



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Durango, City of
Name of Water Project	City of Durango Water Conservation Plan and Drought Response Plan Updates
Grant Request Amount	\$55,500.00
Primary Category	\$55,500.00
<i>Conservation & Land Use Planning</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$18,500.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$18,500.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$0.00
Total Project Cost	\$74,000.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Durango, City of
Mailing Address: 949 E. 2nd Ave Durango CO 81301

Organization Contact: Marty Pool
Position/Title: Sustainability Manager Email: marty.pool@durangogov.org
Phone: 970-375-5061

Organization Contact - Alternate: Laura Rieck
Position/Title: Public Works Administrative Services Manager Email: laura.rieck@durangoco.gov
Phone: 970-375-4804

Grant Management Contact: Marty Pool
Position/Title: Sustainability Manager Email: marty.pool@durangogov.org
Phone: 970-375-5061

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Marisa Rupp
Position/Title: Grants Manager Email: marisa.rupp@durangoco.gov
Phone:

Description of Grantee/Applicant

City of Durango - Sustainability Office

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	37.273970
Longitude	-107.879350
Lat Long Flag	Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source	Florida River, Animas River
Basins	Southwest
Counties	La Plata
Districts	30-Animas River Basin

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Municipal
Type of Water Project	Planning
Scheduled Start Date - Design	10/1/2025
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

The City of Durango is seeking \$55,500 in Colorado Water Plan Grant Funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), with a cash match of \$18,500 from the City of Durango to update our existing Water Efficiency Plan and Drought Management Plan. Additionally, the City of Durango anticipates committing approximately 120 hours of staff time above this 25% cash match. The City of Durango is not seeking to count these hours as in-kind match as we are already committing to a 25% cash match, but these staff hours reinforce our commitment to the success of the effort. Our existing Water Efficiency Plan was adopted in 2011 (nearly 15 years old), and our Drought Management Plan was adopted in 2020 (5 years old). Both plans are due for a

thorough review and update.

City of Durango staff recently attended the CO Western Slope Growing Water Smart Workshop, and updating these plans was identified as a key action moving forward. Our research during the workshop identified several points of contradiction, redundancy, and unnecessary complexity in these documents. Staff agreed that these plans in their current state are not being used as effective tools to guide action at this point in time. This is certainly not to say these plans have not provided useful guidance for previous actions. Rather, it simply acknowledges that these plans were created and utilized under previous contexts. The City of Durango continues to see an evolving context with regard to water management, including the continued impacts of climate change, growth and ongoing development in the community, municipal staff turnover, department restructuring, and even governance changes regarding the structure of our boards and commissions that oversee our water utility.

Looking back, Durango made significant progress in water conservation between 2013 and 2015. This was likely a combination of the Water Efficiency Plan update in 2011 and multiple years of drought during this period. However, following the conservation gains during this period, total water use in Durango has remained more or less flat for the past decade. Given that our region has seen steady population growth over the past decade, keeping water use at a constant level is somewhat commendable. Still, there is a shared sense from City of Durango staff, and many community members, that Durango could be doing quite a bit more when it comes to effective water conservation.

Regarding our Drought Management Plan, when staff reviewed this at the Growing Water Smart Workshop there was a consensus that the structure and purpose of this plan needs to be clarified. In its current format the plan combines both long term water conservation and targeted single-summer critical drought response strategies. Staff agreed that this structure makes the document somewhat hard to navigate and use effectively when it's most needed and quick action may be crucial. It is also unclear if the Drought Management plan is meant to complement the 2011 Water Efficiency Plan, or supersede it.

The City of Durango wishes to update, modernize, and simplify both of these plans in order to be more useful and effective resources. Moreover, we are seeking to clarify the scope of each plan: 1) a Water Conservation Plan that will focus on ongoing water conservation goals through water efficiency projects and programs, and 2) a Drought Response Plan that outlines specific actions during acute summer drought conditions. The updated plans will recommend the most effective strategies, projects, programs, and actions for our municipal water utility as well as for our residential, commercial, irrigation, and institutional utility customers to engage in.

Measurable Results

0	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
0	New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive
0	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
0	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
0	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
0.00	Length of Pipe, Canal Built or Improved (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
470	Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
0	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
0	Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement (acre-feet)
23,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
23,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	

The exact savings resulting from adopting a new water efficiency plan, and in turn implementing the actions identified in the plan, is not precisely known. However, we believe an estimate of approx. 10% water savings is a reasonable (if somewhat conservative) goal.

Water Project Justification

The City of Durango Colorado is seeking Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Water Plan funding to update the City's Water Efficiency Management Plan (adopted 2011) and create a Drought Response Plan as an update to our Drought Management Plan (2020). Updating these plans will give municipal staff, City Council members, and community members a more clear vision of the actions we can take with regard to ongoing water conservation and acute drought response measures.

This effort supports goals and addresses key basin challenges as outlined in the Colorado Water Plan and the Southwest Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). Drought is the leading water issue for the Southwest basin – both on a long-term basis in the downward trend of available water supplies, and also in annual response to water availability based on snowpack and streamflows. The 2011 Water Efficiency plan is now 15 years old, with data that is essentially obsolete for planning purposes. The 2020 Drought Management Plan has more relevant data and analysis, but the structure of the document needs improvement in order to be a more effective resource for municipal staff, elected officials, regional partners, and community members.

As stated in the Colorado Water Plan: "Climate-impacted scenarios project a reduction in flows and available water [for the Southwest Basin]; projects that provide firm yield and increased conservation and efficiency are crucial for balancing future water needs." (page 131). As water utility, the City of Durango has its own unique considerations for water conservation and drought response. The following summarizes how updating these plans aligns with the goals of the Southwest Basin while addressing Durango's needs:

Colorado Water Plan Actions:

- 1.2 Enhance municipal water efficiency reporting and data integration: the scope of the water efficiency plan update includes improving our existing data collection tools for improved future reporting.
- 3.7 Reduce barriers to participation in the Instream Flow Program & 3.9 Create a framework for prioritizing stream health with local stakeholders: the City of Durango does not have adopted water conservation or consumption goals, and the impact of the City's withdrawal on the Florida and Animas rivers are unclear. While not the primary focus of the plan updates, we hope to gain some baseline information regarding the value of water conservation efforts in protecting streamflows on these rivers.
- 4.7 Update Scenarios: updated data for both a Water Conservation Plan and a Drought Response Plan are needed to improve water planning.
- 4.8 Update climate adaptation-related decision support tools: As mentioned, while the existing Drought Management Plan contains useful information regarding the impacts of climate change and recommended response/adaptation strategies, the plan itself is in need of an overhaul in order to make it a useful tool and resource for prioritization, decision making, and action.

Southwest BIP Goals:

Balance all needs and reduce conflict: Through improved water conservation efforts, Durango seeks to be a regional partner in overall water conservation. Every gallon of water we don't take from the rivers is a gallon that can be kept in the stream to protect ecosystems and recreation, or which can be used by downstream communities or agricultural users.

Support the needs of agriculture: Building off the point above, the City of Durango holds senior water rights on the Florida and Animas rivers. Improved conservation efforts will reduce the likelihood the City would put a call on the Florida or seek to purchase additional water rights from agriculture (a.k.a. "buy and dry").

Meet municipal water needs: While the City of Durango water utility has not hit its limit on available water rights, we are facing significant costs in the coming years related to upgrading and/or expanding water distribution infrastructure. Conservation programs can delay or even prevent the needs for costly upgrades. Furthermore, a more clear acute drought response plan will clarify actions related to the proper management of water resource in times of more severe seasonal shortages.

Meet recreation & environmental water needs: As stated in the points above, water not pulled from the river is water that stays in the river to support recreation and ecosystems.

Related Studies

City of Durango Water Efficiency Management Plan (2011)
City of Durango Municipal Drought Management Plan (2020)
Growing Water Smart Workshop Action Plan (2025)

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

None foreseen. Match funding for this project would come out of enterprise funding.