



WATER PLAN GRANT PROGRAM

FY 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

An Introduction to Water Plan Grants

The Colorado Water Plan provides a comprehensive framework to guide collaborative actions throughout the state. Critical to this goal—is the Water Plan Grant Program, managed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), which provides millions of dollars of funding for projects in five key categories:

- Water Storage & Supply
- Conservation & Land Use
- Engagement & Innovation
- Agricultural Projects
- Watershed Health & Recreation

Water Plan Grants also support the four key action areas of the 2023 Colorado Water Plan: Vibrant Communities, Robust Agriculture, Thriving Watersheds, and Resilient Planning—as well as support the Water Plan’s critical Partner Actions. Funded projects are wide-ranging and impactful to the state, focusing on enhancing water infrastructure, restoring ecosystems, supporting education and community collaboration, boosting water conservation and efficiency, guiding resilient land use planning, and much more.



CWCB staff work to distribute Water Plan Grant funds to eligible entities across the state. This team includes four regional grant managers who live and work in the communities they serve. Every river basin in Colorado carries its own unique fingerprint of hydrology and geology, as well as sociocultural differences. Because of these differences, Water Plan Grant managers are vitally important liaisons between local communities and the CWCB—making significant contributions to local water management entities far beyond reviewing applications, making funding recommendations, and ongoing oversight of projects. The Water Plan Grant team also includes a technical lead staff member for each of the grant funding categories, providing critical expertise to the grant process and a technical review that enhances the work of the regional managers.

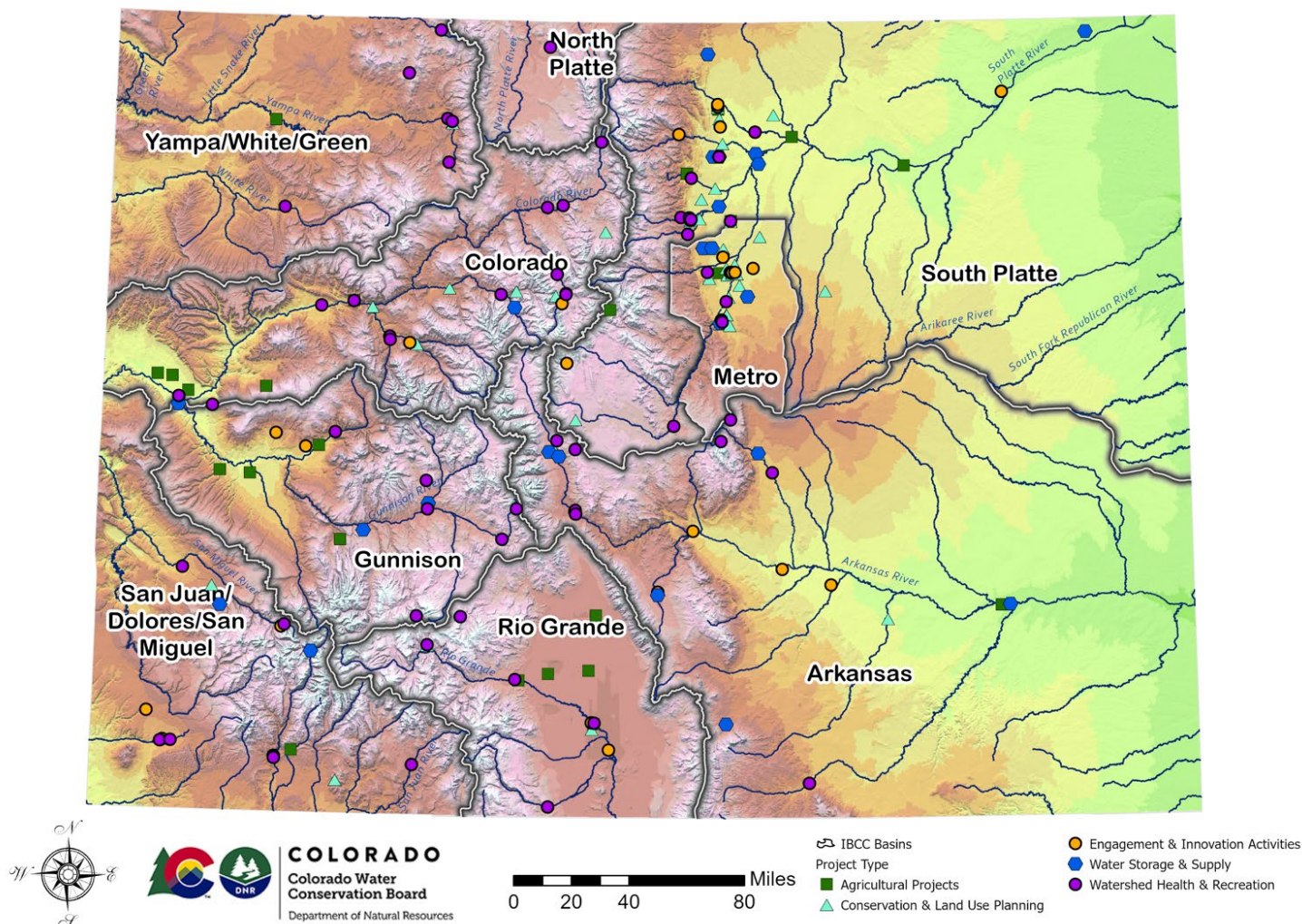
Colorado will continue to face increased challenges from climate change, population growth and changing water demands. The Colorado Water Plan and the Water Plan Grant Program will continue to meet and mitigate our state’s most critical water challenges—allowing water partners, agencies, and Coloradans to work together to ensure our Colorado communities, agriculture and environments will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Funding Sources and Background

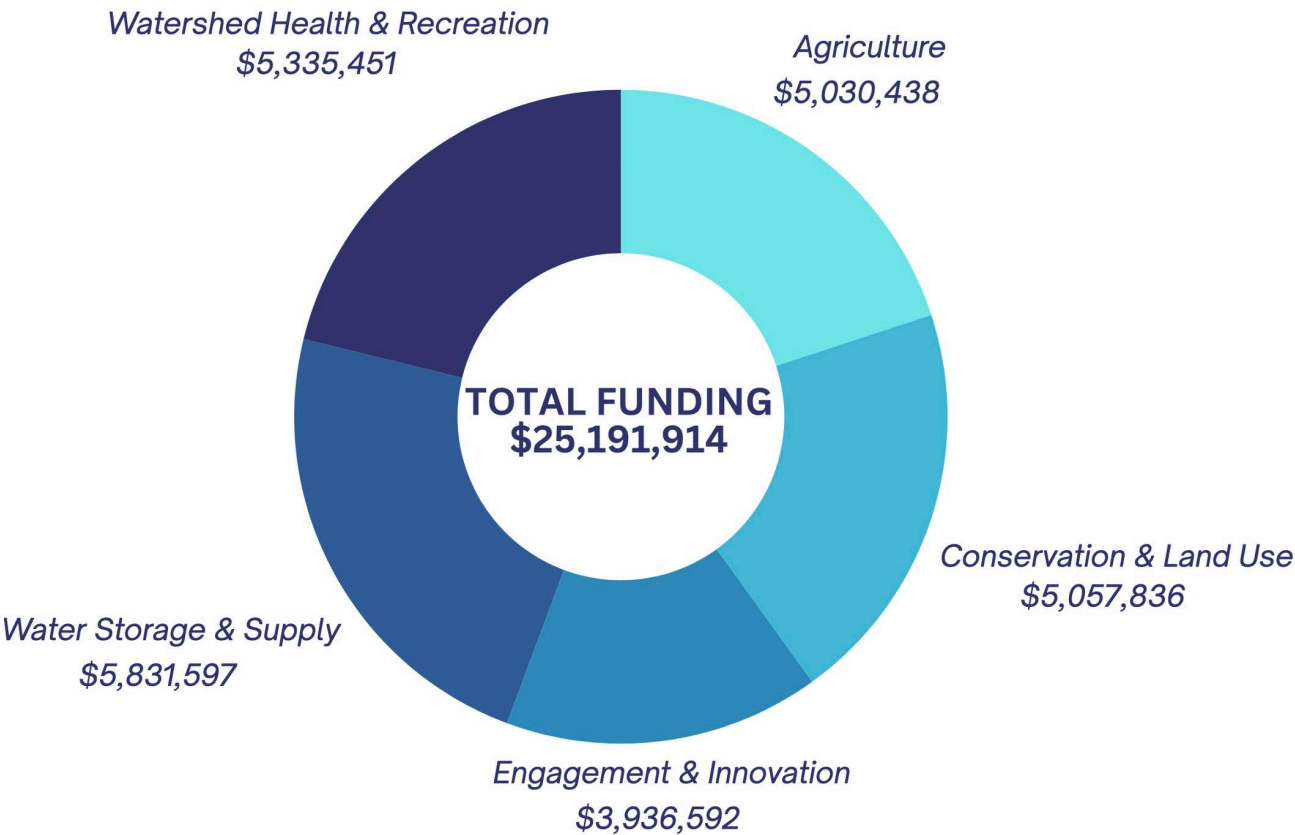
Prior to the receipt of revenue associated with the passage of H.B. 19-1327 (Authorize and Tax Sports Betting Refer Under Taxpayers' Bill of Rights) and the approval of Proposition DD by voters in November 2019, the WPG Program was supported by a series of one-time installments of funding from a number of sources, including the General Fund, the CWCB Construction Fund, and state stimulus funding. Through FY 2024, sports betting revenues are distributed to agencies in arrears of collection, with over 90 percent of revenue distributed to the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund in September of the fiscal year following collection by the Department of Revenue. These funds are appropriated in the legislative session following distribution in the CWCB's annual projects bill. Grants are then awarded twice in the fiscal year following appropriation, which results in a two-year lag from revenue collection to grant award.

Since the 2023-24 fiscal year, sports betting tax revenue represents a stable and permanent source of funding for the WPG Program via the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund. As of the end of FY 2023-24, the WPG Program has issued 470 grants and funded over \$95 million in local projects since it began in FY 2017-18.

Water Plan Grant Project Locations, FY2024



WATER PLAN GRANT FUNDING FY24



(above numbers rounded to the nearest dollar)

Water Plan Grants By the Numbers



84

The total number of Water Plan Grant-funded projects for FY24



602

The number of acres of preserved habitat from FY24 Water Plan Grant projects



918,668

The number of linear feet of stream to be restored from FY24 approved projects (includes design, implementation, planning)



9

Water Plan Grants were awarded for projects in all 9 of Colorado's water basins for FY24



30

Water Plan Grants were awarded for projects in 30 counties across the state for FY24

Projects at a Glance

Agriculture

Las Animas Water-Sharing Program

Grantee: Western Water Partnerships

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$245,738

Description: Western Water Partnerships will lead the development of a water-sharing program that will provide farmers on the Las Animas Consolidated and Consolidated Extension Canals with a permanent water supply through a partnership with a municipality. This project will bring together diverse stakeholders, including Xcel (the current water right holder), farmers, municipal, industrial, environmental and recreational groups to engage in the co-creation of a water sharing program that will provide certainty for agricultural water users while helping to mitigate other water supply challenges in the region.

San Luis Valley Rye Resurgence Project

Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Basin: Rio Grande

Grant Amount: \$405,000

Description: San Luis Valley producers are growing rye, a crop that uses less water than crops traditionally grown in the water-stressed basin. Their water plan grant supports the development of a supply chain and marketing scheme to bring the rye to Colorado's distilling and baking communities. This effort helps farmers reduce groundwater use, prevent erosion, and improve soil health, while creating new economic opportunities, making it an important step toward sustainable agriculture in the region.

Development of a Market for a Drought Tolerant Fresh Vegetable

Grantee: Colorado State University

Basin: Colorado/Gunnison

Grant Amount: \$69,673

Description: This project funds a study to determine consumptive water use savings and consumer taste preference for varieties of Southern Sweet Pea. Southern Sweet Pea will be grown at the Western Colorado Research Center's Grand Valley location and taste preference studies will be conducted at CSU SPUR campus and two western Colorado farmers markets. The consumptive water use results will be compared to other common crops in the area including sweet corn, alfalfa, wheat, orchard grass, and field corn. The study will be used to inform the potential use of cowpea as an augmentation or alternative to other crops.



Southern Sweet Pea varietal taste testing (consumer preference study) at Montrose farmers market

Conservation & Land Use

Alamosa County, Comprehensive Plan Update

Grantee: Alamosa County

Basin: Rio Grande

Grant Amount: \$100,000

Description: In its comprehensive plan update, Alamosa County is focusing on how dwindling water supplies will reshape land-use practices in the San Luis Valley. This effort engages the community and develops strategies for sustainable growth, balancing agriculture, housing, and recreation.

Single Family Home Water Audits and Installs

Grantee: Mile High Youth Corps

Basin: Metro

Grant Amount: \$183,201

Description: Mile High Youth Corps' Energy & Water Conservation Program trains and employs young adults to complete 510 water-efficiency service visits to low-income households. These visits include replacing inefficient fixtures with low-flow alternatives and ultra-high efficiency toilets, reducing water and energy consumption while helping families save money and promoting conservation efforts in the Denver Metro area.

Advancing High Impact Water Efficiency Solutions in Colorado Communities, Phase 2

Grantee: Multiplier, WaterNow

Basin: Statewide

Grant Amount: \$331,885

Description: WaterNow and their fiscal partner Multiplier will continue their efforts to accelerate and fund high-impact water efficiency projects, focusing on integrating water use efficiency with land use planning. This second phase includes technical assistance for municipal water providers, leadership development, and support for underserved communities accessing federal and state funding, helping Colorado communities close supply gaps and promote sustainable water management.

Engagement & Innovation

Colorado Water Fellows Program

Grantee: Colorado State University

Basin: South Platte, Metro, Colorado, Southwest

Grant Amount: \$306,000

Description: The Colorado Water Fellows Program at Colorado State University is expanding to six universities across three river basins. Participants in the Water Fellows Program range from first-year undergraduates to Ph.D. candidates from historically marginalized or excluded communities and identities. The current cohort represents 15 distinct degree programs from engineering to sociology. The year-long program provides comprehensive exposure to practical and theoretical facets of water management and sustainability, including conference attendance, field trips, topical monthly educational sessions, and a stipend to support their participation. By fostering diverse talent and providing comprehensive education in water management, the program builds a skilled and resilient workforce, addressing challenges such as talent retention and diversity, and aligning with Colorado's water equity goals.



The 2024 Water Fellows Cohort

Place-Based Water Education in Southwest Colorado

Grantee: Montezuma Land Conservancy

Basin: Southwest

Grant Amount: \$112,000

Description: The Montezuma Land Conservancy is implementing hands-on water education in partnership with local charter schools, focusing on local watersheds and water systems while incorporating Indigenous perspectives. By engaging a diverse student body, including many Ute and Navajo youth, the project will enhance water stewardship knowledge and confidence, align with Colorado Water Plan goals, and promote equity in water education.

Custer County Conservation District Water Stakeholder Engagement

Grantee: Custer County Conservation District

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$68,400

Description: This project will proactively address Custer County's water needs while supporting the Arkansas Basin Roundtable's goals for water quality and agricultural preservation. By conducting wildfire preparedness assessments, evaluating irrigation infrastructure, and educating pond owners on compliance, the project seeks to enhance water management practices and serve as a model for other districts in the Arkansas River Basin.

Water Storage & Supply

Welton Reservoir Expansion

Grantee: The Consolidated Mutual Water Company

Basin: Metro

Grant Amount: \$919,441

Description: The Consolidated Mutual Water Company will expand the Welton Reservoir in Arvada, including increasing drought storage and accommodating additional water rights. This project aligns with the Colorado Water Plan by addressing water storage needs, enhancing regional water resilience, and optimizing infrastructure investments, supporting both local communities and broader water management goals.



Welton Reservoir

Aquifer Storage and Recovery Pilot Study

Grantee: Donala Water and Sanitation District

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$290,000

Description: The Donala Water and Sanitation District will transition from non-renewable groundwater to renewable surface water through aquifer storage and recovery (ASR), enhancing future water supply sustainability. This pilot project aims to retrofit a well for ASR, demonstrating feasibility and promoting regional collaboration on water resource management, while aligning with the Colorado Water Plan's goals for vibrant communities and resilient planning.

Raw Water and Infiltration Gallery Infrastructure Improvements

Grantee: City of Gunnison

Basin: Gunnison

Grant Amount: \$1,500,000

Description: The City of Gunnison is constructing three new groundwater wells and a surface water diversion structure from the Gunnison River as part of a central water treatment plant project. This upgrade aims to enhance water supply capacity, protect against contamination, and create a more resilient water system, ultimately supporting the city's growing needs and regional water management goals.

Watershed Health & Recreation

Alamosa Riverfront Project, Phase I

Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Basin: Rio Grande

Grant Amount: \$182,900

Description: This project will finalize designs, engineering, and permitting for new public river access, recreation infrastructure, and aquatic habitat enhancements along the Rio Grande River through the Town of Alamosa. The project will also rehabilitate a downstream agricultural diversion, improving deliveries to water users, creating fish passage, and addressing recreational safety concerns. This multi-benefit project will improve water quality, reduce flood risks, and support recreation while advancing key Colorado Water Plan goals for vibrant communities, thriving watersheds, and resilient water management.

North Sand Creek Health & Water Quality

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Basin: North Platte

Grant Amount: \$57,634

Description: Ducks Unlimited is developing a long-term plan to address severe erosion and sedimentation in North Sand Creek, which hinders irrigation water diversions and impacts fisheries. The plan will address mitigating sediment transport, benefiting agricultural water use and improving wildlife habitat, while also supporting recreational planning efforts in collaboration with stakeholders like Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management.



North Sand Creek

South Arkansas River Restoration Concept Design

Grantee: Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$62,709

Description: The Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited will develop concept designs and cost estimates for the re-naturalization of a 1.2-mile stretch of the South Arkansas River near Salida. This project aims to restore in-stream habitat and the riparian corridor in collaboration with local organizations and landowners, who support conservation efforts amidst development pressures. The plan includes an "Ecosystems Learning Center" for community education, with the restored corridor also serving as a fire break in a high wildfire risk area.

Water Plan Grant FAQs

Who can apply?

- Governmental entities: municipalities, districts, enterprises, counties, and State of Colorado agencies. Federal agencies are encouraged to work with local entities.
- Covered entities as defined in Section 37-60-126, C.R.S., are eligible if the applicant has adopted an approved water conservation plan.
- Private entities: mutual ditch companies, non-profit corporations, and partnerships.
- For more information about FY24 WPG projects, see the [September 2023](#) and [March 2024](#) CWCB Board Meeting notes.

How can the money be used?

- Examples of eligible projects and activities:
 - Technical assistance regarding permitting, feasibility studies, and environmental compliance.
 - Studies or analysis of structural, programmatic, consumptive, and non-consumptive water projects or activities.
 - Design of structural projects or activities.
 - Activities that promote education, outreach, and innovation consistent with the mission and goals of the Colorado Water Plan.
 - Researching and demonstrating methods to improve agricultural drought resilience.

How can I apply?

- Applicants must submit application materials through the CWCB portal (July 1 and December 1 deadlines).
- Review these [Partner Actions](#). How does the project advance Colorado Water Plan goals?
- Visit cwcb.colorado.gov/funding/colorado-water-plan-grants for more information.
- Reach out to your [Regional Water Plan Grant Manager](#) for pre-application questions.

To learn more or if you have questions, please email waterplan.info@state.co.us, call 303-866-3441 or visit the Colorado Water Conservation Board website at, <https://cwcb.colorado.gov>.



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