White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts

Promoting the wise use of all natural resources

August 16, 2023

Ben Wade, Program Manager
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Water Supply Planning Section
1313 Sherman Street, Suite 718
Denver, CO 80203

Subject: WSRF – 168478 White River Integrated Water Initiative – Final Report

Dear Ben,

The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts (Districts) are pleased to report that the White River Integrated Water Initiative (Initiative) Phase 2 is complete. We have been very fortunate and this process has proceeded smoothly without any major obstacles and with good reception from the community.

The final reports and meeting notes are all located on the Districts' website at https://wrcd-dccd.colorado.gov/projects/white-river-integrated-water-initiative.

Links to specific documents are:

- 2022 Phase II Report – detailed (36 pages)
- Phase II Final Report – summary (10 pages)

The Initiative has been directed by a 15-member Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and 4 technical advisors. The tasks identified by this group are then carried out primarily by the Districts and/or other assigned entities / individuals. This has been a successful model for the Initiative and the members of the community. See the above noted reports for details.

We continue to be impressed with the commitment from this group. There has been a minimum of 12 participants at all meetings even as we are in the 4th year of the effort. Any time we ask, they all are committed to continuing this effort.

The primary accomplishments of Phase II:

- Completion of 24 Diversion Structure assessments with a minimum of five assessment committee members at each structure plus the landowner/water right holder.
    - Diversion Structure Assessment Committee Members:
        1. Keri Brennan – Coordinator
        2. Mario Sullivan - CNCC
        3. Kendra Young – NRCS/District
        4. Chris Collins – landowner/PAC member
        5. Forrest Nelson – landowner/PAC member
        6. Walt Proctor – landowner/PAC member
        7. Bailey Franklin – CPW
        8. Ian Wilson – TU
        9. Phil Brink – Colorado Ag Water NetWORK
        10. Respective landowners (20 individuals)
- District secured matching funds for three diversion structure improvement projects through partnership with Colorado Cattlemen's and CWCB. Multiple projects have been initiated and finalized by the water right holders themselves.
- Completion of 21 Riparian Health assessments with a minimum of five assessment committee members at each location plus the landowner.
    - Riparian Assessment Members:
        1. Kari Brennan - Coordinator
        2. Mario Sullivan – CNCC (lead)
        3. Linda Masters – Extension
        4. Chris Collins – Landowner
        5. Clay Ramey – USFS
        6. John Kaminsky – BLM
        7. Ian Wilson – TU
        8. John Leary – REW
        9. David Graf – CPW
        10. Respective landowners (20 individuals)
- Two water education workshops held by Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC) in conjunction with the Initiative.
- Formalized the Phase III scope of work, secured grant funds to implement the SOW. See final Phase III SOW below.
    - Phase II and III have overlapped by a few months because the Colorado River District funds became available in April to begin some of the Phase III work. The Districts are wrapping up the reporting and requesting the final reimbursement from Phase II while work is on-going for Phase III.
    - Work has already begun with Dr. Ryan Bailey from CSU to develop the White River Return Flow Model. Dr. Bailey secured funding for his portion of the work in addition to the funding the District has secured for moving Phase III forward and collecting the necessary data for the study. Coordinator, Liz Chandler, has been working with Dr. Bailey and the Return Flow committee to determine where, how, and when to collect the best data to ground truth the model once it is developed.
- See the below Phase 3 Scope of Work.

Phase III White River Integrated Water Initiative
Scope of Work

DIVERSION ASSESSMENTS

Objectives

1. Perform environmental health and infrastructure assessments on approximately 10 diversions on the White River and Piceance Creek for those interested in improving their structures.
2. Provide information to water rights holders on the status of their infrastructure and the environmental health of the diversion.

Tasks

1. Review previous assessment criteria and make improvements as needed with the goal of having uniformity in the process.
2. Solicit water rights holders for diversions that are needing/wanting to make improvements.
3. Work with the Planning Advisory Committee to develop prioritizing criteria for the assessments.
4. Provide a written report to each water right owner.
5. Provide summary information to the Douglas Creek and White River Conservation Districts to be published on their website.

RIPARIAN ASSESSMENTS

Objectives

1. Perform PFC assessments on approximately 10 riparian areas on the White River and Piceance Creek.
2. Provide information to landowners on the riparian health on their property.

Tasks

1. Review the previous assessment criteria and make improvements as needed with the goal of having uniformity in the process.
2. Solicit property owners for riparian areas that are needing/wanting to make improvements.
3. Work with the Planning Advisory Committee to develop prioritizing criteria for the assessments.
4. Provide a written report to each property owner.
5. Provide summary information to the Douglas Creek and White River Conservation Districts to be published on their website.

WATER MEASUREMENT

Objectives

1. Demonstrate the variety of measurement devices that are used to measure water in ditches.
2. Inform water rights holders' choice in deciding which water measurement device is appropriate for their water diversion.
3. Public education on methods of water measurement.

Tasks

1. Identify a location and partners to build the demonstration.
    a. Identify who will be responsible for long-term maintenance and liability of the demonstration. a. Enter into an agreement with that group that defines each entities responsibilities and liabilities.
    b. Participate in an advisory role for the final design, construction and testing of the system.
    c. Utilize the WRIWI preliminary design to. a. Coordinate design and construction with a cooperating entity.
    d. Integrate the project's educational opportunities with interested schools and organizations.
    e. Engineer, build and install the demonstration system.

WATER SUPPLY STUDY

Objectives

1. Identify and quantify the effect of flood irrigation in the middle reach of the White River on return flows, municipal wells, and domestic wells within the Rio Blanco Community.
2. Identify the timing and location of return flows in the middle reach to the White River.
3. Identify and quantify the effect flood irrigation has on the aquifers of the middle reach of the White River.
4. Identify the effect the aquifers have on White River flows.

Tasks

1. Gather data to inform the development of an accurate model of return flows in the middle reach of the White River.
2. Characterize the aquifers of the middle reach.
3. Test and verify the model created.
4. Once model is determined to be valid, use the model to run different scenarios involving irrigation applications, return flows, and their effect on the community.

UPLAND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Goals:

1. **Reduce fire risks and impacts to improve the health of the watershed.**
2. **Improve and maintain upland forest and rangeland health.**
3. **Reduce sedimentation into the White River drainage.**

Objectives

1. Reduce coarse and fine fuels in areas at risk for a high intensity fire.

2. Improve rangeland by removing unwanted woody growth and fine fuels.
   a. Perform treatments in areas that would be negatively impacted by fire. and that can become part of a landscape scale project. a. Work across public/private property boundaries.
   b. Utilize adaptive grazing practices to appropriately manage forage.
   c. Identify and implement desirable projects that have widespread public support.

Tasks

1. Hold public meetings to solicit ideas and foster support for forest treatment and rangeland treatment.
2. Encourage adaptive grazing practices, including for the purpose of emergency fuels reduction.
3. Work with local, state, and federal agencies, private landowners, and other stakeholders to get treatments completed across property boundary lines.
4. Work in concert with Rio Blanco Emergency Manager to keep the Community Wildfire Protection Plan updated and inclusive of prospective projects.
5. Coordinate with the Conservation Districts and Agencies to support the existing CRMP efforts and other projects that reduce sediment flow to the White River drainage.
   a. Identify projects that will reduce sediment flow into the White River drainage.
6. Seek funding for a Forestry Program Coordinator to facilitate planning and implementation of active forestry management.

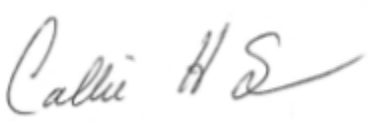
Matching Funds Report

The Districts are pleased to report the below cash and in-kind match for this project. As you will see there was more match than anticipated and the below figures are based on very conservative estimates of hours contributed. Detailed hour and cost tracking forms will be maintained in the office for any needed verification.

Contributing Entity	Budgeted Match (cash or in-kind)	**Actual Match**	
		In-kind	**Cash**
CSU Extension (In-kind)	$4,800	**$4,800**	
NRCS (In-kind)	$1,000	**$600**	
CPW (In-Kind)	$600	**$2,240**	
CNCC (Professor)	$2,500	**$4,960**	
Rivers Edge West (In-kind)	$4,800		
WR & DC Conservation Districts/NRCS/Colo State Cons. Board (DCT Position) (in-kind)	$4,900	**$7,084**	
Trout Unlimited (in-kind)	$5,300	**$6,461**	
Ag Water Network	$7,200	**$7,200**	
CNCC Students (in-kind)	$4,800		
River Network (cash – in hand)	$7,000		**$7,000**
Landowner / PAC Member - Walt		**$5,220**	
Landowner / PAC Member - Chris		**$6,220**	
Landowner / PAC Member- Forrest		**$1,598**	
Totals	$42,900	**$46,383**	**$7,000**
Grand Total of actual match			**$53,383**

Please see the attached financial report and final reimbursement request to close out the White River Integrated Water Initiative Phase 2 Grant.

Sincerely,



Callie (Hendrickson) Scritchfield
Executive Director

Pictures

Diversion to river: Looking at old board slots and plank walkway.

Concrete blocks were installed to control erosion both on both sides of embankment on both the upstream and downstream side of main structure.

Diversion Assessment

Water Subcommittee meeting with Dr. Bailey to discuss potential water return supply study.

PAC Meeting