



Colorado Water Conservation Board

## Technical Assistance for Federal Cost-Sharing Program (TAFC)

### Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Ducks Unlimited
Name of Water Project	Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative
Grant Request Amount	\$100,000.00
Total Cost to Apply for Federal Funding	
Total Project Cost	\$125,000.00

### Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Ducks Unlimited  
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Organization Contact - Alternate: Greg Kernohan  
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Grant Management Contact: Jennifer Shanahan  
Position/Title: Riparian Ecologist Email: jshanahan@ducks.org  
Phone: (970) 218-8858

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Greg Kernohan  
Position/Title: Email: gkernohan@ducks.org  
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### Description of Grantee/Applicant

Wetland conservation and restoration agency

### Proposed Project Type

- ☐ Storage & Supply
- ☐ Conservation & Land Use
- ☐ Engagement & Innovation
- ☐ Agricultural
- ☒ Watershed Health & Recreation
- ☐ Other

### Location of Water Project

Latitude	39.068900
Longitude	108.564300
Lat Long Flag	Stream location: Coordinates based on general location on stream
Water Source	Colorado River
Basins	Colorado
Counties	Mesa
Districts	72-Lower Colorado River

## Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Design / Engineering
Description	

The Colorado and Gunnison rivers support critical regional industries including agriculture, outdoor recreation, and tourism as well as essential public infrastructure. Outdoor recreation contributes over \$140 million annually to Mesa County's economy and supports more than 1,300 local jobs while agriculture generates another \$144 million in annual market value. The Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative (GVRCI) is working in Mesa County to ensure these rivers and their vast floodplains are functioning, resilient, safe, and attractive community corridors for generations to come.

After laying a technical and collaborative foundation over the past five years, including the development of a Fluvial Hazard Zone map, a River Corridor Restoration Action Plan, and a multi-stakeholder Advisory Council, the GVRCI is embarking on new phase of restoration planning. The planning thus far has been high level and conceptual. Bringing large-scale multi-phase projects, such as those envisioned by the GVRCI, to fruition requires a long planning horizon and significant investment in modeling, planning and integrating technical elements. Grant funds would enable GVRCI to fulfill two goals: develop a river corridor restoration program and continue the groundwork of project development. This includes building relationships with landowners and regulators, refining site restoration alternatives, exploring engineering and feasibility considerations, and securing funds for project implementation.

Working in river corridors is intrinsically technical and complex. This is especially true for large river systems such as the Colorado River. So this next phase will integrate landowner priorities, floodplain management and regulations, hazard mitigation and risk reduction goals, and site-specific conservation objectives into a reach scale restoration plan.

Neither DU, nor the GVRCI core team members currently have dedicated capacity or funding to per-form the planning, design, and coordination required to prepare a competitive federal grant proposal. TAFC funding will make it possible to dedicate staff time, technical analysis, and partner coordination towards its long greater goal of developing a comprehensive portfolio of shovel-ready projects across the Grand Valley.

Over the next three years, after preliminary technical and partner discussions, the team will choose a priority reach to focus its design efforts on. Funding this TAFC will enable the team to use a 2D hydraulic model currently under development for the 15-mile reach of the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program. A water engineering firm will be contracted to refine this 2D hydraulic model for the GVRCI priority restoration reach. After model refinement, the firm would be tasked with exploring topographic changes, elements of alternative restoration scenarios and associated hydraulic benefits or risks. It is expected that the plan for the focal restoration reach will be to identify project implementation phases, the first of which will be the subject of the federal grants associated with this TAFC.

With renewed capacity from this TAFC funding, the GVRCI can leverage its team members with diverse skills and experience to navigate conversations between typically siloed professional experts or stakeholders with divergent or conflicting interests. The collective outcome of these efforts is to have multi-party buy-in and design details sufficient to understand the scope and costs of a comprehensive multi-phase restoration project. Getting to this milestone will also require field visits, working within regulatory frameworks, and impacts to flood dynamics.

Using a comprehensive and science-backed set of restoration tools, this initiative emphasizes river-floodplain reconnection utilizing natural infrastructure in combination with engineered solutions to deliver sustainable landscapes and community benefits. The GVRCI embraces many concepts identified within the Colorado Water Plan Action Areas of Vibrant Communities, Thriving Watersheds, and Resilient Planning. Funding this TAFC will significantly increase the GVRCI capacity to meet the goals of the first theme in the Colorado River Basin Implementation Plan (BIP); to protect and restore healthy streams, rivers, and lakes, and riparian areas. This grant will foster informed community engagement throughout the process of creating a Colorado River Corridor Plan in the Grand Valley. This BIP Tier 1 project is the only project identified for Environment and Recreation in the BIP.

In addition, this project is particularly responsive to the Gunnison BIP's goals by bringing together diverse stakeholders to enhance stewardship of the Grand Valley River Corridor by encouraging relationships among agricultural and environmental recreational water uses, and continuing public education, outreach, and stewardship.

Through this investment, the Colorado Water Conservation Board will help position the GVRCI to secure substantial federal and private funding for ambitious multi-faceted improvements on the Colorado River. Together, these efforts advance the Colorado Water Plan's vision of resilient watersheds, thriving economies, and sustainable natural systems that serve both people and wildlife. TAFC funding will make this joint approach possible by supporting the technical resources needed to move from conceptual opportunities to actionable, federally fundable projects.

### 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)  
 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

As comprehensive effort the GVRCI has opportunity to engage 82,500 Coloradoans. In subsequent phases this funding will lead to outcome categories of "Area of restored habitat" and "Length of stream" but at this it is too early in the planning process to quantify these metrics.

**How does the proposed project advance Colorado Water Plan (or Basin Improvement Plan) goals, objectives, or actions?**

The GVRCI is working to develop projects that enhance watershed health and recreation with equal consideration to reducing risks and mitigating river-related hazards. It is a regional multi-faceted initiative that embraces concepts in the Colorado Water Plan (CWP) Action areas of Vibrant Communities, Thriving Watersheds, and Resilient Planning. GVRCI embraces the Strategy listed in the Colorado River Basin Implementation Plan (BIP), "to use integrated planning to reduce risks and enhance benefits across sectors." This project will help fulfill the BIP's theme "to protect and restore healthy streams, rivers, lakes, and riparian areas" and associated riparian restoration goals. This grant would support restoration planning an important technical building block for master planning process. The Master Plan is a BIP Tier 1 project (#CO-2020-0088) being developed as a parallel and interrelated effort and is the sole Environment and Recreation project in the BIP .

**Anticipated federal grant programs that applicant is likely to apply for, if known at this time.**

Given the dynamic nature of federal funds at this time, this team will track the evolution of various grants, including; FEMA pre-disaster grants, BOR (WaterSMART), NFWF (RESTORE), EPA (319), Federal Highway Administration, and USDA (RCPP).

**Does the project advance interstate, regional or watershed-scale water and natural resource management efforts and solutions? Please describe.**

The GVRCI is inherently a regional effort as it spans the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers across all of Mesa County. One of its primary objectives is to foster coordinated collaboration. In 2023 and 2024, the GVRCI convened a series of workshops with participants from all local jurisdictions to create a Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Framework. Next, it is launching a regional a 15-month, interjurisdictional master planning process and multi-party restoration planning (funded by this TAFC).

**The Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) may limit the amount of grant money an entity can receive. Please describe any relevant TABOR issues that may affect your application.**

There are no relevant TABOR issues pertinent to this project.

**Describe any local community and stakeholder support. Note: Letter of support can be uploaded at the end of the application.**

The GVRCI has established an Advisory Committee consisting of 17 organizations, including four local municipalities, Mesa County, the state, five federal organizations, water and conservation districts, and several non-profits. As the GVRCI moves into its next phase, the Master Plan process will make an extensive, deliberate effort to solicit input from all interested community members and technical coordination will include key regional staff representing regional natural resource priorities.

**Have relevant Federal, state and local government agencies provided input on the project? Please describe which agencies and any relevant details.**

The GVRCI Advisory Committee serves as a cornerstone of all efforts and includes the Bureaus of Land Management and Reclamation, Cities of Fruita and Grand Junction, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Mesa Conservation District, Mesa County, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, Town of Palisade, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and its Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. For this grant, regional floodplain and resources experts will be directly involved.

### Disadvantaged Community Information

Population 10,000 or less

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MHI less than 80%

☒

MHV less than 100%

☒

County 24-month unemployment average

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