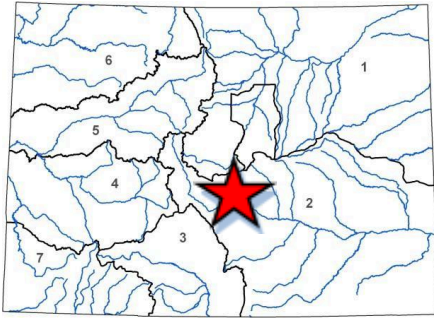




## Water Plan Grant Program



### LOCATION

**Counties:** Archuleta; Chaffee; Gunnison;  
Lake; Rio Grande  
**Basins:** Arkansas; Southwest; Rio Grande;  
Gunnison

### DETAILS

<i>Total Project Cost:</i>	\$1,043,166.00
<i>Water Plan Grant Request:</i>	\$380,880.00
<i>Recommended Amount:</i>	<b>\$380,880.00</b>
<i>Match Commitment:</i>	\$662,286.00
<i>Grant to Match Ratio:</i>	37/63
<i>Project Type:</i>	Capacity Building
<i>Primary Project Category:</i>	Engagement & Innovation
<i>Measurable Result:</i> 14 AmeriCorps members will serve 10 rural water-focused organizations, provide 17,000 hours of service in support of watershed stewardship, and participate in at least 2,000 hours of professional development. Members will provide water education to at least 1,500 youth and adults, complete at least 5 river restoration projects, and support water monitoring of over 15 sites	

Blue Elements, a watershed stewardship 501(c)3 organization, is seeking a Colorado Water Plan grant to support the Watershed Stewards Program in the Arkansas, Southwest, Rio Grande, and Gunnison basins. The project aims to foster a skilled and diverse incoming water workforce through professional pathway internship opportunities for AmeriCorps members who serve with water-focused organizations. The program places 14 AmeriCorps members annually with at least ten rural water-focused organizations. The program's measurable results include providing water education to at least 1,500 youth and adults and completing at least five river restoration projects. Through these efforts, the program works to increase inclusivity and equity within the water field by creating professional career pathway internships for diverse and historically excluded individuals.

This grant application builds upon the success of Blue Elements' current Water Plan Grant, which provides housing allowances for a smaller cohort of AmeriCorps members. This new application seeks to expand that critical support to a larger group of members, ensuring better retention and broader impact. Additionally, the proposed funding will facilitate a week-long technical training intensive in watershed health, delivered in partnership with Western Colorado University and Coldharbour Institute. This enhanced training, combined with direct placement of AmeriCorps members with specific watershed organizations in the region, will ensure that participants are engaged in meaningful, tangible outcomes across the Arkansas, Southwest, Rio Grande, and Gunnison basins.

The Watershed Stewards Program (Program) directly addresses key elements of the Colorado Water Plan and the Arkansas, Gunnison, Rio Grande, and Southwest Basin Implementation Plans. The program supports vibrant communities and an informed public through educational outreach and youth and community engagement. It also acknowledges the need for equity, diversity, and inclusivity by engaging with schools that serve diverse populations and fosters collaboration by empowering residents to participate in community stewardship events. Finally, the Program supports the Roundtables' Public Education, Participation and Outreach (PEPO) missions and provides informed guidance for water management decisions through water quality monitoring.

Grant dollars would be used to provide AmeriCorps members with a housing allowance, which contributes to the long-term success of the program by improving the retention of qualified applicants. The funding would also support a week-long technical training intensive in watershed health, facilitated by Western Colorado University and Coldharbour Institute. Grant funding would support the recruitment, training, and retention of incoming water professionals over a three-year period. Blue Elements has secured other funding sources, including Serve Colorado/AmeriCorps and Great Outdoors Colorado.

### Funding Recommendation:

Staff recommends a Water Plan Grant award not to exceed \$380,880.00 to Blue Elements for the Watershed Stewards Program.