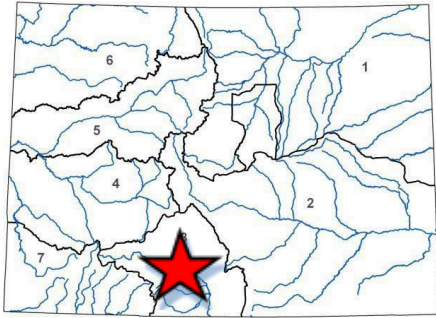




Water Plan Grant Program



LOCATION	
Counties:	Alamosa; Rio Grande; Conejos; Saguache
Basin:	Rio Grande

DETAILS	
Total Project Cost:	\$197,150.00
Water Plan Grant Request:	\$147,863.00
Recommended Amount:	\$147,863.00
Match Commitment:	\$49,287.00
Grant to Match Ratio:	75/25
Project Type:	Education
Primary Project Category:	Engagement & Innovation
Measurable Result:	30-minute documentary film and related outreach; up to 100,000 Coloradans impacted by engagement activity

The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, a nonprofit organization, is seeking Colorado Water Plan grant funding to support the Rye Resurgence Film & Educational Impact Campaign in the San Luis Valley and across Colorado.

Funded by a 2023 Water Plan Grant to CRGRF and led by the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District (SLVWCD), the Rye Resurgence Project is a multi-benefit initiative working to cultivate a demand in Colorado markets for rye—a low water crop—while providing incentives for San Luis Valley producers to plant rye. In 2023, 10 participating producers grew 4,500 acres, surpassing the goal of 1,200 acres. Producers have sold more than \$370,000 in San Luis Valley Rye to distilleries, bakeries, stores, breweries, and mills. Farmers now have one more option when seeking to reduce groundwater water use, prevent erosion, and improve soil health.

This 30-minute documentary will showcase the Rye Resurgence Project, highlighting how San Luis Valley stakeholders—farmers, water managers, and biologists—are adapting to changing water supplies by integrating rye into crop rotations to recover aquifers. The film will showcase market infrastructure developments (mills, malting facilities, grain hubs) needed to support a resilient regional food system, and link agriculture and water management to wildlife conservation and recreation by featuring the Sandhill Crane migration. The film will also demonstrate the process to engage with buyers and consumer packaged goods companies to use alternative grains.

Upon the film's release, the project team will launch an educational impact campaign to share it through various avenues, including film festivals, partnerships with educators and school systems, and distribution with strategic media partners like Colorado's local PBS channel. Other organizations interested in promoting the film include MAD Agriculture, Slow Food USA, Naturally Colorado, Zero Footprint, Startup Colorado, Colorado Proud, The Colorado Grain Chain, and the Aspen Institute.

The project aligns with the Water Plan Grant criteria by promoting public engagement and education. This project exemplifies the Colorado Water Plan's push to innovate for robust agriculture, specifically Action 2.10 to "integrate soil health, water conservation, and adaptive practices that increase economic outputs with less water use." This effort also has the support of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable. This project demonstrates a commitment to collaboration and broad-based involvement with farmers, water managers, vendors, and conservation leaders.

Grant dollars would be used for film production and the impact campaign to follow. Project supporters include the Mighty Arrow Family Foundation, which has committed \$50,000, as well as the SLVWCD, Colorado Malting Company, and various agricultural, food, and beverage producers.

Funding Recommendation:

Staff recommends a Water Plan Grant award not to exceed \$147,863.00 to the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation for the Rye Resurgence Film & Educational Impact Campaign.