



**COLORADO**

Colorado Water  
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

## Water Plan

### Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Denver Public Schools
Name of Water Project	Resilient School Landscape With Smart Irrigation
Grant Request Amount	<b>\$2,279,890.00</b>
Primary Category	\$2,279,890.00
<i>Conservation &amp; Land Use Planning</i>	
Total Applicant Match	<b>\$2,500,000.00</b>
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$2,500,000.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	<b>\$0.00</b>
Total Project Cost	<b>\$4,779,890.00</b>

### Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Denver Public Schools  
Mailing Address: 2800 W 7th Avenue Denver CO 80204

Organization Contact: Lindsay Weber  
Position/Title: Senior Analyst Email: lindsay\_weber@dpsk12.net  
Phone: 720-460-6077

Organization Contact - Alternate: Miles Hoffman  
Position/Title: Email: miles\_hoffman@dpsk12.net  
Phone:

Grant Management Contact: Lindsay Weber  
Position/Title: Senior Analyst Email: lindsay\_weber@dpsk12.net  
Phone: 720-460-6077

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Miles Hoffman  
Position/Title: Email: miles\_hoffman@dpsk12.net  
Phone:

### Description of Grantee/Applicant

No description provided

### Type of Eligible Entity

- ☒ Public (Government)
- ☐ Public (District)
- ☐ Public (Municipality)
- ☐ Ditch Company
- ☐ Private Incorporated

- ☐ Private Individual, Partnership, or Sole Proprietor
- ☐ Non-governmental Organization
- ☐ Covered Entity
- ☐ Other

### Category of Water Project

- ☐ Agricultural Projects  
*Developing communications materials that specifically work with and educate the agricultural community on headwater restoration, identifying the state of the science of this type of work to assist agricultural users among others.*
- ☒ Conservation & Land Use Planning  
*Activities and projects that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, and drought planning.*
- ☐ Engagement & Innovation Activities  
*Activities and projects that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts. Please fill out the Supplemental Application on the website.*
- ☐ Watershed Restoration & Recreation  
*Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation.*
- ☐ Water Storage & Supply  
*Projects that facilitate the development of additional storage, artificial aquifer recharge, and dredging existing reservoirs to restore the reservoirs' full decreed capacity and Multi-beneficial projects and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap.*

### Location of Water Project

Latitude 39.739200  
 Longitude 104.990300  
 Lat Long Flag Center of County: Coordinates based on center point of county boundary  
 Water Source Denver Water  
 Basins Metro  
 Counties Denver  
 Districts

### Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Municipal  
 Type of Water Project Construction / Implementation  
 Scheduled Start Date - Design 3/18/2026  
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction  
 Description  
 Denver Public Schools (DPS) is Colorado's largest public school district, serving over 90,000 students with over 15,000 employees. DPS has about 2,250 acres of landscape that play a vital role for the community, is Denver Water's second largest retail customer, and is a principal employer in the Denver metro area (DW CAFR 2024, III-36, III-51). At DPS, 62.8% of students are eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch, and 31.3% of students are English language learners. DPS' vision is "every learner thrives".

DPS has a nationally recognized Climate Action Plan that was developed in response to a student-driven climate action policy that was unanimously adopted by the Board of Education in 2022. The Climate Action Plan includes a water conservation goal to reduce water consumption by 15% from 2021 baseline by 2028. The DPS Sustainability Team, DPS Grounds Team, and Denver Water Efficiency and Youth Education teams have been

collaborating on this goal for over a year. 80% of DPS's annual water use is used outdoors. Additionally, DPS is seen as a model of sustainability and climate action to other school districts in Colorado and beyond.

To meet this water conservation goal, Denver voters approved \$2.5 million in the 2024 Bond for smart irrigation controllers to be installed district-wide. 105 sites are planned to get smart irrigation controllers with master valves and flow sensing. The Bond funding was estimated to support smart irrigation controller installation at all sites, commissioning, software costs, and repairing of issues identified by the smart irrigation [controllers.](#) An RFP for the equipment and installation was put out in summer 2025.

However, there was only one bid, and that bid was over the allotted Bond amount. No bid was awarded, and DPS plans to re-issue the RFP in early 2026 with more data on water line size. Costs have increased since the project was originally scoped due to economic volatility and increases in costs of equipment and labor over the last year. Additionally, DPS has explored creative purchasing approaches to reduce the cost of hardware via direct distributor purchasing, however, costs remain beyond our current Bond budget to ensure the most viable project implementation to achieve the water savings initially calculated.

DPS intends to use this grant funding to fully realize the water saving opportunity of this Bond project by providing capacity and funding to respond to and implement the water-saving actions identified by the smart irrigation controller diagnostics, as well as verify, properly program, and commission the equipment. Such actions include dialing-in water schedules, fixing broken irrigation system equipment, fixing irrigation leaks, and other identified tasks. Simply installing the smart irrigation controllers will not achieve the full water savings potential of this project. Sites will be prioritized for repairs based on water savings potential, with potable water first and nonpotable second, and damage/impact reduction to school grounds. DPS Grounds data and experience estimates that a typical DPS site costs \$15-20K on average (includes labor and replacement equipment) to address and fix the irrigation system after a controller has been installed.

We expect this smart irrigation controller project to fully achieve the 15% savings goal in the Climate Action Plan based on an analysis of the water use changes in the sites in the 2019 DPS WeatherTrak pilot. (In 2019, DPS piloted WeatherTrak smart irrigation controllers as part of an Energy Performance Contract at 27 schools, and then incorporated learnings into its irrigation standards.) This project will provide co-benefits of also helping maintain beautiful, sustainable, and resilient public spaces, reducing water use costs (especially higher tier irrigation costs), and reducing staff callout time for the critically understaffed DPS Grounds Department. The grant will also allow money to go back in the classroom and allow staff to focus on other priority landscape tasks that will save water.

This grant request is estimated to save about 52 million gallons, or 160 acre-feet, of water annually. DPS intends to incorporate student outreach and education around water stewardship, and partner with Denver Water's Youth Education team to do so. This would inspire the next generation of 90K+ water users in Colorado to be responsible stewards of our most precious natural resource. Although not in scope of this grant, DPS has also recently completed new irrigation standards that require the installation and commissioning of WeatherTrak controllers for all irrigation projects, and is finalizing a new landscaping manual for site maintenance and development in partnership with Superbloom that will be posted to our website shortly.

More efficient water use improves the reliability of water supplies, enhances community resilience to drought, and helps sustain healthy river ecosystems in our arid environment.

### Measurable Results

New Storage Created (acre-feet)

New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive

	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
	Length of Pipe, Canal Built or Improved (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
160	Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
	Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement (acre-feet)
1,500,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
105,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	
	No additional measurable results provided

### Water Project Justification

This project is an example of an on-the-ground program to improve water efficiency and conservation in Colorado's largest metro area. By installing smart irrigation control systems across Denver Public Schools sites and making fixes and repairs to irrigation systems, the following aspects of the Colorado Water Plan are supported for Vibrant Communities: Meeting Future Water Needs, Wise Water Use, Healthy Lands, and Engaged Partners (CWP p186).

Vibrant Communities (p183): This project will create a more sustainable urban landscape in Colorado's most populated urban center, will create water-conscious and attractive urban landscapes for both DPS students and the broader community, will prioritize efficient water use, will manage landscapes with optimized water efficiency and improved resiliency, and will engage external partners. It also directly affects the Partner Actions of optimizing investments in infrastructure (old irrigation systems and controllers) and increases efficiency and conservation (smart irrigation controllers and equipment repairs), and the implementing water-saving measures by investing in water conservation technologies (p190).

Thriving Watersheds (p187): This project provides social, ecological, and economic benefits. It will improve landscape management at Colorado's largest school district, it will reduce water use and peak summer demand, and it will reduce the cost of DPS' water utility bills and put more money back into the classroom.

Resilient Planning (p187): This project will allow for better management of key community landscapes during water-related challenges like drought and climate change.

### Related Studies

This water project is part of the implementation of DPS' nationally recognized Climate Action Plan ([https://issuu.com/dpscommunications/docs/dps\\_climate\\_action\\_plan\\_pages](https://issuu.com/dpscommunications/docs/dps_climate_action_plan_pages)). Within the Climate Action Plan, this project affects reaching the goals for both "Grounds" and "Water Conservation" (<https://sustainability.dpsk12.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/CAP-Goals-One-Pager-UPDATED-02.01.24.pdf>).

DPS has recently completed its "Sustainable Landscape Standard & Implementation Plan", and this water project will assist with the implementation of that plan. This project will complement the work to save water we are doing through our landscape transformation and updating landscape standards to more water-wise landscaping and practices. It also will protect our investment in the new plant's establishment period.

The DPS Sustainability Team's latest Annual Report can be found:

[https://issuu.com/dpscommunications/docs/2024-2025\\_dps\\_climate\\_action\\_accountability\\_report](https://issuu.com/dpscommunications/docs/2024-2025_dps_climate_action_accountability_report)

Additionally, in 2009 and 2010, DPS, Denver Water, and the Brendle Group analyzed water use at 124 DPS schools, and found significant water savings potential for outdoor water use.

In 2019, DPS piloted smart irrigation controllers as part of an Energy Performance Contract at 27 schools, and then incorporated learnings into its irrigation standards.

This project will also assist with the implementation and goals of the following local and regional plans: Denver Water's Water Efficiency Plan, Denver's One Water Program, Denver's 80x50 Climate Action Plan, DRCOG's Metro Vision plan, and the Colorado Water Plan.

#### **Taxpayer Bill of Rights**

n/a