



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Adams State University
Name of Water Project	Water Education and Community Engagement at Adams State University
Grant Request Amount	\$207,720.00
Primary Category	\$207,720.00
<i>Engagement & Innovation Activities</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$0.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$79,301.00
<i>Outcalt Foundation</i>	\$12,940.00
<i>ASU Foundation</i>	\$56,017.00
<i>ASU Foundation</i>	\$10,344.00
Total Project Cost	\$287,021.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Adams State University	
Mailing Address: 208 Edgemont Boulevard Alamosa CO 81101	
Organization Contact: Tawney Becker	
Position/Title: Senior Grant Specialist	Email: tbecker@adams.edu
Phone: 719-587-8305	
Organization Contact - Alternate: David Tandberg	
Position/Title: President	Email: dtandberg@adams.edu
Phone: 719-587-7341	
Grant Management Contact: Tawney Becker	
Position/Title: Senior Grant Specialist	Email: tbecker@adams.edu
Phone: 719-587-8305	
Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Paul Formisano	
Position/Title: Director, Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center	Email: pformisano@adams.edu
Phone: 719-587-7111	

Description of Grantee/Applicant

Water education curriculum and programming, public outreach, annual basin symposium host, student internships

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 37.472584
Longitude -105.879046
Lat Long Flag Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source
Basins Rio Grande
Counties Alamosa; Conejos; Costilla; Rio Grande; Saguache; Mineral; Hinsdale
Districts 20-Rio Grande

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Education
Type of Water Project Education
Scheduled Start Date - Design 12/1/2025
Scheduled Start Date - Construction
Description
In July 2024, the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center (Salazar Center) at Adams State University (ASU) hired a new director, thereby filling a two-year vacancy. Reinvigorated under new leadership and guided by an advisory

board, the Salazar Center embarks on its next phase of growth and increased visibility within the San Luis Valley (SLV) and Colorado through its Water Education and Community Engagement project for 2026, 2027, and 2028. In this three-year project, the Salazar Center seeks to strengthen stakeholder engagement within the SLV and Colorado through water education programming targeting ASU students, community members, and water professionals. Proposed activities include revising ASU's current Water Studies Minor and creating a Water Certificate, connecting students with the water industry through local paid internships, enhancing community participation and knowledge through the Salazar Center Speaker Series, and preserving local water heritage through the creation of the Rio Grande Water Collection. Together, these water education initiatives support these stakeholder groups by helping them develop new skill sets, foster collaboration, and celebrate the basin's unique water heritage.

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
5,000	Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity
Other	
No additional measurable results provided	

Water Project Justification

This project promotes and implements high-impact water education, professional development, and community engagement activities that advance the goals and objectives of the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan (RGBIP) outlined in Section 4. These include: healthy watersheds; sustainable aquifers; vibrant and resilient agriculture; adaptive, flexible, and creative water administration; and “engaged and informed citizens who understand the scope and urgency of local, state, and regional water issues and participate in robust and diverse educational opportunities” (p. 18). The basin's far-reaching goals are possible through this project because of its connection to the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center (Salazar Center) at Adams State University.

Since 2016, the Salazar Center has been a catalyst in uniting the university and the San Luis Valley (SLV) in their efforts to protect and preserve the public about the Rio Grande Basin's threatened water resources. Involved in the creation of the Rio Grande Natural Area and leading the way to establish the university's Water Studies Minor, the Salazar Center occupies a special niche within the SLV to advance knowledge and invite participation regarding the region's most pressing natural resource challenges.

Despite the momentum the Salazar Center gained in its initial years, factors including the pandemic, the former director's retirement, and two years without a director compromised the Salazar Center's visibility and impact on campus and within the SLV. Last summer's hire of the Salazar Center's first full-time director has helped move the organization in the right direction through the director's extensive experience in higher education and his research regarding western water resources. Capitalizing on the SLV's tight-knit water community, the director

has made important connections with many stakeholders from the Roundtable, the university, the SLV's K-12 schools, and many other partners. The October 2024 Welcome Event for the new director, featuring former Secretary of the Interior and Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar, brought various partners together who, with the university, reinforced their commitment to the Salazar Center's success. The March 2025 Rio Grande State of the Basin Symposium, which had approximately 200 registrants and featured writer Kevin Fedarko as the keynote, further reinvigorated the university's role as a leader in regional water education.

This new era of water education and community engagement at Adams State capitalizes on the university's commitment to honoring diversity and thereby strong supports the Colorado Water Plan's Water Equity Task Force's guiding principles of diversity, collaboration, rural and urban opportunity, and community engagement (p. 5). The project's development of interdisciplinary water curriculum for students and the public and its student internships and Project Assistant opportunities "promote diversity in career pathways in water-related fields through education and engagement" (p. 223). Those activities build toward student and community participation in public water education events with experts to increase the number and variety of voices involved in water discussions. The creation of the Rio Grande Collection at ASU's Nielsen Library will become a highlight of the university's water education efforts as it collects, preserves, and promotes the special water history that has shaped this part of rural Colorado.

The RGBIP highlights the essential role the Salazar Center and Adams State University play within the basin in moving its goals—and those related to the Colorado Water Plan—forward. Section 8 of the RGBIP notes that the Roundtable's water education and outreach mandates rely on "a multi-pronged approach to reach community members in varying age and economic groups. Working with higher education, specifically the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center, makes it possible to leverage the facilities, faculty, and staff of Adams State University" (p. 55). Each task within the project responds to this understanding as it utilizes the Salazar Center's and university's expertise and resources to transform students' and the public's understanding of the region's and state's waters. However, project tasks don't just build awareness about the many issues impacting our surface and groundwaters and their influence on local economies and community identities; they also catalyze that awareness to transform lives as project participants develop skills and knowledge and then implement those elements and voice their ideas to guide future water decisions. Together, the project facilitates targeted yet wide-reaching initiatives to promote and realize the Colorado Water Plans vision of creating "vibrant communities, robust agriculture, thriving watersheds, and resilient planning" (chapter 6).

Related Studies

No Related Studies provided

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

No Tax Bill of Rights provided