



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Chris Sturm, Watershed and Flood Protection Section

DATE: May 17-18, 2022 Board Meeting

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Item 12, Water Plan Grant, Environment and Recreation
Category - Criteria Update

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Board approve the revised guidance for the Environment and Recreation Category of the Water Plan Grant program.

Introduction:

This agenda item provides draft criteria for an updated Colorado Water Plan grant (WPG), Environment and Recreation category that includes the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program (CWRP). Staff has developed draft guidance that updates and merges the criteria of the two grant programs. The draft criteria is included after this memo. Staff incorporated feedback from the Board after presenting draft language at the March 2022 Board Meeting.

Background:

CWCB first introduced the concept of merging the Environment and Recreation category of the WPG and the CWRP in March of 2021 (March Agenda Item #12, Grant Recommendations). In May of 2021 (Agenda Item #23, Grant Recommendations) the Board approved the recommendation below.

“Beginning in July 2022, include the majority of the Watershed Restoration Grant Program under the WPG program. Due to legislation currently under consideration by the General Assembly that would allocate additional funding to this grant program for post-fire mitigation work, staff is recommending delaying the inclusion of this program in to the WPG program for a year until the outcome of that legislation and funding appropriation is known. Future recommend funding appropriations in the annual Projects Bill would be consistent with past proportional appropriations to the Watershed Restoration Grant Program and WPG environment and Recreation category (\$5.5 million per year). Staff recommends continuing the Watershed Restoration Program in the Watershed and Flood Protection Section as the recipient of special funding for urgent post-fire and flooding grant needs and any technical watershed contracting work.”



Watershed Health & Recreation Category

The Colorado Water Plan defines watershed health as “a measure of ecosystem structure and function. Structure refers to species richness (characterized by abundance and diversity), inorganic and organic resources, and physical attributes (including habitat complexity). Function refers to ecosystem processes such as the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and succession.” Healthy watersheds are resilient, and resilient ecosystems are able to absorb repeated disturbances (e.g. fires, floods, droughts) and adapt to change without fundamentally changing the services (e.g. flow regime) upon which society and the environment depend. Well-formed applications in the Watershed Health and Recreation category will take these ideas into consideration. A variety of watershed health opportunities can be addressed with this grant category, and applicants should demonstrate a multi-objective approach.

Grant Types:

There are three grant types in the Watershed Health and Recreation Category of Colorado’s Water Plan Grant program. They are *planning, design, and project* grants. Each type is discussed below. Applicants should contact the CWCB to discuss potential applications if there is any question about eligibility. Applicants may submit applications that combine the different grant types.

Planning grants:

Planning studies include the data, analysis, and social requisites necessary to explore restoration and protection alternatives. They develop project concepts and guidelines that reflect the values, goals, and objectives of the watershed community. These studies are typically performed at watershed, county, or stream reach scales to inform priorities for watershed & forest health, flood hazard mitigation, and water based recreation. This grant type can include watershed plans and assessments, watershed & stream master plans, [stream management plans](#), [Wildfire Ready Watersheds](#) framework implementation, [Fluvial Hazard Zone](#) mapping, elements of the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Watershed Planning](#), and recreation enhancement planning.

The objectives for the planning effort should be clearly described in the application. Please describe how the planning will aid local stakeholders to conserve, develop, protect, and manage Colorado’s water resources. Please also outline if and how the plan will be used to protect life and property from flood and fluvial hazards.

Design grants:

Design grants support analysis and design efforts to develop construction documents (plans specifications, reports, permits, and supporting data). Designs are typically performed at stream reach scales or individual site locations. Applications of this grant type can include baseline data collection, modelling, engineering, and permitting. Designs for stream channels and floodplains should come with a strong commitment to protect, manage, and restore river and floodplain ecosystems.

Project grants:

Project grant applications should focus on the implementation of priorities identified through stakeholder led planning processes. They should be informed by a plan type described in the Planning Grants section above. Project grants should also demonstrate a strong commitment to restoring, protecting, or enhancing the ecological processes of the riverine environment.

Project types may include stream channel and floodplain restoration, habitat development for aquatic and terrestrial species, re-vegetation of riparian areas & invasive species removal, erosion mitigation in upland areas, improvement of water based recreational opportunities, and fish & boat passage. Restoration is a general term that may include the restoration, reconfiguration, rehabilitation, or resurrection of stream channels and floodplains. Monitoring associated with project implementation is also an eligible activity for this grant type. Recreation projects must demonstrate no adverse impact to ecological structure and function. More specific project types are listed below.

- Stream restoration and riparian habitat improvement projects
- Removal of invasive phreatophytes, e.g. tamarisk and Russian olive
- Projects that support multi-objective water-related recreational activities, such as boating, fishing, waterfowl hunting, and wildlife watching
- Projects that promote restoration, recovery, and sustainability of endangered, threatened, and imperiled aquatic and riparian-dependent species and plant communities
- Structural solutions (e.g., diversion structure reconstruction with fish and boat passage)
- Flow-related projects (e.g., split-season use of water - irrigation and instream flow use)
- Multi-objective flood mitigation projects
- Post-Wildfire impact mitigation projects
- Recreational in-channel diversions and other projects that provide or improve boating opportunities

Basic Applicant Qualifications:

Applicants are required to demonstrate that the planning, design, or project application meets the minimum criteria outlined below.

Grant applicants must demonstrate:

- a commitment to collaborative approaches, involving locally and/or regionally based diverse interests within the watershed in question, with participation open to all interested persons in the watershed. Please list the stakeholders and how they will be involved.
- a commitment to restoring or protecting the ecological processes that connect land and water;
- a broad based involvement in or support for the grant application, including relevant local, state, or federal governmental entities
- That the plan, design, or project is fiscally and technically feasible.
- That a design or project grant has been informed through a planning effort similar to those described in the Planning Grant section
- That a grant for recreation will not have any negative impacts on ecosystem structure or function. Ideally it will enhance ecosystem structure and function while also addressing recreational needs