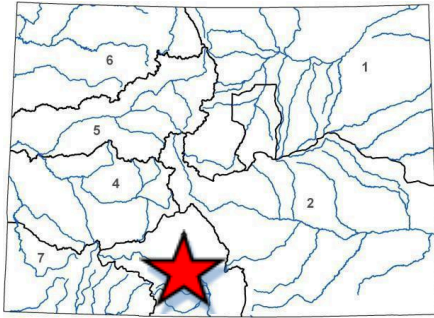




Water Plan Grant Program



LOCATION

Counties:	Alamosa/Rio Grande
Basin:	Rio Grande

DETAILS

Total Project Cost:	\$1,304,000.00
Water Plan Grant Request:	\$652,000.00
Recommended Amount:	\$0.00
Match Commitment:	\$652,000.00
Grant to Match Ratio:	50/50
Project Type:	Implementation
Primary Project Category:	Agriculture
Measurable Result:	Estimated 4,000 acre-feet water efficiency savings from low water use crop

The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (CRGRF), a nonprofit organization, is seeking a Colorado Water Plan grant to support the Rye Resurgence Project - Phase 2 in the San Luis Valley.

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 that is 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, blowing past the goal of 1,200 acres. Partners 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.

Phase 2 seeks to build on lessons learned to date. Project proponents would educate end consumers on the benefits of low-water rye. The project would grow San Luis Valley Rye as a winter cover crop and market product on 4,000 acres, coordinate the sale and processing of the rye, and expand the market for it. Partners would expand the market for San Luis Valley Rye by continuing to build relationships with businesses in the baking, milling, brewing, distilling, malting, and restaurant communities. The team would also assist partners with new product development and accessing new markets for existing products. Additionally, the project would work to increase demand for the rye through product marketing and media campaigns that target consumers in Colorado and the Western United States. The project would also provide incentives for customers by helping with processing, cleaning, or shipping costs.

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, as it would further their Basin Implementation Plan goal of “aquifers with sustainable supplies of groundwater for farmers and ranchers, towns, and wildlife habitat.”

Grant funds would incentivize customers by covering processing, cleaning, and/or shipping, and support market development through marketing, graphic, media, and brand professionals, materials, advertisements, and travel. Funds would also aid partners in researching, creating, packaging, and marketing new rye products. The SLVWCD has committed \$20,000 in in-kind administrative time, while farmers and partners would purchase rye seed and contribute to market expansion, respectively.



Funding Recommendation:

Staff does not recommend Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation be awarded a Water Plan Grant for the Rye Resurgence Project - Phase 2 because Phase 1 has not yet been sufficiently completed.