



Colorado Water Conservation Board

Water Plan

Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Chama Peak Land Alliance	
Name of Water Project	San Juan - Chama Watershed Health Project	
Grant Request Amount		\$1,827,393.13
Primary Category		\$1,827,393.13
<i>Watershed Health & Recreation</i>		
Total Applicant Match		\$28,000.00
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>		
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>		\$28,000.00
Total Other Sources of Funding		\$985,000.00
<i>US Bureau of Reclamation</i>		\$985,000.00
Total Project Cost		\$2,840,393.13

Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Chama Peak Land Alliance	
Mailing Address: PO Box 5701 Pagosa Springs CO 81147	
Organization Contact: Caleb Stotts	
Position/Title: Executive Director	Email: caleb@chamapeak.org
Phone: 505-470-1943	
Organization Contact - Alternate: Sage Faulkner	
Position/Title:	Email: sage@chamapeak.org
Phone:	
Grant Management Contact: Caleb Stotts	
Position/Title: Executive Director	Email: caleb@chamapeak.org
Phone: 505-470-1943	
Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Sage Faulkner	
Position/Title:	Email: sage@chamapeak.org
Phone:	

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 37.059367
 Longitude -106.773107
 Lat Long Flag
 Water Source
 Basins Southwest
 Counties Archuleta
 Districts 29-San Juan River Basin

Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type Agricultural
 Type of Water Project Construction / Implementation
 Scheduled Start Date - Design
 Scheduled Start Date - Construction
 Description

The San Juan-Chama Project (SJCP) is a series of diversions and infrastructure near Chromo, CO that conveys San Juan River water to the Rio Grande Basin. Water allocations supplied through the SJCP are incredibly important for much of New Mexico's population, making up 75% of Albuquerque's drinking water, 50% of Santa Fe's drinking water, and multiple Tribes, irrigation districts, and municipalities. As such, the health of the San Juan-Chama Project source watersheds are extraordinarily important.

The San Juan-Chama Watershed Health Project proposal aims to improve watershed health and resiliency in the Navajo, Little Navajo, and Blanco basins that supply the SJCP. Fortunately, for over a decade many partners and downstream water users have recognized the importance of SJCP source watershed health and invested in

projects to reduce the risk of severe wildfire and subsequent deterioration of watershed functions. This current proposal reflects a collaborative and integrative approach to watershed health and resilience in the source watersheds, seeking funding for aquatic habitat improvement projects to pair with ongoing investments in forestry-based watershed protection efforts.

The proposal includes an Aquatic Habitat Improvement Targeting Package that aligns with many ongoing plans and efforts. Priority aquatic habitat projects have multiple benefits and include creating fish barriers and improving habitat for the extremely rare San Juan Cutthroat and baseline data collection to better understand the state of a state threatened species, the North American River Otter. Tasks in the Statement of Work expand wetlands and riparian habitat, improve conveyance for agricultural water projects, and build resiliency through wetland and upland forest treatments that reduce hazardous fuels on the landscape.

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)
12,100	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)
660	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

Area of habitat restored :

Task 1 - 55 acres improved floodplain habitat

Task 2 - Study Area 261 acres

Task 4 - Study area 54 river miles

Task 6 - 4.5 acres improved floodplain habitat

Task 7 - 600 acres restored forest

Length of stream:

Task 1 - 5100 lf of ditch realignment

Task 3 - 1-2 miles of native trout habitat identified

Task 5 - 5000 lf Little Navajo stream restoration

Task 6 - 2000 lf ditch realignment

Water Project Justification

This project advances several Colorado Water Plan (Plan) goals related to watershed health, wetland restoration, native habitat enhancement, and a robust agricultural economy. The project upholds the four values outlined in the Plan by supporting our agricultural economy in conjunction with an effective water infrastructure system that supports a strong environment with healthy watersheds, rivers, streams, and wildlife (pg. 9). Thanks to the extensive and diverse public participation in the plans that support this project and the work of the Chama Peak

Land Alliance, the project engages an informed public with “creative, forward-thinking solutions that are sustainable and resilient to changing conditions and result in strong, equitable communities that can adapt and thrive in the face of adversity” (pg. 8).

The San Juan - Chama Watershed Health Project addresses a key challenge identified for the Southwest Basin in the Plan by “balancing agricultural uses while supporting environmental and recreational values— all of which support the economic and aesthetic values that support a high quality of life” (pg. 128). The project addresses multiple Southwest Basin Roundtable goals identified in the Plan by maintaining agricultural water needs on private lands while meeting environmental water needs and promoting healthy watersheds. This is accomplished through a variety of projects as defined in the seven tasks in Exhibit A: Statement of Work, all of which are located in the source watersheds for the San Juan - Chama Project that provides drinking water to millions of downstream users in the Rio Grande Basin, thereby managing risk associated with the Colorado River Compact, another Southwest Basin Roundtable goal (pg. 129).

Task 1: Upper Navajo Basin – Wetland Creation and Ditch Realignment Project

Task 2: Upper Navajo Basin – Riparian Study Area Planning and Design

Task 3: Upper Navajo Basin – Native Cutthroat Habitat Protection and Fish Barrier Planning

Task 4: Navajo River - North American River Otter Analysis

Task 5: Little Navajo Basin - Little Navajo River Habitat Enhancement

Task 6: Upper Blanco Basin - Irrigation Return Flow and Wetland Enhancement Project

Task 7: Navajo/Blanco Focal Area - Forest thinning

The project utilizes a variety of important tools identified in the Plan including endangered and threatened species recovery programs (North American river otter and San Juan Cutthroat Trout), innovation in project design and cross-boundary approach, conveyance infrastructure on agricultural ditches on private lands, data collection and sharing, natural hazard planning through hazardous fuels mitigation, and stream/watershed restoration and enhancement (pg. 153).

Finally, this project implements many Partner Actions defined in the Plan. Design features that explore the feasibility of incorporating low-tech, process-based structures (LTPBR) to extend surface water retention and encourage further natural wetland development that benefit North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) and North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) align with the watershed health and restoration partner actions as identified in the Plan (pg. 204). LTPBR structures restore natural stream systems and enhance riparian ecosystems and are a “nature-based solution” as identified in the Plan (pg. 205). And the forest health improvements in this project support the Healthy Lands partner actions identified in the Plan (pg. 206). Finally, the ditch realignment task supports the conveyance efficiency improvements recommended in the Robust Agriculture section of the Plan (pg. 194).

Related Studies

Numerous studies and collaboratives over the past decade have laid the groundwork for this visionary cross-boundary project: 1) San Juan - Chama Source Area Fire Planning Group (2025), 2) U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Environmental Water Resources Project (EWRP): Cross Boundary Watershed Protection in the San Juan-Chama Region (2025), 3) 2-3-2 Rio Chama CFLRP 10 Year Cross-Boundary Strategy (2023), 4) Navajo-Blanco Watersheds Resilience Strategy for the San Juan - Chama Project Source Watersheds (March 2017), and 5) Rio Grande Water Fund: Comprehensive Plan for Wildfire and Water Source Protection (July 2014).

The Upper San Juan Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP)(2022) developed by the Watershed Enhancement Partnership (WEP) is the guiding document that supports the goals and tasks outlined in the San Juan - Chama Watershed Health Project (project). Overarching goals of the IWMP align with the project by improving watershed health and riparian habitats (pg. 21), wildlife and biodiversity (pg. 7), and wildfire and forest health (pg. 9). Each of the seven tasks identified in Exhibit A: Statement of Work also have strong plan alignment

with the objectives and actions identified in the IWMP.

Tasks 1 and 2 enhance stream-connected wetland systems, protect riparian corridors, and upgrade irrigation infrastructure to better align with ecological and agricultural needs in the Upper Navajo Basin. Tasks 5 and 6 accomplish similar objectives within the Little Navajo and Upper Blanco Basins (Objectives AG-1, AG-2; WB-3, pg. 20; Action WEP-2, pg. 26).

Task 3 and 5 supports IWMP Action WEP-13: Banded Peak Ranch Habitat Protection and Enhancement by “conserving habitat quality for San Juan Cutthroat Trout in tributaries to the Navajo River” (pg. 37). Task 3 also aligns with the acknowledgement that the San Juan-Chama Project diversion structures on the Little Navajo, Navajo, and Rio Blanco Rivers are key barriers to fish passage and negatively impact native fish and require structural modifications to improve habitat and migration connectivity (Objectives WB-2, WB-3, pg. 20; Action WEP-10, pg. 34).

Task 4 supports IWMP Objective WB-3 by “enabling aquatic organism passage through each of the three primary San Juan-Chama Project diversions on the Rio Blanco, Little Navajo, and Navajo River (pg. 20). Additionally, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife State Wildlife Action Plan supports Task 4 since the North American river otter is a threatened, Tier 2, Species of Greatest Conservation Need (CPW 2015, pg. 28).

Task 7 that includes forest thinning aligns with the plan’s recognition that the Upper Navajo and Blanco Rivers are high-risk zones for post-fire erosion and channel instability (Objectives WF-1 and WF-2, pg 20). The project implements Action WEP-9 by “supporting Banded Peak Ranch and Chama Peak Land Alliance's efforts on forest fuels reduction and wildfire risk reduction to protect water sources, aquatic and riparian habitat, and water quality” (pg. 33)

Taxpayer Bill of Rights

No known TABOR issues will affect this application.