



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
Name of Water Project	Upper and Lower Poudre River Health Assessment
Grant Request Amount	\$327,851.60
Primary Category	\$327,851.60
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$0.00
Applicant Cash Match	\$0.00
Applicant In-Kind Match	
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$152,321.90
City of Fort Collins Natural Areas	\$20,000.00
City of Greeley	\$50,000.00
City of Fort Collins Utilities	\$20,000.00
City of Fort Collins Natural Areas	\$33,184.00
Sisters of St. Francis	\$14,137.90
NSF Virridity	\$15,000.00
Total Project Cost	\$480,173.50

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
Mailing Address: 320 E Vine Drive, Ste 317 Fort Collins CO 80524

Organization Contact: Hally Strevey
Position/Title: Executive Director
Phone: 9702225754

Email: hallys@poudrewatershed.org

Organization Contact - Alternate: Cory Dick
Position/Title: Watershed Project Manager
Phone:

Email: cory@poudrewatershed.org

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	40.696944
Longitude	105.441944
Lat Long Flag	Stream location: Coordinates based on general location on stream
Water Source	Cache la Poudre River
Basins	South Platte
Counties	Weld; Larimer
Districts	3-Cache La Poudre River

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type

Type of Water Project Planning

Scheduled Start Date - Design	11/18/2024
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Scheduled Start Date - Construction

Description

In 2024, CPRW and partners with the City of Fort Collins completed the updated River Health Assessment Framework (RHAF) and User Manual to implement the RHAF from headwaters to confluence. This was a four-year effort that adapted the Upper, Middle, and Lower RHAF assessments into one protocol. This project was funded by our current CWCB grant and is now complete. With partners, we intend to conduct a basin-wide RHAF every five years to monitor river health over time. This new proposal will support the second iteration of the RHAF implementation for the Upper and Lower watershed. Fort Collins Natural Areas is conducting the assessment in the Middle Reach starting this fall. Our aim is to complete the watershed-wide assessment over a one-year period to capture baseline conditions in 2025. The results from previous assessments conducted between 2015-2019 helped to inform river restoration projects, water quality protection and watershed planning.

Our goal is to implement the RHAF in the Upper and Lower Watersheds to 1) gather baseline conditions to track changes over time (including from the Cameron Peak Fire), 2) identify areas in the river corridor for restoration; and 3) communicate the health of the river to stakeholders and the community.

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
 1,500 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
 Other
 A completed River Health Assessment for the Upper and Lower watershed which will provide baseline data for 2025-2026, and assist with planning efforts across the basin.

Water Project Justification

Our proposal to implement the River Health Assessment Framework in the Upper and Lower Watersheds starting in 2025 (RHA or RHAF) supports many of the goals articulated in Colorado's Water Plan (both the 2015 and updated 2023 version), the Statewide Water Supply Initiative, and the South Platte Basin Roundtable Implementation Plan. For this section, only the 2023 Water Plan will be referenced.

Specifically, our project will contribute to measurable outcomes that relate to Water Plan's Action Areas including Vibrant Communities, Thriving Watersheds and Resilient Planning. The 2023 Colorado Water Plan (pg 8) identifies the four action areas for the state. Our proposal meets the following:

- **VIBRANT COMMUNITIES:** counties, municipalities, utilities, cities, towns, businesses, large industries, large and small urban and rural communities, etc.
- **THRIVING WATERSHEDS:** environment and recreation, river health, watershed health, forest health, wildfire mitigation, wildlife and aquatic species protection, etc.
- **RESILIENT PLANNING:** climate adaptation, planning for climate extremes, embracing EDI (equity, diversity, inclusivity), education, outreach and engagement, supportive government, etc.

Our existing collaborative lower and upper Poudre stakeholder groups address multiple perspectives as they include municipal utilities, federal, state, and regional natural resources agencies, community groups, researchers, non-profits and members of the public. We will work closely with these two stakeholder groups throughout the second iteration of the RHA in the upper and lower watersheds. The results of the RHAF will also be shared widely with the Poudre communities meeting the Vibrant Communities Action Area.

The River Health Assessment Framework (RHAF) looks at a entire suite of indicators and metrics related to river and watershed health including hydrology/geomorphology, riparian habitat, aquatic life, and water quality. This addresses the Plan's Action Areas of Thriving Watersheds and Resilient Planning. The RHAF is also recognized as a Stream Management Plan by CWCB: <https://www.coloradosmp.org/>

In Chapter 6, the Water Plan outlines the various Partner and Agency Actions to take within each Action Area. Page 181 outlines specific Partner Action that relates to the RHAF for Vibrant Communities: NGOs, business:

NGOs, academia, and others engage residents, advance research on water issues, and need funding. Public-private partnerships should be supported that focus on research and other joint efforts. The business community should be engaged to promote innovation and identify new technologies for conserving and tracking water use. The Partner Actions to address Meeting Future Water Needs States: Integrated planning and multi-use projects are needed to meet water demands across all sectors of water use, and efforts to improve stream health or function often benefit all water users. The RHAF by design involves a variety of stakeholders-both in its development and throughout its implementation. The intent of the RHAF is to assign a grad/score of the stream health and function to help track baseline conditions, changes over time, and areas in need of restoration.

The RHAF directly addresses the Water Plan's Action Area of Thriving Watersheds. Page 204 states that: Comprehensive water resources planning should incorporate conditions of forests, streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. The RHAF is one component of this planning process that includes assessing the conditions of the streams for the entire Poudre.

More specifically, the RHAF identifies areas to improve habitat through reconnection with the floodplain. It is also considered a Stream Management Plan by CWCB as a collaborative planning effort that considers multiple benefits to local users. The Poudre RHAF uses an integrated planning approach with the goal of tracking baseline conditions and identifying areas to improve stream health. The RHAF is collaborative in nature, and is the most successful when multiple stakeholders are involved. Page 206 under Healthy Lands suggests that watershed management requires collaboration across multiple scales and geographies. Shared stewardship is an approach to planning for improvement of watershed health and resilience across management jurisdictions. The RHAF has been developed with assistance from multiple jurisdictions including the Cities of Fort Collins and Greeley, with collaboration from various agencies (USFS, Larimer County, Colorado Parks & Wildlife) and researchers (CSU, UNC, Colorado Natural Heritage Program), and across multiple scales (headwaters to confluence). The data collected through the RHAF also helps us to identify stream reaches that could benefit from improvements to riparian and aquatic habitat and floodplain reconnection, including nature-based solutions like Low-Tech Process Based Restoration (page 206, Healthy Lands).

Page 207 outlines Actions specific to the NGOs including: partners in watershed planning like NGOs can often help with efforts such as data collection, project implementation, analysis, and education. They can often form strong, trust-based relationships with communities. One of CPRW's core functions is as a convener of all stakeholders in the watershed. Over the last decade, we have established trusted relationships with our partners, stakeholders and private landowners. We aim to build upon these relationships and enhance the community's understanding of river health throughout this process.

Our project also directly addresses the Water Plan's Agency Action under Thriving Watersheds to Develop a Colorado River Health Assessment Framework (CoRHAF). Page 208 of the Plan outlines the plan for CWCB to develop a new guidance document and workbook to help stakeholders approach stream health assessments. In fact, the Poudre RHAF was one of the first river health assessments tailored to a specific basin when it was created back in 2015. We recently completed a similar effort as CWCB to create a guidance document specific to the Poudre, The RHAF User's Manual (completed in 2024). Our aim is to implement the RHAF across the entire basin with our partners every five years.

Finally, page 217 outlines some specific actions partners can take to address Resilient Planning; Integrated planning: Planning studies of water supply, demand, and needed infrastructure that consider a range of uncertain future conditions will help water providers develop supplies and facilities that are resilient and adaptable. The RHAF is just one facet of a resilient/integrated planning approach that we use in the Poudre watershed. If we achieve our goal of implementing the RHAF across the basin every five years, it will help our partners, including water providers plan for future water supply conditions based on how certain RHAF indicators

have changed over time (i.e. flow regime).

Finally, in the 2015 CWP, Chapter 6 recognizes that the Cache la Poudre River is the only river in Colorado that is designated as a Wild and Scenic River (Pg 166 Wild and Scenic Rivers). The RHAF will assess the streams within the Wild & Scenic corridor including the mainstem and South Fork.

Similarly, our proposal to implement the RHAF in the Upper and Lower Watersheds also aligns with the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan. Specifically, the RHAF addresses at least two of the BIP goals: 1) Protecting and enhancing watershed function and environmental and recreational attributes and 2) Broadening communications, outreach, and education.

The RHAF gives us a consistent methodology to track watershed health over time, and changes in health/function following a disaster like a fire or flood, or improvements after restoration. The RHAF also is only as good as the community and stakeholders that understand its outcomes and what it means for the river and watershed. We aim to incorporate a robust outreach/education campaign around the RHAF after the results have been compiled. Our stakeholders, partners and private landowners will be included throughout the project to ensure that they understand the process and are able to provide feedback.

On page 35, Section 6.C of the South Platte BIP, outlines the strategy to incorporate stream management plans throughout the South Platte: THROUGH EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, IDENTIFY, PRIORITIZE, AND DEVELOP STREAM MANAGEMENT PLANS WITHIN THE SOUTH PLATTE BASIN. 6.C.1: Plans should address and be based around biological, hydrological, geomorphological, and other data to assess the flows, water quality parameters, recreational opportunities and other physical conditions that are needed to support collaboratively identified environmental and/or recreational values.

As stated previously, the RHAF is considered a Stream Management Plan by the CWCB. While the RHAF does not include any indicators around recreational values, it does address the biological, hydrological and geomorphological aspects of river health.

Section 6.C.2 states: Encourage implementation of projects and programs identified within these stream management plans

CPRW has already used the results of the 2017 Lower Poudre Resilience Plan which included the RHAF to identify priority projects to move forward for restoration. The City of Fort Collins has also used the RHAF to identify several of their priority river restoration projects. We intend to use the results from the basin-wide 2025 RHAF to continue to advance river/stream restoration projects and to track changes over time following future fires/floods, water development projects, and restoration.

Related Studies

- City of Fort Collins upcoming River Health Assessment of the Middle Reach- to begin in fall 2024
- Revised Upper Poudre Resilience Plan- completed in 2024
- 2024 Poudre Pearls Pilot Study
- 2020 Upper Poudre River Health Assessment
- 2017 Lower Poudre Flood Recovery and Resilience Master Plan
- 2016 City of Fort Collins State of the Poudre- A River Health Report Card

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

As a non-profit entity, we are not affected by TABOR.