



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Colorado Open Lands	
Name of Water Project	Chaffee County Multi-Benefit Wetland Restoration Project Development	
Grant Request Amount		\$65,785.00
Primary Category	<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>	\$65,785.00
Total Applicant Match		\$0.00
Applicant Cash Match		\$0.00
Applicant In-Kind Match		\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		\$66,500.00
Chaffee County		\$11,000.00
US Forest Service - Salida Ranger District		\$50,000.00
Chaffee Common Ground		\$5,500.00
Total Project Cost		\$132,285.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Colorado Open Lands
 Mailing Address: 1546 Cole Boulevard Lakewood CO 80401
 FEIN: 840,866,211

Organization Contact: Dirk Rasmussen
 Position/Title: Email: drasmussen@coloradoopenlands.org
 Phone: (970) 368-2613

Grant Management Contact: Dirk Rasmussen
 Position/Title: Email: drasmussen@coloradoopenlands.org
 Phone: (970) 368-2613

Description of Grantee/Applicant

Colorado Open Lands is one of Colorado's most impactful non-profit land conservation organizations. We are committed to protecting land and water forever.

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 39.740967
 Longitude -105.152880
 Lat Long Flag
 Water Source N/A
 Basins Arkansas
 Counties Chaffee
 Districts 11-Arkansas: Headwaters to Salida

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Environmental
 Type of Water Project Planning
 Scheduled Start Date - Design 6/1/2024
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction

Description

Together with our partners at Envision Chaffee County and the US Forest Service, Colorado Open Lands respectfully requests funding for planning, assessment, and development of restoration projects on National Forest in Chaffee County through our Riparian Reconnect program, building on extensive county-wide and regional planning led by Envision. Strategically implementing riparian restoration that promotes ecologically functional conditions will allow natural processes to address community goals identified through stakeholder engagement: (1) mitigating accelerated sedimentation, (2) curtailing the decline of wildlife, (3) attenuating flash floods, and (4) maintaining healthy riparian ecosystems for drought and fire resilience. Impacts of this work are amplified by connecting projects with the 30,000+ acres of ongoing treatments that are part of regional wildfire, recreation management, and habitat restoration plans. This proposal covers all the work necessary to develop a pipeline of projects strategically identified to meet these goals. The project scope includes professional site

assessments of 21 identified restoration opportunities, engagement with the Envision Forest Health Council and Chaffee Recreation Council teams to ensure maximum benefit and alignment with regional plans, completion of NEPA, and obtaining permits. Deliverables include a pipeline of ~6 shovel-ready projects to treat 4-6 miles of wetland riverscape ready for implementation in 2026.

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)
Length of Stream Restored or Protected (linear feet)
Length of Pipe, Canal Built or Improved (linear feet)
Efficiency Savings (dollars/year)
Efficiency Savings (acre-feet/year)
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
Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

This project delivers fully developed and permitted low-tech process-based restoration projects to treat 4-6 miles degraded wetland riverscape on National Forest. Projects will be prioritized to meet the goals of Chaffee County Wildfire Protection and Recreation Management Plans and ready to begin treatment in 2026.

Water Project Justification

This project is a restoration planning and community engagement partnership between two successful organizations. Colorado Open Lands is a Colorado leader in riparian restoration with the well-established Riparian Reconnect program. Envision Chaffee County (Envision) is a non-profit convened by the Chaffee Board of County Commissioners in 2016, who engaged over 1500 citizens to create a vision of a future with “healthy forests, waters and wildlife” and is implementing state-leading plans to make the vision a reality.

Our Riparian Reconnect-Envision partnership is a uniquely powerful opportunity to connect deep restoration experience with state-leading community-driven planning and landscape-scale action. This proposal embodies core Action Areas, The Colorado Vision, and specific Tools of the 2023 Colorado Water Plan (pgs. 8-10*). Our collaborative and community-driven project assessment and prioritization approach neatly fits with Chaffee County’s state-leading wildfire protection and recreation management plans. These efforts are crucial for planning long-term community and ecosystem resilience and reliability with finite water resources.

Our approach exemplifies the One Water Ethic vision for “integrated planning and implementation approach to managing finite water resources for long-term resilience and reliability, meeting both community and ecosystem needs” (p. 178*). Integrated multi-benefit wetland restoration projects must consider consumptive use needs alongside the needs for healthy and resilient ecosystems. Achieving this balance requires intentional planning, community engagement, and coordination amongst partners, especially in the Upper Arkansas basin, where water supply and demand dynamics are uniquely challenging (p. 8†). The professionally mediated planning efforts we propose will lead directly to Environment and Recreation Goals ER1, ER2, and ER4 (pgs. 20-212) as well as Watershed Health Goals W1 and W2 (p. 222†) in the 2022 Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan.

Engaged Partners, Wise Water Use, Meeting Future Water Need, and Healthy Lands (p. 175*) are all specific

partner actions in this proposal that directly support CWCB's vision for Vibrant Communities (pgs. 179-181*), Thriving Watersheds (pgs. 205-206*) Resilient Planning (pgs. 217-219*). This proposal also specifically employs Public Outreach and Education (p. 154*), Collaboration Groups (p. 157*), Watershed Planning (p. 158*), Natural Hazard Planning (p. 162*), Land Use and Water Planning Integration (p. 163*), and Steam/Watershed Restoration and Enhancement (p. 170*). Engaging this breadth of Colorado Water Plan Tools will ensure the successful completion of deliverables described in this Scope of Work for this proposal.

*Digital version of the Colorado Water Plan (2023)

†Vol. 1 Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan (2022)

Related Studies

Riparian Reconnect partners have been actively studying and restoring Colorado watershed health for longer than two decades. With ongoing support from CWCB as well as other state, local, and federal partners, we have completed numerous studies that have allowed us to optimize our restoration efforts to produce well-defined community benefits. In collaboration with Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) we have evaluated the feasibility and opportunities to restore historic beaver wetland riverscapes in parts of Colorado. Together with CWCB and Colorado Mesa University we are currently implementing an ambitious monitoring effort to document the hydrological and ecological responses to low-tech process-based restoration treatments throughout Colorado. We are also currently partnering with Colorado State University faculty Dr. Ellen Wohl and her students to study carbon dynamics and habitat complexity of restored riverscapes at Riparian Reconnect sites.

In 2022, Envision Chaffee County collaborated with EcoMetrics, USFS, and the National Forest Foundation to conduct an inventory of all headwaters streams in Chaffee County to rate the feasibility of using low-tech approaches to restore floodplain-connected wetland riverscapes. Feasibility determinations were overlaid on County maps of wildfire risk and wildlife sensitivity, so that restoration opportunities could be evaluated alongside these community-derived priorities. 22 stream segments were identified as potential restoration opportunities on USFS lands in Chaffee County. See attached reports.

Envision further collaborated with Riparian Reconnect and CWCB to integrate stream and wetland restoration into community, recreation, and wildfire actions plans such as the 2020 Chaffee County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. See attached reports.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

COL is not aware of any TABOR issues that affect our application.