

**COLORADO**Colorado Water  
Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

## Colorado Water Conservation Board

## Water Plan

### Water Project Summary

Name of Applicant	Big Thompson Watershed Coalition
Name of Water Project	Big Thompson Watershed Coalition Education & Outreach Program: Linking Water, Forests, and Community Resilience
Grant Request Amount	<b>\$342,210.39</b>
Primary Category	\$342,210.39
<i>Engagement &amp; Innovation Activities</i>	
Total Applicant Match	<b>\$20,212.68</b>
<i>Applicant Cash Match</i>	\$0.00
<i>Applicant In-Kind Match</i>	\$20,212.68
Total Other Sources of Funding	<b>\$146,661.59</b>
<i>Other - TBD</i>	\$20,000.00
<i>Chevron</i>	\$119,621.59
<i>National Forest Foundation</i>	\$7,040.00
Total Project Cost	<b>\$509,084.66</b>

### Applicant & Grantee Information

Name of Grantee: Big Thompson Watershed Coalition  
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Grant Management Contact - Alternate: Will Davis  
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### Description of Grantee/Applicant

The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition (BTWC) formed as a 501(c)3 to help private and public landowners collaborate recovery efforts after the 2013 state-declared flooding emergency. Our flood recovery efforts brought over \$15 million instate, federal, and local funds to the watershed allowing us to complete 15 restoration projects and 2 infrastructure replacement projects. Today, we are focused on creating a bright future for the Big Thompson watershed. Through dedicated partnerships we work to build resilience in the watershed through

projects that reduce the risk and potential impacts of natural disasters like floods and wildfires and continue to help the watershed recover from events like the Cameron Peak Fire. Our goal as a Watershed Coalition is to bolster the health and integrity of this critical river system for the wild and natural communities that depend on it through engaging watershed residents and completing on-the-ground conservation projects.

### 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	40.395073
Longitude	-105.068649
Lat Long Flag	Default/Proponent headquarters: If the location cannot be defined with flags above, use location of project proponent headquarters
Water Source	Big Thompson Watershed
Basins	South Platte
Counties	Larimer
Districts	4-Big Thompson River

### Water Project Overview

Major Water Use Type	
Type of Water Project	Education

Scheduled Start Date - Design

10/31/2025

Scheduled Start Date - Construction

#### Description

The Big Thompson Watershed Coalition (BTWC) proposes a multi-year effort to build the internal capacity, strategic direction, and community partnerships needed to launch a robust Education and Outreach Program that complements its growing watershed restoration and wildfire recovery work. This project will begin by hiring a full-time Outreach and Education Coordinator to lead engagement efforts, expand partnerships, and help shape the future of BTWC's education program.

BTWC will then update its 5-year strategic plan to reflect recent organizational growth, expanded programmatic areas, and new leadership perspectives. A key outcome will be clarifying the role of education and outreach priorities and initiatives and setting measurable goals for long-term impact.

Over three years, the Outreach & Education Coordinator will lead a biannual public event series—such as pub talks and community presentations—designed to raise awareness about watershed resilience, water resources, and source water protection. Simultaneously, the team will develop one of three programmatic pathways: K–12 curriculum, expanded volunteer programming, or a citizen science initiative. The selected program will be piloted in year three.

Together, these efforts will establish the foundation for a community-driven, water-literate Big Thompson watershed aligned with Colorado's Water Plan and South Platte Basin goals.

#### 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

1,200 Number of Coloradans Impacted by Engagement Activity

Other

1 new full-time position. Updated 2026-2030 organizational strategic plan.

#### Water Project Justification

This project directly supports the Colorado Water Plan's (2023) education, outreach, and engagement objective by embedding sustained, place-based water education across the Big Thompson watershed (Section 9.1, p. 9-2). It advances the Water Plan's call to "broaden public understanding of water-related issues" through informal learning, school partnerships, and targeted engagement (Chapter 9.5). The program also supports other measurable objectives—particularly around conservation, land use, and watershed health—by helping residents understand how individual and community actions impact water systems (Ch. 3, pp. 3-7 to 3-16).

The project aligns with the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan (2022) by addressing Goal 11: "Broaden

South Platte communications, outreach, and education programs” (p. 39). Through its event series and pilot initiative (K–12 curriculum, volunteerism, or citizen science), BTWC supports strategies to expand local engagement, reach new audiences, and build shared understanding of basin challenges and opportunities.

Finally, the project advances the goals of the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP) by creating multiple access points for diverse audiences to learn about and engage with water, forest, and fire-related issues. It emphasizes repeated messaging, place-based relevance, and collaboration—core principles of effective outreach outlined in SWEAP (SWEAP Full Plan, pp. 9–15).

Together, this work builds a more water-literate community and strengthens local capacity to support the long-term goals of Colorado’s Water Plan and regional partners.

## Related Studies

This project draws on established research in environmental education and aligns with CWCB’s Watershed Protection & Restoration focus area, while supporting long-term goals identified in CWCB-funded planning efforts.

### 1. Research-Based Justification

-Studies such as Project WET’s national impact reports and Kidd et al. (2020, Water Literacy Review) show that place-based water education improves environmental literacy and promotes stewardship behaviors. These findings support the project’s focus on locally relevant programming tied to watershed resilience. Additionally, Ardoin et al. (2018, Environmental Education Research) found that environmental education programs emphasizing local context and action-oriented learning are more likely to result in pro-environmental behaviors and community engagement. Similarly, Stevenson et al. (2013, Journal of Environmental Education) concluded that sustained, experiential learning in local ecosystems significantly enhances environmental knowledge and long-term behavior change. Together, these studies reinforce the importance of community-centered, watershed-based education as a strategy for advancing public understanding and encouraging active stewardship.

### 2. Watershed Restoration Program (WRP)

-This project complements the WRP’s goals by building public understanding of watershed function, forest health, and post-fire recovery—topics critical to long-term watershed resilience.  
-Outreach events and citizen science activities will help connect residents to ongoing restoration projects, reinforcing the WRP’s emphasis on community involvement and locally driven solutions.

### 3. Stream Management Planning (SMP) Grant Program

-BTWC’s project supports the SMP program by increasing public understanding of stream health, flow needs, and infrastructure challenges identified through its own completed Big Thompson River Envisioning Project – A Stream Management Plan.  
-The education and outreach framework will serve as a tool for building awareness and support for future implementation of SMP-identified projects and priorities including volunteer river clean ups, weed management, and native plant installation.

### 4. Forest Health and Watershed Resilience Interagency Agreement

-This project reinforces goals from the CWCB-Colorado State Forest Service agreement by promoting public education around wildfire mitigation, forest stewardship, and their impacts on water resources.  
-Outreach materials and talks will help increase support for forest treatments and defensible space strategies in high-risk WUI areas.

### 5. Public Education, Participation, and Outreach (PEPO) Workgroup

-By building local capacity and fostering cross-sector collaboration, the project aligns with PEPO’s intent to increase water-related knowledge through accessible, locally relevant engagement.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights
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N/A
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