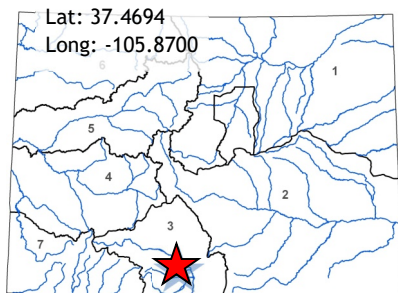


Water Plan Grant Application

September 2021 Board Meeting



L O C A T I O N	
County/Countries:	Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache
Drainage Basin:	Rio Grande

D E T A I L S	
Total Project Cost:	\$425,511
Water Plan Grant Request:	\$163,406
Other CWCB Funding:	\$0
Other Funding Amount:	\$232,105
Applicant Match:	\$30,000
Project Type(s):	Other
Project Category(Categories):	Water Storage & Supply (Water Sharing/ATM)
Measurable Result:	16,000 acre-feet shared through a water sharing agreement annually

The Upper Rio Grande River basin in Colorado supports an agricultural system that utilizes a combination of surface water rights and groundwater wells. Over 1,000,000 ac-ft/yr. of surface water diversions are combined with almost 500,000 ac-ft/yr. of groundwater withdrawals to irrigate over 500,000 acres of agricultural land. Groundwater Management Subdistricts currently utilize several programs, including: the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, short-term fallow programs, and contracts with both surface and groundwater rights owners to achieve well withdrawal reductions and to fully remedy well depletions to the streams.

Funding will be used to support outreach and partnership building to educate and encourage the participation of the Subdistricts and surface water right holders in an in-basin water market strategy. The aim is to design water sharing mechanisms such as temporary water leases or rotational fallowing. The project team will identify water rights that could participate in an in-basin water market that would help us meet the approximate 16,000 acre-feet of water needed by Subdistricts collectively to remedy stream depletions. The effort will involve analysis of potential water rights for feasibility of participation in an in-basin water market, storage and infrastructure needs, and potential benefits or impacts to the basin regarding socio-economic, environmental, and recreational values. Based on this scoping and planning work, an implementation plan will be developed that details the key elements of the in-basin water marketing strategy, including: its operations, administration, finances, governance and legal framework.

This project furthers several Colorado Water Plan critical action goals including facilitating collaborative water-sharing agreements that sustain agriculture and provide multiple benefits. Overall, the project will help address a potentially 16,000 acre-foot water gap through water-sharing agreements, which will help CWCB meet the Colorado Water Plan objective of 50,000 acre-feet of voluntary water-sharing efforts by 2030. Furthermore, the project will demonstrate the viability of water-sharing agreements to address a broader suite of water resource challenges including groundwater sustainability and augmentation. The project will also directly assist subdistricts in avoiding mandatory well closures and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture.

Funding Recommendation:

Staff recommends Board approval of \$163,406 to Rio Grande Water Conservation District for the Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project.



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Last Updated: May 2021

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan Grant Application

Instructions

To receive funding for a Water Plan Grant, applicant must demonstrate how the project, activity, or process (collectively referred to as “project”) funded by the CWCB will help meet the measurable objectives and critical actions in the Water Plan. Grant guidelines are available on the CWCB website.

If you have questions, please contact CWCB at (303) 866-3441 or email the following staff to assist you with applications in the following areas:

Water Storage & Supply Projects	Matthew.Stearns@state.co.us
Conservation, Land Use Planning	Kevin.Reidy@state.co.us
Engagement & Innovation Activities	Ben.Wade@state.co.us
Agricultural Projects	Alexander.Funk@state.co.us
Water Sharing & ATM Projects	Alexander.Funk@state.co.us
Environmental & Recreation Projects	Chris.Sturm@state.co.us

FINAL SUBMISSION: Submit all application materials in one email to waterplan.grants@state.co.us in the original file formats [Application (word); Statement of Work (word); Budget/Schedule (excel)]. Please do not combine documents. In the subject line, please include the funding category and name of the project.

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Rio Grande Water Conservation District	
Name of Water Project	Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project	
CWP Grant Request Amount	\$163,406	
US Bureau of Reclamation	\$212,105	
Colorado Open Lands	\$ 10,000	
Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust:	\$ 10,000	
Applicant Funding Contribution	\$ 30,000	
Total Project Cost	\$425,511	



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Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: May 2021

Applicant & Grantee Information	
Name of Grantee(s)	Colorado Open Lands
Mailing Address	1546 Cole Boulevard #200, Lakewood CO 80401
FEIN	84-0866211
Organization Contact	Judy Lopez
Position/Title	San Luis Valley Conservation Project Manager
Email	jlopez@coloradoopenlands.org
Phone	(719) 580-5300
Grant Management Contact	Sarah Parmar
Position/Title	Director of Conservation
Email	sparmar@coloradoopenlands.org
Phone	(303) 988-2373
Name of Applicant (if different than grantee)	Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Mailing Address	8805 Independence Way, Alamosa, CO 81101
Position/Title	Amber Pacheco, Program Manager
Email	amber@rgwcd.org

Description of Grantee/Applicant
<p>Provide a brief description of the grantee's organization (100 words or less).</p> <p>COL is a 501(c)3 nonprofit land trust that exists to protect Colorado's land and water resources. Led by a full-time staff of fifteen and governed by a Board of Directors with wide ranging expertise, Colorado Open Lands operates efficiently and effectively. Founded in 1981, Colorado Open Lands holds over 500 easements in 44 Colorado counties where we have conserved 560,000 acres and over 358 miles of Colorado's waterways.</p> <p>Our work then as now, is focused on working with communities and landowners to develop strategies that keep the San Luis Valley water and the vibrant agriculture, recreation, and wildlife communities intact and here in the San Luis Valley. COL will participate in supporting the team as needed for stakeholder outreach and will also be providing funding support. The local contact for COL will be Conservation Project Manager, Judy Lopez.</p> <p>The project applicant is the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The District was created to protect, enhance, and develop water resources in the Rio Grande River basin in Colorado. The District encompasses a five-county region, which includes Alamosa, Rio Grande, Conejos and portions of Saguache and Mineral Counties within the Rio Grande River basin, including the Closed Basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District is the leading entity in water management in the San Luis Valley and is governed by a Board of nine directors each appointed by the Board of County Commissioners of their respective county. The Board of Directors develops and supports programs which lead to the conservation of water in the San Luis Valley.</p>



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Colorado Water
Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: May 2021

Type of Eligible Entity (check one)	
	Public (Government): Municipalities, enterprises, counties, and State of Colorado agencies. Federal agencies are encouraged to work with local entities. Federal agencies are eligible, but only if they can make a compelling case for why a local partner cannot be the grant recipient.
	Public (Districts): Authorities, Title 32/special districts (conservancy, conservation, and irrigation districts), and water activity enterprises.
	Private Incorporated: Mutual ditch companies, homeowners associations, corporations.
	Private Individuals, Partnerships, and Sole Proprietors: Private parties may be eligible for funding.
X	Non-governmental organizations (NGO): Organization that is not part of the government and is non-profit in nature.
	Covered Entity: As defined in Section 37-60-126 Colorado Revised Statutes .

Type of Water Project (check all that apply)	
	Study
	Construction
X	Other

Category of Water Project (check the primary category that applies and include relevant tasks)			
X	<p>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, multi-beneficial projects, water sharing agreements, Alternative Transfer Methods, and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap. <i>Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):</i></p> <p>Note: For Water Sharing Agreements or ATM Projects - please include the supplemental application available on the CWCB's website.</p>		
	<p>Conservation and Land Use Planning - Activities and projects that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, water efficiency, and drought planning. <i>Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):</i></p>		
	<p>Engagement & Innovation - Activities and projects that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts. <i>Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):</i></p>		
	<p>Agricultural - Projects that provide technical assistance and improve agricultural efficiency. <i>Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):</i></p>		
	<p>Environmental & Recreation - Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation. <i>Applicable Exhibit A Task(s):</i></p>		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>Explain:</td> </tr> </table>	Other	Explain:
Other	Explain:		

Last Updated: May 2021

Location of Water Project	
Please provide the general county and coordinates of the proposed project below in decimal degrees . The Applicant shall also provide, in Exhibit C, a site map if applicable.	
County/Countries	Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache
Latitude	37.4694° N,
Longitude	105.8700° W

Water Project Overview
<p>Please provide a summary of the proposed water project (200 words or less). Include a description of the project and what the CWP Grant funding will be used for specifically (e.g., studies, permitting process, construction). Provide a description of the water supply source to be utilized or the water body affected by the project, where applicable. Include details such as acres under irrigation, types of crops irrigated, number of residential and commercial taps, length of ditch improvements, length of pipe installed, and area of habitat improvements, where applicable. If this project addresses multiple purposes or spans multiple basins, please explain.</p> <p>The Applicant shall also provide, in Exhibit A, a detailed Statement of Work, Budget, Other Funding Sources/Amounts and Schedule.</p> <p>The ability to sustain agriculture and the local economy, while managing groundwater depletion is a critical issue in south-central Colorado's San Luis Valley. Groundwater withdrawals for irrigation beyond the recharge capacity of the basin is causing injurious depletion to senior surface water rights holders.</p> <p>Agriculture is both economically and ecologically important in the San Luis Valley, where it drives the majority of the region's economic activity and creates food sources and habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife. To avoid direct state intervention in the form of well shutdowns, well owners from six Groundwater Management Subdistricts of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District ("RGWCD") and one Subdistrict of the Trinchera Water Conservancy District are participating in voluntary programs to reduce groundwater withdrawals, replace injurious depletions, and to create and maintain sustainable aquifers in both the unconfined and confined aquifers in the Basin.</p> <p>The Upper Rio Grande River basin in Colorado supports an agricultural system that utilizes a combination of surface water rights and groundwater wells. Over 1,000,000 ac-ft/yr. of surface water diversions are combined with almost 500,000 ac-ft/yr. of groundwater withdrawals to irrigate over 500,000 acres of agricultural land. The Groundwater Management Subdistricts currently utilize several programs, including: the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, short-term fallow programs, and contracts with both surface and groundwater rights owners to achieve well withdrawal reductions and to fully remedy well depletions to the streams. Against the backdrop of recent droughts and given the amount of recharge necessary, however, the scale of these efforts has not been enough to achieve sustainability as quickly as needed. Subdistricts collectively need to acquire approximately 16,000 acre-feet of water per year through an in-basin water marketing program to replace injurious stream depletions and sustain their ability to continue the use of groundwater in the Basin.</p> <p>These conditions have encouraged the RGWCD to explore new voluntary, water-sharing arrangements, and an in-basin water marketing strategy to maintain maximum agricultural production in the San Luis Valley and prevent permanent dry-up of historically irrigated lands. The RGWCD developed this proposal in collaboration with several partners, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board,</p>

Last Updated: May 2021

Colorado Open Lands, Trout Unlimited, the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust and the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center at Adams State University.

If awarded, this funding will be used to support outreach and partnership building to educate and encourage the participation of the Subdistricts and surface water right holders in an in-basin water market strategy. The aim is to design water sharing mechanisms such as temporary water leases or rotational fallowing. Our goal will be to develop a more holistic, basin-wide analysis of flexible in-basin water market potential by focusing on multiple Subdistricts and assessing water-sharing opportunities that will help meet Subdistrict objectives, sustain agriculture, keep water in the Basin, and provide multiple other benefits such as enhanced environmental conditions and beneficial stream flows where feasible.

Through our scoping and planning process, our team will identify water rights that could participate in an in-basin water market that would help us meet the approximate 16,000 acre-feet of water needed by Subdistricts collectively to remedy stream depletions. The effort will involve analysis of potential water rights for feasibility of participation in an in-basin water market, storage and infrastructure needs, and potential benefits or impacts to the basin regarding socio-economic, environmental, and recreational values. Based on this scoping and planning work, an implementation plan will be developed that details the key elements of the in-basin water marketing strategy, including: its operations, administration, finances, governance and legal framework. Public input will be a key element of the plan development and monitoring of the program will be essential to document as well.

The San Luis Valley is a unique and complex hydrological system, consisting of thousands of acres of irrigated agriculture from both surface water and groundwater sources. An in-basin water marketing program utilizing water sharing agreements such as lease-fallow rotations, partial year dry-up, and deficit irrigation can provide an alternative to the permanent dry-up of over 10,000 acres. This shows how efficient the planned in-basin water marketing program will be in sustaining agriculture in the region, in addition to providing benefits for other uses such as municipal, commercial, environmental, and compact requirements.

This project will involve all seven Subdistricts in the Basin and the surface water users in the basin. Currently, Groundwater Management Subdistricts have few and limited options for replacing depletions from their member's groundwater withdrawals. Most Subdistricts rely on the use of forbearance agreements because of the limited options available for obtaining sufficient water to fully remedy injurious stream depletions. Under these forbearance agreements the owners of the injured water right agree to forgo their injury and are paid by the Subdistrict in cash, or some other valuable, other than water. While forbearance allows groundwater withdrawals to continue, the practice excludes farmers and ranchers who would likely prefer a wet water replacement option. It also eliminates the positive ancillary benefits that wet water replacements would have for aquatic ecosystem function. Additionally, the lack of options for wet water excludes environmental and recreational interests from partnership and cost-sharing in the water market. This project will develop tools and methods for wet water replacements that do not require significant new infrastructure and further manipulation of the natural hydrology and seek opportunities to enhance environmental and recreational outcomes.

Last Updated: May 2021

Measurable Results

To catalog measurable results achieved with the CWP Grant funds, please provide any of the following values as applicable:

	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
	New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Non-consumptive
	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (indicate acre-feet/year OR dollars/year)
	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
16,000 AF Annually	Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement
	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
	Other Explain:

Water Project Justification

Provide a description of how this water project supports the goals of [Colorado's Water Plan](#), the [Analysis and Technical Update to the Water Plan](#), and the applicable Roundtable [Basin Implementation Plan](#) and [Education Action Plan](#). The Applicant is required to reference specific needs, goals, themes, or Identified Projects and Processes (IPPs), including citations (e.g. document, chapters, sections, or page numbers).

The proposed water project shall be evaluated based upon how well the proposal conforms to Colorado's Water Plan Framework for State of Colorado Support for a Water Project (CWP, Section 9.4, pp. 9-43 to 9-44;)

The strategy is designed to be inclusive, and to broadly communicate a dynamic menu of options and opportunities for those in-basin uses that have the potential for multiple benefits and multiple partners including agricultural, municipal, commercial, recreational, and environmental sectors. It will also include monitoring that informs adaptive management over time with changing conditions. Additionally, the strategy can be used to help Colorado meet its requirements under the Rio Grande Compact. These are all goals/objectives identified in SWSI, the Colorado Water Plan as well as the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan.

The project specifically addresses the following Rio Grande Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan (2021) goals:

- **Aquifers with sustainable supplies of groundwater for farmers and ranchers, towns, and wildlife habitat.**
- **Vibrant and resilient agriculture, recreation, municipal, and industrial economies that support thriving communities.**

Last Updated: May 2021

- **Water administration that is adaptive, flexible, and creative while complying with state statutes and the doctrine of prior appropriation, and fully utilizing Colorado's compact entitlements under the Rio Grande and Costilla Creek compacts.**

Related Studies

Please provide a list of any related studies, including if the water project is complementary to or assists in the implementation of other CWCB programs.

Several previous and current projects that will help provide a basis for the outreach, scoping and planning and marketing strategy design under this project (links are included):

Cactus Hill Conservation Easement and Water Lease to City of Alamosa - The Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, in partnership with the City of Alamosa and a local producer, completed a perpetual water-sharing agreement that will provide augmentation water to the City while preserving a working farm. The Cactus Hill project provides a template for similar water-sharing opportunities in the region that involve the coupling of land conservation with in-basin water leasing. More information regarding the project can be found here:
<http://www.riograndelandtrust.org/news/https://www.cactushillfarm.com>.

Subdistrict 6 Consumptive Use Analysis - The objective of this planning project is to conduct the initial engineering work to develop ditch-wide consumptive use analysis with the intent to inform the development of a rotational fallowing program in which producers under four ditch systems will voluntarily fallow a portion of their irrigated acres for compensation from the Subdistrict. The project scope of work can be found at:
<https://dnrweblink.state.co.us/cwcb/0/edoc/212693/7b.pdf?searchid=a1d2b86a-6aab-4b53-b5dc-e3dd570b71fb>

Trujillo Meadows Reservoir Alternative Transfer Method Study - investigated the feasibility of a unique ATM that involves enlarging Trujillo Meadows to provide intra-year regulation of water supplies including direct flow storage and storage of other agricultural and augmentation water rights for agricultural users. The final report can be found at:
https://dnrweblink.state.co.us/cwcbsearch/0/edoc/205334/Rio%20Grande%20-%20Conejos%20WCD%20-%20Increase%20Supplies%20for%20Conejos%20Basin_FinalDeliverableES1-8-2018.pdf?searchid=59248bef-054b-4625-9188-2aa07872bcd1.

Colorado Open Land's Groundwater Conservation Easement Report - Groundwater depletion is a critical issue in Colorado's south-central San Luis Valley; groundwater pumping for irrigation beyond the recharge capacity of the basin is causing injurious depletion to senior surface water rights holders and may be impacting riparian ecosystems. In the San Luis Valley, irrigated agriculture is important because it drives most of the region's economic activity and creates food sources and habitat for migrating birds and wildlife. The working group developed and analyzed a conservation easement model that specifically restricts groundwater pumping. Research and expert interviews with groundwater managers in over drafted basins in Nebraska and California revealed the functionality of

Commented [AP1]: Judy, we do have a grant for an Alamosa River ATM Study that was approved for SD #6 about a year or so ago. Do we need to list that here a well? The work is on-going and we are still under the grant timeline.



Last Updated: May 2021

conservation easements when applied to groundwater and affirmed the economic value of groundwater. Groundwater conservation easements are one important instrument within a larger suite of voluntary tools that Groundwater Management Subdistricts in the San Luis Valley can use to reduce groundwater pumping while maintaining community vitality.

<https://secureservercdn.net/50.62.89.111/309.d0c.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Groundwater-Conservation-Easements-for-Aquifer-Recovery-in-the-San-Luis-Valley-web.pdf>

CWCB Alternative Transfer Methods Status Report - released in 2020, the CWCB Alternative Transfer Methods Status Report highlights progress made on implementing state-wide goals regarding alternative transfer methods and recommendations for creating a framework for continuing to support the development of water-sharing arrangements providing multiple benefits. The report specifically identifies the Upper Rio Grande Basin as a location where an in-basin water marketing strategy could be further developed to address compact compliance and groundwater augmentation needs. The full report can be found at: <https://dnrweblink.state.co.us/CWCB/0/edoc/212963/ATM%20Status%20Report.pdf>

Previous CWCB Grants, Loans or Other Funding

List all previous or current CWCB grants (including WSRF) awarded to both the Applicant and Grantee. Include: 1) Applicant name; 2) Water activity name; 3) Approving RT(s); 4) CWCB board meeting date; 5) Contract number or purchase order; 6) Percentage of other CWCB funding for your overall project.

Colorado Open Lands

WSRF

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Education & Outreach Implementation in RG Basin
- 3) Rio Grande Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2016
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 201700000375

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Anderson Lazy EA Conservation Easement
- 3) Rio Grande Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2017
- 5) CMS 127247 CTGGI 20193078

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) South Platte ATM and Riverview Farm
- 3) South Platte Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2019
- 5) CMS 125999 CTGGII 20192940

- 6) Colorado Open Lands
- 7) Jackson Conservation Easement
- 8) Rio Grande Basin
- 9) CWCB Board Date 2020
- 10) CMS 166822 CTGGII 2021*303

CWP

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Enhancing the Colorado Water Plan through Comprehensive Education and Outreach



COLORADO
Colorado Water
Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: May 2021

- 3) Rio Grande Basin RT- PEPO Project
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2017
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 2018000

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Acequia Conservation Initiative - Protecting Colorado's Oldest Agricultural Communities
- 3) Rio Grande Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2018
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 201900002510

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) San Luis Valley River & Aquifer Recovery & Enhancement (RARE) Partnership
- 3) Rio Grande Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date March 2019
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 20200008

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Riparian Reconnect – Restoration Projects
- 3) South Platte Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2019
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 20202061

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Educating for Understanding of Critical Resource Issues
- 3) Rio Grande Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2020
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 20210000228

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) Riparian Reconnect
- 3) South Platte Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2021
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 202100002908

ATM Grants:

- 1) Colorado Open Lands
- 2) South Platte Basin ATM
- 3) South Platte Basin
- 4) CWCB Board Date 2019
- 5) POGG1 PDAA 2018745

Rio Grande Water Conservation District

ATM Grant

1. Rio Grande Water Conservation District
2. Alamosa River ATM Project
3. Rio Grande Basin
4. CWCB Board Date 2020
5. POGG1 2021-2313

1. Taxpayer Bill of Rights



Last Updated: May 2021

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.
Colorado Open Lands is not subject to TABOR restrictions.

Submittal Checklist

X	I acknowledge the Grantee will be able to contract with CWCB using the Standard Contract .
X	Statement of Work ⁽¹⁾
X	Budget & Schedule ⁽¹⁾
	Engineer's statement of probable cost (projects over \$100,000)
X	Letters of Matching and/or Pending 3 rd Party Commitments ⁽¹⁾
X	Map (if applicable) ⁽¹⁾
X	Photos/Drawings/Reports
X	Letters of Support (Optional)
X	Certificate of Insurance (General, Auto, & Workers' Comp.) ⁽²⁾
X	Certificate of Good Standing with Colorado Secretary of State ⁽²⁾
X	W-9 ⁽²⁾
	Independent Contractor Form ⁽²⁾ (If applicant is individual, not company/organization)
Water Sharing Agreements and Alternative Transfer Methods ONLY	
X	Water Sharing Agreements and Alternative Transfer Methods Supplemental Application ⁽¹⁾

(1) Required with application.

(2) Required for contracting. While optional at the time of this application, submission can expedite contracting upon CWCB Board approval.



Last Updated: May 2021

Colorado Water Conservation Board
Water Plan Grant - Exhibit A

Statement Of Work	
Date:	June 23, 2021
Name of Grantee:	Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Name of Water Project:	Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project
Funding Source:	Colorado Water Plan Grant
Water Project Overview:	
<p>If awarded, this funding will be used to support outreach and partnership building to educate and encourage the participation of the Subdistricts and surface water right holders in an in-basin water market strategy. The aim is to design water sharing mechanisms such as temporary water leases or rotational fallowing. Our goal will be to develop a more holistic, basin-wide analysis of flexible in-basin water market potential by focusing on multiple Subdistricts and assessing water-sharing opportunities that will help meet Subdistrict objectives, sustain agriculture, keep water in the Basin, and provide multiple other benefits such as enhanced environmental conditions and beneficial streamflows where feasible.</p> <p>Through our scoping and planning process, our team will identify water rights that could participate in an in-basin water market that would help us meet the approximate 16,000 acre-feet of water needed by Subdistricts collectively to remedy stream depletions. The effort will involve analysis of potential water rights for feasibility of participation in an in-basin water market, storage and infrastructure needs, and potential benefits or impacts to the basin regarding socio-economic, environmental, and recreational values. Based on this scoping and planning work, an implementation plan will be developed that details the key elements of the in-basin water marketing strategy, including: its operations, administration, finances, governance and legal framework. Public input will be a key element of the plan development and monitoring of the program will be essential to document as well.</p> <p>The San Luis Valley is a unique and complex hydrological system, consisting of thousands of acres of irrigated agriculture from both surface water and groundwater sources. An in-basin water marketing program utilizing water sharing agreements such as lease-fallow rotations, partial year dry-up, and deficit irrigation can provide an alternative to the permanent dry-up of over 10,000 acres. This shows how efficient the planned in-basin water marketing program will be in sustaining agriculture in the region, in addition to providing benefits for other uses such as municipal, commercial, environmental, and compact requirements.</p>	
Project Objectives:	

Last Updated: May 2021

The project's water marketing strategy could provide sources of water in amounts sufficient to completely replace well depletions while maintaining the agricultural economy, and to a lesser degree the municipal and commercial sectors that rely on groundwater, by minimizing permanent dry-up of historically irrigated land. This strategy can also address the environmental shortfall by exploring new methods and legal framework to make water available to impacted water users that currently do not have the option. Further, the market creates space for environmental stakeholders to partner with water users and Subdistricts to cost-share in situations where wet water has appreciable non-consumptive environmental benefits. In turn, this expands the scope of where meaningful aquatic and riparian restoration can occur on the landscape. At completion of the project, the applicant shall provide the CWCB a final report that summarizes the project and documents how the project was completed. This report may contain photographs, summaries of meetings and engineering reports/designs.

Tasks

Task 1 - Project Management and Administration

Description of Task:

Task 1 will develop a project work plan, coordinate project implementation, prepare and review invoicing to funders, monitor and report project milestones and oversee the development of technical reports.

Method/Procedure:

The purpose of this task will be to work with US Bureau of Reclamation to develop a project work plan that will drive all aspects of the project. These include defining partner roles, developing tasks, schedule, and budget. This task will also cover project coordination, review and prepare invoices to funders, monitor progress and prepare performance reports.

Deliverable:

The final deliverable will be the development of technical and scoping reports that will drive water sharing in Colorado's upper Rio Grande Basin.

Tasks

Task 2 - Outreach and Partnership Building

Description of Task:

Task 2 will develop an outreach and communication plan that identifies and engages water supply partners, identifies and engages a variety of water market stakeholders that is supported by regular public outreach through a series of public workshops.

Method/Procedure:

Last Updated: May 2021

This task will develop a Communication and Outreach Plan to engage the public, Subdistricts, surface water owners, groundwater users, the Basin Roundtable, and others. The Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center at Adams State University will assist in developing and implementing the following components of Outreach and Communications.

- Identify potential surface water supply partners including ditch and reservoir companies.
- Identify potential groundwater supply partners including the Subdistricts and well owners.
- Identify stakeholders and affected parties within the San Luis Valley including but not limited to individual well users, surface water right owners, environmental interests, recreational interests, municipalities, industrial users, conservation community, etc.
- Update the public and stakeholders on the project's status (e.g., presentations at Basin Roundtable meetings, press releases, etc.) on a regular basis.
- Conduct public workshops to describe the water marketing program concept and solicit input. The Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center at Adams State University will assist in organizing, hosting, and facilitating the public workshops (3-5 workshops).
- Develop interim workshops to present draft water marketing program elements which might include the program's governance, economics, participating suppliers/users, etc. (3-5 workshops in total)
- Final workshops to present the final water marketing program and how it would operate once implemented.

Deliverable:

A comprehensive partner network that is supported by the community and water stakeholders. This task will further identify waters resources that can be used within the Subdistricts to ensure long-term water sustainability.

Task 3 – Scoping and Planning Activities

Description of Task:

Task 3 will develop a comprehensive surface water market evaluation, a groundwater market evaluation and review of existing groundwater market programs and mechanisms. This will include:

- Water Rights Analysis/Legal Analysis
- Analyze Quantity of Available Supplies
- Evaluation of Infrastructure Requirements,
- Evaluation of Environmental and Socio-economic Impacts and Opportunities, and
- Economic Analysis

Last Updated: May 2021

Method/Procedure:

This task will work directly with the surface water users to assess the various water marketing strategies and how they might work for specific surface rights holders. The surface water market evaluation will build on initial scoping efforts assessing potential cooperative water sharing methods and water leasing opportunities for Subdistricts 2, 3, 6, and the Trinchera Subdistrict.

Contractors will work directly with the Subdistricts to assess the various water marketing strategies and how they might work for each specific Subdistrict, review existing groundwater credit programs including Groundwater Sustainability Agencies' Programs in California (e.g., North Kings, Merced Subbasin and McMullin), North Platte Project (NE) and Edwards Aquifer Market (TX).

Additionally, it will identify tools such as the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Conservation Easements, Drought contract, Lease of Non-Use and determining their applicability to the water marketing program and review and utilize several existing tools developed by the Colorado Division of Water Resources including the Rio Grande Decision Support System groundwater model and the State CU model for analyzing historical consumptive use.

In doing this this task will evaluate any potential legal or institutional issues with water transfers and water rights such as type and place of use, identification of compliance needs and permit requirements, potential policy issues, analyze water availability for varying hydrologic years (i.e., wet, dry, average) and contractual scenarios along with indirect limitations such as irrigated acreage, crop water usage and potential localized impacts. To determine current and future demands, sustainable yield, and maximum allowable withdrawals.

To accomplish this, contractors will prepare an initial scoping study to identify:

1. Which reaches need replacement water and how much is needed in each reach.
2. Which surface right and groundwater owners could potentially supply replacement water to Subdistricts.
3. Develop conceptual water sharing projects including:
 - Lease fallow rotations
 - Partial year dry-up
 - Deficit irrigation (including demand management)

Deliverable:

Evaluate existing infrastructure capacity and potential additional infrastructure needs for delivery of surface water and groundwater transfers, identify environmental compliance requirements with proposed water marketing program and/or infrastructure needs, evaluate social and economic impacts associated with the water marketing program versus status quo (prevent permanent dry-up of agricultural land, provide for instream uses, and maintain Colorado compact compliance). Identify opportunities for enhanced flows for environmental/recreational uses through the in-basin water marketing program.

Evaluate the potential of coupling conservation easements and other identified land and water protection mechanisms to keep any water market local and within the basin, as well as determining the capital needs associated with the identified infrastructure upgrades and associated O&M costs and the administrative and operating costs associated with the water marketing program that utilizes surface and groundwater for the water.

Task 4 – Development of the In-Basin Water Marketing Strategy

Description of Task:



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Colorado Water
Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: May 2021

Task 4 will develop the implementation plan, legal framework, monitoring plan, project evaluation tool, online trading platform and identify future pilot projects.

Method/Procedure:

This task will identify the in-basin water marketing program goals (overall and on a Subdistrict basis) and define limiting factors such as extraction rates and volumes, individual allocations, consumptive use limitations and trading zones, identify participants (Subdistricts, sellers, funders) in water marketing programs, needed infrastructure, address assessments and fees for maintaining and administering the water marketing and groundwater credit program and potential income/credits for conservation and supplying water to the program.

The task will further define roles, responsibilities and administrative structure associated with the water marketing program and summarize the rationale of the water marketing program's policies (i.e., preference for surface water versus groundwater) and social/environmental issues to be resolved, mitigated, or addressed prior to and during implementation. Establish oversight and enforcement mechanisms for water marketing program participants. This includes identification of water law/administrative rules that pertain to the program's operations and internal rules and regulations that would govern the water marketing program.

Deliverable:

Establish trading and transfer approval procedures, develop a monitoring program to track transfers, payments, economic and social impacts, and aquifer and environmental conditions.
Create a template for partners to share potential projects, outlining various values and benefits of project and ranking based on local priorities and define the components of an online platform to help facilitate water transfers (e.g., water available for lease) between sellers and Subdistricts.

Budget and Schedule

This Statement of Work shall be accompanied by a combined Budget and Schedule that reflects the Tasks identified in the Statement of Work and shall be submitted to CWCB in excel format.

Reporting Requirements

Progress Reports: The applicant shall provide the CWCB a progress report every 6 months, beginning from the date of issuance of a purchase order, or 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.

Last Updated: May 2021

Final Report: At completion of the project, the applicant shall provide the CWCB a Final Report on the applicant's letterhead that:

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

The CWCB will pay out the last 10% of the budget when 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 purchase order or grant will be closed without any further payment.

Payment

Payment will be made based on actual expenditures and must include invoices for all work completed. The request for payment must include a description of the work accomplished by task, an estimate of the percent completion for individual tasks and the entire Project in relation to the percentage of budget spent, identification of any major issues, and proposed or implemented corrective actions.

Costs incurred prior to the effective date of this contract are not reimbursable. The last 10% of the entire grant will be paid out when the final deliverable has been received. All products, data and information developed as a result of this contract must be provided to as part of the project documentation.

Performance Measures

Performance measures for this contract shall include the following:

- (a) Performance standards and evaluation: Grantee will produce detailed deliverables for each task as specified. Grantee shall maintain receipts for all project expenses and documentation of the minimum in-kind contributions (if applicable) per the budget in Exhibit C. Per Water Plan Grant Guidelines, the CWCB will pay out the last 10% of the budget when 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 purchase order or grant will be closed without any further payment.
- (b) Accountability: Per Water Plan Grant Guidelines full documentation of project progress must be submitted with each invoice for reimbursement. Grantee must confirm that all grant conditions have been complied with on each invoice. In addition, per Water Plan Grant Guidelines, Progress Reports must be submitted at least once every 6 months. A Final Report must be submitted and approved before final project payment.
- (c) Monitoring Requirements: Grantee is responsible for ongoing monitoring of project progress per Exhibit A. Progress shall be detailed in each invoice and in each Progress Report, as detailed above. Additional inspections or field consultations will be arranged as may be necessary.
- (d) Noncompliance Resolution: Payment will be withheld if grantee is not current on all grant conditions. Flagrant disregard for grant conditions will result in a stop work order and cancellation of the Grant Agreement.



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Colorado Water
Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan Grant - Exhibit B Budget and Schedule

Prepared Date: June 28, 2021

Name of Applicant: Rio Grande Water Conservation District

Name of Water Project: Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project

Project Start Date: November 2021

Project End Date: November 2024

Task No.	Task Description	Task Start Date	Task End Date	Grant Funding Request	Match Funding	Total
1	Project Management and Administration	21-Nov	24-Nov	\$9,906	\$14,859	\$24,765
2	Outreach and Partnership Building	21-Nov	24-Nov	\$25,610	\$38,415	\$64,025
3	Scoping and Planning Activities	21-Nov	24-Nov	\$72,300	\$108,450	\$180,750
4	Development of the In-Basin Water Marketing Strategy	21-Nov	24-Nov	\$55,590	\$83,385	\$138,975
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
						\$0
	Direct Costs (See Detailed Page)				\$16,996	\$16,996
Total				\$163,406	\$262,105	\$425,511



Colorado Water Plan Fair

Prepared Date: 28-Jun-21
Name of Applicant: Rio Grande Basin Water Council
Name of Water Project: Colorado's Rio Grande Basin

	Project Manager	
Hourly Rate:	\$160	
	Hours	Costs
Task 1: Project Management and Administration		
- Project Work Plan	15	\$ 2,400
- Coordination	30	\$ 4,800
- Invoicing	10	\$ 1,600
- Monitoring and Reporting	20	\$ 3,200
- Technical Reports	25	\$ 4,000
Task 2: Outreach and Partnership Building		
- Outreach and Communication Plan	5	\$ 800
- Identification and Engagement of Water Supply Partners	10	\$ 1,600
Identification and Engagement of Water Market Stakeholders	10	\$ 1,600
-Regular public outreach (Roundtables, press releases, etc)	10	\$ 1,600
- Public Workshops	10	\$ 1,600
Task 3: Scoping and Planning Activities		
- Surface Water Market Evaluation	20	\$ 3,200
- Groundwater Market Evaluation	20	\$ 3,200
- Review Existing Groundwater Market Programs	40	\$ 6,400
- Water Rights/Legal Analysis	10	\$ 1,600
- Analyze Quantity of Potential Supplies	10	\$ 1,600

- Evaluate Infrastructure Requirements	10	\$ 1,600
- Environment - Socio/Economic Impact/Opportunities	15	\$ 2,400
- Economic Analysis	15	\$ 2,400
- Development of Decision Matrix	40	\$ 6,400
Task 4: Development of Water Marketing Strategy		
- Implementation Plan	120	\$ 19,200
- Legal Framework	25	\$ 4,000
- Monitoring Plan	25	\$ 4,000
Project Evaluation Tool	25	\$ 4,000
- Determine Feasibility of Online Water-Sharing Platform	25	\$ 4,000
- Identify Future Pilot Projects	25	\$ 4,000
- Final Report	75	\$ 12,000

645 103200

Direct Costs

Mileage	450	# mtgs/yr	4
Lodging	30		130
Copies			

Funding Source

Local Cash Match

Rio Grande Water Conservation District and Subdistricts	\$	30,000.00
Colorado Open Lands/ Rio Grande Headwaters Land trust	\$	20,000.00

State Cash Match

Colorado Water Conservation Board	\$	162,755.50
Sub-Total (50% cash match)	\$	212,755.50
Reclamation Funding	\$	212,755.50
Total Project Funding	\$	425,511.00



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Water Conservation Board

Grant - Detailed Budget Estimate and Reasonable Estimate

operative Project

Water Cooperative Project

Engineering		Economist		Attorney		Education & Outreach		Admini Assis
\$160		\$250		\$235		\$125		\$7
Hours	Costs	Hours	Costs	Hours	Costs	Hours	Costs	Hours
2	\$ 320	2	\$ 500	2	\$ 470	2	\$ 250	10
	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	10
	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	35
	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	10
10	\$ 1,600		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	10
	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	50	\$ 6,250	2
25	\$ 4,000		\$ -	5	\$ 1,175	50	\$ 6,250	10
25	\$ 4,000		\$ -	5	\$ 1,175	50	\$ 6,250	5
5	\$ 800		\$ -		\$ -	35	\$ 4,375	10
10	\$ 1,600	5	\$ 1,250	5	\$ 1,175	120	\$ 15,000	20
100	\$ 16,000	10	\$ 2,500	5	\$ 1,175	15	\$ 1,875	5
100	\$ 16,000	10	\$ 2,500	5	\$ 1,175	15	\$ 1,875	5
5	\$ 800	25	\$ 6,250	5	\$ 1,175	5	\$ 625	5
60	\$ 9,600		\$ -	30	\$ 7,050	10	\$ 1,250	10
120	\$ 19,200		\$ -	15	\$ 3,525		\$ -	5

80	\$ 12,800	15	\$ 3,750	15	\$ 3,525		\$ -	10
5	\$ 800	35	\$ 8,750		\$ -	50	\$ 6,250	5
5	\$ 800	35	\$ 8,750	5	\$ 1,175	20	\$ 2,500	5
10	\$ 1,600	10	\$ 2,500	5	\$ 1,175	10	\$ 1,250	
75	\$ 12,000	35	\$ 8,750	10	\$ 2,350	75	\$ 9,375	25
20	\$ 3,200	10	\$ 2,500	50	\$ 11,750	15	\$ 1,875	10
10	\$ 1,600		\$ -	5	\$ 1,175	10	\$ 1,250	
5	\$ 800	5	\$ 1,250	5	\$ 1,175	15	\$ 1,875	
5	\$ 800	10	\$ 2,500		\$ -	5	\$ 625	5
35	\$ 5,600	10	\$ 2,500	10	\$ 2,350	10	\$ 1,250	
5	\$ 800	5	\$ 1,250	5	\$ 1,175	25	\$ 3,125	25
717	114720	222	55500	187	43945	587	73375	237

consultants	years				
4	3	0.56	\$	12,096.00	
			\$	3,900.00	
			\$	1,000.00	
	total		\$	16,996.00	



strative stant		Total Hours	Total Labor Costs
75			
Costs			
\$ 750		33	\$ 4,690.00
\$ 750		40	\$ 5,550.00
\$ 2,625		45	\$ 4,225.00
\$ 750		30	\$ 3,950.00
\$ 750		45	\$ 6,350.00
		Task 1 Total =	\$ 24,765.00
\$ 150		57	\$ 7,200.00
\$ 750		100	\$ 13,775.00
\$ 375		95	\$ 13,400.00
\$ 750		60	\$ 7,525.00
\$ 1,500		170	\$ 22,125.00
		Task 2 Total =	\$ 64,025.00
\$ 375		155	\$ 25,125.00
\$ 375		155	\$ 25,125.00
\$ 375		85	\$ 15,625.00
\$ 750		120	\$ 20,250.00
\$ 375		150	\$ 24,700.00

\$ 750		130	\$ 22,425.00
\$ 375		110	\$ 18,575.00
\$ 375		85	\$ 16,000.00
\$ -		75	\$ 12,925.00
		Task 3 Total =	\$ 180,750.00
\$ 1,875		340	\$ 53,550.00
\$ 750		130	\$ 24,075.00
\$ -		50	\$ 8,025.00
\$ -		55	\$ 9,100.00
\$ 375		50	\$ 8,300.00
\$ -		90	\$ 15,700.00
\$ 1,875		140	\$ 20,225.00
		Task 4 Total =	\$ 138,975.00

17775 Total Labor Costs \$ 408,515.00

Total Direct Costs \$ 16,996.00

Total Project Costs \$ 425,511.00

50% Match \$ 212,755.50

Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project

Project Area Maps

Map Depicting the Project Area

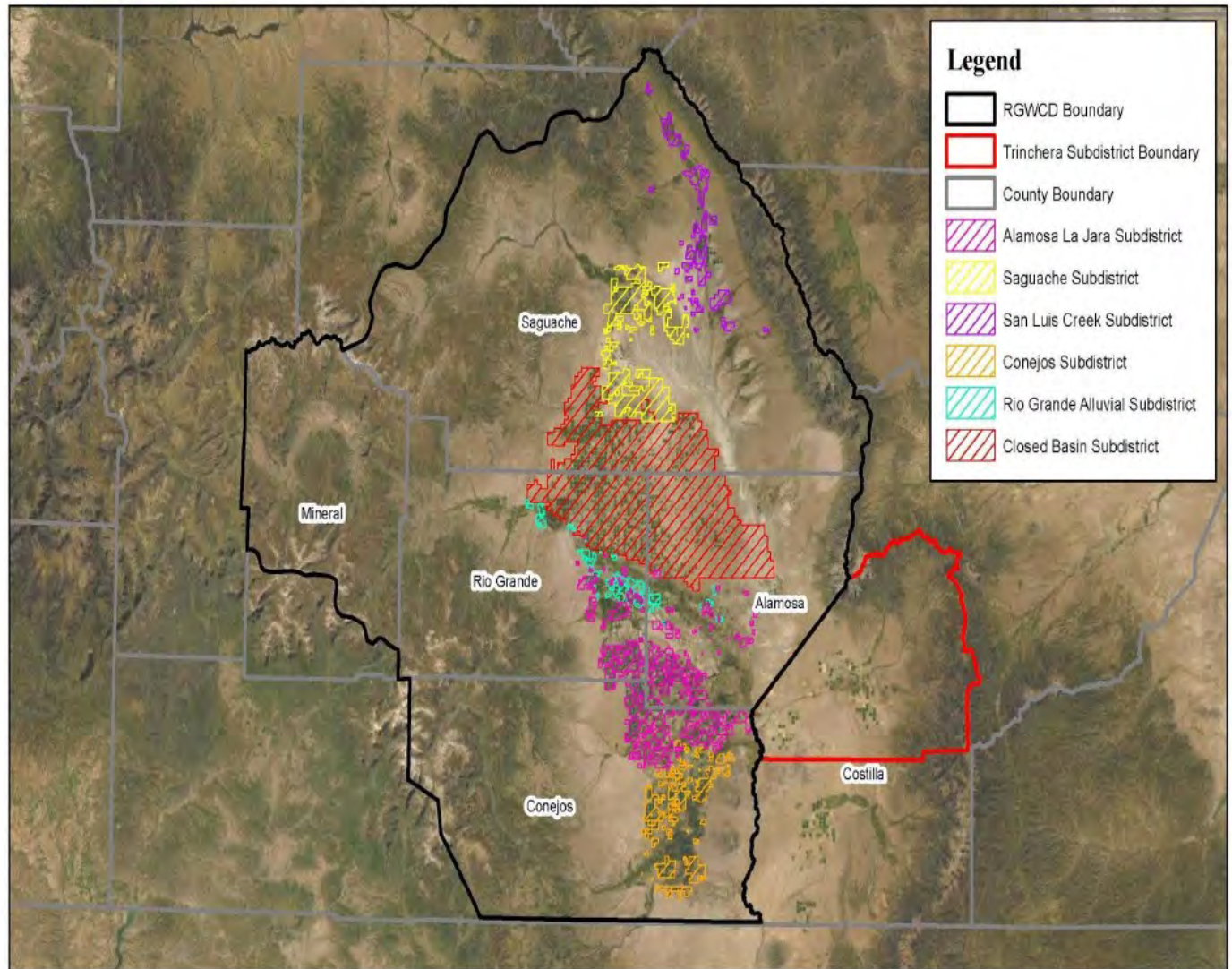
Counties include: Alamosa, Rio Grande, Conejos and portions of Saguache and Mineral Counties within the Rio Grande River basin, including the Closed Basin



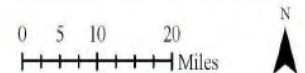
Rio Grande Water Conservation District Subdistricts map



RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT & TRINCHERA SUBDISTRICT MAP SAN LUIS VALLEY



Preparer: Colorado Open Lands Date: 4/6/21
Data Source: Tim Cardon (RGWCD), Jason Lorenz (Trinchera)
Public Access should not be inferred from this map. This map is not a survey and should not be construed as one.



Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project
Letters of Commitment



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

1313 Sherman Street, Room 718
Denver, CO 80203

04/05/2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation
Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District - WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy
Grant

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is pleased to collaborate with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District in committing funds for the development of an in-basin water marketing strategy associated with the Upper Rio Grande Basin. The Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project will help further state and local water management objectives, help sustain the region's agricultural economy, and provide critical multi-benefits such as enhancing environmental and recreation flows and preserving working lands.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board will provide a funding commitment of at least \$162,755.50 from our Alternative Transfer Methods Grant Program. Funds would be available at the time of contracting with Reclamation. CWCB's contribution will take the form of cash and will span all facets of the project, with the CWCB working collaboratively with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and others toward the development of a comprehensive, in-basin water market strategy.

Sincerely,

Alexander Funk
Agriculture and Rural Resiliency Policy Specialist
Colorado Water Conservation Board





Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

April 5, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District - WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

Groundwater Management Subdistricts (Subdistricts) are pleased to partner with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District in support of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project. Those Subdistricts of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District which will participate in the water marketing strategy project are those who will benefit most from this project. These participating Subdistricts are pleased to commit funds to be used for the development of a water marketing strategy to support their ability to find a Basin-wide cooperative solution that allows the remedy of injurious depletions to senior surface water owners and to create and maintain sustainable aquifer systems within the Basin.

As you know, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, in support of Groundwater Management Subdistricts and others, have been analyzing water market strategies for several years, and believe it is important to the long-term sustainability of one of the San Luis Valley's most important resources, its water supply. These participating Subdistricts are committing \$30,000 for matching funds from non-federal sources, which is contingent on the acceptance of the referenced Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant. Funds would be available at the time of contracting with Reclamation. Subdistrict contributions will take the form of cash and will span all facets of the project, with the Subdistricts working collaboratively with Rio Grande Water Conservation District and others toward the development of a comprehensive water market strategy. As always, these Subdistrict's reserve the right to provide their contribution through several non-federal sources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Amber Pacheco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amber" and last name "Pacheco" clearly distinguishable.

Amber Pacheco

Acting Deputy General Manager

Rio Grande Water Conservation District



April 1, 2021

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project Contribution

Dear Application Review Committee,

The Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) is partnering with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, Colorado Open Lands, and others on the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project.

RiGHT is committing \$10,000 from non-federal sources, contingent on the award of the referenced grant. Funds are secure and would be available immediately, in their entirety, upon contracting of this grant. RiGHT's contribution will be cash match. We plan to be involved in several aspects of the projects, especially marketing to landowners. We also anticipate being involved in overall project design and scoping as part of our strong partnerships with the districts and other nonprofits involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allen Law".

Allen Law, Executive Director, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

PO Box 444 Del Norte, CO 81132
(719) 657.0800
info@riograndelandtrust.org

riograndelandtrust.org

CONSERVING
OUR LAND, WATER
AND WAY OF LIFE
IN COLORADO'S
SAN LUIS VALLEY

April 4, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

Colorado Open Lands (COL) is pleased to partner with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District in committing funds for the development of a water marketing strategy to support aquifer decline in the San Luis Valley. As you know, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, the Ground Water Subdistricts and others have been analyzing water market strategies for several years, which we believe is important to the long-term sustainability of one of San Luis Valley's most important resource, its water supply.

The amount of our funding commitment is \$10,000 dollars from non-federal sources, which is contingent on the acceptance of the referenced WaterSMART grant. Funds would be available immediately, in their entirety, upon acceptance by the Bureau of Reclamation of this grant. COL's contribution will take the form of cash and will span all facets of the project, with the Subdistricts working collaboratively with Rio Grande Water Conservation District and others toward the development of a comprehensive water market strategy. As always, COL reserves the right to provide our contribution through several non-federal sources.

Colorado Open Lands would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage the Bureau of Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,



Anthony P. Caligiuri
President
Colorado Open Lands



Kevin Terry, Rio Grande Basin Program Director, Colorado Water and Habitat Project

Date: 3/30/2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District- WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Project

Trout Unlimited (TU) is committed to working alongside the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) and project partners to develop a holistic in-basin water marketing strategy in the Upper Rio Grande of Colorado. The Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project will provide the framework to prioritize environmental and recreational water needs that can simultaneously meet agricultural needs and create a market-based approach to catalyze new partnerships and mechanisms to share costs.

TU and local water partners have developed a voluntary market-based program that restores stream flows below working storage reservoirs in the Upper Rio Grande of Colorado. This program, known as the Winter Flow Program, operates for about 40% of the year (Nov. 1-March 31) and it has steadily grown in the basin, now operating downstream of five on-channel reservoirs. The Winter Flow Program's annual budget is approximately \$100,000 and we believe this project and associated strategy has the potential to tie in directly with the Winter Flow Program, creating a mutually beneficial leverage opportunity.

Additionally, TU is a committed partner to the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project and will contribute staff time to the project over 3 years. TU's staff commitment of 120 hours/year (\$50/hr) plus travel costs (\$1,000/yr) amounts to \$21,000 of in-kind services that will help make this project successful.

Thank You for your consideration of this valuable project,

Rio Grande Basin Program Director
Western Water and Habitat Program

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization

85 Pinon Circle, South Fork, CO 81154

(970) 799-7682 • kevin.terry@tu.org • www.tu.org

Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project
Letters of Support

MICHAEL F. BENNET
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
FINANCE
INTELLIGENCE

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

WASHINGTON, DC:
261 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5852

COLORADO:
CESAR E. CHAVEZ BUILDING
1244 SPEER BOULEVARD
DENVER, CO 80204
(303) 455-7600
<http://www.bennet.senate.gov>

April 2, 2021

Deputy Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Deputy Commissioner:

I write to express my support for the application submitted by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) for funding from the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grants Program. If awarded, the RGWCD, in collaboration with several partners, will implement the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project to assess the potential use of alternative transfer methods (e.g., temporary water leases) or "ATMs" to assist sub-districts in meeting their annual replacement obligations while protecting the Valley's agricultural economy.

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually, which provides a significant source of base jobs in the region. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

The key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. With USBR monies, the RGWCD in partnership with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Open Lands, Trout Unlimited, and the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, will develop and implement a basin-wide water leasing strategy. In August 2020, I met with RGWCD to better understand the groundwater management challenges and the leasing strategy concept. This proposal has the potential to help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the Basin, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

The RGWCD plays a critical role in managing water supply challenges and provides support to local sub-districts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation. I encourage you to give the application submitted by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District your full and fair consideration consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. Thank you for your consideration, and please notify my office of any funds awarded.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

State Representative
DONALD VALDEZ
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Avenue, Room 307
Denver, Colorado 80203
Office: 303-866-2916
Email: donald.valdez.house@state.co.us



Member:
Agriculture, Livestock, & Water
Committee
Transportation & Local
Government Committee

COLORADO
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL

DENVER

80203

March 29, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives, as does past and ongoing attempts to send water out of the Basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation, replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping and assuring that the Basin's water resources are used within the Basin. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with state and local partners, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board, to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods or temporary water leasing to help meet state requirements while sustaining some agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and can be developed in ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes such as enhanced streamflows within the Basin. Further, given the success of some of these early projects, there's significant, diverse community interest in developing and implementing a basin-wide water leasing strategy that may help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the Basin, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

I would like to provide my wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Donald E. Valdez", is written over a circular official stamp. The stamp contains text that is partially obscured but includes "DONALD VALDEZ" and "HOUSE DISTRICT 62".

Donald E. Valdez
State Representative
House District 62



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

1313 Sherman Street, Room 718
Denver, CO 80203

03/24/2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region with a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. The Rio Grande Basin is also home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including popular activities such as angling, hunting, and boating.

Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compact compliance. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation and replacing water depletions. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District is working with state and local partners to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods to help meet state requirements while sustaining agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and developing ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes. Given the success of these early projects, there is diverse community interest in developing a basin-wide water leasing strategy that may help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the region, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board would like to provide our support for the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Mitchell,
Colorado Water Conservation Board Director





April 1, 2021

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project

Dear Application Review Committee,

The Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) enthusiastically supports the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project application. RiGHT is a 21-year old, local nonprofit land trust serving the San Luis Valley, which is the same focus area as this application. As an organization we focus on using conservation as a tool to benefit agricultural producers, the environment, wildlife, Valley communities, visitors to the area, and others.

Today and likely into the future, water quantity is the San Luis Valley's greatest natural resource concern. The work of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and each of its Groundwater Management Subdistricts is critical to bringing the Valley's water demand both into compliance with rules and regulations and to a closer match with the wet water supply actually available long-term. RiGHT is actively engaging with the districts to ensure we are a helpful partner in their critical work.

One role RiGHT hopes to play is assisting with marketing the possibility of ag-to-ag water leases within the basin. Working with smaller ranchers every day, we see great opportunity for landowners to lease some water to the subdistricts to replace depletions while the vast majority of their land remains highly productive. This could provide a much-needed second source of income for family farms and ranches that are under a great deal of economic stress, while also preserving stream flows and larger-scale farming.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allen Law".

Allen Law, Executive Director, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

PO Box 444 Del Norte, CO 81132
(719) 657.0800
info@riograndelandtrust.org
riograndelandtrust.org

CONSERVING
OUR LAND, WATER
AND WAY OF LIFE
IN COLORADO'S
SAN LUIS VALLEY

April 1, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, hay, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation and replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with state and local partners, including Colorado Open Lands, to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including conservation easements and the use of alternative transfer methods or temporary water leasing to help meet state requirements while sustaining some agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and can be developed in ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes such as enhanced stream flows.

Colorado Open Lands would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,



Anthony P. Caligiuri
President
Colorado Open Lands



April 5, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District's WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant Application

Here at the headwaters of the Rio Grande in Colorado's San Luis Valley, we have a rich history of both water use and active community engagement in collaborative problem solving. Our core economies of agriculture and increasingly recreation rely upon the highly variable, snow-pack dependent water supply. Likewise, we have extensive habitat on both private working lands and public lands which sustain wildlife populations ranging from migratory birds and fisheries to diverse non-game and big game species, including Federally Endangered Species. Statewide, 80% of wildlife species rely upon riparian and wetland that comprise a mere 2 to 3% of Colorado's landscape.

While annual variability of water supply, drought, and long-term drying trends are affecting our economies and habitats we value, a core issue we face is the sustainability of the groundwater supply. Many efforts have long been underway to secure adequate water supply for well augmentation and to maintain compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. With many partners addressing various aspects of water sustainability, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a central role. Through their Groundwater Management Subdistricts and numerous other efforts, we are striving for creative solutions to encourage conservation and provide replacement of water depletions caused by groundwater pumping. While current efforts contribute to the solutions, these approaches may not be able to fully address the needs. Likewise, there is concern that the potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing could well cause extensive economic adversity, affecting the entire community. This project could add additional and useful tools to our collective efforts.

Since the launch of the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center's *Water Education Initiative* at Adams State University, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with us to advance new approaches to community outreach and education, for both students and the public at large. They co-host the annual Rio Grande State of the Basin Symposium as well as provide information, speakers and support for the water education programs offered by the Salazar Center and those of many other local partners. We look forward to working with the District and partners on the communications and outreach aspects of this project, in order to continue to build, enhance and sustain community engagement in water solutions.

The Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center encourages Reclamation's full support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project as proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ms. Rio de la Vista
Director, Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center
Adams State University, 208 Edgemont Boulevard, Suite 3150
Alamosa, CO 81101



Kevin Terry, Rio Grande Basin Program Director, Colorado Water and Habitat Project

Date: 3/30/2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District- WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Project

Please accept Trout Unlimited's (TU) enthusiastic support of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's (RGWCD) application for funding through the United States Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant Program.

The groundwater crisis in the San Luis Valley has reached a critical point, as the State Engineer's groundwater rules and regulations are now enforceable after decades of development. Water users, through self-governance, are implementing annual replacement plans that rectify the injurious depletions that wells cause to senior surface water rights. Locally, there is a clear understanding in our communities of the need to integrate new methods and multiple-benefit strategies, that can help maximize the benefits of limited and dwindling supplies of a shared resource, by creating a holistic approach to water sustainability in the San Luis Valley.

TU is motivated to be a partner in this comprehensive effort, and we believe it will create opportunity for partnerships and an effective market by including non-consumptive environmental and recreational water benefits in the approach. We are excited to offer our extensive experience in this arena. In Colorado, TU and our local partners have created a voluntary market-based program, in the Upper Rio Grande to restore stream flows and simultaneously meet the needs of other water users. The program, known as the Winter Flow Program, restores stream flows below 5 working reservoirs in the basin, which have historically shut off outlet flows during the winter to store water for irrigation. Shutting off rivers for 150 days or 40% of the year is obviously not good for fisheries and aquatic ecosystems. Therefore, TU had a need to get water in the streams during this time-period, but we didn't directly have a need for additional uses of the water. This created an opportunity to identify partners that could accomplish their water needs within the winter timeframe, allowing us to restore flows and share costs including reservoir storage. TU has been working with the RGWCD every step of the way, trying to find creative ways to integrate sub-district operations into the Winter Flow Program. We see this project as an opportunity to expand this

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization

85 Pinon Circle, South Fork, CO 81154

(970) 799-7682 • kevin.terry@tu.org • www.tu.org

effort to new areas of the basin and to develop new tools and the legal framework to do so.

This funding opportunity and project proposal is exactly the support our communities need to move forward towards a sustainable water future, that captures the diverse needs of water and catalyzes diverse partnerships.

Thank You for your consideration of this valuable project,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'V. B.', is positioned above the typed name.

Rio Grande Basin Program Director
Western Water and Habitat Program



COLORADO
Division of Water Resources
Department of Natural Resources
Water Division 3 - Main Office

April 6, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @Water SMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of Division 3 of the Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR) for the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant.

A key water management issue in the upper Rio Grande Basin in Colorado centers around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought presents serious challenges to these management objectives. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation, and replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

The Rio Grande Water Conservation District, along with other state and local partners, has worked to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods (ATM's) or temporary water leasing, which may be used to help meet state requirements while sustaining agricultural production. This WaterSMART grant will be a key component in the development of these innovative approaches.

I would encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

Craig W. Cotten
Division Engineer, Division 3





Special Improvement District No. 2 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

March 25, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

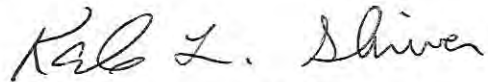
Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives, as does past and ongoing attempts to send water out of the Basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation, replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping and assuring that the Basin's water resources are used within the Basin. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with state and local partners, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board, to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods or temporary water leasing to help meet state requirements while sustaining some agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and can be developed in ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes such as enhanced streamflows within the Basin. Further, given the success of some of these early projects, there's significant, diverse community interest in developing and implementing a basin-wide water leasing strategy that may help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the Basin, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

The Board of Managers of Special Improvement District No. 2 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further

strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karla L. Shriver". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Karla L. Shriver, President

Special Improvement District No. 2 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District



Special Improvement District No. 3 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

March 25, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

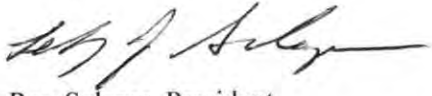
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The Board of Managers of Special Improvement District No. 3 of the Water Conservation District would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the

Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LeRoy Salazar", with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

LeRoy Salazar, President

Special Improvement District No. 3 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District



Special Improvement District No. 4 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

April 5, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

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Special Improvement District No. 4 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District would like to provide our support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies for all the subdistrict by supporting the

goals and strategies in their Plans of Water Management, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this very important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Ivers". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Ivers" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Ivers, Program Manager
Special Improvement District No. 4 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District



Special Improvement District No. 5 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

April 5, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

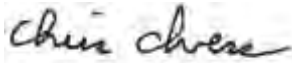
Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives, as does past and ongoing attempts to send water out of the Basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation, replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping and assuring that the Basin's water resources are used within the Basin. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

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Special Improvement District No. 5 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District would like to provide our support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies for all the subdistrict by supporting the

goals and strategies in their Plans of Water Management, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this very important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Ivers", written in a cursive style.

Chris Ivers, Program Manager
Special Improvement District No. 5 of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District



March 23, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, hay, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

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The Rio Grande Basin Roundtable would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and

multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nathan Coombs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nathan" and last name "Coombs" clearly distinguishable.

Nathan Coombs
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
Chairman

623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-2230
Heather@slvwcd.org



April 2, 2021

United States Bureau of Reclamation

RE: Rio Grande Water Conservation District WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

Dear WaterSMART Review Committee,

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District (SLVWCD) for the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's (RGWCD) WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant proposal. This project would allow the RGWCD and their partners to implement creative and collaborate projects to share water across conservation programs in the San Luis Valley.

The San Luis Valley in Southern Colorado is a rural community with rich cultural and natural resources. The local economy is supported by agriculture and year-round outdoor recreation. The area has long grappled with managing the surface and groundwater supplies, which are limited and variable. Over-appropriation, periodic droughts, and overuse of the aquifers have resulted in the need for strict regulation of water resources. Diverse partners across the watershed are working collaboratively to comply with regulations, while maintaining local agriculture, as well as sustaining environment and recreation attributes.

The RGWCD has been a leader in this effort, working across the basin to develop self-governed groundwater management subdistricts with the goal of keeping agriculture in production while addressing impacts of groundwater use on aquifers and surface water users. This difficult task is made more challenging in the face of limited water supplies and increased frequency of years with lower than average water yield. Therefore, it is critical that water and natural resource managers in the basin develop creative and flexible approaches to water management. The RGWCD's water marketing and sharing project does just that; this innovative project will create a water leasing program that will help meet state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the region, and support other multi-benefit initiatives. It is admirable how the RGWCD and the project partners have devised this project to benefit diverse water interests. This type of creative and inclusive thinking was highlighted as a priority strategy for water management in both the Colorado State Water Plan and the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan.

The SLVWCD wholeheartedly supports the RGWCD's project, which is critical to the future success of water users in the Rio Grande Basin. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the RGWCD's application and I hope you will look fondly on their request for funding through the WaterSMART program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather R. Dutton".

Heather R. Dutton
Manager, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District

Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation
Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-2230



April 1, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, hay, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

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More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with state and local partners, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board, to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods or temporary water leasing to help meet state requirements while sustaining some agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and can be developed in ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes such as enhanced stream flows. Further, given the success of some of these early projects, there's significant, diverse community interest in developing and implementing a basin-wide water leasing strategy that may help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the region, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

Emma Reesor

Executive Director, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project

Terrace Irrigation Company, Inc.

P.O. Box 109, Monte Vista, CO 81144

719/852-4535

April 2, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

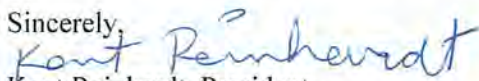
Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Basin, and San Luis Valley, is a culturally significant region in southern Colorado that is home to a vibrant agricultural economy and outstanding, unique natural landscapes. Agriculture is the region's primary economic activity, with agricultural products sold totaling approximately \$325 million annually and providing a significant source of base jobs in the region. Compared with other agricultural regions in Colorado, and other interior mountain west states, the San Luis Valley also supports a diverse agricultural economy featuring potatoes, barley, wheat, quinoa, and livestock production. In addition to agriculture, the Rio Grande Basin is home to a thriving recreational industry, much of which is water-dependent, including Great Sand Dunes National Park and popular activities such as angling, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

Key water management issues in the basin center around the sustainability of the groundwater supply while securing adequate water supply for augmentation and maintaining compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. Sustained drought and climate change present serious challenges to these management objectives, as does past and ongoing attempts to send water out of the Basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District plays a critical role in managing these water supply challenges, supporting local subdistricts in developing creative solutions to encourage groundwater conservation, replacing water depletions caused by groundwater pumping and assuring that the Basin's water resources are used within the Basin. Traditional approaches to replacing water depletions include the purchase of reservoir water, forbearance, and permanent retirement of irrigated agriculture. These approaches could become more difficult due to declining water supply and potential economic impacts of permanent fallowing.

More recently, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District has worked with state and local partners, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board, to assess other innovative water conservation and sharing approaches, including the use of alternative transfer methods or temporary water leasing to help meet state requirements while sustaining some agricultural production. Early leasing pilots in the region provide a template for scaling these efforts basin-wide and can be developed in ways that allow for continued agricultural production while also benefiting environmental and recreational attributes such as enhanced streamflows within the Basin. Further, given the success of some of these early projects, there's significant, diverse community interest in developing and implementing a basin-wide water leasing strategy that may help further state and local water management objectives, sustain local agriculture, enhance the ability to keep water in the Basin, and support other multi-benefit initiatives.

The Terrace Irrigation Company is in support of this application. As a reservoir company, whose stockholders are surface water users and well owners on the Alamosa River who could potentially benefit from the success of an ATM project, we write in support of the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, to benefit agricultural, municipal & industrial, and environmental water users. We encourage the United States Bureau of Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

Kent Reinhardt, President
Terrace Irrigation Company



Conejos Water Conservancy District

P. O. Box 550

Manassa, CO 81141

Cwcd1971@hotmail.com

Phone 719-843-5261 fax 5452

April __1__, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

Re: Rio Grande Water Conservation District @WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

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The Your Organization would like to provide our wholehearted support for the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant project proposed by the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. The proposal will further strategies in the Colorado Water Plan, including alternative transfer methods and multi-benefit, collaborative projects. We encourage Reclamation to approve funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "N. Coombs".

Nathan Coombs, Manager CWCD



Rio Grande Water Conservation District

8805 Independence Way • Alamosa, Colorado 81101

Phone: (719) 589-6301 • Fax: (719) 992-2026

Protecting & Conserving San Luis Valley Water

April 6, 2021

To: United States Bureau of Reclamation

RE: Rio Grande Water Conservation District WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grant

The Rio Grande Water Conservation District currently uses the services of a lobbyist at the state level, Mrs. Becky Brooks with Stealey II, Inc. and another, Ms. Christine Arbogast with Kogovsek and Associates, at the federal level to assist the District in monitoring legislative issues at both levels that could have potential impacts on the Basin and the District. For all purposes of this grant application process, the District did not utilize any type of lobbying efforts at any level. The District will not utilize lobbying efforts for the benefit of this grant if this application is awarded.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amber Pacheco".

Amber Pacheco
Acting Deputy General Manager
Rio Grande Water Conservation District