

**COLORADO**Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Ducks Unlimited
Name of Water Project	Yampa River State Wildlife Area Wetland Restoration and Enhancement
Grant Request Amount	\$249,871.08
Primary Category	\$249,871.08
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$0.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$250,128.92
<i>US Fish and Wildlife Service</i>	\$250,128.92
Total Project Cost	\$500,000.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Ducks Unlimited	
Mailing Address: 2114 Midpoint Dr. Suite 1 Fort Collins CO 80525	
Organization Contact: Katharine Cody	
Position/Title: Biologist	Email: kcody@ducks.org
Phone: (970) 218-4167	
Organization Contact - Alternate: Jojo La	
Position/Title: Manager of Conservation Programs, Colorado	Email: jla@ducks.org
Phone: 970-672-9971	
Grant Management Contact: Katharine Cody	
Position/Title: Biologist	Email: kcody@ducks.org
Phone: (970) 218-4167	
Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Jojo La	
Position/Title: Manager of Conservation Programs, Colorado	Email: jla@ducks.org
Phone: 970-672-9971	

Description of Grantee/Applicant

Wetland conservation and restoration agency

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 40.520140
 Longitude -107.402420
 Lat Long Flag Other: Coordinates based on other boundaries or locations
 Water Source Yampa River
 Basins Yampa/White/Green
 Counties Routt
 Districts

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Environmental
 Type of Water Project Construction / Implementation
 Scheduled Start Date - Design 11/1/2025
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction 6/1/2027

Description

Despite the Yampa River's ecological importance, the region has very few publicly accessible wetlands. The Yampa River State Wildlife Area Wetland Restoration and Enhancement project was developed as a result of Ducks Unlimited's long standing partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to provide quality wetland habitat throughout the state. Through a collaborative, iterative planning process, DU has developed preliminary plans for shallow-water and wet meadow habitat restoration activities on Yampa River SWA, and we are requesting \$299,988.76 in Water Plan Grant funds for implementation. These activities will improve CPW staff's

ability to use available water to provide a mosaic of quality habitat for migrating waterfowl and wetland-dependent species, while also increasing opportunities for public experiences. Specifically, DU will create and enhance wetland cells on the DRGW Slough and install water control structures and measuring devices on the Brock Ditch Meadow wetland tract. These actions directly help improve irrigation infrastructure for sustainable water management, while also improving ecological resistance and increasing recreation and educational opportunities in the Yampa River Basin.

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)
 Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
 116 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
 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
 Other
 No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

The Yampa River State Wildlife Area Wetland Restoration and Enhancement Project directly support the Colorado Water Plan (2023) focus areas of Thriving Watersheds, as well as Partner Actions that encourage multi-benefit projects improving watershed health, habitat, and recreation (Colorado Water Plan, Ch. 9.4 & Partner Actions PDF). Specifically, this project:

- Enhances watershed resilience by restoring and creating shallow-water wetlands and wet meadow habitats, improving ecological function and water management infrastructure.
- Supports recreational and educational opportunities through public access for recreation in alignment with the Water Plan's emphasis on community engagement and outdoor access (Ch. 9.5 Education, Outreach & Innovation)
- Implements Partner Actions to "advance multi-benefit projects that restore ecosystems and improve water management efficiency" and "support projects that integrate habitat restoration with recreation and education" (Water Plan Partner Actions document).

The Project directly achieves the set goals in the Yampa-White-Green Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) by restoring, maintaining, and modernizing water storage and distribution infrastructure and quantify and protect environmental and recreational water uses (YWG BIP Vol. 1, pp. 8–12). This project advances these goals by:

- Installing water control and flow measurement devices on Brock Ditch Meadow to modernize infrastructure and improve water conveyance efficiency. This is a direct goal to quantify and protect non-consumptive water uses.
- Creating and enhancing wetland cells on DRGW Slough to protect and expand environmental and recreational water uses, addressing BIP objectives for habitat and hunting opportunities. This also helps to protect and maintains the existing natural range of water quality that is necessary for current and anticipated water uses through natural wetlands filtration. These wetlands will act as natural storage reservoirs, allowing spring floods to

recharge groundwater tables, providing slow-release flows later in the season. This process supports low-flow conditions, sustains non-consumptive benefits, and strengthens watershed resilience.

- Supporting integrated water management by enabling Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff to optimize flooding and drawdown schedules for ecological and recreational benefits.

The Project also aligns with the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP) (2020–2025) by creating opportunities for public engagement and education about wetland ecology, water management, and conservation (SWEAP Strategic Framework, pp. 10–17). Enhanced wetlands at Yampa River SWA will serve as a living classroom for:

- K-12 and community programs focused on water stewardship and habitat conservation.
- Outreach that promotes understanding of Colorado’s water challenges and solutions, fulfilling SWEAP’s goal to empower Coloradans to make informed water decisions.

This project reflects Identified Projects and Processes (IPPs) listed in the Yampa-White-Green Basin and statewide CWCB Project Database, which prioritize wetland restoration, habitat enhancement, and infrastructure modernization as strategies to meet future water needs and improve watershed health (CWCB Project Database).

Related Studies

This project directly relates to four previously completed studies/planning efforts. Two are listed below.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Wetland Program Planning

The Yampa River State Wildlife Area Wetland (SWA) Restoration and Enhancement project represents a long-standing collaboration among Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and Ducks Unlimited, Inc (DU), with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Society (NRCS) and private landowners. This project is the most recent of numerous effort on CPW-owned public lands, and allows DU to continue building relationships in the Yampa River Basin. In 2019, a comprehensive stakeholder process was conducted to develop a plan for rehabilitation and wetland enhancement on the Yampa River SWA and associated tracts in Routt County. Local partners identified wetland protection work as a priority in their respective plans (see below), and DU is now working on implementing projects which will help meet the goals of these initiatives. The Yampa River SWA project primarily focuses on addressing damaged or misplaced structures from initial wetland development, and advancing the visions outlined during the aforementioned stakeholder process, in turn helping move the Basin closer to its long-term conservation goals.

Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP)

The IWMP prioritizes improving habitat health and modernizing irrigation infrastructure throughout the Yampa Basin. The Yampa River State Wildlife Area Wetland Restoration and Enhancement Project directly complements these objectives by balancing water infrastructure needs with the creation of high-quality habitat. The IWMP specifically calls for projects that enhance hydrology, floodplain connectivity, and water quality protection, goals this project fully supports. By installing water control structures and restoring wetland cells, we enable sustainable water management while improving ecological resilience. Additionally, the IWMP recognizes the critical role of riparian areas and floodplains as natural storage reservoirs. Rehabilitation of degraded riparian zones and reconnection of floodplains will allow spring floods to recharge groundwater tables, providing slow-release flows later in the season to sustain low flows and non-consumptive benefits. Importantly, the IWMP highlights that although riparian areas represent only 1% of U.S. land, they support 80% of all wildlife species at some point in their life cycle. This project advances that vision by restoring vegetation and wetlands essential for wildlife habitat, food, and shelter.

Other related studies include the Upper Yampa River Watershed Plan (2016) and the Colorado Wetland Program Plan (2020-2024). Please see attached Appendix One for details.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

N/A
