



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	River Science	
Name of Water Project	River Conservation Corps	
Grant Request Amount		\$999,370.00
Primary Category		\$999,370.00
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>		
Total Applicant Match		\$2,010,485.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>		\$2,010,485.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>		\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		\$894,633.00
<i>Serve Colorado</i>		\$249,963.00
<i>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment</i>		\$539,670.00
<i>United States Forest Service</i>		\$105,000.00
Total Project Cost		\$3,904,488.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: River Science	
Mailing Address: 430 Main Street Canon City CO 81212	
Organization Contact: Luke Javernick	
Position/Title:	Email: luke@river.science
Phone: (719) 428-9609	
Organization Contact - Alternate: Allison Palmassano	
Position/Title: Administration Manager	Email: allision@river.science
Phone: 719-429-3707	
Grant Management Contact: Luke Javernick	
Position/Title:	Email: luke@river.science
Phone: (719) 428-9609	
Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Allison Palmassano	
Position/Title: Administration Manager	Email: allision@river.science
Phone: 719-429-3707	

Description of Grantee/Applicant

River Science is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization. Our mission is to use education, technology, and information to improve river management and project impacts.

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 38.448575
 Longitude -105.223153
 Lat Long Flag Other: Coordinates based on other boundaries or locations
 Water Source Statewide
 Basins Arkansas; Colorado; Gunnison; Yampa/White/Green; Southwest; Rio Grande; South Platte; Metro
 Counties Adams; Alamosa; Arapahoe; Clear Creek; Custer; Cheyenne; Boulder; Delta; Broomfield; Chaffee; Denver
 Districts

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Environmental
 Type of Water Project Capacity Building
 Scheduled Start Date - Design 1/1/2025
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction
 Description
 The River Conservation Corps (RCC) is a new AmeriCorps program designed to provide technically trained Members to support the capacities of NGOs and agencies involved in Thriving Watersheds actions. Developed with funding from a Serve Colorado Planning Grant, this program has been shaped by the frequently requested

capacity needs in our discussions with over 50 partners. Placed Members will enhance our partners' capacity by: i) providing data collection and assessment expertise; ii) assisting with public outreach, communication, and education; and iii) contributing labor to support river restoration implementation. AmeriCorps programs are structured to be sustainable through the Serve CO Operational Grant and the generated host fees and service contracts. Our program aims for the same sustainable future; however, we are seeking CWCB funds to assist during the startup phase as this unique program's technical niche requires a larger-than-usual upfront investment in equipment, significant travel costs for remote data collection, and specialized supervision to ensure Member performance meets data quality requirements. During the three years of this grant, the Corps program will establish the necessary fees and partnerships to secure a financially sustainable future.

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)
45	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)
200	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
3,000,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	
400	PFAS samples and data reporting
10	additional instream flow recommendations

Water Project Justification

The River Conservation Corps (RCC) is a new AmeriCorps program with a unique niche that provides technician-level AmeriCorps Members to address the identified capacity needs of several Colorado-based organizations and agencies involved in Thriving Watershed Actions (Colorado Water Plan, page 177). With the support of our staff, Members will increase partner capacity by: i) providing data collection and monitoring assessment assistance; ii) assisting with public outreach, communication, and education; and iii) providing labor for river restoration implementation.

The RCC has been accepted under a Serve Colorado Operational Grant to provide 10 fulltime (FT) Members, but is currently waitlisted until federal funding is released on July 25th, 2024. Once operational, the RCC is committed to at least three (3) years of this AmeriCorps program. Serve CO funding for these three years covers the AmeriCorps Members recruitment, living allowance, health insurance, and some indirect costs. Anticipated Serve CO funding is \$249,963, \$375,000, and \$510,000 for the 2025, 2026, and 2027 operation years, respectively.

To successfully launch and sustain this program, we seek CWCB's support in critical areas. This funding request supports operations in 2025, 2026, and 2027. Our CWCB request includes funding for Member training in essential skills (water quality sampling, project monitoring, and watershed management) and acquiring the foundational equipment (water quality sampling devices and field instrumentation). CWCB assistance is also needed for travel expenses associated with Members' watershed action tasks in 39 Colorado Counties (Figure 1

in attached Maps) in and for administrative tasks (program management, data management, and reporting). Requested CWCB funding is \$326,681 for 2025, \$378,134 for 2026, and \$294,554 for 2027.

AmeriCorps programs aim to be financially sustainable through Serve CO grants and matches from host fees, labor contracts, and fundraising. This CWCB grant period will provide critical support as we build necessary equipment, work with hosts to develop practical fees, and secure partnership contracts. We believe in the viability of our program, as evidenced by our secured CDPHE contract for PFAS water quality sampling (\$539,670 for 2025, providing a \$316,495 match) and a U.S. Forest Service commitment of \$105,000 (2025-2027, details to be determined). These contributions reduce our 2025 request, but significant gaps remain for the first three years. We will continue to secure labor contracts, which may reduce the 2026 and 2027 CWCB fund requests.

Member placements (see attached Maps) for the 2025 program year will be:

- 1.5 FT assisting CWCB instream flow program (1 FT along front range, 0.5 FT on western slope)
- 0.5 FT assisting western slope River Watch groups
- 4 FT Members assisting statewide PFAS sampling,
- 1 FT Member assisting Blue River Watershed,
- 1 FT Member assisting San Miguel Watershed and Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership
- 1 FT Member with Friends of the Yampa, and
- 1 FT Member with River Watch of Colorado.
- During the summer and fall months, the PFAS and River Watch Members will be assisting with river restoration project implementation.

The following lists specific tasks the Members will provide that support our partners' six (6) action areas and that align with the CO Water Plan. Note that this list is not exhaustive, but a sampling for each action. Please reference the attached Maps document for specific locations of services.

1) Thoughtful Storage: Innovative water storage operations can meet intended needs and provide flexible delivery of flows for critical habitat and recreation interests. Key Elements of RCC:

- assist the CWCB Instream Flow Program with baseline data collection.
- assist in the preparation of instream flow recommendations (currently the number of recommenders is very low).

2) Meeting Future Water Needs: Efforts to improve stream health and infrastructure efficiency benefit all water use sectors while enhancing the environment and recreation opportunities.

Key Elements of RCC river restoration implementation in 2025.

- Colorado Open Lands: Riparian Reconnect Riverscape Restoration (at 8 USFS sites in South Park and South Platte Ranger districts). Phase II - Chaffee County Fourmile Creek Restoration
- The Nature Conservancy: Yellow Creek, a tributary of the White River (2025 & 2026) / Meadow Creek, a tributary of the Yampa River (2025 & 2026) / Douglas Creek, a tributary to the White River (possibly 2025, but likely 2026)

Key Elements of RCC data collection to continue/establish baseline information to support river health monitoring, adaptive management, river restoration implementation, and/or recovery following an event:

- Members supporting Uncompahgre Watershed will provide: 1) ongoing River Watch water quality data collection and stream flow measurement to monitor eight (8) TMDL sites, 2) provide new data to complete TMDLs, 3) Continue to monitor impaired sections below Ouray for metals and pH
- Ecological data (i.e. macroinvertebrates) to evaluate the ecological health of streams. This includes the River Watch Members who will assist several stream management plans with macroinvertebrate data collection: e.g.

GARNA, Purgatoire Watershed Partnership.

- Periodic assessments to understand the impacts of flow variations and environmental changes on river ecosystems. This includes the River Watch Members, and partners who have River Watch programs, continue the valuable baseline dataset that provides the information of river health, and more importantly the opportunity to identify when problems arise that allow for a faster management solution.

3) Wise Water Use: Resilient systems recognize social, ecological, and economic connections. Key Elements of RCC:

- All Members will receive training in Watershed Coordination and the social studies behind the various water demands and stakeholder perspectives. During Members' services, they will receive several questions about their work. Their knowledge and responses can be impactful to stakeholder understanding and/or project support. Therefore, they must be cautious to think and communicate around the social, ecological, and economic inter-relationships. These are especially true for Members: 1) involved in the PFAS sampling and how PFAS are being monitored and the future drinking safety; 2) involved with instream flow programs and how they may impact and benefit various users.
- Members will assist partners capacity to increase communication to stakeholders about project updates and meetings. Through these repeated and consistent efforts, relationships and trust can foster and partners can improve their understanding of stakeholder perspectives that are often complex social, ecological, economic, and/or emotional concerns.

4) Healthy Lands: Shared stewardship improves watershed health and resilience across multiple jurisdictions. Key Elements of RCC:

- The 10 FT Members services cover multiple jurisdictions (e.g. project on state, federal, and private property).
- Members tasks will include supporting River Watch assist with educational programs, workshops, and training sessions for schools and community groups to raise awareness about water issues and engage citizens in water stewardship. Specifically, there are eight (8) schools joining River Watch for the 2024/2025 fiscal year that are new to the program, or have new teachers taking over an existing program. These eight teachers will benefit from the Member's support during the critical first school year of implementation.
- Members with Blue River Watershed will implement youth and adult river ecology educational programs, volunteer management and coordination, and community outreach will equip community Members with the skills and knowledge necessary to make tangible, lasting impacts on our projects and ecosystems.
- Members with Friends of the Yampa will help local partners organize volunteer and community engagement opportunities to build a sense of ownership and commitment within community Members to protect and conserve the natural resources and increase the value that individuals place on our rivers, streams and lakes.

5) Engaged Partners: Agencies and Stakeholders need to plan together to prioritize together and act together. Key Elements of RCC:

- Members will be coordination with local water users, conservation groups, and governmental agencies to manage PFAS sampling and instream flow rights and achieve baseline data, collaboration, and mutual benefits.
- Added assistance to River Watch will aid in the collaboration with local governments, academic institutions, and other organizations to conduct research and share data for water management and conservation projects.
- Members with the Blue River Watershed will aim to strengthen partnerships by assist with landowner outreach, developing outreach materials, planning trainings, implementing and monitoring restoration projects.
- Members with USFS (2026) will assist in the Best Management Practices monitoring. Specifically, Members will coordinate stakeholder and USFS site visits of past projects, documents conditions, and support reporting. This coordinated effort will improve the USFS workflows and strengthen communication and collaboration with existing partners.

6) Integration with other water sectors: Efforts to improve stream health or function often benefit other water

sectors. Key Elements of RCC:

- Instream flow programs help keep the flow in the streams, which benefits water rights holders and helps to attenuate the flows which can improve riparian health, function, and reduce sedimentation.
- Members' task with water data collection (water quality, quantity and PFAS) will provide valuable data for current and future challenges, decisions, and action (e.g. EPA's new drinking water standards that are being created in-lieu of PFAS).
- Members' labor to construct stream restoration treatments can help slow flows, trap sediment, and improve downstream water quality that reduces local water treatment facilities process and expenses.

The River Conservation Corps' activities align closely with the Colorado Water Plan by assisting the watershed health actions that rely on data, monitoring, implementation, and community/stakeholder collaboration. Through restoration projects, educational outreach, and volunteer training, RCC supports the Plan's vision of sustainable, community-involved water management. This program also has the potential to become a component of career development, ensuring Colorado has a pipeline for the next generation of water leaders.

Related Studies

The River Conservation Corps will be directly assisting with the following projects:

- 1) Yampa River Scorecard Project
- 2) Yampa River Stewardship Program
- 3) Riparian Reconnect Riverscape Restoration
- 4) Phase II - Chaffee County Fourmile Creek Restoration
- 5) Big Cottonwood Creek Post-Fire Long Term Recovery
- 6) Next Generation Water Leaders
- 7) Strategies and Initiatives for Meeting San Miguel Water Use Needs
- 8) Blue River Integrated Water Management Plan
- 9) Blue River Habitat Restoration Project

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

None