



**COLORADO**

**Colorado Water  
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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**TO:** Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

**FROM:** Alexander Funk, Program Manager  
Technical Assistance for Federal Cost Share (TAFC), Federal, and Water  
Information Section

**DATE:** March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**AGENDA ITEM:** Consent Agenda 5(a). Technical Assistance for Federal Cost-Share, Rocky  
Mountain Farmers Union, Natural Working Land Climate Solutions  
Coordination for Water Resource Co-Benefits

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**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of up to \$69,000 from the Technical Assistance for Federal Cost-Share Grant to help fund the "National Working Land Climate Solutions Coordination for Water Resources Co-Benefits" project.

#### **Background:**

The Technical Assistance for Federal Cost-Share Program provides financial assistance to eligible organizations to expand water resource stakeholders' capacity through project development and funding assistance. Primarily, all grant applications must include tasks that will develop applications for federal funding programs that may leverage state and local resources.

In the 2019 legislative session, Colorado passed House Bill 19-1261, the Climate Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Pollution, which includes science-based targets of reducing statewide greenhouse gas pollution. To ensure that Colorado continues to progress on these objectives, state agencies recently developed and released a comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap. The Roadmap identifies natural climate solutions including, but not limited to, the adoption of soil health practices, wetland restoration and protection, and forest management as potential opportunities to support both climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. The Roadmap also identifies that natural climate solutions can support important community and water resource co-benefits, including enhancing water quality, promoting drought resiliency, and improving watershed health.

Through this project, the applicant will work with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Department of Agriculture and the Colorado State Forestry Service to develop, submit and track competitive applications to potential Federal (and other public) and other funding sources to advance pilot projects assessing the nexus between climate solutions on natural and working lands and water resource co-benefits. Projects identified will help further both state greenhouse emission reduction goals and Colorado Water Plan objectives. Projects will also inform the development of a draft statewide Natural Working Lands Strategic Plan set for release later in 2021.

Staff concludes this TAFC Grant application is complete. The proposed activity meets the eligibility requirements in the C&G. The TAFC Grant Application, Statement of Work, and Budget and Schedule are below.

**Scope of Work**  
**Natural Working Land Climate Solutions Coordinators**  
**Technical Assistance for Federal Cost Share (T AFC) Program**  
**Technical Assistance for NWL and Water Co-Benefits Project Development**

**Purchase Order Amount:** \$69,000

**CWCB Funding Source:** Construction Fund, HB17-1248, sec. 8

**Grantee:** Rocky Mountain Farmers Union

**Contractors:** Ground Up Consulting LLC  
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**Project Purpose:** In the 2019 legislative session Colorado passed House Bill 19-1261, the Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution, which includes science-based targets of reducing statewide greenhouse gas pollution. To ensure that Colorado continues to make progress on these objectives, state agencies recently developed and released a comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap. The Roadmap identifies natural climate solutions including, but not limited to, the adoption of soil health practices, wetland restoration and protection, and forest management as potential opportunities to support both climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. The Roadmap also identifies that natural climate solutions can support important water resource co-benefits including enhancing water quality, promoting drought resiliency, and improving watershed health.

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Potential Grant Funding Sources include:

- USDA Conservation Innovation Grant
- USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- USDA Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program
- USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- CWCB-Colorado Water Plan and Watershed Restoration Grant
- Colorado State Conservation Board Matching Grant

Proposed grant applications will include the following components focused on advancing state natural working lands (NWL) climate solutions and water resource co-benefits across Colorado:

- Working with the state agencies and other stakeholders to identify, prioritize, and develop NWL pilot projects that collectively advance state objectives set in HB19-1261, the Colorado Water Plan, Colorado Resiliency Framework, Colorado Nonpoint Source Management Plan, Colorado Forest Action Plan, and other state planning efforts related to rural economic development and natural resource conservation.

- Pilot projects will be identified and selected based on their potential to fill in identified research gaps, inform the existing GHG inventory and other NWL pathways under development, collaboration opportunities, and developing a framework for statewide accounting, verification, and monitoring of NWL carbon sequestration benefits
- In consultation with state partners and other stakeholders, identification and submission of grant proposals for a minimum of four pilot projects within the next two fiscal years, focusing on the following NWL strategies: soil carbon sequestration through on-farm management, wetlands protection/restoration, forest management, and avoided land conversion.

### Task Descriptions:

1. **Develop a NWL public funding database and calendar, and develop a funding network for NWL projects.** Applicants will develop an online database of public funding opportunities to support NWL projects. The database will provide critical information regarding the current public funding opportunities such as program eligibility, evaluation criteria, and match information. Through this process, the applicant will develop points of contact at public agencies offering grant assistance to develop a funding network to support NWL pilot project development.
2. **Build and maintain NWL project and programming database.** Working with public and private NWL partners, the applicant will build and develop an online database containing information about current and planned NWL projects and programming in Colorado. Through this process, applicants will build relationships with key NWL stakeholders, assess whether existing NWL efforts are documenting water resource co-benefits, and offer coordination to project leads to scale NWL efforts.
3. **Develop prioritization criteria and a selection process for NWL pilot projects.** Working with public and private NWL partners, the applicants will develop prioritization criteria and a process to inform NWL pilot project development. These criteria and process details will also lead to the development of an updateable NWL project and processes list that can inform public funding delivery.
4. **Submit a RCPP-AFA grant proposal to support a Colorado Soil Health Program.** Building off of previous work on behalf of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the applicants will develop and submit an RCPP-AFA proposal to expand soil health programming to farmers and ranchers across Colorado. This programming includes incentive payments for producers to try new practices, increased capacity for conservation districts and other entities, soil health testing, a soil health inventory, education, demonstration, and outreach. This RCPP-AFA grant proposal will expand on a pending section 319 grant application that investigates the link between water quality outcomes the adoption of soil health practices.
5. **Scope and begin to develop funding portfolios and applications for three NWL pilot projects.** Based on input from state and other NWL stakeholders, the applicants will identify, develop and coordinate funding applications for up to three additional NWL projects. Applicants will prioritize projects that support NWL pathways with significant potential for water resource co-benefits such as wetland restoration and protection, forest management, and avoided land conversion.
6. **Project coordination:** Applicants will work with state agencies to support NWL programming, including attending state NWL meetings and meeting with NWL stakeholders across the state.
7. **Project Administration:** Rocky Mountain Farmers Union may charge the CWCB up to 15% of the costs of tasks 1-6 to defray a portion of the project management and administration expense it incurs in providing those services and preparation of all deliverables.

### Deliverables:

1. Provide monthly status reports documenting all task activities with each invoice.

2. Provide a copy of funding proposals and grant applications submitted to TAFC.
3. Develop a funding and pilot project database for tracking NWL objectives.

**Task Schedule:** April 2021 – December 2021.

**Payment Schedule:**

<b>Invoice Items by Task</b>	<b>Estimated cost</b>
1. Develop and build NWL funding database	\$5,325
2. Build and maintain a database for tracking ongoing NWL programming and projects in Colorado	\$5,325
3. Develop prioritization criteria and selection process for NWL pilot projects	\$2,000
4. Submit a RCPP-AFA grant proposal to support a Colorado Soil Health Program	\$20,000
5. Scope and begin to develop funding portfolios and applications for three other pilot projects	\$20,000
6. Project coordination	\$6,000
7. Project Administration	\$10,350
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$69,000</b>