COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	The Watershed Center
Name of Water Project	Plans to Actions for Emerging Priorities
Grant Request Amount	**$307,400.00**
Primary Category	$307,400.00
Watershed Health & Recreation	
Total Applicant Match	**$225,000.00**
Applicant Cash Match	$225,000.00
Applicant In-Kind Match	$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	**$0.00**
Total Project Cost	**$532,400.00**

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: The Watershed Center
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Description of Grantee/Applicant

Since 2005, the Watershed Center has been working to protect and restore watersheds for people and the environment using a collaborative and science-based approach. We are a stakeholder driven, non-profit organization in Boulder County that uses the best available science to monitor, assess, and manage our watersheds. We plan and implement on-the-ground forest and river restoration projects. We strive to build a strong stewardship ethic in our community through place-based and participatory learning. Though our primary focus is the St. Vrain Basin, we increase our impact by developing programs and projects to be scalable and repeatable across other Colorado watersheds.

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	40.151775
Longitude	-105.113713
Lat Long Flag	Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source	
Basins	South Platte
Counties	Boulder
Districts	5-St. Vrain Creek; 6-Boulder Creek

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Planning
Scheduled Start Date - Design	9/1/2025
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

The Watershed Center (TWC) aims to address emerging watershed health priorities in the St. Vrain Basin by building on the success of our adaptive management process. Since 2020, this collaborative process has united

>30 partners to plan, monitor, and advance >10 projects across river, grassland, and forest systems. These projects, now at various stages of implementation, demonstrate the effectiveness of this process.

As we move beyond the initial phase of our adaptive management efforts, we are expanding our focus to address emerging priorities such as beaver restoration, abandoned mines, and aquatic nuisance species. These priorities present opportunities and challenges in achieving watershed health goals but currently lack the strategies and relationships needed for effective, holistic management and project implementation.

This project aims to address these needs by developing actionable solutions through collaborative planning, targeted monitoring, and community engagement. Using collaboratively defined desired conditions, complementary planning efforts, and existing tools, we will work with local and regional partners to convene priority-specific working groups, evaluate priorities through monitoring, and integrate public perspectives to craft effective, inclusive solutions.

By driving climate resiliency actions, this project strengthens TWC's role as a stakeholder-led grassroots coalition committed to safeguarding the health and resilience of our watersheds.

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)
976,800	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)
320,000	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
325,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

This project supports goals of the Colorado Water Plan and South Platte Basin Implementation Plan related to watershed health, adaptive management, collaboration, and public engagement. Below we summarize goals achieved in each plan.

Colorado Water Plan
1. Tools (Chapter 5, pages 154, 157): "The tools described below are proven strategies that agencies, water users, and stakeholders implement to overcome challenges."
a. Public Outreach and Education: "An educated public is necessary for developing sustainable grassroots solutions and gaining public and political support for implementing water solutions. Outreach creates public awareness of policies and processes, and education promotes a deeper understanding of these topics."
b. Collaborative Groups: "Collaboration through inter-agency and interdisciplinary approaches that define clear roles and responsibilities can help in prioritizing water issues from planning to implementation. The Water Plan identifies the need to address risks to water supply and watershed health with coordinated planning across

boundaries. Regional and local, place-based collaborative groups are a vital component to successfully approaching these multi-scale efforts."

The proposed project aligns with these tools by emphasizing outreach to landowners, fostering community support for watershed projects, and building public awareness of water policies and processes through targeted education. Collaborative working groups within the project bring together diverse stakeholders to develop multi-objective, cross-boundary management recommendations, prioritizing watershed health through coordinated, watershed-scale planning. The monitoring and management tools developed under this project include public-facing story maps on emerging watershed priorities that will support public education. The abandoned mine tour will also incorporate public education on the legacy impacts of mining and reclamation practices. Importantly, The Watershed Center is uniquely equipped to adapt and respond to emerging priorities, leveraging local expertise to develop place-based solutions that address emerging priorities while fostering long-term resilience. Furthermore, this project aims to connect local planning efforts with state initiatives to ensure cohesive, multi-scale approaches to watershed management and policy implementation.

2. Thriving Watersheds (Chapter 6, page 204): "Colorado's watersheds hold the future of our water supply security. Comprehensive water resources planning should incorporate conditions of forests, streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. As our state's water source, the health of watersheds affects agriculture, downstream communities, recreation, tourism, and ecosystem function. Colorado will continue to follow a shared stewardship ethic to plan and implement multi-benefit projects to enhance the health of our watersheds."
a. Partner Actions: Nature-based solutions; Rehabilitate streams to improve habitat, reduce erosion, and meet needs; Create greater drought, fire, and flood resilience; Reconnecting floodplains and nature-based solutions; Improving riparian and aquatic habitat.

The proposed project aligns with the Thriving Watersheds partner actions by advancing beaver restoration as a nature-based solution to enhance stream health and habitat, wetland habitats, and climate resilience. Beaver-related efforts focus on improving ecological conditions, such as floodplain connectivity, groundwater recharge, and habitat restoration, to reduce drought, fire, and flood risks while supporting wildlife and downstream water needs. Additionally, the project supports a shared stewardship ethic through collaboration within priority specific working groups made up of multiple agencies, municipalities, and organizations representing diverse uses including recreation, agriculture, municipal, and environment. This project will develop shared stewardship of aquatic nuisance species through development of collaborative monitoring and management strategies that can be implemented and adapted for reservoir, lake, river, and ditch systems across the St. Vrain Basin. Shared stewardship is also incorporated into the abandoned mines watershed monitoring protocol because this approach requires collaboration among several partners including US Environmental Protection Agency, US Forest Service, US Geological Survey, CO Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety, and CO Department of Public Health and the Environment. Additionally, this project supports Partner Action engagement and education through broader partner and landowner engagement in priority planning. Partners representing more than 20 regional agencies, municipalities, and organizations will be engaged in emerging watershed priorities and management recommendations through Annual Collaborative Meetings. The public mine tour and 5-10 landowner outreach meetings will engage public in emerging priorities and foster trust-based relationships that are essential to successful project implementation.

3. Resilient Planning (Chapter 6, page 216): "Water security is critical to the quality of life, environment, and economy of Colorado. The future is uncertain, and Colorado needs to be adaptive and resilient to face the challenges ahead. Water security roadmaps, inclusively developed at a local level and informed by strong state leadership, can identify acute and chronic risks to water supply, integrate local planning strategies, prioritize collaborative solutions, and build adaptive capacity and resilience."
a. Partner Actions: Protecting storage from effects of wildfire, debris flow; Multi-purpose projects for building

resiliency; Conservation-oriented outreach and education; Support for natural and working lands.

The proposed project aligns with the Resilient Planning partner actions by supporting nature-based restoration strategies such as beaver restoration that enhance floodplain connectivity and groundwater recharge to reduce impacts of drought, fire, and flood risks on downstream water resources. This project explores multi-benefit solutions, including beaver restoration, mine reclamation, and aquatic nuisance species management, to tackle both urgent and long-term priorities for water security and quality in a changing climate. This project also expands a successful adaptive management process that is both flexible and responsive to emerging watershed priorities in face of climate and watershed health uncertainty. Building on robust state leadership in developing a state-level beaver management plan, this project will adapt those strategies and recommendations to align with the unique needs and conditions of the St. Vrain Basin community. Through collaborative planning, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement, the project ensures local strategies are continuously informed by the latest data and evolving state guidance.

South Platte Basin Implementation Plan
1. Volume 1. Section 4 (page 26) Goal 1: Encourage implementation of projects. “The South Platte Basin will encourage the implementation of identified projects that meet existing and future M&I, agricultural, and environmental/recreational (E&R) water needs.”

This project aligns with this goal by advancing emerging watershed priories towards implementation that were identified in a previous phase of adaptive management planning but currently lack resources to advance them to implementation. This project aims to advance these priorities to meet this implementation goal through planning, monitoring, and community engagement activities that support management and project recommendations for each watershed priority. This comprehensive approach ensures that emerging and future municipal, agricultural, and environmental/recreational water needs are met while fostering regional collaboration and climate resilience.

2. Volume 1. Section 4.6 (page 32) Goal 4: Protect and enhance watershed function. “…To benefit the ecological health of all the watersheds within the basin, as well as to meet water supply, economic, and water quality demands, the South Platte Basin will recognize the importance of and encourage strategies that enhance watershed functions and hydrologic processes.”
a. Strategy 6.A.4: “Identify, assess, and implement actions, programs, and measures that aim to minimize the adverse effects on wetlands, lakes, streams/rivers, and associated ecosystems from water pollution, nutrient overload, reduced streamflows, and filling or dredging.”

This project aligns with this goal by addressing watershed function and nutrient loading through beaver management planning and water quality issues associated with abandoned mines through targeted planning and monitoring. Beaver restoration can improve watershed function and hydrologic processes by creating wetlands and reconnected floodplains that attenuate fluxes and nutrient loads from flood and wildfire while recharging groundwater. This project further supports Strategy 6.A.4 by identifying persistent and emerging sources of pollution from abandoned mines, assessing their impacts on streams and associated ecosystems, and developing actionable and up to date management recommendations to mitigate these effects. By leveraging updated data and fostering collaboration with partners and communities, the project focuses on addressing legacy mine impacts while building community support to advance sustainable solutions for improved water quality.

3. Volume 1. Section 4.7 (page 36) Goal 7: Protect and enhance environmental attributes. “Throughout the South Platte Basin, the importance of ecological processes and environmental attributes will be fully recognized. The South Platte Basin will implement strategies that protect and enhance environmental attributes for ecologically, socially, and economically important habitats and focus areas.”

a. Strategy 7.C: “Identify, assess, and implement actions, programs, and measures that aim to protect, maintain, and improve conditions and long-term sustainability of streams, lakes, floodplains, riparian areas, wetlands, and wet meadows for self-sustaining fisheries and functional waterfowl, beaver, and other aquatic habitats.”

This project aligns with this goal by addressing aquatic nuisance species and advancing beaver-related restoration efforts. It supports Strategy 7.C by identifying and assessing sustainability threats like Eurasian watermilfoil and New Zealand mudsnails, while implementing targeted management strategies to protect aquatic habitats. Additionally, the project focuses on beaver co-existence and restoration as a means to improve riparian, wetland, and wet meadow habitats, enhancing long-term ecological sustainability for fisheries, waterfowl, and other vital species. Importantly, these efforts are important ecologically, socially and economically because they were collaboratively identified with community and partners representing diverse interests including agriculture, recreation, municipal, and environment.

Related Studies

Below is a list of related studies to the proposed project. These studies are critical to ensuring cohesive and coordinated watershed projects that collectively address regional priorities. This effort will build upon established tools and plans, complementing ongoing work to ensure basin-wide, integrated watershed management. Detailed information on each study and how it differs from the proposed project is provided in the Statement of Work under Task 1: Planning.

1. Adaptive Management at Scale
2. St. Vrain and Left Hand Stream Management Plan
3. St. Vrain Basin Watershed-Based Plan
4. Watershed Management Plan for Upper Left Hand Creek Watershed
5. Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool
6. Colorado Beaver Activity Mapper
7. City of Boulder and Northern Water’s Eurasian Watermilfoil Management Plan for Boulder Reservoir

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

There are no relevant TABOR issues that would impact this application.