



COLORADO

Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance
Name of Water Project	DARCA Capacity and Education Building
Grant Request Amount	\$379,000.00
Primary Category	\$379,000.00
<i>Engagement & Innovation Activities</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$132,000.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$66,000.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$66,000.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$0.00
Total Project Cost	\$511,000.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance
Mailing Address: 1001A E. Harmony Rd. #200 Fort Collins CO 80525

Organization Contact: Amber Weber
Position/Title: Executive Director Email: darcaconference@gmail.com
Phone: 719-688-9941

Organization Contact - Alternate: Dawn Jewell
Position/Title: Board President Email: dmjewell@auroragov.org
Phone: 720.219.6294

Grant Management Contact: Amber Weber
Position/Title: Executive Director Email: darcaconference@gmail.com
Phone: 719-688-9941

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
- ☐

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 40.521770
 Longitude -105.060000
 Lat Long Flag Precise coordinates: Project coordinates are readily definable and precisely define the location of the project
 Water Source
 Basins Arkansas; Colorado; Gunnison; Metro; North Platte; Rio Grande; South Platte; Southwest; Yampa/Whi...
 Counties
 Districts

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type
 Type of Water Project Education
 Scheduled Start Date - Design 11/3/2025
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction
 Description
 The Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance (DARCA) proposes a statewide capacity-building project to support water delivery entities by increasing education, outreach, and stakeholder engagement. This effort will strengthen mutual ditch companies, reservoir operators, and lateral systems across Colorado by funding additional staff, a project manager, who can attend Basin Roundtable meetings, ditch and reservoir company meetings, and other key gatherings where water users convene to gather feedback on needs across the state while strengthening DARCA's name recognition.
 Staff will serve as DARCA's "eyes and ears," helping gather real-time feedback on challenges facing water users, such as governance, finance, aging infrastructure, and water-sharing practices. This information will guide the development of in-person training sessions focused on topics found in DARCA's existing resources, including bylaws, incorporation, financial management, stormwater delivery, and board/staff roles.
 The project also responds to growing concerns about leadership transition in the sector. Through facilitated

conversations and guided workshops, DARCA will support the next generation of water leaders and the veteran stewards passing the torch.

A stakeholder group made up of diverse representatives will guide implementation, recommend speakers and locations, and ensure programming remains relevant and accessible. This project directly supports DARCA's mission to connect, advocate for, and educate Colorado's water delivery community.

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
500 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

No additional measurable results provided

Water Project Justification

This project directly supports the goals and measurable objectives outlined in Colorado's Water Plan (2023 Update), particularly those found in Chapter 9.5: Outreach, Education, Engagement, and Innovation (Water Plan Grant Fund) and Chapter 10: Engagement Objectives and Actions. The project aligns with the Water Plan's education, outreach, and public engagement goals by increasing awareness and participation among agricultural water users, mutual ditch companies, and reservoir operators—groups that are often underrepresented in water planning and engagement efforts.

Relevant Water Plan Goals and Actions Supported:

Goal: "Significantly improve the level of public awareness and engagement regarding water issues statewide" (Water Plan, Chapter 10, Engagement Objective #1).

Action: "Develop educational materials and provide trainings for key water stakeholders such as ditch companies and irrigation districts" (Water Plan, Chapter 10, Action E.).

Action: "Leverage partnerships with organizations with strong local networks to expand outreach capacity" (Water Plan, Chapter 10, Action D.).

This project also advances Colorado Water Plan Implementation Principle 6 (Chapter 10), which calls for building local capacity to engage in water management and planning.

Alignment with Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs):

This project supports specific goals and themes identified in multiple Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs),

including:

South Platte BIP (2022):

Theme: “Outreach, Education, and Public Engagement” (Section 6.5, page 113), which emphasizes expanding engagement to underrepresented water users, including ditch companies and agricultural stakeholders.

Identified Need: “Develop targeted education for water providers and ditch companies to build capacity and knowledge on governance and water management” (Section 6.5, page 114).

Arkansas BIP (2022):

Goal: “Enhance stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts to improve participation in basin-wide water discussions and planning” (Section 6.5, page 138).

Identified Project and Process (IPP): Development of educational programming tailored to ditch companies, lateral associations, and small agricultural water providers (IPP Reference: Arkansas BIP, Appendix D).

Gunnison BIP (2022):

Goal: “Support educational opportunities and information-sharing to help agricultural water users adapt to changing conditions” (Section 6.5, page 103).

Alignment with PEPO Education Action Plans:

Across multiple basins, PEPO Education Action Plans emphasize the need to engage ditch companies and irrigation districts more directly in water education and outreach. Key priorities addressed by this project include:

Increasing capacity for face-to-face engagement at local meetings

Developing regionally relevant training materials

Empowering traditionally underserved water users to participate in basin and state-level water planning discussions

For example, the South Platte Basin PEPO Plan (2021) identifies the need for targeted outreach to agricultural water providers and ditch companies as a critical gap in basin education efforts (Section: Identifying Priority Audiences).

Summary:

By placing DARCA representatives in community meetings, developing in-person and virtual trainings, and responding directly to stakeholder input, this project delivers on the goals, themes, and IPPs outlined in the Colorado Water Plan, Basin Implementation Plans, and PEPO Education Action Plans. It advances statewide water engagement objectives while addressing locally expressed needs for capacity building, education, and leadership development within the agricultural water delivery sector.

Related Studies

None

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

None