving irrigation infrastructure and other multi-beneficial projects.

The project objectives for this supplement grant include:

1. Recommend actions and locations to scale the multi-benefit project coordinators project up after the pilot phase.
2. Develop an online resource hub and directory for ditch companies, irrigators, and other stakeholders seeking assistance in improving irrigation infrastructure and other multi-beneficial projects.

## II. TASK BY TASK PROGRESS

### *Task 1 –Coarse Analysis at the HUC-8 Scale*

River Network and DARCA plan to complement the previously funded placement of Ag Coordinators in the Yampa and Southwest basins with an analysis of agriculture organizations at the HUC-8 scale and provide possible locations where this approach could be successfully replicated.

#### **Method and Deliverables:**

- River Network and DARCA will develop a **scoring rubric** to score the readiness for the placement of future agricultural coordinators throughout the state to successfully scale this approach;
- River Network and DARCA will **complete an assessment of agricultural organizations** to determine the level of readiness for placement of an agricultural coordinator.

#### **Progress:**

##### **Scoring rubric and scorecard**

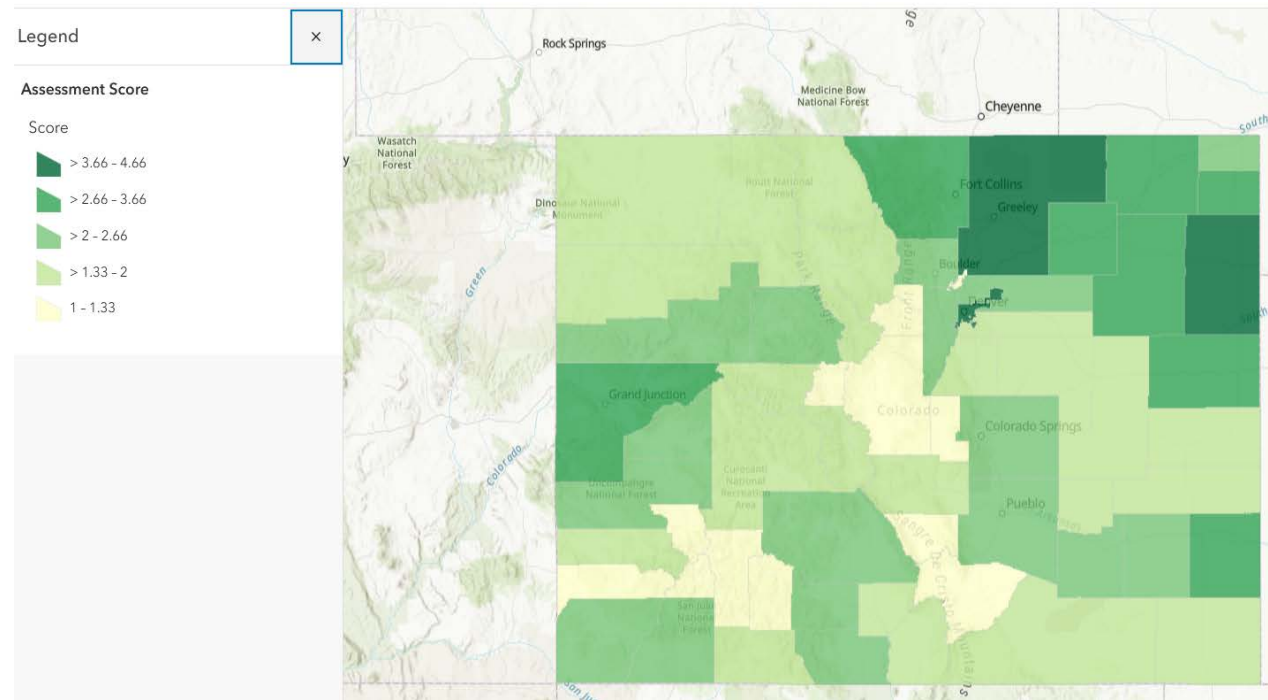
The [assessment scorecard](#) scored the following indicators:

1. Future economic impacts of flood, drought, and wildfire for the agricultural sector under current climate and population growth scenarios. This indicator is the [FACE Hazards](#) tool that the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) developed to assess the expected annual damages of certain risks on specific sectors.
2. The total irrigated acreage by county was looked at to determine counties with high agricultural land use. Data is from the [2017 USDA agricultural census](#).
3. Market value of agricultural products sold within a county. Data is from the [2017 USDA agricultural census](#).

These three indicators were scored on a Likert-type scale, with a score of 1 indicating low future economic impacts, low irrigated acreage, and low market value of agricultural products sold. A score of 5 indicating high risk for future economic impacts, high irrigated acreage, and a high market value of agricultural products sold. Because the data that was available to us was at the county level, River Network pivoted from assessing these indicators at the HUC-8 scale.

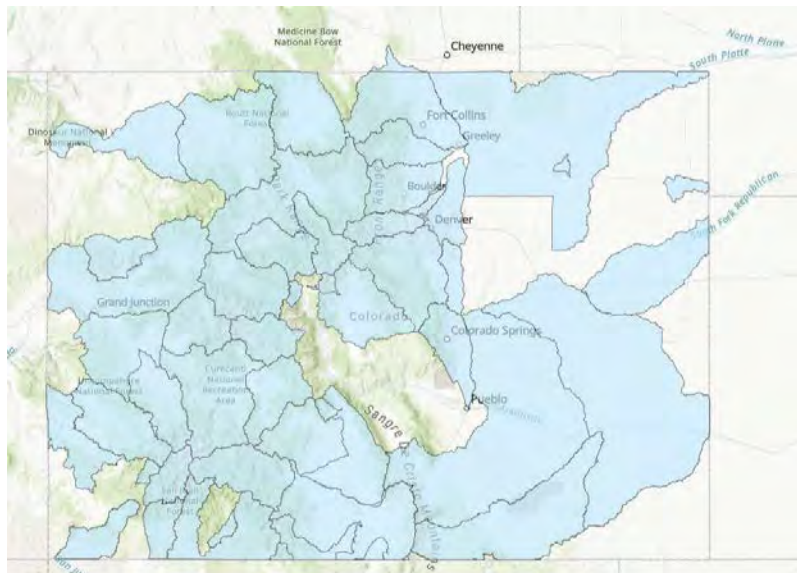
The counties scoring a 3 or greater included:

Basin	County
Arkansas	PROWERS
Colorado	MESA
South Platte	DENVER
South Platte	KIT CARSON
South Platte	LARIMER
South Platte	LOGAN
South Platte	MORGAN
South Platte	PHILLIPS
South Platte	WASHINGTON
South Platte	WELD
South Platte	YUMA



Once a hazard and agricultural score was compiled, River Network considered other factors such as:

1. The location of watershed health plans, [as defined by Colorado Department of Health and Environment](#), and
2. Irrigation by primarily surface or groundwater sources

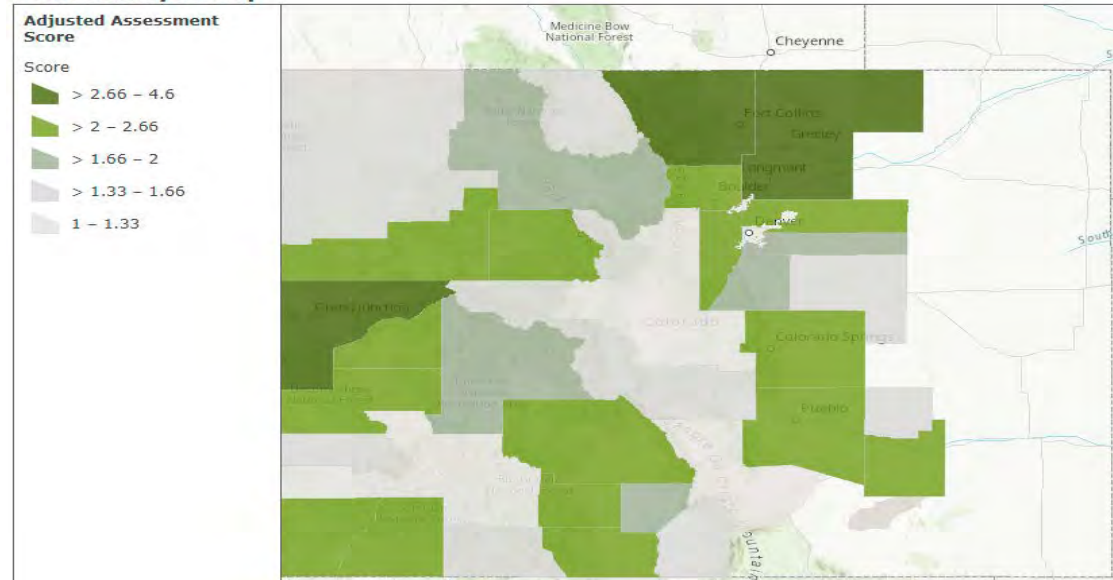


Locations with an approved watershed plan

After considering the above additional elements, River Network narrowed its analysis down to counties containing an existing watershed plan (*where watershed health plans are already underway gives us insight as to where coalitions are already engaged in watershed health planning initiatives and may be interested in deepening work in this sector*) and where irrigation is primarily by surface water (*because our interest is on multi-benefit projects with a focus on river health, areas that do not primarily irrigate from surface water have less ability to improve surface water conditions*).

The following final scoring takes these factors into account and provides guidance as to which counties have a high risk for hazards, high agricultural land use, a high agricultural market value, surface water irrigation and an existing watershed plan.

### Coarse Analysis Map



### **Selection for deeper analysis**

Several counties rank as a high needs area and have a watershed plan. Areas that stand out as key regions to explore for placement of agricultural coordinators in the future include **the Grand Valley and the northern Front Range**.

As part of River Network's larger multi-year CWCB grant, we will pursue next steps that include a deep dive into the Grand Valley and northern Front Range regions to conduct a landscape scan to identify potential organizations that may be logical partners to scale this program. When assessing organizations, several indicators will be reviewed, including:

- **Type of organization:**
  - Ditch or reservoir company
  - Government agency
  - Conservation Districts
  - Tribal entity
  - Nonprofit organization
  - Unincorporated citizen group
  - Local affiliate of national organization
  - Citizen-led watershed council
  - Agency-led watershed council
  - School or University
- **Mission area(s)**
  - Agriculture and irrigation
  - Farmers markets and local foods advocates
  - Land or soil protection and restoration
  - Watershed Planning
  - Monitoring & Assessment
  - Advocacy/Lobbying
  - Drinking Water Protection
  - Consensus Building
  - Public Education
  - School-Based Programs
  - Environmental Justice
  - Water Conservation
  - Pollution prevention
- How the organization engages their local community on watershed health issues
- If the organization has or currently is engaged in a watershed health plan and to what capacity
- Number of full-time staff, how active the board is, and the number of active volunteers.
- The primary sources of funding for programs and organizational expenses, including staff time.

After assessing organizations within these two regions we will identify logical partners to scale the placement of coordinators in the future.

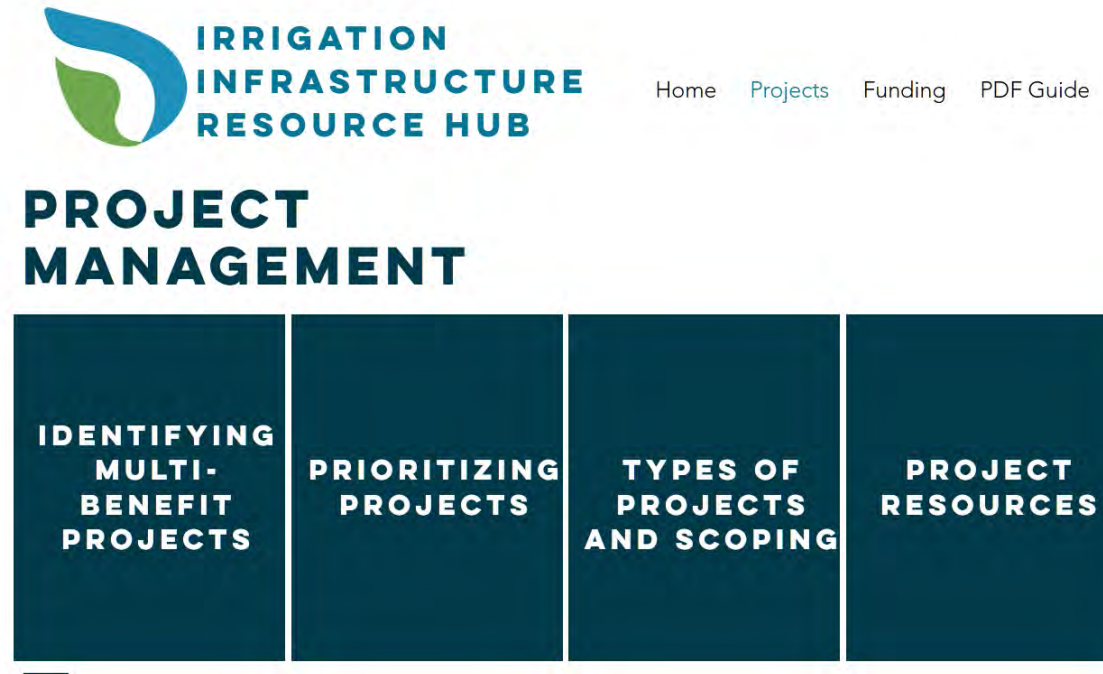
### *Task 2- Resource Hub & Directory*

River Network and DARCA developed an online resource hub and directory that provides resources for ditch companies, irrigators, and other stakeholders seeking assistance in improving irrigation infrastructure and other multi-beneficial projects.

#### **Progress:**

DARCA and River Network completed the Irrigation Infrastructure Resource Hub. This resource hub provides a one-stop-shop for resources to irrigators and other DARCA members and stakeholders and allows a ditch, reservoir, or irrigation company or stakeholder the opportunity to gather resources for additional capacity building and to gather ways to take a project from single benefit to multi-benefit that also modernizes the system to cut down on maintenance costs while creating many benefits to the overall system.

<https://www.irrigationresourcehub.org/>



The image shows a screenshot of the Irrigation Infrastructure Resource Hub website. At the top left is the logo, which consists of a stylized blue and green leaf shape next to the text "IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE HUB". To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Projects", "Funding", and "PDF Guide". Below the navigation menu is the main heading "PROJECT MANAGEMENT" in large, bold, dark blue letters. Underneath this heading is a horizontal row of four dark blue rectangular boxes, each containing white text. From left to right, the boxes contain: "IDENTIFYING MULTI-BENEFIT PROJECTS", "PRIORITIZING PROJECTS", "TYPES OF PROJECTS AND SCOPING", and "PROJECT RESOURCES".

**IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE HUB**

Home Projects Funding PDF Guide

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- IDENTIFYING MULTI-BENEFIT PROJECTS
- PRIORITIZING PROJECTS
- TYPES OF PROJECTS AND SCOPING
- PROJECT RESOURCES

### III. FINANCIALS

<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Actually Invoiced</b>
1	Coarse Analysis at the HUC-8 Scale	\$ 7,070	\$ 6,990
2	Resource Hub & Directory	\$ 22,437	\$ 22,689
3	Project Oversight	\$ 2,932	\$ 2,758
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 32,439</b>	<b>\$ 32,439</b>