



**Colorado Water Conservation Board**

**Water Plan**

**Water Project Summary**

Name of Applicant	Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation	
Name of Water Project	Conejos River Restoration Phase II	
Grant Request Amount		<b>\$494,221.00</b>
Primary Category		\$494,221.00
<i>Watershed Health &amp; Recreation</i>		
Total Applicant Match		<b>\$0.00</b>
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>		\$0.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>		\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		<b>\$494,221.00</b>
<i>Rio Grande Water Conservation District</i>		\$40,000.00
<i>Colorado State Land Board</i>		\$10,000.00
<i>Colorado Parks and Wildlife Wetlands Program</i>		\$337,117.00
<i>Conejos Water Conservancy District</i>		\$2,500.00
<i>American Rivers</i>		\$10,000.00
<i>USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program</i>		\$25,000.00
<i>Colorado Trout Unlimited, SLV Chapter</i>		\$10,000.00
<i>Bird Conservancy of the Rockies</i>		\$15,500.00
<i>Private Landowners and Water Users</i>		\$34,704.00
<i>Private Landowners</i>		\$9,400.00
Total Project Cost		<b>\$988,442.00</b>

**Applicant & Grantee Information**

Name of Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation  
 Mailing Address: 623 4th Street Alamosa CO 81101  
 FEIN: 753,169,057

Organization Contact: Daniel Boyes  
 Position/Title: Executive Director Email: [daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org](mailto:daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org)  
 Phone: 719-589-2230

Grant Management Contact: Daniel Boyes  
 Position/Title: Executive Director Email: [daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org](mailto:daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org)  
 Phone: 719-589-2230

**Description of Grantee/Applicant**

No description provided

### 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	37.049447
Longitude	-106.149716
Lat Long Flag	Precise coordinates: Project coordinates are readily definable and precisely define the location of the project
Water Source	Conejos River; Rio Grande River Watershed
	Note: The Conejos River is a tributary to the Rio Grande and, together with the Rio Grande, is subject to annual water delivery obligations under the Rio Grande Compact.
Basins	Rio Grande
Counties	Conejos
Districts	22-Conejos Creek

### Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Environmental
Type of Water Project	Construction / Implementation
Scheduled Start Date - Design	
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	10/1/2024

## Description

The full Conejos River Restoration project encompasses approximately 4 miles of the Conejos River, upstream of the town of Mogote, CO. The project reach supports a well-regarded trout fishery, and cottonwood- and willow-dominated riparian areas that offer suitable habitat for the federally endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL). Additionally, the majority of the adjacent lands are flood-irrigated and are utilized for cattle grazing and hay production. These flood-irrigated grounds facilitate seasonal wetland habitats that support SWFL foraging and habitat for other Colorado Parks and Wildlife state species of concern, including multiple species of waterfowl. The project is aimed at restoring the functionality and resilience of this reach of the Conejos River through habitat- and irrigation-centric restoration projects.

This application seeks funding to support the first round of implementation of the restoration opportunities identified during the engineering and planning phase (Phase I), which is now completed. This constitutes Phase II of the Conejos River Restoration project and addresses approximately half the identified and pre-planned project opportunities. These opportunities are streambank stabilization (which includes riparian habitat restoration and floodplain reconnection), channel morphology reconstruction (to achieve resilient channel dimensions and maintain key habitat components), backwater and wetland restoration, and irrigation infrastructure replacement.

## 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)
5,100	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)
7	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
25	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	
	25 water users and 400 irrigated acres directly supported through irrigation infrastructure restoration

## Water Project Justification

This project aligns well with the Colorado Water Plan (2023) Partner Actions for Thriving Watersheds and Robust Agriculture. Planned work for streambank stabilization, floodplain reconnection, riparian habitat restoration, and in-stream habitat restoration aligns with the Thriving Watersheds action areas including Healthy Lands and Meeting Future Water Needs (pg 177), as these aim to establish long-term resiliency within the stream system. The planned irrigation infrastructure work aligns with the Robust Agriculture action areas including Meeting Future Water Needs and Wise Water Use (pg 176), since this work updates infrastructure to allow persistence of flood irrigation even during lower flow months (when the ditch is in priority). This project effort is collaborative and has already begun to establish a network of landowners and partners along the Conejos River, which aligns with the Engaged Partners action area theme from the Plan (pg 177).

Additionally, the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan (RGBIP, updated in 2021) outlines goals that match those of this project. The project work focused on stabilizing streambanks, reconnecting the floodplain, restoring riparian ecosystems, enhancing fish habitat and diversifying channel characteristics all align with RGBIP Goal 1,

which prioritizes healthy and resilient watersheds and ecosystem services, protected wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitats, and build ecological connectivity (Goal 1, pg 18); and Goal 2, which prioritizes sustainable groundwater and aquifer resources (Goal 2, pg 18). Additionally, the irrigation infrastructure restoration components of this project align with Goal 3, which includes the need to maintain resilient agricultural economies to support communities (Goal 3, pg 18). Finally, this project has addressed RGBIP Goal 5 throughout by bringing together landowners and partners to collaborate and address multiple shared challenges (Goal 5, pg 18).

### Related Studies

The Conejos River Restoration project effort began with a comprehensive survey and planning phase, Phase I, in 2023. This effort was led by the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (BCR) and was supported by a Water Plan Grant from CWCB. Phase I included a reach-long aerial and field survey completed by Southwest River Engineering (SRE), and multiple opportunities for restoration of the river corridor, riparian areas, backwater wetlands, and irrigation infrastructure were identified. SRE then produced concept plans (preliminary engineering designs) and associate cost estimates as a Phase I deliverable.

Project work and goals identified during Phase I are reflected in the Conejos River Stream Management Plan (CSMP; 2020). The project reach is identified in the CSMP as CR08, which flagged floodplain disconnection, channelization, and native species regeneration as reach concerns, which align with those identified during project Phase I. The CSMP also notes that conservation work along CR08 should “Maintain and improve the function of floodplains, associated alluvial aquifers, and natural channel processes”, including “bank stabilization, ...improved riparian vegetation condition and water quality” (Goal C; page 174). The restoration work associated with this project aligns well with the goals identified in the CSMP.

### Taxpayer Bill of Rights

The Applicant, The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, is not subject to TABOR limitations, as it is a Colorado nonprofit organization operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.