

**COLORADO**Colorado Water
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Colorado Open Lands
Name of Water Project	Colorado's Upper Rio Grande Cooperative Project—Phase 2
Grant Request Amount	\$288,209.00
Primary Category	\$288,209.00
<i>Agricultural Projects</i>	
Total Applicant Match	\$0.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$0.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$0.00
Total Other Sources of Funding	\$102,000.00
<i>Rio Grande Water Conservation District</i>	\$51,000.00
<i>Rio Grande Water Conservation District</i>	\$51,000.00
Total Project Cost	\$390,209.00

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Colorado Open Lands

Mailing Address: 1546 Cole Boulevard #200 Lakewood CO 80401

Organization Contact: Megan Anthony

Position/Title: Grants Manager

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Grant Management Contact: Megan Anthony

Position/Title: Grants Manager

Phone: (303) 988-2373

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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	37.469400
Longitude	105.870000
Lat Long Flag	
Water Source	This project will involve most water sources within the San Luis Valley including both confined and unconfined aquifers and surface water including surface water rights associated with storage and diverted water rights.
Basins	Rio Grande
Counties	Alamosa; Conejos; Costilla; Mineral; Rio Grande; Saguache
Districts	20-Rio Grande

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	Agricultural
Type of Water Project	Study
Scheduled Start Date - Design	12/1/2025
Scheduled Start Date - Construction	
Description	<p>In 2021, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) received matching grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program to explore the development of a basin-wide water market. This initiative aimed to enhance water efficiency and encourage conservation by facilitating water trades among users in the basin. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District and a team of partners have been working to develop tools to support a local, in-basin water market/ trading platform/strategy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure water within the Basin• Sustain as much agriculture as possible• Replace approximately 16,000+ acre-feet of annual stream depletions• Benefit the overall watershed health and wildlife habitat• Provide new and more flexible water use options within our Basin

In Phase 1, the project team has been developing the following deliverables:

- the initial components of surface water and groundwater tools and
- an implementation plan outlining the components of a water rights accounting and trading platform

Phase 2 of this project will be to fully develop and implement the tools (i.e., surface and groundwater tools, a water rights accounting and trading platform, and geodatabase) which is outlined in the proposed scope of work.

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

The objective is to replace approximately 16,000+ acre-feet of annual stream depletions through water-leasing.

Water Project Justification

The Upper Rio Grande Basin Cooperative Project Phase 2 is the result of a WaterSMART and CWCB Colorado Water Plan grant award (Phase 1) that explored the development of a basin- wide water market. This initiative was designed to enhance water efficiency, promote conservation, and facilitate water trades among users across the basin. These objectives directly support the long-standing goals of the groundwater management Subdistricts of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) in the San Luis Valley.

The RGWCD and its Subdistricts have been at the forefront of efforts to sustainably manage groundwater resources in the face of persistent aquifer declines and increasing pressure on surface water supplies. The primary goals of the Subdistricts include:

- Replacing injurious depletions to surface streams caused by groundwater pumping.
- Stabilizing and recovering the confined and unconfined aquifers; and,
- Promoting the long-term viability of agriculture within the region

The Cooperative Project supports these goals by developing tools and strategies that enable flexible, transparent, and localized water management solutions. Phase 1 of this project, to be completed in August 2025, will deliver the foundational versions of these tools and an implementation strategy. Phase 2 will bring these tools to full functionality and integration, allowing Subdistrict administrators to make timely and effective decisions that directly support sustainable groundwater management and stream depletion replacement. By supporting this Phase 2 effort, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District affirms its commitment to advancing the goals of the groundwater management plans, the Colorado Water Plan and the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan. The

project specifically addresses the following Rio Grande Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan (2021) goals:

- Maintaining aquifers with sustainable supplies of groundwater for agriculture, communities, and wildlife.
- Supporting a vibrant, resilient agricultural economy.
- Promoting water administration that is adaptive, flexible, and compliant with state statutes and interstate compacts.

Related Studies

This project, Upper Rio Grande Basin Cooperative Project Phase 2, is the result of a WaterSMART and CWCB Colorado Water Plan grant award (Phase 1) that explored the development of a basin- wide water market. This initiative was designed to enhance water efficiency, promote conservation, and facilitate water trades among users across the basin.

Colorado Water Plan Grant and Reclamation's WaterSMART grant program

Colorado's Rio Grande Basin Water Cooperative Project (Phase 1)

CWCB Award amount: \$163,406

Award date: September 2021

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

Colorado Open Lands does not have any TABOR issues/restrictions.