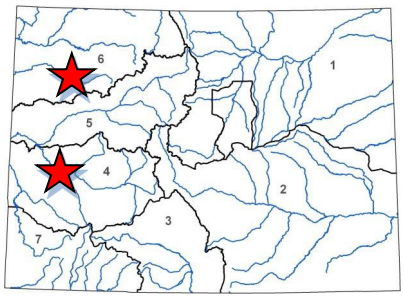
COLORADO
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Department of Natural Resources

Uncompahgre and White River Riparian Restoration
RiversEdge West

March 2023 Board Meeting

Water Plan Grant Application

Lat:39.069130
Long: -108.560810



LOCATION	
Counties:	Montrose, Rio Blanco
Drainage Basin:	Gunnison, White

DETAILS	
Total Project Cost:	$204,826
Water Plan Grant Request:	$100,503
Recommended Amount:	**$100,503**
Other CWCB Funding:	$0
Other Funding Amount:	$97,323
Applicant Match:	$7,000
Project Type(s): Construction/ Implementation	
Project Category:	Watershed Health & Recreation
Measurable Result:	19 acres of river restoration at several project sites. Train 20+ Western Colorado Conservation Corps members in riparian restoration Best Management Practices.

RiversEdge West (REW, formerly Tamarisk Coalition) proposes to restore 19 acres of public and private riparian lands along two miles of the White River, Yellow Creek, and Uncompahgre River. Restoration work will be accomplished through the removal of invasive tamarisk, Russian olive, and other noxious weeds from the riparian zone and replacing them with diverse native plant species.

This project engages youth conservation corps, community volunteers, private landowners, local contractors, federal agencies, local government, and non-profit groups. The project will enhance fish and wildlife habitat, protect water quality, and improve recreational and agricultural river uses.

RiversEdge West was incorporated as a nonprofit in 2002 with the mission to advance the restoration of riparian lands through collaboration, education, and technical assistance. Past CWCB Grants include 2018- $85,000 for Technical Assistance and Capacity Building for Riparian Habitat Restoration and 2019- $150,000 for Collaborative Riparian Restoration.

Water Plan Support: *Action Areas-* Thriving Watersheds- Healthy Lands & Engaged Partners, Robust Agriculture- Reducing erosion and improving water quality; *BIP IPP-* White River IWI*; Supporting Plans-* White River Partnership- 2021 White River Restoration Plan; Uncompaghre Riverway Master Plan (Montrose)

WPG Request: 49%
Matching Funds: Colorado River District: $70,823; City of Montrose: $10,000; BLM: $5,000 (cash) $1,500 (in kind); BOR: $2,000; REW: $7,000; Uncompaghre Volunteers: $5,000 (in kind); Western Colorado Conservation: $1,000 (in kind); private landowner: $2,000 (in kind)

Funding Recommendation: Staff recommends Board approval of $100,503 to RiversEdge West for the Uncompahgre and White River Riparian Restoration Project.

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Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	RiversEdge West
Name of Water Project	Uncompahgre and White River Riparian Restoration Project
Grant Request Amount	**$100,502.77**
Primary Category	$100,502.77
Watershed Health & Recreation	
Total Applicant Match	**$7,000.00**
Applicant Cash Match	$7,000.00
Applicant In-Kind Match	$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	**$97,323.00**
Colorado River District	$70,823.00
City of Montrose	$10,000.00
Private landowner	$2,000.00
Friends of the River Uncompahgre	$5,000.00
Bureau of Land Management	$5,000.00
Bureau of Land Management	$1,500.00
Bureau of Reclamation	$2,000.00
Western Colorado Conservation Corps	$1,000.00
Total Project Cost	**$204,825.77**

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: RiversEdge West
Mailing Address: PO Box 1907 Grand Junction CO 81502
FEIN: 270,007,315

Organization Contact: Shannon Wadas
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Organization Contact - Alternate: Rusty Lloyd
Position/Title: Executive Director
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Grant Management Contact: Shannon Wadas
Position/Title: Associate Director
Email: swadas@riversedgewest.org
Phone: 9702567400

Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Shannon Wadas
Position/Title: Associate Director
Email: swadas@riversedgewest.org
Phone: 9702567400

Description of Grantee/Applicant

RiversEdge West restores riparian ecosystems through education, collaboration, and technical assistance. We accomplish this by replacing invasive plants with native plant species along thousands of riverside acres across the Southwest, educating thousands of community members and youth to foster long-term river stewardship, training river restoration professionals through our training series and annual conference – including education and outreach about the tamarisk beetle, and researching and developing new restoration techniques to effectively restore riparian ecosystems.

Type of Eligible Entity

- ☐ Public (Government)
- ☐ Public (District)
- ☐ Public (Municipality)
- ☐ Ditch Company
- ☐ Private Incorporated
- ☐ Private Individual, Partnership, or Sole Proprietor
- ☐ Non-governmental Organization
- ☐ Covered Entity
- ■ Other

Category of Water Project

- ☐ Agricultural Projects
  Developing communications materials that specifically work with and educate the agricultural community on headwater restoration, identifying the state of the science of this type of work to assist agricultural users among others.
- ☐ Conservation & Land Use Planning
  Activities and projects that implement long-term strategies for conservation, land use, and drought planning.
- ☐ Engagement & Innovation Activities
  Activities and projects that support water education, outreach, and innovation efforts. Please fill out the Supplemental Application on the website.
- ■ Watershed Restoration & Recreation
  Projects that promote watershed health, environmental health, and recreation.
- ☐ 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 and Multi-beneficial projects and those projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap.

Location of Water Project

Latitude	39.069130
Longitude	-108.560810
Lat Long Flag	Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source	Uncompahgre River, White River, Yellow Creek
Basins	Yampa/White/Green; Gunnison
Counties	Montrose; Rio Blanco
Districts	41-Lower Uncompahgre River; 43-White River Basin

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Construction / Implementation
Scheduled Start Date - Design	3/1/2023
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	

Description

This project will enhance fish and wildlife habitat, protect water quality, and improve recreational and agricultural river uses on 19 acres of public and private riparian lands along two miles of the Uncompahgre, White River and Yellow Creek. Restoration work will be accomplished through the removal of invasive tamarisk, Russian olive, and other noxious weeds from the riparian zone and replacing them with diverse native plant species.

The Uncompahgre, White River, and Yellow Creek provide habitat for endangered and state-listed fish and amphibian species as well as economically important trout fisheries. The riparian corridors provide habitat and migratory routes for game and other wildlife. Agricultural and recreational uses of these rivers serve as the foundation of local communities' socioeconomic well-being. Invasive plants like tamarisk and Russian olive degrade these rivers in myriad ways along with the ecological and societal benefits that they provide.

This collaborative project engages youth conservation corps, community volunteers, private landowners, local contractors, federal agencies, local government, and non-profit groups to enhance riparian zones across land ownership boundaries and improve overall watershed health.

Measurable Results

	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
	New Annual Water Supplies Developed or Conserved (acre-feet), Consumptive or Nonconsumptive
	Existing Storage Preserved or Enhanced (acre-feet)
	New Storage Created (acre-feet)
10,364	Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
	Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
	Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
19	Area of Restored or Preserved Habitat (acres)
	Quantity of Water Shared through Alternative Transfer Mechanisms or water sharing agreement (acre-feet)
	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Incorporating Water-Saving Actions into Land Use Planning
140	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

This project also enhances communication and coordination between agricultural landowners, community members, federal agencies, businesses, conservation districts, and local governments through a collaborative approach and volunteer events. In addition to the populations directly impacted by engagement, this project also positively impacts local residents, business, and visitors by improving overall watershed health, recreational access, and landscape aesthetics.

Water Project Justification

This project supports goals of the Colorado Water Plan, Yampa-White-Green Basin Implementation Plan (BIP), and the Gunnison BIP by improving aquatic and terrestrial habitat, including for endangered native fishes, enhancing river-based recreation, and improving agricultural uses of riparian areas. This project uses a collaborative approach involving federal, county, municipal, and nonprofit entities as well as private landowners, private businesses, and community volunteers working across jurisdictional boundaries to improve riparian health. The White River and Yellow Creek portions of the project are informed by the White River Partnership Riparian Restoration Plan, which was collaboratively developed by a diverse stakeholder group. The

Uncompahgre portion of the project originated from a desire of local citizens, businesses, and government who saw a need for collaborative efforts to restore this section of river. Specific goals of the Water Plan, Yampa-White-Green BIP, and Gunnison BIP that this project supports are addressed below.

2023 Colorado Water Plan Draft:

P6-5: Thriving Watersheds: Healthy Lands: Shared stewardship improves watershed health and resilience across multiple jurisdictions. This project represents a collaborative effort between nonprofit organizations, private citizens, private landowners, municipal government, and federal and management agencies that restores riparian areas across jurisdictional boundaries and on multiple land ownership types.

P6-5: Thriving Watersheds: Engaged Partners: Agencies and stakeholders need to plan together, prioritize together, and act together. This project is a collaborative effort resulting from planning among federal agency staff, local stakeholders, and other partners.

P6-22: Robust Agriculture: Healthy Lands: Reducing erosion and improving water quality: Management practices such as conservation tillage, contour farming, and buffer strips can reduce on-farm erosion and improve water quality. This project enhances riparian buffers of agricultural lands that consist of diverse native vegetation.

P6-33: Thriving Watersheds: Meeting Future Water Needs: Increase access to recreational opportunities. This project improves recreational opportunities by enhancing a public river access point and improving river aesthetics.

P6-34: Thriving Watersheds: Wise Water Use: Invasive phreatophyte and species removal. This project removes tamarisk and Russian olive which disconnect floodplains from the river, channelize rivers, alter nutrient cycles, and consume large amounts of water. The White River and Yellow Creek portions of this project are part of the larger White River basin-wide efforts of the White River Partnership that works across jurisdictional and state boundaries to implement riparian restoration. The sites on the main stem of the White River occur on adjacent private and Bureau of Land Management lands. The Uncompahgre River site has strong local support and the goal is to use this project to catalyze further landscape-scale riparian restoration efforts.

P6-34: Thriving Watersheds: Healthy Lands: Reconnecting floodplains and nature-based solutions. Tamarisk and Russian olive armor riverbanks which causes rivers to disconnect from the floodplain. This project removes tamarisk and Russian olive to re-establish and maintain floodplain connectivity.

P6-34: Thriving Watersheds: Healthy Lands: Improving riparian and aquatic habitat. This project improves riparian habitat by removing invasive plant species and establishing diverse native plant species. It also improves instream habitat by removing invasive plants that armor riverbanks and disconnect the river from the floodplain and reduce the presence of backwater habitats that native fish depend on. Removal of tamarisk and Russian olive also helps maintain natural river geomorphology, which is key to native fish habitat in the lower White River.

P6-35: Thriving Watersheds: Partner Actions Rely on Effective Engagement at Different Levels. As a nonprofit organization, RiversEdge West coordinates the White River Partnership which consists of federal, state, county, municipal, research, educational, and nonprofit entities as well as private landowners. On the White River and Yellow Creek, RiversEdge West leads project coordination, planning, and data collection. On the Uncompahgre Project, RiversEdge West is the principal grant applicant and coordinates partners and planning efforts for riparian restoration implementation. Project sites in the White River basin are identified in the White River Partnership Riparian Restoration Plan as well as a Coordinated Resource Management Plan created by the

White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts.

P6-45: Resilient Planning: Meeting Future Water Needs: Flood storage for extremes. Healthy and properly functioning riparian areas, which this project aims to maintain and establish, act as natural storage areas that absorb water during atypically high river flow events.

Yampa-White-Green Basin Implementation Plan (2022)

Goal 6 Objective 3: Quantify and protect environmental and recreational water uses project examples: “riparian restoration and habitat improvement to improve specific and general watershed health for consumptive and nonconsumptive uses alike.”

This riparian restoration project will improve general watershed health to benefit aquatic and riparian habitats, agricultural use of the riparian zones, and recreational river users. At the landscape scale this project improves water quality and quantity in the White River basin.

Goal 6 Objective 4: Recognize that floodplains, riparian areas, and wetlands are natural storage reservoirs, and implement restoration projects to maintain and improve these storage reservoirs.

Through the removal of woody invasive plants and their replacement with native vegetation, this project will restore riparian areas to maintain and improve natural riparian functions, which include regulating atypically high flow events and storing water that is later released back into the river channel as flow levels decrease.

Goal 6 Objective 8: Research and design multi-purpose projects to improve riparian or aquatic ecology and bank stability without changing the existing flow regime.

The portion of this project that occurs on private land along the White River includes revegetation with native plants that will both enhance the riparian ecology for wildlife needs and river nutrient inputs as well as maintain bank stability.

Goal 7 Objective 6: Support non-point-source water quality efforts (I.e., riparian and flow restoration...)

Removing tamarisk will reduce salinity levels in the White River and Yellow Creek because tamarisk increases the salinity levels of riparian soils and thus can increase salinity levels of rivers. Tamarisk and Russian olive increase the frequency and intensity of fires in riparian forests, which cause myriad water quality issues. Removing these fire fuel loads caused by tamarisk and Russian olive will reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfire and its negative impacts on water quality. This project involves active revegetation with native plants, including willows, which have been shown to improve water quality (Franks et al 2019).

Goal 7 Objective 7: Engage in collaborative efforts to address wildfire-watershed risks.

As mentioned above, tamarisk and Russian olive increase the likelihood and intensity of wildland fire in riparian zone. This project is a collaborative effort between private landowners, grazing permittees, nonprofit organizations, federal land management, and local conservation districts to remove these hazardous fire fuels. This project is coordinated through the White River Partnership, made up of 14 diverse stakeholders that collaboratively developed a Riparian Restoration Plan for the White River Basin.

Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan

Goal 5: Quantify and protect environmental and recreational uses: This project provides improved access to the waterfront for recreational users and looks to enhance overall riparian habitat with the goal of improving the current baseline of native trout.

Goal 6: Maintain or, where necessary, improve water quality throughout the Gunnison Basin: This project will remove invasive tamarisk and Russian olive which can degrade water quality through the channelization of rivers, nutrient displacement, and water consumption.

Goal 7: Describe and encourage relationships among agricultural and environmental recreational water uses: Through the removal of invasive tamarisk and Russian olive, this project looks to improve water quality and quantity which supports recreational, environmental, and agricultural uses of the river. This project involves a collaborative process which brings together stakeholders from throughout the Uncompahgre River Valley who rely on this water for environmental recreation and agriculture alike.

Goal 9: Create and maintain active, relevant, and comprehensive public education, outreach, and stewardship processes involving water resources in the six sectors of the Gunnison Basin: This project will include a robust volunteer stewardship program supported by Friends of the River Uncompahgre doing 2 volunteer revegetation events yearly. Additionally, RiversEdge West will regularly post educational materials to a broad-reaching email group and social media network.

Related Studies

Conservation, Restoration, and Monitoring Plan for the Lower White River, Utah:
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/eco_pubs/136/

Independent Peer Review of Tamarisk and Russian Olive Evapotranspiration Colorado River Basin:
https://riversedgewest.org/resource-center/documents/independent-peer-review-tamarisk-russian-olive-evapotransp

Uncompahgre Riverway Master Plan:
https://www.cityofmontrose.org/612/Uncompahgre-Riverway-Master-Plan

White River Partnership Riparian Restoration Plan:
https://riversedgewest.org/sites/default/files/Restoration%20Plan_2021.pdf

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

N/A