COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	High Desert Conservation District	
Name of Water Project	Wilson Ditch Piping Project	
Grant Request Amount		**$758,419.00**
Primary Category		$758,419.00
Agricultural Projects		
Total Applicant Match		**$33,800.00**
Applicant Cash Match		$5,000.00
Applicant In-Kind Match		$28,800.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		**$2,547,219.00**
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation		$1,669,719.00
Colorado Department of Local Affairs		$877,500.00
Total Project Cost		**$3,339,438.00**

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: High Desert Conservation District
Mailing Address: 628 West 5th Street Cortez CO 81321

Organization Contact: Neva Connolly
Position/Title:
Phone: 970-529-8365
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Organization Contact - Alternate: Cindy Wallace
Position/Title: High Desert Conservation District Board President
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Grant Management Contact: Neva Connolly
Position/Title:
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Email: hdcd.manager@highdesertconservation.org

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Erica Holm
Position/Title: Office Manager
Phone:
Email: admin@highdesertconservation.org

Description of Grantee/Applicant

The High Desert Conservation District (formerly the Dolores Conservation District) is one of 76 Districts throughout Colorado. The Colorado State Legislature encouraged formation of local Districts in 1941 with the passage of the Colorado Soil Conservation Act (Title 35, Article 70 of the Colorado Revised Statutes). The Dolores Soil Conservation District was organized on April 11, 1942 per this Act. The District boundaries include all but a small portion of Montezuma County.

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	37.325360
Longitude	108.700720
Lat Long Flag	Ditch diversion structure location: Coordinates based on ditch's diversion structure
Water Source	Point of Diversion is at Hartman Draw
Basins	Southwest
Counties	Montezuma
Districts	32-McElmo Creek Basin

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Agricultural
Type of Water Project	Design & Construction
Scheduled Start Date - Design	3/26/2026
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	10/12/2026

Description

With reference to the accompanying Interactive Map, the Project (in red) will place 8,650 linear feet of the Lower Wilson Ditch (in blue) in 28" OD, 26.1" ID DR 32.5 HDPE pipe, stretching from a point just east of the present "Point Sluice" to a point on the Ditch's upper branch west of the present "High-Low" diversion structure. The

aging “Point Sluice” structure will be bypassed and a new sluice structure will be constructed at the eastern entrance to the pipeline. The present “High-Low” diversion structure will be demolished and replaced with a new diversion apparatus. All existing culverts and pipe segments along the Project length will be removed, and the new pipeline will connect to an existing sleeved culvert and pipe (24” HDPE and 30” SDR) under Road G (depicted in yellow) just west of the present Point Sluice. The new pipeline will be bedded in aggregate to 7/10 of its diameter and backfilled to a cover depth of 12 inches.

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)
8,650.00	Length of Pipe, Canal Built or Improved (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
268	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)
	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
48	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

48 Farm families directly impacted.

Greater Community Impacts: All of McElmo Canyon (24 Miles) and McElmo Creek-San Juan River riparian corridor

Other:

Public Safety Improved

Liabilities Obviated

Tribal Water Delivery Benefited

Farming Operation Disruptions Avoided

Disadvantaged Community Benefited

Critical Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species Improved

Federal and State Grant Money Leveraged

Water Project Justification

The Project seeks to pipe 1.8 miles of the Lower Wilson Ditch, an open, earthen irrigation ditch in Montezuma County’s McElmo Canyon, and to upgrade or replace various associated delivery structures.

Once completed, the Project will help conserve Colorado water resources by improving the efficiency of the Lower Wilson Ditch, reduce carriage loss along its length, limit disruption of water delivery during irrigation season, improve public safety, reduce the proliferation of invasive and non-native species along its length, obviate potential liabilities associated with ditch overtopping and failure, and improve the McElmo Canyon riparian corridor and its threatened and endangered species by returning more water to McElmo Creek, the San Juan River, and the Colorado River. The Project will sustain and enhance agricultural production in McElmo Canyon, serve both the current and future needs of LWDA's 48 member-farmers, a cohort that includes the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and benefit the greater McElmo Canyon ecosystem.

With specific reference to the 2023 Colorado Water Plan, the Project will upgrade and improve conveyance

infrastructure, helping to manage water supplies in the face of changing hydrology, help keep agricultural lands in production by aiding producers in more efficiently diverting water for beneficial uses, and improve the McElmo Canyon riparian corridor by returning more water to McElmo Creek, the San Juan River, and the Colorado River.

With specific reference to CWCB's 2024 Agricultural Program Criteria, the Project will help maintain Colorado's agricultural productivity, rural economies, and food security while reducing agricultural water shortages and other growing water demands by improving agricultural efficiencies and modernizing water infrastructure.

With specific reference to the Southwest Basin Roundtable's strategic goals, as articulated in its Basin Implementation Plan, the Project will minimize the removal of irrigated acreage from production, support implementation of efficiency measures to maximize beneficial use and production, support implementation of projects that work toward meeting agricultural water supply shortages, and address delivery concerns created by aging infrastructure, all with a view toward maintaining the quality of life in our rural, agricultural community.

HDCD/LWDA is pursuing both design and construction in a single grant to mirror the Project funding previously and conditionally approved by BOR/WaterSMART/WEEG (up to $1.68M) and DOLA/LOMA ($877.5K), and do so after receiving preliminary engineering input from NRCS and Plummer Associates Engineering, all of which, together with its own extensive preliminary engineering and site visits, helped inform WCA Construction, LLC in drafting its concurrently-submitted Proposal which includes both design and construction services.

Note that BOR and DOLA both have extended their agreement acceptance deadlines through December of 2026 to allow HDCD/LWDA to pursue this CWCB grant funding opportunity.

Related Studies

See Water Savings calculation (Plummer Associates Engineering) at pages 7-8 of LWDA's accompanying support letter dated November 20, 2025. See also:

Web Soil Survey - Home (https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/)
CORTEZ, COLORADO - Climate Summary (https://wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/cliMAIN.pl?cocort)
Anthropogenic Climate Change Negatively Impacts Vegetation and Forage Conditions in the Greater Four Corners Region - Williams - 2023 - Earth's Future - Wiley Online Library (https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2022EF002943)
CRBSCP - McElmo Creek Unit - Title II (https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=349)
Montezuma County, CO | Data USA (https://datausa.io/profile/geo/montezuma-county-co#:~:text=Median%20household%20income%20in%20Montezun .)
(PDF) A Tribute to Tributaries: Endangered Fish Distributions within Critical Habitat of the San Juan River, USA (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334675645_A_Tribute_to_Tributaries_Endangered_Fish_Distributions_wi)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Biological Opinion for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply (https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-04/documents/2018-003-gp_oscar_renda_contracting-ngws_final_bio_)
DRAFT Environmental Assessment for the (https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/202312_Draft_EA_Colorado_River_Recovery_Programs_forPubl)

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

The High Desert Conservation District has been "de-TABORed."