

**COLORADO**Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board**Water Plan****Water Project Summary**

Name of Applicant	Northern Water
Name of Water Project	CRCC Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan
Grant Request Amount	\$500,000.00
Primary Category	\$500,000.00
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$500,000.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$500,000.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$0.00
Total Project Cost	\$1,000,000.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Northern Water

Mailing Address: 220 Water Avenue Berthoud CO 80513

Organization Contact: Jonathan Hernandez

Position/Title: Senior Project Manager

Phone: 9706179337

Email: jhernandez@northernwater.org

Grant Management Contact: Jonathan Hernandez

Position/Title: Senior Project Manager

Phone: 9706179337

Email: jhernandez@northernwater.org

Description of Grantee/Applicant

Northern Water is a conservancy district that delivers water to municipal and agricultural entities, providing water to over a million people in northern Colorado. Northern Water jointly operates and maintains the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, a federally owned water project that delivers supplemental water to northeastern Colorado, with the Bureau of Reclamation. Northern Water also manages a variety of other water projects and infrastructure. In addition, Northern Water provides regional leadership through data collection and delivery (including water supply forecasts), water efficiency programs, source water protection and interagency cooperation.

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	40.101000
Longitude	-105.980000
Lat Long Flag	Stream location: Coordinates based on general location on stream
Water Source	Colorado River
Basins	Colorado
Counties	Grand
Districts	51-Upper Colorado/Fraser Rivers

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Construction / Implementation
Scheduled Start Date - Design	
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	4/1/2025

Description

The Colorado River Connectivity Channel (CRCC) is a collaborative project which reconfigured Windy Gap Reservoir and constructed a new channel and floodplain, reconnecting two segments of the Colorado River. The Project Partners (Municipal Subdistrict, Grand County, Colorado River Water Conservation District, Upper Colorado River Alliance, Trout Unlimited, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife) are committed to an adaptive management approach and developed a monitoring program designed to evaluate whether the goals and objectives of the project are being met as well as the process and steps the Project Partners will follow if shortcomings are identified.

Goals of CRCC are:

Goal 1: Improve bedload sediment transport around Windy Gap Reservoir.

Goal 2: Moderate potential elevated temperatures in the Colorado River downstream from Windy Gap Reservoir as measured at the USGS stream gage (09034250) and the Northern Water Real-Time temperature gage

(CR-WGD) below Windy Gap.

Goal 3: Provide connectivity for aquatic life, including fish passage for sculpin and trout.

Goal 4: Enhance aquatic habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates within and downstream of the connectivity channel; and

Goal 5: Maintain enhanced aquatic habitat within and downstream of the connectivity channel while simultaneously maintaining reliable and safe operation of Windy Gap Dam and Pump Plant.

Measurable Results

0	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
0	New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive
420	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
0	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
5,280	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)
280	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
	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	
40+	miles of Aquatic habitat reconnected

Water Project Justification

The Colorado River Connectivity Channel is Project-01232 of the Basin Identified Projects. This project supports the CWP goal [Chapter 6.6, p. 6-157] to implement environmental and recreational projects that: Protect and enhance local and statewide economic values; Improve conditions of streams, lakes, wetlands, and riparian areas to promote self-sustaining fisheries and functional riparian and wetland habitat to promote long-term sustainability and resiliency; Maintain watershed health by protecting or restoring watersheds that could affect critical infrastructure and/or environmental and recreational areas; and Provide multi-purpose benefits.

The Colorado River is a significant source of revenue to Grand County's recreation industry and related businesses. The project is expected to significantly improve reaches of the river that are currently designated Gold Medal Trout fisheries, but which have declined over the years, risking the potential loss of this valuable designation. Moreover, the project will open-up almost two stream miles for public fishing, including a mile of newly created stream. These improvements, which also include the addition of 280 acres of new floodplain, will not only benefit Grand County's economy, but they will also make the river and its aquatic habitat more resilient in the face of increased water diversions, wildfires, and climate change. By creating a channel around Windy Gap Reservoir, the project will also protect this municipal water supply structure from the impacts of sediment and debris from up-basin forest fires.

The Project supports the goals and themes of the Colorado River Basin Roundtable BIP and helps address its specified measurable outcomes and long-term needs for the basin, as follows. The project supports the BIP's goal to "[p]rotect and restore healthy streams, rivers, lakes and riparian areas." [BIP at p. 43]. It helps address the BIP's identified vulnerability of "[p]otential loss of "Gold Medal" fishing status and the related benefits of attracting anglers worldwide. [BIP at 44]. It furthers the measurable outcome identified in the BIP, to "[i]mprove habitat conditions in all identified prioritized reaches in exchange for harm caused by existing or additional water development." [BIP at p. 47]. And it furthers the BIP's stated long-term need to "[e]nsure that new water activities do not further degrade stream and riparian health or become an impediment to restoration and recovery efforts.

[BIP at p. 47].

The project helps address the specific needs for Grand County identified in the BIP, which states: “[t]he protection and restoration of the Fraser and the Colorado Rivers are critical needs for Grand County.” [BIP at p. 88].

The Colorado River Connectivity Channel (a.k.a. the Windy Gap Bypass) is specifically identified in the BIP as a top-priority project. [See BIP Table 18 at p. 129], and is being currently identified by the roundtable’s as a Wildly Important Goal (WIG).

While the Connectivity Channel project is not a water development project, as contemplated in the CWP’s Water Plan Framework for State of Colorado Support for a Water Project (CWP, Section 9.4, pp. 9-43 to 9-44), it is an enhancement project for the Windy Gap Firming Project (WGFP). The WGFP has been approved by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Grand County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and endorsed by former Gov. John Hickenlooper and has support from several conservation groups such as Trout Unlimited. The WGFP aligns with the objectives of the Colorado Water Plan which identifies additional water storage among the measures needed to meet the state’s future demands.

Faced with significant opposition from west slope entities and conservation groups, the CRCC project cleared a pathway for conflict resolution. The same entities that opposed the project are partners in the effort to build the Connectivity Channel. By supporting the Connectivity Channel project, the CWCB is supporting these types of efforts into the future, as contemplated by the Colorado’s Water Plan Framework for State of Colorado Support for a Water Project.

Related Studies

Colorado River Aquatic Resources Investigations Federal Aid Project F-237R-18, Division of Wildlife, R. Barry Nehring (2011) (evaluates impacts of Windy Gap Reservoir on downstream aquatic life and concludes reconnecting the river is necessary to restore lost aquatic habitat).

Windy Gap Firming Project Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Plan, adopted by the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the CWCB pursuant to C.R.S. 37-60-122.2 (2011) (provides for evaluation of Bypass and implementation of the Colorado River Habitat Restoration Project)

Moffat Collection System Project Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Plan, adopted by the Colorado Wildlife Commission and the CWCB pursuant to C.R.S. 37-60-122.2 (2011) (see above)

TetraTech’s Final Report, Windy Gap Reservoir Modification Study (February 2015) and Supplemental Report for the Windy Gap Reservoir Modification Study (June 2017).

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

The Municipal Subdistrict is aware of this potential and does not anticipate adverse impacts.