



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Chris Sturm, Watershed and Flood Protection Section

DATE: January 16, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Item 17. January 26-27, 2026, Board Meeting
Colorado Watershed Restoration Program Grant Guidelines

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program Grant Guidelines.

Introduction

The Colorado Watershed Restoration Program (CWRP) is designed to provide capacity building, planning, engineering, and project implementation funding for stream restoration and watershed protection efforts. It also provides technical assistance for design review, engineering analysis, pre wildfire preparedness, post wildfire hazard analysis, fluvial hazard zone mapping development, construction oversight, adaptive management, and monitoring. The Board first approved the CWRP guidelines in September 2008. The Board approved revisions to the program in May 2012 and July 2015 before merging it with the Watershed Health and Recreation category of the Colorado Water Plan grant program in May of 2022. The program dispersed over \$15.5 million from 2009-2022, and it leveraged over \$46 million in match funding.

The Board also approved a Special Release of the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program in October 2013 to address planning and project needs associated with the September 2013 Front Range floods. Special Releases were also approved in March 2021 and January 2022 to disperse funds appropriated for fire recovery and to launch the Wildfire Ready Watersheds program. Total funding administered through the Special Releases of CWRP exceed \$100 million.

Discussion

In November of 2024 and 2025 the Board approved funding for the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program with the intent to fund Wildfire Ready Action Plans (WRAPs) and projects borne out of the CWCB's Wildfire Ready Watersheds Program (WRW). WRW was established to understand the susceptibility of Colorado's watersheds to post-wildfire impacts and to plan and prepare for them before fires occur. Nearly two dozen stakeholder groups have assembled to prepare WRAPs, and more groups are coming together to fill gap planning areas. Each WRAP identifies projects to achieve the WRW mission. Staff has prepared guidelines to re-establish the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program for the purpose of funding WRAPs and associated projects.

The proposed grant guidelines are attached as a redlined version of the 2022 Special Release that the Board approved in 2022. A clean copy of the proposed grant guidelines are also attached.





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COLORADO WATERSHED RESTORATION PROGRAM

Grant Guidelines

~~Special Release Winter 2022-2023~~ January 2026

Grant Guidelines

Introduction

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) has approved a ~~special~~ release of the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program. The Program will focus on the development of Wildfire Ready Watersheds (wildfirereadywatersheds.com) ~~action~~ Action plans ~~Plans~~ and implementation of projects designed to mitigate post wildfire impacts. Post-wildfire impacts such as flooding and debris flows are a threat to life, safety, and property, and have a profound impact on water supply, transportation, and other infrastructure. The Colorado Water Conservation Board approaches planning and hazard mitigation implementation in this realm with urgency. Catastrophic wildfires and subsequent flooding and debris flows occur with little or no warning during all seasons.

~~House Bill 22-1379 was signed into law in May 2022. Utilizing funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF), it established an appropriation of \$10,000,000 for the CWCB Colorado Watershed Restoration Program. The bill states that the funds shall be used “for watershed restoration and flood mitigation grants to restore, mitigate, and protect stream channels and riparian areas susceptible to flood hazards and sediment erosion and deposition after wildfire, including expenditures for the design and implementation of projects intended to mitigate increased flows, sediment, and debris, with federal and local matching requirements.” Funds appropriated in HB 22-1379 must be contracted by December 30, 2024 and spent before December 30, 2026.~~

Eligible Grant Types

Applications will be accepted for capacity building, planning, engineering, and implementation to address the goals of the CWCB’s Wildfire Ready Watersheds program. Applications will also be accepted for emergency funding to address post wildfire hazards. susceptibility of values at risk to post wildfire hazards. Examples include:

- **Capacity Building** to establish a stakeholder group represented by all interested parties in the watershed. Funds can be used by stakeholder groups to support outreach, organization, communication, and management of planning activities. Capacity building grants must be submitted in conjunction with a planning grant.

- ~~Planning to develop a Wildfire Ready Action Plan (WRAP). the Wildfire Ready Watersheds (WRW) local framework or similar flood after fire mitigation plans.~~
- **Engineering** projects such as hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, fluvial hazard zone mapping, sediment yield and transport evaluations, risk assessment, project identification and prioritization, project design, permitting, and construction oversight.
- **Implementation** projects designed to protect values at risk from post wildfire hazards such as debris flows, increased runoff, hillslope erosion, flooding, and fluvial hazards (erosion, deposition, and channel migration). Project examples include, but are not limited to, stream and floodplain restoration, floodplain connectivity enhancement, gully stabilization, sediment catchment, revegetation, low water road crossings, culvert replacement, culvert protection and debris catchments, diversion protection, early warning system development, and associated project monitoring.
- Post-Wildfire Emergency Funding is available for capacity building, planning, engineering and implementation as outlined in the above categories.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible parties include established non-profit organizations, watershed coalitions, local governments, State of Colorado agencies, conservation and water conservancy districts, and Colorado's tribal governments. Federal agencies and private landowners are not eligible to receive grant funds; however, projects may be conducted on private, state, or federal lands with appropriate permissions and under the sponsorship of an eligible entity. Local governments that do not participate in the National Flood Insurance Program will not be eligible for funding.

Match Funding Requirements

A minimum of 25% match is required for all Capacity Building, Planning, and Engineering Grants. A minimum of 50% match is required for all Implementation Grants. Project costs may consist of a combination of in-kind and cash match, but no more than half of the match may be in the form of in-kind services. Applicants should identify match as pending or secure and provide evidence of matching funds (such as an award letter). Matching funds must be secured within one year of the application date. Match funding is not required for the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribes.

The Wildfire Ready Watersheds program can allow complementary projects to provide match for each other. This scenario should be discussed with the CWCB contact before an application is submitted.

Non-CWCB matching funds include state agencies such as Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and other state and federal agencies. CWCB loans are also considered matching funds. All other funding sources within the control of the CWCB Board and its Director are not eligible for match, including the Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) and the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund.

- **Cash Match**

Actual expenditures paid directly with cash funds from the grantee to a vendor. Examples are supplies, services, and necessary equipment purchase or rental.

- **In-Kind Match**

Materials, services, and labor provided by grantee to perform all or part of the approved project scope of work, including necessary project administration. This can include standard direct and indirect personnel fringe benefits. Volunteer services provided at no cost to the applicant by firms or individuals consistent with the approved scope of work will be valued for in-kind match at local prevailing wage rates. Project specific land acquisition or access agreement costs may also be claimed as in-kind contributions and credited against the minimum requirement. Costs that CAN NOT be considered include: general organization operating costs such as utilities, operating supplies and services, amortized costs or rental costs for buildings and equipment used for the general operation of the organization, and general property and liability insurance costs, nor will overhead percent charges to cover such items be allowed. These business expenses are NOT reimbursable costs and may not be claimed as matching contributions.

- **Past Expenditures**

Recognizing the limited resources of some entities, past expenditures directly related to the grant application may be considered as matching funds if the expenditure occurred within 9 months of the execution date of the contract or purchase order between the applicant and the State of Colorado.

Application Process

Prior to submitting an application, interested parties must contact the CWCB to discuss potential projects. For more information, please email Chris Sturm (chris.sturm@state.co.us).

The application process is outlined on the CWCB website (<https://cwcb.colorado.gov>) under the Funding tab. ~~(this will be available on January 11, 2023).~~

All grants must include a scope of work, budget, and project schedule.

BEGINNING OF APPLICATION

Evaluation Criteria

CWCB staff will select the projects to fund from applications that best meet the basic ~~applicant qualifications~~ applicant criteria and evaluation criteria below. CWCB staff reserves the right to negotiate with successful applicants to modify the scope and/or budget of their projects to better meet CWCB ~~objectives-goals~~ and fund availability. An evaluation team will review the applications and recommend projects ~~to senior CWCB staff~~. The evaluation team will consist of at least three members. The CWCB Director will have approval authority for funding recommendations.

The CWCB's review and approval process will include the following steps:

- CWCB staff will determine if the required documentation has been submitted. The application will be accepted once all documentation has been received.
- CWCB staff will review and score the applications. Once scored, a funding recommendation will be made to the CWCB Director.
- ~~Upon the CWCB Director's approval of the applicant's request, funding can only be used on project components that begin after a grant contract is executed by the office of the state controller.~~
- The grant contracting estimate is 45 days from the receipt of the signed grant contract from the grantee. No funding will be dispersed for activities completed before a contract is fully executed.

Basic Applicant Criteria

Applicants are required to demonstrate that the capacity, planning, engineering, or implementation application meets the minimum criteria outlined below. Grant applicants must demonstrate:

- a commitment to collaborative approaches, involving locally and/or regionally based diverse interests within the watershed in question, with participation open to all interested parties in the watershed. This includes relevant local, state, and federal governmental entities. Please list the stakeholders and how they will be involved (B1 in the application).
- That the need for the plan or project is urgent and if delayed may result in negative impacts to life, property, water supply, and other infrastructure (D2 in the application).
- a commitment to restoring or protecting the ecological processes that connect land and water (D2 in the application).
- That the plan, design, or project is financially and technically feasible (D1 in the application).
- That an implementation grant, including project design, has been informed through a planning effort (B2 in the application).

Grant applications that do not demonstrate the above criteria will be disqualified from the application review process.

The information below is a summary of what must be included in an application for funding from ~~the 2021 Special Release of~~ the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program. Proposals shall address all sections (A-E) listed below.

Logistical questions about submitting applications should be directed to Chris Sturm (chris.sturm@state.co.us).

Please address all of the criteria below via the [CWCB application portal](#). Register [here](#) for CWCB portal access.

Application

A. Project Proposal Summary Sheet

Please list the following on the summary ~~sheet~~sheet: Applicants will be prompted to submit the following items to the portal:

- Project Title
- Project Location (include map and/or latitude/longitude if applicable)
- Grant Request/Amount
- Cash Match Funding Secured
- Cash Match Funding Pending
- In-kind Match Funding
- Project Sponsor(s) (identify the fiscal agent if different from the project sponsor)
- Contact person name, email address, and phone number
- Brief description of the project

B. Applicant Qualifications (30 points)

- **B1:** Identify the lead project sponsor and describe the other stakeholders' level of participation and involvement.
- **B2:** What information is the project sponsor using to develop the proposed plan or project? Include any relevant information regarding existing plans and models.
- **B3:** Specify in-kind services and cash contributions (match) amount for proposed activities. Discuss whether other funding sources are secured or pending.

C. Organizational Capability (30 points)

- **C1:** What is the applicant organization's history of accomplishments in the watershed? Provide several past project examples. List partner organizations and agencies with which applicant worked to implement past projects.
- **C2:** What level of staffing will be directed toward the implementation of the proposed project/planning effort? Discuss the number of staff and

amount of time dedicated for the project. Will volunteers be utilized, and if so, how?

D. Proposal Effectiveness (40 points)

- D1: Demonstrate that the project budget and schedule are realistic. ~~All projects shall be completed by December 30, 2026.~~ Please use the budget template provided on the CWCB website.
- ~~D2:~~ Discuss the multi-objective aspects of the project and how they relate to each other. Provide a description of the project, its purpose, and a summary of goals and objectives.
- D3: Describe other watershed health and fire ~~/post-fire~~ preparedness activities in the watershed and how this application complements those activities.

E. Attachments

Please complete the scope of work and budget template. Other documents may be attached to the application in order to support the request for funding. These may include:

- Letters of support from other entities and letters of financial commitment.
- Pertinent still photos.
- ~~Maps and reports from other similar or related projects.~~
- Spatial data related to the project or planning effort

END OF APPLICATION

Documents Required for Contract Execution:

- Insurance Certificate of Liability (Government entities excluded)
- Secretary of State - Certificate of Good Standing
- W-9
- Electronic Funds Transfer (preferred)

Timeline

- ~~All grants must be contracted by December 30, 2024, and funds must be spent by December 30, 2026.~~
- The CWCB will accept applications on a rolling basis starting ~~January 11~~ February 13, 2026 until the available funds are obligated.

Grant Administration

Contracting:

Successful applicants are expected to execute a contract with CWCB within 6 months of award. If a grant contract is not executed within this timeframe, CWCB staff may return the funds to support other grant applications if adequate progress is not made.

Reporting Requirements:

Progress Reports: The applicant shall provide the CWCB progress reports and expenditure reports every six months, beginning from the date of the execution of a contract. The progress report shall describe the status of the tasks identified in the statement of work, including a description of any major issues that have occurred and any corrective action taken to address these issues. The CWCB may withhold reimbursement until satisfactory progress reports have been submitted.

Final Report:

At completion of the project, the applicant shall provide the CWCB a Final Report that:

- Summarizes the work completed.
- Describes any obstacles encountered, and how these obstacles were overcome.
- Confirms that all matching commitments have been fulfilled.
- Includes engineering reports/designs.

The CWCB will withhold disbursement of the last 10% of the budget until the Final Report is completed to the satisfaction of CWCB staff. Once the Final Report has been accepted, and final payment has been issued, the grant will be closed without any further payment.

Payments:

Payment will be based on actual expenditures invoiced by the grantee. Payments are limited by the proportionate grant percentage of the overall project. The request for payment shall include:

- Date of request
- Grantee's contact name, email address, physical address, and phone number
- Contract or purchase order number
- Description of the work accomplished by major task as presented in the approved budget
- Supporting documentation for items or services billed

~~Management of SLFRF Funds:~~

- ~~• US Treasury SLFRF Reporting and Compliance Guidance can be found here.~~



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Grant Guidelines

January 2026

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Applications will be accepted for capacity building, planning, engineering, and implementation to address the goals of the CWCB's Wildfire Ready Watersheds program. Examples include:

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- **Planning** to develop a [Wildfire Ready Action Plan \(WRAP\)](#).
- **Engineering** projects such as hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, fluvial hazard zone mapping, sediment yield and transport evaluations, risk assessment, project identification and prioritization, project design, permitting, and construction oversight.
- **Implementation** projects designed to protect values at risk from post wildfire hazards such as debris flows, increased runoff, hillslope erosion, flooding, and fluvial hazards (erosion, deposition, and channel migration). Project examples include, but are not limited to, stream and floodplain restoration, floodplain

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