



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation
Name of Water Project	Wildfire Ready Action Planning - Conejos and Costilla Counties Project
Grant Request Amount	\$567,320.00
Primary Category	\$567,320.00
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$0.00
Applicant Cash Match	\$0.00
Applicant In-Kind Match	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$250,000.00
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Community Wildfire Defense Grant	\$250,000.00
Total Project Cost	\$817,320.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation
Mailing Address: 623 4th Street Alamosa CO 81101

Organization Contact: Daniel Boyes
Position/Title: Executive Director
Phone: 719-589-2230

Email: daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org

Organization Contact - Alternate: Emma Reesor
Position/Title: Administrative Director
Phone: (719) 589-2230

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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	37.303843
Longitude	-105.735947
Lat Long Flag	Other: Coordinates based on other boundaries or locations
Water Source	Conejos River, Trinchera Creek & Sangre de Cristo Creek
Basins	Rio Grande
Counties	Conejos; Costilla
Districts	22-Conejos Creek; 35-Trinchera Creek

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Agricultural
Type of Water Project	Planning
Scheduled Start Date - Design	6/1/2025
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

The Wildfire Ready Action Planning - Conejos and Costilla Counties Project (Project) will result in Wildfire Ready Action Plans (WRAPs) for watersheds within Conejos and Costilla counties, completed in conjunction with Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for those two counties. The Conejos River watershed in Conejos County and the Sangre de Cristo Creek and Trinchera Creek watersheds in Costilla County are crucially important drainages for a variety of water and land management uses, from municipal drinking water to irrigated agriculture. These watersheds are at risk of severe wildfire and the potential impacts of a catastrophic wildfire on watershed health, key water infrastructure, and other values at risk are substantial.

During San Luis Valley (SLV) Wildfire Council meetings over the past year, community partners identified SLV CWPP updates as a priority. In response, the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (CRGRF), in partnership with the Colorado State Forest Service (Alamosa Field Office), initiated CWPP updates for Conejos and Costilla counties. CRGRF and our partners recognized an opportunity to pair the CWPP updates with Wildfire Ready Action Planning to maximize the outcomes of each. When complete, the comprehensive plan will enable local communities to implement wildfire risk mitigation activities.

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
400 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

Comprehensive wildfire in Conejos and Costilla counties.

Water Project Justification

The proposed project, Wildfire Ready Action Planning - Conejos and Costilla Counties Project (Project), will support multiple Colorado Water Plan (CWP) Action Areas and goals set in the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). The project aligns with the four CWP Action Areas of Vibrant Communities, Robust Agriculture, Thriving Watersheds, and Resilient Planning, by assessing wildfire risk and identifying key actions to mitigate potential community and watershed impacts from wildfire:

- The CWP list the following as an important tool for Colorado communities: “Pre-wildfire planning and mitigation efforts, which may include implementation of nature-based solutions, are opportunities to reduce risk and lower the costs associated with potential threats to forest health” (2023 CWP, Chapter 5, pg 151). Also, an Agency Action (CWP, Chapter 6, pg 210), is to create a “Wildfire Ready Watersheds framework.” The Project implements this tool/action, and by identifying pre-disaster planning and mitigation activities, the Project is expected to meet many of the Resilient Planning Partners Actions, including “thoughtful storage” (CWP, Chapter 6, pg 217).
- The CWP notes, “Colorado’s increased warming and climate variability, including natural disasters like fire, flood, and drought, are driving advancements in climate adaptation.” In response, the Action Area of Resilient Planning includes an action to “Conduct integrated planning that considers uncertainty and drought.” This project will result in a comprehensive plan documenting wildfire risk in the Conejos River, Trinchera Creek, and Sangre de Cristo Creek watersheds as well as priority activities to mitigate potential risk and uncertainty for a variety of users and uses.
- In Chapter 6: Vision and Actions for Addressing Colorado’s Risks (CWP, Chapter 6, pg 177), the CWP lists the following Partner Actions:
 - o Engaged Partners: Creative solutions supported by thoughtful and efficient government are needed and can promote sustainability and resiliency
 - o Integration with Other Water Sectors: Coloradans need to work alongside each other to build solutions together

The proposed Project will result in an integrated and efficient planning effort, which will be made possible by close collaboration between local governments (Conejos and Costilla counties as well as municipalities). The Project is creative and unique in that it will integrate Community Wildfire Protection Plans (county-based planning) with the CWCB’s Wildfire Ready Watersheds framework, thereby meeting the criteria of both planning efforts more efficiently. As emphasized in Chapter 7, “Coloradans must come together across diverse groups and

geographies to implement actions that will move us closer to a more resilient water future” (CWP, Chapter 7, pg 240).

Additionally, The project is also in alignment with the education/outreach actions outlined in the CWP. The CWP’s vision is that “Education and outreach engages the public, partners, and leaders in integrated water planning to conserve and protect water for current and future generations.” (2023 CWP, Chapter 7, pg 240). This project will help address key challenges of “Inclusive Public Engagement” identified in Chapter 5 (pg 151) by engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in Conejos and Costilla counties in a planning effort which will help meet the Effective Engagement Partner Action by “fostering information sharing, education, and innovation at the state and local level” (CWP, Chapter 6, pg 175). The CRGRF will track and monitor specific metrics including number of individuals engaged and number of events organized.

In addition to meeting many of the CWP Action Areas, the project meets the following Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan Goals and is supported by the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable:

- Healthy watersheds that provide critical ecosystem services, are resilient to disturbances, and benefit from ongoing efforts to protect water sources, improve water quality, enhance aquatic, riparian, wetland, and upland habitat, and maintain connected ecosystems.
- Engaged and informed citizens who understand the scope and urgency of local, state, and regional water issues and participate in robust and diverse educational opportunities.
- Vibrant and resilient agriculture, recreation, municipal, and industrial economies that support thriving communities.

To maintain and improve healthy watersheds, the BIP lists the following strategy “Conduct pre-disturbance planning to assess and mitigate potential wildfire impacts, with an emphasis on protecting ecosystem services and values at risk.” This planning effort directly aligns with this strategy by creating a plan to reduce the risk of severe wildfire and to mitigate potential wildfire impacts on watershed health and local communities. The Project will also help meet education goals by engaging diverse community stakeholders. As the Rio Grande Basin continues to face prolonged periods of drought and the risk of catastrophic wildfire grows, the need for pre-disaster planning and mitigation is increasingly urgent.

Related Studies

This Project will complement the Conejos River Stream Management Plan as well as the Upper Culebra Watershed Assessment, both of which are CWCB-funded studies. The Project will also further the strategies outlined in the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

The Applicant, The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, is not subject to TABOR limitations, as it is a Colorado nonprofit organization operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.