



WATER PLAN GRANT PROGRAM

FY 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.



COLORADO
Colorado Water
Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

An Introduction to Water Plan Grants

The Colorado Water Plan provides a comprehensive framework to guide collaborative actions throughout the state. Critical to this goal—is the Water Plan Grant (WPG) Program, managed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), which provides millions of dollars of funding for projects in five key categories:

- Agricultural Projects
- Conservation & Land Use
- Engagement & Innovation
- Water Storage and Supply
- Watershed Health & Recreation

Water Plan Grants also support the four key action areas of the 2023 Colorado Water Plan: Vibrant Communities, Robust Agriculture, Thriving Watersheds, and Resilient Planning. Funded projects are wide-ranging and impactful to the state, focusing on enhancing water infrastructure, restoring ecosystems, supporting education and community collaboration, boosting water conservation and efficiency, guiding resilient land use planning, and much more.

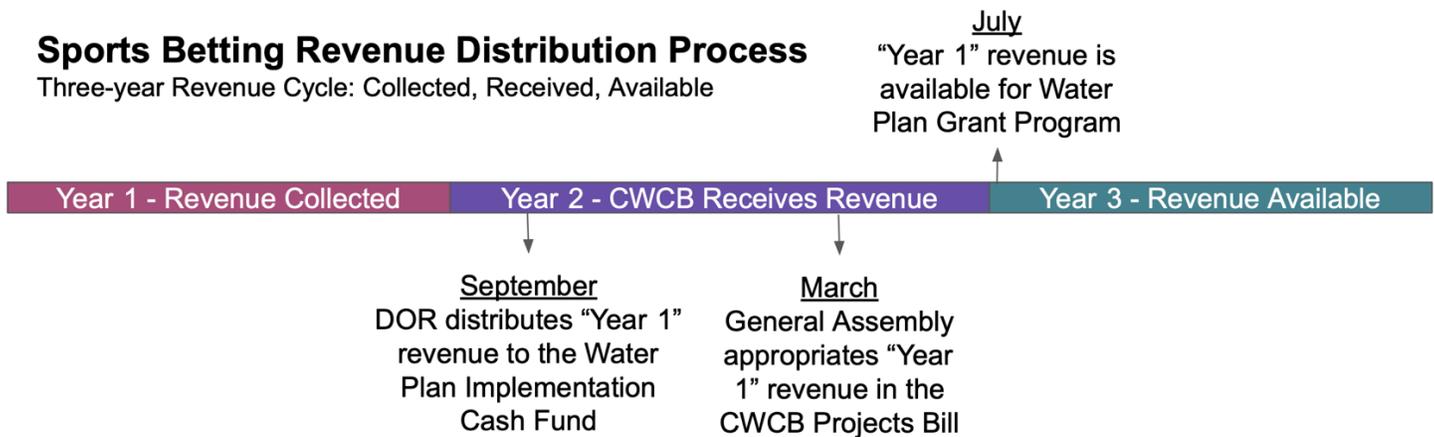


CWCB staff work to distribute Water Plan Grant funds to eligible entities across the state. This team includes four regional grant managers who live and work in the communities they serve. Every river basin in Colorado carries its own unique fingerprint of hydrology and geology, as well as sociocultural differences. Because of these differences, Water Plan Grant managers are vitally important liaisons between local communities and the CWCB—making significant contributions to local water management entities far beyond reviewing applications, making funding recommendations, and ongoing oversight of projects. The Water Plan Grant team also includes a technical lead staff member for each of the grant funding categories, providing critical expertise to the grant process and a technical review that enhances the work of the regional managers.

Colorado will continue to face increased challenges from climate change, population growth and changing water demands. The Colorado Water Plan and the Water Plan Grant Program will continue to meet and mitigate our state’s most critical water challenges—allowing water partners, agencies, and Coloradans to work together to ensure our Colorado communities, agriculture and environments will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Funding Sources and Background

Sports betting tax revenue represents a stable and permanent source of funding for the WPGP via the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund (WPIF) (Section 37-60-123.3(1), C.R.S). Prior to the receipt of revenue associated with the passage of H.B. 19-1327 (Authorize and Tax Sports Betting Refer Under Taxpayers’ Bill of Rights) and the approval of Proposition DD by voters in November 2019, the WPGP was supported by a series of one-time installments of funding from a number of sources, including the General Fund, the CWCB Construction Fund, and state stimulus funding. Over 90 percent of sports betting revenue received by the state is distributed to the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund in September of the fiscal year following its collection by the Department of Revenue (DOR). These funds are then appropriated in the next legislative session in the CWCB’s annual projects bill to be awarded in the upcoming fiscal year. This arrears funding model results in a two-year lag from revenue collection to grant award, but provides greater security by granting actual revenue instead of depending on projections. The below graphic demonstrates the collection and distribution of the revenue.



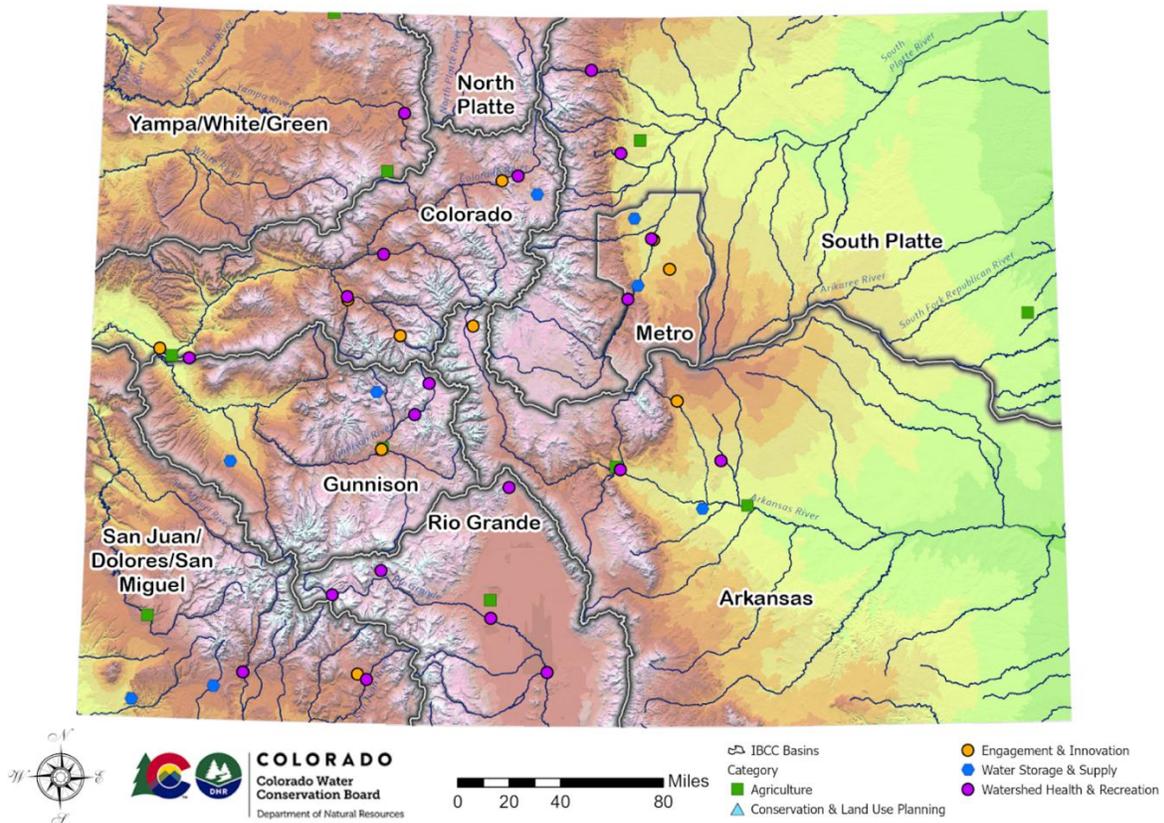
In fall 2024, voters passed Proposition JJ, removing the \$29M Tabor cap on the fund and allowing the state to retain all revenue. Additionally, the General Assembly passed [HB25-1311](#), ‘Deductions for Net Sports Betting Proceeds,’ which will result in additional revenue for the Water Plan Implementation Fund. Since the 2023-24 fiscal year, sports betting tax revenue represents a stable and permanent source of funding for the WPG Program via the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund. As of the end of FY 2024-25, the WPG

Program has issued 530 grants and funded over \$110 million in local projects since funding was first made available in the 2017 legislative session.

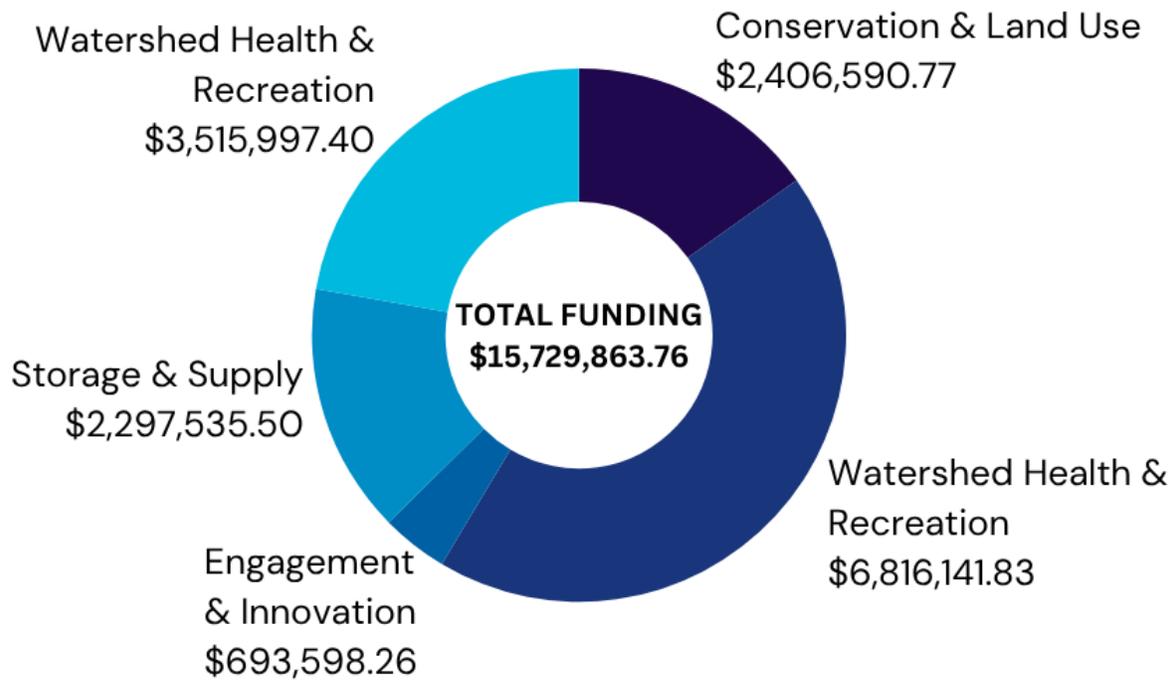


Colorado State Capitol. Photo: Cris Gonzales/wiki

Water Plan Grant Project Locations, FY2025



Water Plan Grant Funding by Project Category, FY25



Water Plan Grants By the Numbers



78

The total number of Water Plan Grant-funded projects for FY25



779

The number of acres of preserved habitat from FY25 Water Plan Grant projects



300,821

The number of linear feet of stream to be restored from FY25 approved projects (includes design, implementation, planning)



100%

Water Plan Grants were awarded in all basins that applied in FY25



42

Water Plan Grants were awarded for projects in 42 counties across the state for FY25

By the Dollars:

\$16M

Total matching funds for FY25 was \$16M—a more than 100% return on investment, leveraged from \$15.7M awarded

\$248K

The average grant award size in FY 2024-25

\$15K-\$1.2M

The range of grant award amounts in FY 2024-25

Projects at a Glance

Agriculture

Dolores Operations Model Modernization

Grantee: Dolores Water Conservancy District

Basin: Southwest

Grant Amount: \$182,369.20

Description: The Dolores Water Conservancy District (DWCD) will implement a modern software model for Dolores Project operations, focusing on McPhee Reservoir. Serving 63,000 irrigated acres and three towns, the reservoir supports agriculture, municipalities, tribes, recreation, and environmental needs, including fish and wildlife flows and boating. Collaborative efforts like the Dolores River Dialogue and Native Fish Monitoring Team guide operations. Facing drought and water shortages, DWCD will use the new model to integrate advanced forecasting, test scenarios, optimize releases, incorporate real-time streamflow data, and improve transparency with clear, data-driven plans for stakeholders.



McPhee Reservoir. Photo: Corey Robinson, Colorado Sun

Bear River Automation Phase 1

Grantee: Community Agriculture Alliance

Basin: Yampa/White/Green

Grant Amount: \$122,057.00

Description: Phase 1 of the Bear River Automation Project will convert five high-priority, manually operated headgates on the Bear River to an automated system. The Phase 1 headgates were selected because they are the top five headgates that require daily adjustments due to the river's complex fluctuations. The automation will improve the efficiency of water delivery for agricultural producers, help manage water use during fluctuations in river flow, and support existing instream flow targets. The project will reduce the time burden on water managers and ditch owners, and ultimately help mitigate water use conflicts.

Colorado Canal Company Strategic Water Plan

Grantee: Colorado Canal Company

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$95,975.00

Description: This project supports the development of a strategic water management plan to modernize infrastructure and implement new strategies for sustainable operations. The plan will identify the most effective ways to ensure the long-term viability of irrigated agriculture for Colorado Canal Company shareholders by addressing aging infrastructure and future agricultural challenges. Most Water Plan Grant funds will engage farm stakeholders in assessing current operations, identifying infrastructure improvements, and developing new water management strategies to enhance water delivery and economic resilience. By including both agricultural and municipal shareholders, the project demonstrates strong collaboration and aligns with the goals of the Colorado Water Plan and Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan. It offers an innovative, scalable, and replicable approach to agricultural water management planning.

Little Thompson River Corridor Conservation Inventory

Grantee: Town of Berthoud

Basin: South Platte

Grant Amount: \$79,650.00

Description: The Town is in need of this detailed plan that involves a holistic view of all the natural resources throughout the river corridor. They will complete a water and land resources inventory that includes objectives to improve river flows and ecological function and put land into conservation easements. The inventory proposed will provide an informed dataset and framework for the Town on how to prioritize opportunities for investments and make decisions across its different departments that provide multiple benefit outcomes to the community.

Conservation & Land Use

Water Rate and Connection Fee Study

Grantee: Town of Frisco

Basin: Colorado

Grant Amount: \$50,000.00

Description: The Town of Frisco will conduct a comprehensive Water Rate and Connection Fee Study. The goal of the study is to create a sustainable and equitable rate structure that promotes water conservation through tiered rates and helps fund the costs associated with PFAS mitigation and infrastructure maintenance. The project will also address future development needs, including workforce housing projects like Lake Hill. The study's findings will be incorporated into the Town's larger Water Master Plan and Water System Materials Condition Inventory.

El Paso County Indirect Potable Reuse

Grantee: Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$249,900.00

Description: Grant funds support the Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority's El Paso County Indirect Potable Reuse (IPR) Project, a feasibility study evaluating the potential to divert and reuse water from Fountain Creek via the Chilcott Ditch to supply potable water for multiple regional providers. The study examines infrastructure needs, storage sizing, water quality, and conceptual designs to ensure efficient use and reuse of local water supplies. Facing rapid population growth and limited resources, El Paso County will benefit from the IPR Project's focus on leveraging existing infrastructure and maximizing legally available water, including converted agricultural water and treated return flows. The project unites multiple municipalities and water providers, including Colorado Springs Utilities and other regional stakeholders, to ensure integrated planning, shared resources, and broad regional benefit.

Denver Resilient Landscape Code

Grantee: City and County of Denver

Basin: Metro

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

Description: The Grantee is working toward an overhaul of citywide landscape code, rules, regulations, and policies to create a more climate resilient city. The goal is to create requirements for landscapes which address the effects of our changing climate, including limited water resources, drought, increased intensity rainfall and flood events, extreme heat, wildfire, and decreasing biodiversity. This project is in line with approved Denver plan guidance including Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver, the Denver Game Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and will work to implement the Denver One Water Plan. This regulatory

project will address a holistic approach for all new development, redevelopment, and city projects to ensure that we are collectively creating a more climate resilient landscape palette that is attractive and functional for the community and the environment.

Engagement & Innovation

GameOn for Drought Resilience: Youth Led Rural Engagement

Grantee: University of Colorado Boulder

Basin: Gunnison, Rio Grande, Southwest

Grant Amount: \$70,029

Description: University of Colorado Boulder's Center for Education, Engagement, and Evaluation (CEEE) is expanding their existing educational drought resilience game to include examples from the Colorado Water Plan and Basin Implementation Plan, videos from local water leaders, and Spanish translations. The game will be redesigned and formatted for professional printing, and a digital game facilitation toolkit will be created. Once updated, the game will then be shared at summer teacher training workshops, some of whom will teach the unit in their classroom and help their students lead a Community Game Night.



GameOn Community Game Night

Commercial Water Efficiency Challenge, Rebate, and Awards Program

Grantee: City of Aspen

Basin: Colorado

Grant Amount: \$75,000

Description: The City of Aspen's Commercial Water Efficiency Challenge is a pilot project designed to promote water conservation by targeting indoor commercial water use. The project aims to engage at least 15 of the city's approximately 400 commercial water accounts, which account for 20% of all water sold by the City. Through a year-long challenge, the City will encourage businesses, particularly hotels and restaurants, to adopt water-saving practices by offering incentives such as rebates of up to \$7,500 per account for replacing old, inefficient equipment with high-efficiency appliances. The program will provide on-site assessments, educational materials, and a point-tracking system to monitor progress and foster friendly competition among participants. The initiative will inspire broader community engagement in water conservation among commercial users. The project is a final action item from the 2015 Roaring Fork Watershed Regional Water Efficiency Plan and will serve as a model for other municipalities to implement similar programs in the future.

Water Ambassador Outreach

Grantee: South Metro Water Supply Authority

Basin: Metro

Grant Amount: \$30,000.00

Description: South Metro Water Supply Authority and its Water Ambassador Program launched the South Metro Water Festival in Summer 2025. Grant funding supports the purchase and distribution of water conservation kits and the festival event. The Water Ambassador Program engages students and families through hands-on learning about water, featuring educational games, experiments, and models. The festival brings together all 15 South Metro member water providers and communities across Douglas and Arapahoe Counties. Partners include Denver Water, Castle Pines Metro District, Plum Creek Water Reclamation Authority, Douglas County Conservation District, CSU Spur Hydro, Water Education Colorado, High Line Canal Conservancy, and NOAA National Weather Service.

Front Range and West Slope Tour of Mirasol

Grantee: Palmer Land Conservancy

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$100,000.00

Description: Grant funding supports Palmer Land Conservancy's Mirasol: Looking at the Sun, a documentary and outreach campaign designed to bridge the urban-rural divide through storytelling. The project includes a Front Range and West Slope tour to engage diverse stakeholders and raise awareness about land and water issues vital to Colorado's future. The film highlights how water scarcity and urban growth affect rural agricultural communities, building on Palmer's Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project, which works to

protect critical agricultural water rights in Pueblo. Partners—including the Lower and Upper Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy Districts, private philanthropists, and local businesses—are contributing funding, venues, and outreach support to expand the film’s reach across Colorado.



Water Storage & Supply

Federal Reserved Water Rights Options Study

Grantee: Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Basin: Southwest

Grant Amount: \$395,080

Description: Through this options study, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is investigating opportunities to fully utilize their federal reserved water rights within their Reservation boundary. Specifically, the Grantee will complete: 1) an inventory and database to track existing wells, springs, and ponds for wildlife and stock use; 2) a hydrologic and geotechnical analysis to identify potential reservoir sites in the Mancos River basin; 3) design of a diversion structure, pump station, and pipeline to deliver the San Juan River reserved water right to new irrigated acres; 4) options to put their Wilson Ditch right to beneficial use in the McElmo Creek basin; and 5) opportunities to deliver their Dolores Project allocation of municipal and industrial water to the Four Corners region.

Slate River Alternative Water Supply Feasibility Project

Grantee: Town of Crested Butte

Basin: Gunnison

Grant Amount: \$342,000.00

Description: The Slate River Alternative Water Supply Feasibility Study will investigate the feasibility of developing a redundant raw groundwater supply using an exploratory well program in the Slate River alluvium. The Town's current water supply comes from Coal Creek, and its reliance on this single source leaves it vulnerable to impacts from climate change, such as post-wildfire water quality issues and declining snowpack. The study will support exploratory work at two potential sites: the Town Pipeline and the Town

Ranch. By developing an alternative water supply, the project aims to mitigate risks to the Town's current sole-source water supply and enhance the community's water resiliency.

Lake Minnequa Restoration Feasibility Study

Grantee: City of Pueblo

Basin: Arkansas

Grant Amount: \$112,500.00

Description: This project funds a feasibility study to restore storage capacity and improve water quality, habitat, and recreation at Lake Minnequa. As a key stormwater detention facility for southern Pueblo, the lake captures over 20% of the city's runoff, protecting neighborhoods from flooding and filtering pollutants before they reach the Arkansas River. Over time, sediment buildup has reduced storage and degraded water quality, causing algal blooms and invasive species issues. The study will evaluate the technical and economic feasibility of dredging Lake Minnequa through data collection, hydrologic and hydraulic analysis, groundwater and water quality assessments, infrastructure evaluation, cost estimation, and development of potential solutions. Stakeholder engagement, regulatory review, and a final report will guide next steps for restoration.

Standley Lake Spillway Raise Design

Grantee: Farmers Reservoir and Irrigation Company

Basin: South Platte

Grant Amount: \$289,777.00

Description: The Grantee will evaluate, design, and permit a spillway and dam crest raise and required park infrastructure modifications at Standley Lake, located northwest of Denver. The modifications based on these efforts will increase the storage capacity in the reservoir by 4,200 acre-feet. This will bring the total capacity to 47,544 acre-feet, closer to the decreed storage amount of 49,060 acre-feet. Colorado Water Plan Grant funding will support design and permitting costs.

Watershed Health & Recreation

Animas River Plan Phase 2

Grantee: San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Council

Basin: Southwest

Grant Amount: \$305,827.00

Description: The Animas Watershed Partnership (fiscal agent San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Council) will develop Phase 2 of the Animas River Plan, covering the river reach from Bakers Bridge to the Colorado-New Mexico state line. A Steering Committee will guide plan development and public outreach, coordinating with a consultant to produce a scorecard report describing existing conditions, future

risks, and stressors. This report will inform the creation of a mission statement, goals, and strategies. The group will then identify multi-benefit water projects, develop an implementation plan, and establish monitoring strategies to track progress. Phase 2 will culminate in a final, accessible Animas River Plan to share with the public and drive project implementation.

Wildfire Ready Action Planning - Conejos and Costilla Counties Project

Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Basin: Rio Grande

Grant Amount: \$567,320.00

Description: The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation will administer the development of two Wildfire Ready Action Plans (WRAPs) for watersheds within Conejos and Costilla counties, completed in conjunction with Community Wildfire Protection Plans for those two counties. When complete, these comprehensive plans will enable local communities to implement post-wildfire risk mitigation activities.

Forest Hill Mill Reclamation

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Basin: Gunnison

Grant Amount: \$ 337,563.12

Description: This project focuses on reclamation of the Forest Hill Mill site, removing 7,000 cubic yards of mine waste and restoring 11 acres of wetland, riparian, and upland habitat. Located in Taylor Park in the Upper Gunnison River Basin, has a history of recreation, logging, and mining, which has led to degraded environmental conditions. The project aims to improve water quality, habitat resilience, and community awareness. The project involves collaboration between state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions, and community volunteers. Trout Unlimited is partnering with the U.S. Forest Service, Western Colorado University, Coldharbour Institute, and the Taylor Park Adaptive Management Group.



Barren swaths of forest ground where mill tailings have washed down the landscape from mining infrastructure near Taylor Park Reservoir in Gunnison County. Photo: Trout Unlimited

Eagle River Community Water Plan: Phase 2

Grantee: Eagle River Coalition

Basin: Colorado

Grant Amount: \$356,827.00

Description: The Eagle River Community Water Plan: Phase 2 will advance nine Phase 1 recommendations to implementation readiness through community engagement and on-the-ground restoration. An advisory committee will help keep the plan active and establish the Eagle River Fund, a local endowment supporting long-term river health projects. The project includes a recreation and use study to assess river users, stewardship practices, and access infrastructure. A major focus is instream and riparian restoration—advancing four projects, including Wearyman Creek and Camp Hale-Eagle River, to 90% design and identifying areas for improved streambank canopy cover. The team will also pilot a temperature reduction project to address high-temperature impairments along sections of the river.

Lower North Fork Sediment Stabilization

Grantee: Jefferson Conservation District

Basin: Metro

Grant Amount: \$368,196.00

Description: Jefferson Conservation District will address bank erosion, sediment transport, and riparian vegetation health at the confluence of the North Fork of the South Platte and South Platte Rivers, upstream of Strontia Springs Reservoir in Waterton Canyon. Colorado Water Plan Grant funding will support project administration, engineering design and construction support, and construction. Guided by Denver Water's 2021 Strontia Watershed Sediment Management Plan, the project will create in-channel areas to slow water flow and trap sediment, promote natural vegetation succession to stabilize floodplains and side channels, and implement grading and bank stabilization using locally sourced woody materials where possible. By reducing downstream sediment, the project protects Strontia Springs Reservoir from capacity loss and water quality degradation, while enhancing resilience to wildfires and high-intensity rainfall events.

Water Plan Grant FAQs

Who can apply?

- Governmental entities: municipalities, districts, enterprises, counties, and State of Colorado agencies. Federal agencies are encouraged to work with local entities.
- Covered entities as defined in Section 37-60-126, C.R.S., are eligible if the applicant has adopted an approved water conservation plan.
- Private entities: mutual ditch companies, non-profit corporations, and partnerships.
- The full list of applications for FY 2024-25 for the two cycles are available [here](#) and [here](#).

How can the money be used?

- Examples of eligible projects and activities:
 - Technical assistance regarding permitting, feasibility studies, and environmental compliance.
 - Studies or analysis of structural, programmatic, consumptive, and non-consumptive water projects or activities.
 - Design of structural projects or activities.
 - Activities that promote education, outreach, and innovation consistent with the mission and goals of the Colorado Water Plan.
 - Researching and demonstrating methods to improve agricultural drought resilience.

How can I apply?

- Applicants must submit application materials through the CWCB portal (July 1 and December 1 deadlines).
- Review these [Partner Actions](#). How does the project advance Colorado Water Plan goals?
- Visit cwcb.colorado.gov/funding/colorado-water-plan-grants for more information.
- Reach out to your [Regional Water Plan Grant Manager](#) for pre-application questions.

To learn more or if you have questions, please email waterplan.info@state.co.us, call 303-866-3441 or visit the Colorado Water Conservation Board website at, <https://cwcb.colorado.gov>.



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