COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Wright-Ingraham Institute
Name of Water Project	Field Workshop 2026: San Luis Valley
Grant Request Amount	**$38,360.00**
Primary Category	$38,360.00
Engagement & Innovation Activities	
Total Applicant Match	**$69,573.00**
Applicant Cash Match	$69,573.00
Applicant In-Kind Match	$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	**$20,000.00**
Gale Family Foundation	$20,000.00
Total Project Cost	**$127,933.00**

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Wright-Ingraham Institute
Mailing Address: 633 seventeenth street, suite 2200 Denver CO 80202

Organization Contact: Tal Beery
Position/Title: Executive Director
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Organization Contact - Alternate: Frida Foberg
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Grant Management Contact: Tal Beery
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Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Dylan Gauthier
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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
- [x] 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.
- [x] 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	37.469400
Longitude	105.870000
Lat Long Flag	Precise coordinates: Project coordinates are readily definable and precisely define the location of the project
Water Source	
Basins	Rio Grande
Counties	Saguache; Alamosa; Conejos; Rio Grande; Costilla; Mineral
Districts	20-Rio Grande

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Education
Scheduled Start Date - Design	1/1/2026
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

Field Workshop 2026: San Luis Valley is a three-week field-based summer fellowship that brings together an interdisciplinary cohort of graduate students and early-career professionals to explore the upper Rio Grande from southern Colorado into northern New Mexico. Participants will engage with complex, place-specific challenges including water and land stewardship, regenerative agriculture, forest and watershed health, and ecohydrology.

Through site visits, hands-on learning, and dialogue with local land stewards such as farmers, ranchers, acequia associations, tribal leaders, and conservationists, participants will investigate how communities are navigating climate pressures while cultivating resilience grounded in the region’s unique cultures, histories, and ecologies.

Designed to center systems thinking and collaborative inquiry, the workshop supports the development of participant-led, place-based projects co-created with local partners. Projects may take the form of visual essays, maps, oral histories, or applied tools that reflect participants' insights and contributions to the watershed.

The program culminates in a public event that shares findings with the local community and a published report that documents local knowledge and contributes to regional and statewide conversations on resilience, integrated water management, and adaptive leadership in the San Luis Valley and greater Rio Grande basin.

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
2,644 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other
No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

The San Luis Valley is an ecologically and culturally rich region that, according to American Rivers and One Water Econ, contributes 39% of Colorado's agricultural output. The region's future is closely tied to the health of its water systems, which support farming, ecosystems, and community well-being. As water availability becomes increasingly uncertain due to climate change, local communities face mounting environmental, economic, and social pressures. As noted in the 2022 Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan (RG BIP), aquifer depletion, watershed degradation, and climate-related disturbances such as drought, wildfires, and dust-on-snow events are among the most pressing cross-sector challenges in the basin (RG BIP 2022, Sec.2, p.8).
The 2026 Field Workshop responds directly to these challenges by equipping a cohort of graduate students and early-career professionals with the tools and relationships necessary to navigate complex water and land issues in the region. It aligns with the BIP goal of creating "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" (RG BIP 2022, Sec. 4, p.18) by offering an immersive educational experience for early-career scholars and researchers from Colorado who will develop projects that benefit their communities. A public education event will share findings with a wider audience of local stakeholders, creating a forum for dialogue and local knowledge exchange in line with the BIP's emphasis on community engagement. Participants will collaborate with local stakeholders on projects focused on aquifer recovery, regenerative agriculture, and acequia-based water governance. These activities reflect the BIP's emphasis on inclusive outreach, collaborative action, and basin-wide knowledge exchange.
This project also supports key Partner Actions and long-term goals outlined in the 2023 Colorado Water Plan (CWP). By promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and integrated planning across sectors, especially water, land, agriculture, and cultural stewardship, it reflects the One Water ethic described in Chapter 6 (CWP 2023, Ch.

6). The fellowship's focus on adaptive leadership, public education, and systems-based problem solving addresses Water Plan priorities such as Thriving Watersheds and Resilient Planning. In addition, the program directly contributes to statewide education strategies as defined in the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP), advancing water literacy and stakeholder engagement through experiential, place-based learning (SWEAP 2020-2025, pp. 14-16).
This program offers a timely and grounded response to basin and statewide goals. By advancing resilience, interdisciplinary collaboration, and integrated water management through experiential learning, it supports Partner Actions in the Colorado Water Plan that emphasize equitable education, basin-wide collaboration, and adaptive leadership (e.g., Resilient Planning: Education and Engagement, and others). Its focus on water literacy, regenerative practices, and cultural stewardship reflects the kind of locally grounded, systems-based work needed to prepare for Colorado's water future.

Related Studies

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25650827/

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02734753241288182

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1395977.pdf

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-02915-8

https://ecologyandsociety.org/vol30/iss1/art16/

https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/4/4/623

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

N/A