

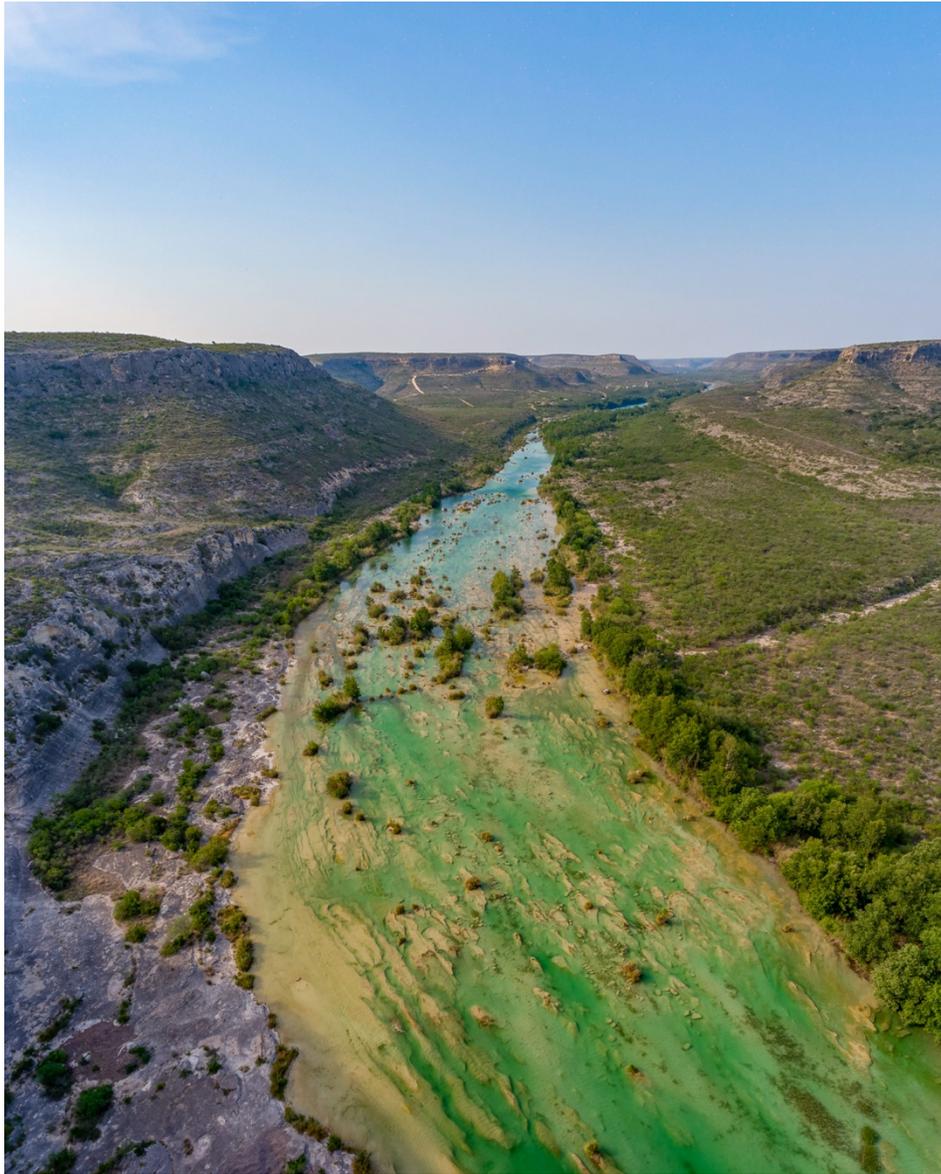
WaterSMART Grant Application

Lower Devils River Watershed Restoration and Conservation Planning Group Proposal

Phase I Grant FY2021

FOA: BOR-DO-21-F003

Opportunity Package ID: PKG00264154



Applicant: Julie Lewey, Executive Director
Devils River Conservancy
201 W 5th St Suite 1300
Austin, Texas 78701
Phone: (512) 482-4412
Email: Julie@devilsriverconservancy.org
SAM CAGE #: 84LQ0



**DEVILS RIVER
CONSERVANCY**
Treasure. Preserve. Protect.

Table of Contents

Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria	3
Executive Summary	3
Background Data.....	4
Project Location	6
Technical Project Description.....	7
Program Evaluation Criteria.....	8
Criterion A.....	8
Criterion B.....	11
Criterion C.....	13
Criterion D.....	15
Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance	16
Required Permits or Approvals.....	16
Project Budget.....	16
Board Resolution.....	17
Letters of Support.....	18
Citations.....	23

Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria

Executive Summary

Date:	January 19, 2021
Applicant Name:	Devils River Conservancy
City:	Del Rio
County:	Val Verde
State:	Texas
Estimated Project Start:	August 2021
Project Length:	24 Months
Estimated Project Completion:	August 2023
Amount Requested:	\$99,805

The Devils River Conservancy (DRC) is seeking a WaterSMART Grant for Phase I watershed group development and restoration and conservation planning in the Lower Devils River watershed in Southwest Texas. The DRC desires to form a new watershed group (Group) comprised of a diverse array of stakeholders in the Lower Devils River watershed, including but not limited to Federal, State, County, municipal, corporate, environmental, recreational, and private entities. The DRC's goal is to bring these parties together to resolve longstanding disagreement between stakeholders, strengthen relationships, build trust and a unified vision amongst the community, address water quality issues, and develop strategies to ensure sustainability of the region's water supply.

The proposed project is located in the Lower Devils River watershed (HUC 13040302) in Val Verde County, Texas, which includes national and state parkland and is a tributary to the Rio Grande, an international water source critical to downstream users.

Background Data

The Devils River Conservancy (DRC) is a grassroots non-profit organization legally incorporated as a 501(c)3 in December of 2010. Governed by a 9-member board of directors comprised of landowners, engaged citizens, and conservation professionals, the DRC advocates for the preservation of the Devils River. Through education, outreach, and research, the DRC contributes to the understanding of the river's value and promote respectful use and responsible policymaking throughout the 2.24-million-acre watershed. The DRC is supported by government grants, foundations, and private donors.

The Lower Devils River watershed is located in Southwest Texas, in rural Val Verde County along the Texas-Mexico border. The semi-arid watershed occurs at the convergence of the Edwards Plateau, Chihuahuan Desert, and Tamaulipan Brush Country ecosystems, lending to the area's unique biological and habitat diversity. The perennially flowing reach of the river begins south of the ghost town of Juno, Texas. The river flows south for approximately 60 miles before reaching Amistad International Reservoir and Recreation Area formed by the Amistad Dam on the Rio Grande – constructed in 1969. The Lower Devils River watershed is largely comprised of undeveloped tracts of land and is widely regarded as the most intact ecosystem in Texas. The river corridor is home to rare flora and fauna, including several species listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, the river provides unparalleled wilderness recreation opportunities and historical and cultural tourism attractions.

The river's baseflows are entirely supported by groundwater from the Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer and provide critical freshwater flows to Amistad Reservoir and the Lower Rio Grande Valley, diluting saline inflows from the Pecos River. In a year of average rainfall (approximately 12-19 inches), the Devils River contributes 20% of the inflow to Amistad International Reservoir (Green, 2015), which provides water supply to millions of downstream users. Within the watershed, the river provides water to streamside landowners and agricultural operations and serves as the backup water supply for the City of Del Rio and Laughlin Air Force Base.

Water Issues

- Water Quantity
 - The groundwater that supports river baseflows in the Lower Devils River watershed is not managed by a regulatory authority (i.e. a groundwater conservation district) and, therefore, falls under the Texas "Rule of Capture" groundwater law. This means the groundwater critical to the health of the Devils River is subject to each landowner's often incongruous management strategies and has no limit on pumping regardless of consequential impacts to water resources including groundwater on adjacent properties, spring flows and river baseflows.
 - Surface and groundwater flows are intrinsically connected in the watershed's karst aquifer system. As a result, development of groundwater resources would affect surface water resources in the watershed. For example, recent work by Southwest Research Institute (Fratesi et al. 2019) suggests that as little as 3,000 - 5,000 acre-feet of pumping beyond what is currently pumped in the watershed could create significant reductions in river flows during periods of drought.
 - The lower Devils River watershed contributes as much as 20% of the flows in Amistad International Reservoir (Green, 2015). It plays a critical role in upholding the United States' water allocations agreement set forth in the 1944 Treaty with Mexico. It also dilutes the saline water that flows into the reservoir

- from the Pecos River, preserving the overall water quality of Amistad Reservoir and the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Purchase et al, 2001).
- In the past ten years, there have been several proposals from water marketers to develop large-scale groundwater pumping and export projects in the Lower Devils River watershed to meet the needs of distant communities, including San Antonio, Midland, and San Angelo, Texas.
 - Research efforts have elevated the understanding of the complex water supply of the Lower Devils River watershed; however, critical data gaps remain.
 - Formation of a groundwater management entity (e.g., groundwater conservation district) would provide a means to balance the water needs in the watershed, but legislative efforts to create such an authority have not succeeded due to lack consensus amongst stakeholders.
 - Despite previous research and conservation actions, there is not currently nor has there ever been a comprehensive watershed management plan in the Lower Devils River watershed.
 - A watershed management plan could help resolve stakeholder conflict by outlining interests, creating a shared vision for a sustainable and resilient watershed, jointly identifying and prioritizing data gaps, and identifying water supply management solutions to protect the varied interests and the water supply for future generations.
- Water Quality
 - The Devils River is touted as the benchmark for river water quality by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The DRC believes all watershed stakeholders would be interested in planning to protect water quality conditions going into the future.
 - Current threats to water quality in the watershed include increased fragmentation and residential development, industrial scale energy development, overgrazing, and wastewater discharge.
 - Environmental Interests
 - The Lower Devils River watershed supports three aquatic species listed under the Endangered Species Act; the Texas Hornshell mussel *Popenaias popeii* (federally endangered), Devils River minnow *Dionda diaboli* (federally threatened) and the Mexican Blindcat *Prietella phreatophila* (federally endangered). Additionally, the river corridor is home to the federally endangered Texas Snowbell *Styrax texanus* and is a critical waypoint on the migratory path of federal candidate species, Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*.
 - The Devils River has been named as a Native Fish Conservation Area, an area critical to preserving the native freshwater fish diversity of Texas (Birdsong et al. 2019). This designation prioritizes the Devils River watershed for funding and conservation efforts by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
 - The watershed also supports nesting sites for Bald Eagles *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* and Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and roosting sites for Mexican Free-tailed bats *Tadarida brasiliensis*.
 - A watershed management plan could guide restoration and conservation efforts to protect the lower Devils River watershed's unique environmental values.

Project Location

The proposed project will address critical watershed conservation, restoration, and planning issues in the Lower Devils River watershed. The project area is defined by the lower watershed's hydrologic bounds, as illustrated in Figure 1. This area includes all of the Lower Devils River HUC 13040302.

This project area lies within Val Verde County, Texas.

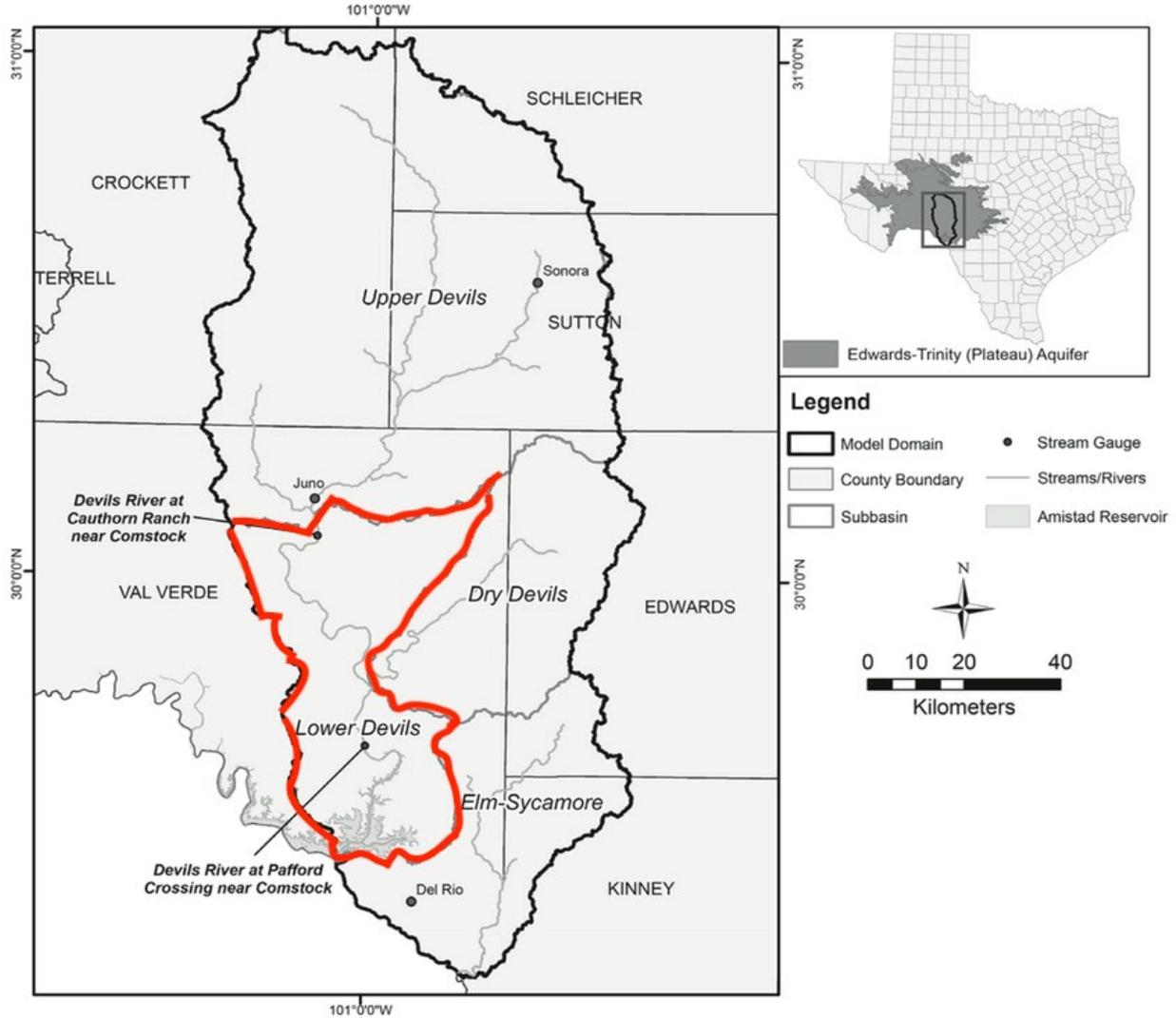


Figure 1. Map showing the project area – Lower Devils River watershed outlined in red.

Technical Project Description

Applicant Category

The DRC is seeking funding from the WaterSMART Phase 1 FOA to create a new watershed Group for the lower Devils River watershed. Water supply management in the lower Devils River watershed is deeply conflicted, and a formal watershed planning group has not been attempted to date.

Eligibility of Applicant

- As defined in Section C.1 of the WaterSMART Phase 1 FOA, the applicant is a non-profit organization.
- The DRC, as the river's advocate, stewards the environmental interests of the Lower Devils River watershed, which depend entirely on the region's water quantity and quality.
- The DRC is a proven community leader and successfully promotes environmental education and collaboration on other vital issues, including industrial energy encroachment.
- The watershed is located in Texas.

Goals

The primary goals of forming this Group are to:

- Identify and incorporate all stakeholder interests,
- Create a shared vision for a sustainable and resilient watershed,
- Build community trust and resolve conflict,
- Jointly identify, prioritize and carry-out projects to address watershed data gaps and restoration needs, and
- Identify water supply management solutions to protect the varied interests and the water supply for future generations.

Approach

Task A: Form a watershed group.

Task A Approach: To achieve this, DRC would serve as the watershed group coordinator and facilitate outreach and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, DRC would hire a facilitator to guide productive stakeholder meetings and aid in curating a group vision and mission statement.

DRC's outreach activities would include, but not be limited to, postings in local news media, emails, letters, presentations to stakeholder groups, and other direct discussions to generate interest and participation. Preplanning activities will be undertaken that further identify specific stakeholders and related water resource issues that need to be addressed in the watershed plan.

DRC currently has strong support for the formation of a group and a watershed plan from two of the largest conservation interests in the watershed, The Nature Conservancy and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Task A Deliverables: Contact list of group members, approved mission and vision statement, and documentation of stakeholder input.

Task B: Developing a watershed restoration and conservation plan.

Task B Approach: Following the Group's creation, a process would be initiated to gather information and ideas, identify and quantify critical restoration and conservation needs, set goals and priorities, identify methods for implementation and define a plan of action. This will likely require the assistance of planning professionals. Data would be gathered for map development. These efforts would culminate in the development of a Group supported watershed management plan that will identify and prioritize adopted measures for implementation.

Task B Deliverables: Documentation of stakeholder input, list of critical needs, and an actionable watershed restoration and conservation plan.

Program Evaluation Criteria

Criterion A

Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)

1. Watershed Group Diversity

The Lower Devils River watershed has a long history of contention among stakeholders over water supply and water management issues, particularly groundwater. Conflict over research and understanding of the shared resource has continually derailed efforts to create a groundwater management structure in Val Verde County. This project aims to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders that affect or are affected by the quality and quantity of water within the watershed. It is our hope that development of a new watershed group, where every member has an equal seat at the table will offer a level playing field and a new opportunity to reopen discussions on water supply issues in the Lower Devils River watershed. The following is a list of potential stakeholders:

- Federal governmental entities:
 - *International Boundary and Water Commission* manages Amistad International Reservoir and the Rio Grande's surface waters, to which the lower Devils River watershed is a significant tributary.
 - *The U.S. National Park Service* owns the lands around and manages recreation on Amistad International Reservoir which extends up the Devils River arm of the reservoir.
 - *The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* works to conserve and protect fish, wildlife, and their habitats in the Devils River watershed, including permitting research and monitoring populations of Texas Hornshell (federally endangered) and Devils River minnow (federally threatened).
- State governmental entities
 - *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department* is responsible for managing the state's wildlife and fisheries resources and has a vested interest in conservation of the Devils River. The Inland Fisheries Division maintains aquatic species and habitat monitoring locations and funds biologic and hydrologic research throughout the Lower Devils River watershed. The State Parks Division is a major landowner in

the watershed, overseeing operation of two state natural areas. Lastly, the Wildlife Division provides technical guidance to private landowners on conservation issues throughout the watershed.

- *Texas Commission on Environmental Quality* monitors water quality and governs surface water withdraws from the watershed.
- *Devils River Soil and Water Conservation District* works to combat soil erosion and protect water quality in the watershed.
- *Texas Water Development Board* is charged with planning for Texas' water resources and recently completed a special groundwater study for Val Verde County including the Devils River (TWDB, 2018).
- Agriculture and Ranching enterprises including the Hudspeth River Ranch and others graze livestock and irrigate pasture within the watershed.
- Private Landowner groups such as the Devils River Association who represent the heritage landowners of the region.
- Recreation outfitters including Amistad Expeditions, Angell Expeditions, Diablo Paddlesports, Expedition Outfitters, Ryes and Sons, and Devils River Outfitters all rely on the surface water flows in the Lower Devils River watershed to conduct their business.
- Tourism advocates such as the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce tout the Devils River as one of Val Verde County's leading attractions.
- Industry interests such as the Plains All American Pipeline, LP and Akuo Energy who operate energy transportation and production facilities in the watershed and rely on groundwater to support construction.
- Academic institutions including Texas A&M University, Texas State University, and the University of Texas-Bureau of Economic Geology conduct biologic and hydrologic research in the watershed.
- Environmental entities such as Audubon Texas and The Nature Conservancy work to research and protect aspects of the watershed's ecology. The Nature Conservancy is also a watershed landowner, conservation easement holder, protecting over 100,000 acres, is engaged in groundwater management policy, has funded additional research and monitoring, and has led previous conservation planning and management partnerships in the watershed.
- Cultural stewards such as Shumla Archeological School who document and steward historical and cultural sites in the watershed. The Devils River watershed is home to some of the best preserved and plentiful pictograph sites in the United States.
- Independent private landowners not otherwise represented.
- Local municipalities such as the Val Verde County Commissioners Court and the Amistad Land Use and Zoning Commission have jurisdiction within the watershed. The cities of Del Rio, Sonora, and Ozona occur in and around the Devils River watershed and have a vested interest in both the surface water of the Devils River and the groundwater that feeds it.
- Water Planning Groups
 - *Region J Regional Water Planning Group* is a diverse stakeholder group representing the multi-county region of western central Texas charged with developing regional water plans as part of the overall State Water Plan.
 - *Groundwater Management Area 7* sets groundwater desired future conditions for a large region of central, west Texas including Val Verde County and the Lower Devils River watershed which are also incorporated into the State Water Plan.

The DRC has conducted initial inquiries of planning interest with the Nature Conservancy, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. National Park Service, and the Devils River Association. These stakeholders have indicated their support and willingness to participate in the Group. Their concerns include landowner rights, water quantity, and habitat protection.

If awarded, the DRC would reach out to potential stakeholders through public posting in local news outlets, emails, letters, and other direct discussions to generate interest and participation. The DRC would share program information with those identified on the list above, as well as examples of past successful CWMP projects and anticipated outcomes and benefits specific to the planning process in the Lower Devils River watershed. Potential stakeholders will be contacted directly and be requested to sign and return a letter of intent to participate. Additionally, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and The Nature Conservancy have pledged to help engage potential stakeholders and invite them to participate.

We anticipate that development of a watershed group will offer a level playing field and a fresh start for stakeholders to discuss water supply and conservation issues in the Lower Devils River watershed. Previous discussion amongst stakeholders on water issues have been in the form of public forums which don't often facilitate the dialogue needed to reach consensus or compromise with a group of stakeholders with diverse water interests. These forums have also been intermittent in nature. We expect that a planning process such as is proposed here will provide the timeline and environment that will produce a watershed conservation plan representative of the varied water interests found throughout the Lower Devils River watershed.

The Devils River has a direct nexus with federal lands in the Amistad National Recreation Area. Additionally, the river supplies water to Amistad International Reservoir and the Lower Rio Grande which is managed by international water treaties. A watershed conservation plan is needed to help ensure conservation and sustainability of this valuable water resource upon which so many depend.

Currently within the watershed, some state, federal, and non-profit partners communicate on various projects or initiatives; however, there is no broad coordinated effort and each entity still retains their own individual conservation priorities and measures. Development of a new watershed group would facilitate open communication between various levels of government and local partners. Additionally, it would facilitate development of joint priorities for conservation and sustainability of the surface and groundwater in the Lower Devils River watershed. Joint priorities and conservation actions outlined in a watershed conservation plan would allow these groups to leverage federal, state, and private dollars to accomplish larger scale projects than any one stakeholder could accomplish independently.

Geographic Scope

The lower Devils River watershed is comprised of approximately 482 square miles in the Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 13040302 located in Val Verde County, Texas. The watershed has a diverse range of property owners and stakeholder interests. The upper reach of the watershed and surface water flows of the Devils River begins south of the Juno, Texas ghost town and proceeds to and includes Amistad International Reservoir's Devils arm. While the entire Devils River watershed contains two additional 8-digit HUCs, all of the perennially

flowing waters within the watershed occur within the Lower Devils River HUC, thus it is the focus of this planning process. This is also the geographic extent in which most stakeholders are currently working.

The Devils River Watershed Planning Group will primarily focus within the watershed bounds; however, stakeholders who affect or are affected by water quantity or quality in the Lower Devils watershed will be included. A comprehensive, detailed map that includes these out-of-watershed stakeholders and stakeholder "boundaries" will be developed as part of the planning process.

The Devils River Conservancy will review county land maps and rely on local partners to help ensure that all areas of the watershed are represented in the group development and planning process.

Criterion B

Addressing Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

1) Describe the critical issues or needs within the watershed

Through communication with a variety of potential stakeholders, its own experience, and preliminary stakeholder meetings, the DRC has identified various issues that need to be addressed through the planning process. Some of these issues have been elevated to state legislature level in the past but remain without resolution. The most prominent and recurring issues facing water supply in the Lower Devils River watershed is groundwater availability. Surface water within this watershed is entirely dependent on groundwater and spring flows. However, no Groundwater Conservation District currently manages this groundwater and thus it is available to unlimited pumping by landowners. This includes the sale and export of large amounts of groundwater out of the watershed, something that has been proposed time and time again, but has yet to materialize. The threat of large-scale groundwater export coupled with an incomplete understanding of the relationship between surface water and groundwater supplies is the heart of the water issues in this watershed. In recent years, small-scale local agricultural pumping appears to have caused reaches of the river to go dry for long periods of time. The potential for unregulated groundwater pumping, coupled with climate change effects and drought, lead to serious concerns for the people, agriculture, fish and wildlife, and tourism that depend on the Devils River. The following are specific areas and projects within the watershed which have been identified as a critical issues and needs:

- Build consensus among watershed stakeholder groups:
 - There is a longstanding conflict between stakeholders regarding the management and scientific understanding of the watershed's water resources. The creation of a watershed group representative of all stakeholder interests and creating a unified plan could help resolve the conflict and direct progress toward a management strategy to protect the water quantity and quality of the watershed and stakeholders' interests.
- Develop critical science to inform groundwater management:
 - Aquifer properties are poorly defined in the Lower Devils River watershed and there is limited data on aquifer responses to pumping stresses. These data are needed to estimate critical parameters for groundwater modeling, such as

aquifer hydraulic conductivity and storage. Aquifer tests could be designed and conducted on wells constructed for this purpose and located where data are most needed. This project could further refine groundwater models and aid in managing groundwater to accommodate surface water needs (TWDB, 2018).

- Expand network of well and spring flow data is needed to better understand aquifer flow paths and recharge rates (TWDB, 2018)
- Development of a hydraulic habitat model to evaluate impacts of declining instream flows on habitat for priority species.
- Additional research to Texas Hornshell mussel beds to further understanding of the relationship between flow, temperature, and habitat for Texas Hornshell, Devils River minnow and other unique Devils River species to further help with water management decisions to protect species.
- Develop tools to increase understanding of the flow needs of the Devils River and its endangered species:
 - Conflict and pushback from landowners led this reach of river to be omitted from critical habitat designation for Devils River Minnow by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There needs to be a better understanding of listing and critical habitat designation by all stakeholders.
- Design watershed management and other actions to mitigate water quality impacts:
 - Water quality monitoring project to assess impacts of wastewater discharge to tributaries in the Upper Devils River watershed.
 - Upland Conservation project to address erosion and sediment discharge where road and pipeline construction have impacted the watershed.
- Inform sustainable recreational use of the Devils River:
 - Assess recreational impacts on environmental values and habitat.
 - Assess flow targets needed to provide an enjoyable wilderness paddling experience.

2) Describe how the work funded under this program will benefit the issues or needs identified.

Stakeholder Outreach and Partnership Building – The DRC plans to reach out to all stakeholders who affect or are affected by water from the Lower Devils River watershed. The formation of a watershed planning group will be the foundation for establishing these diverse partnerships to protect the region's critical water resources. The DRC has initiated conversations with stakeholders to measure interest in forming a watershed group.

As a critical portion of the watershed – the river itself and Amistad International Reservoir– are publicly owned and largely dependent on spring flows, discussions regarding access, land use, and groundwater use and management would be undertaken.

Watershed Planning – The DRC plans to use the planning process similar to that identified below:

- Build partnerships by identifying and inviting key stakeholders and conducting public outreach. The DRC has begun this process by initiating conversations with

stakeholders including Devils River Association, U.S. National Parks Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

- If awarded, the DRC will:
 - Conduct stakeholder outreach and recruitment efforts, including posting in local news outlets, send letters, and present to stakeholder groups to elicit interest and representation in the Group.
 - Conduct professionally facilitated Group meetings.
 - Craft a Group mission and vision statement.
 - Outline stakeholder interests and conflicts.
 - Set initial goals to define, quantify, and address issues and conflicts.
 - Draft plan outline.
- The DRC would include a consultant in Group meetings to help with the following specific tasks:
 - Gather existing data and create a watershed inventory,
 - Include data and analysis from NGOs, federal and state resource agencies such as The Nature Conservancy, Texas Water Development Board, Fish, and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.
 - Identify and prioritize data gaps, conservation, and restoration needs,
 - Craft watershed management project concepts and
 - Develop a comprehensive GIS database and maps.
- Finalize Goals and Develop Plan;
 - Re-evaluate preliminary goals and set overall goals and management objectives,
 - Prioritize areas critical to achieving goals,
 - Develop and prioritize conservation, restoration, and monitoring actions to achieve goals, and
 - Define approach to measuring conservation progress
- Finalize Restoration and Conservation Management Plan

Criterion C

Implementation and Results (25 points)

1) Ability to meet program requirements evaluated based on schedule with milestones broken out for each task, start and end dates, and budget identifying costs for each task.

The DRC can comply with all program requirements and timeframes. DRC staff have experience managing large grants, distributing funds to sub-contractors and sub-recipients. To date, DRC staff have overseen state, federal and private grants totaling \$750,000. DRC has budgeted to ensure DRC has the capacity to comply with administration and reporting requirements. DRC confirms that all federal procurement standards for subcontracting would be followed. The timelines and milestones presented below outline the proposed plan to complete the two-year grant period's proposed activities.

Task A: Develop A Lower Devils River Watershed Planning Group	
Timeline: Duration of the contract	
Cost: \$49,901	
Milestone	Timeline
Conduct stakeholder outreach and recruitment	Year One: 1st Quarter
Host kick-off full Group meeting to outline stakeholder interests and conflicts	Year One: 1st Quarter
Host Group meetings to craft a mission and vision statement	Year One: 1st & 2nd Quarters
Host Group meetings to set preliminary goals to define, quantify and address issues and conflicts	Year One: 2nd & 3rd Quarters
Draft Plan Outline	Year One: 4th Quarter

Task B: Develop A Lower Devils River Watershed Plan	
Timeline: Duration of the contract	
Cost: \$49,904	
Milestone	Timeline
Create and analyze a watershed inventory	Year One: 4th Quarter
Identify and data gaps, conservation and restoration needs	Year Two: 1st Quarter
Craft watershed management project concepts	Year Two: 2nd Quarter
Develop a comprehensive GIS map	Year Two: 2nd Quarter
Finalize goals and develop plan	Year Two: 2nd & 3rd Quarters
Finalize Plan	Year Two: 4th Quarter

2) Building on relevant federal, state, or regional planning efforts, e.g., water conservation or drought plans or plans that meet EPA criteria for Nonpoint Source Management Program or watershed Based Plans.

The new Devils River Watershed Group would utilize all existing plans to assist in watershed plan development. DRC would use such completed State and Federal planning efforts as:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2005 Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan,
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's 2014 Devils River Working Group Action Plan, and the
- Plateau Region J's 2016 Regional Water plan.

DRC would also utilize other completed planning efforts such as The Nature Conservancy's 2004 Devils River Conservation Area Plan and 2006 water research plan for the Devils River and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 2018 Southwest Rivers Business Plan.

Additionally, USGS, International Boundary and Water Commission, Texas Water Development Board, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality data and reports will be used to assess baseline and existing data. These reports include but are not limited to:

- Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). 2018. Overview of Groundwater Conditions in Val Verde County, Texas.
- Upper Rio Grande Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (URGB BBEST). 2012. Environmental flows recommendations report. Final submission to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group, Rio Grande Basin, and Bay Area Stakeholders Committee and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Criterion D

**Department of the Interior Priorities and Bureau of Reclamation Priorities (10 points)
Demonstrate that the project supports the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation priorities.**

DRC's proposed project is in direct support of:

- DOI priority #1, 'Create a conservation stewardship legacy second only to Teddy Roosevelt.' The Devils River is one of the last ecologically intact ecosystems in Texas and is a mecca of biodiversity. The DRC aim's to bring stakeholders together to resolve conflict and plan for a sustainable and healthy watershed legacy for the Devils River.
- DOI priority #3, 'Restoring trust with local communities,' DRC, Devils River Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and The Nature Conservancy, have, and will continue to, foster dialogue between stakeholders.
- BOR priority #3, 'Leverage Science and Technology to Improve Water Supply Reliability to Communities'. Work in the watershed is guided by scientists and resource managers in State and Federal agencies and the private sector. The activities in this proposal are directly guided by recommendations from the Texas Water Development Board and others. The activities are expressly designed to protect the Devils River watershed's water quantity and quality and support habitat for the Devils River minnow (Federally threatened), Texas Hornshell mussel (Federally endangered), public, private, and municipal interests.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

If the project includes monitoring, measurement, or other fieldwork, environmental and cultural resources compliance may be required. Applications containing these activities must budget for all associated compliance work and should discuss the required compliance. We recommend contacting your local Reclamation office (www.usbr.gov/main/offices.html) to discuss the required environmental and cultural resource compliance and associated costs prior to submitting your application.

No monitoring, measurement, or other field work is planned.

Required Permits or Approvals

Applicants must state in the application whether any permits or approvals are required and explain the plan for obtaining such permits or approvals.

No permits or approvals will be required.

Project Budget

Budget

Budget Item Description	Rates	Quantity	Type	Annual Cost	Total Project Cost
Salaries and Wages					
<i>Julie Lewey, DRC Executive Director</i>	\$36.05/hr	1,015	Hr	\$ 18,295	\$ 36,591
Fringe Benefits					
<i>Full-Time Employee</i>	\$7.16/hr	1,015	Hr	\$ 3,634	\$ 7,267
Supplies and Materials					
<i>Mailings</i>	\$500	6	Ea	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000
<i>Office Supplies & Equipment</i>	\$4,000	1	Lump Sum	\$ 2,000	\$ 4,000
<i>Meeting Supplies</i>	\$800	1	Lump Sum	\$ 400	\$ 800
Contractual					
<i>GIS Map Research and Development</i>	\$125	98	Hr	\$ 6,125	\$ 12,250
<i>Room Rental for Meetings</i>	\$500	6	Ea	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000
<i>Planning Consultant/Facilitator</i>	\$75/hr	400	Hr	\$ 15,000	\$ 30,000
Travel					
<i>DRC Mileage</i>	\$0.56/mile	5,172	Miles	\$ 1,448	\$ 2,897
Total Costs					\$ 99,805

Budget Narrative

Salaries and Wages

Julie Lewey, DRC's Executive Director, will coordinate and manage the watershed planning effort. She will be responsible for organizing and attending meetings, assisting the facilitator in setting up meetings, providing guidance, managing contractors, executing group communications, and other administrative activities. The employee will allocate 25% of her professional time to the project each of the two years.

Fringe Benefits

The employee mentioned above earns fringe benefits, including paid vacation, paid holidays, sick leave, workers comp, healthcare, and federal withholdings at the amount expressed in the budget worksheet.

Staff Travel

Staff travel to and around the project area for watershed group meetings and field trips is anticipated. The proposed project will reimburse staff mileage only for an estimated 5,172 miles @\$0.56/mile. This budget allows for eight total round-trips of approximately 646 miles from DRC headquarters in Austin, Texas to and around the watershed.

Office Supplies and Equipment

It is estimated that there will be about six mailings to approximately 1,000 addresses to invite prospective stakeholders to participate in the watershed Planning effort. The costs for mailings include envelopes, printing, and postage.

A projector or other device may be needed as a tool in carrying out meetings. These cost \$600 - \$1,000.

Other materials may include but not be limited to whiteboards, markers, easels, paper, pens, folders, and other miscellaneous items necessary for conducting brainstorming sessions, printing reports, printing maps, and handouts.

Meeting supplies, including water, coffee, and snacks, may be necessary to encourage engagement and attentive participation.

Contractual

To produce an actionable, unbiased plan, an outside planning consultant and facilitator capable of facilitating meetings, assimilating and analyzing data, making recommendations, and documenting and organizing plan components. A preliminary estimate for this task is 400 hours at \$75/hour for a total cost of \$30,000.

Depending upon location and response to invitations, it may be necessary to rent a meeting room in a public space. The nearest available public rooms average \$500/use, and 6 Group meetings are anticipated.

Comprehensive watershed maps should be developed as part of the planning effort to organize and present data including stakeholder interests and location, recreational zones, and research sites. This

would require the services of GIS mapping expertise. It is estimated that it would require 98 hours of GIS mapping time at \$125/hr totaling \$12,250 to produce to tools needed.

Total Costs

The total project cost is estimated to be \$99,805 and will not exceed \$50,000 each year.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

DRC is registered & active with SAMs. Our CAGE code is 84LQ0. We have included a copy of our active registration page.

Appendix- Attachments

Mandatory Federal Forms
SAMs Registration Page
Board Resolution
Letters of Support
Citations

Mandatory Federal Forms

Form 424 with one attachment
Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
Assurances

Board Resolution

Letters of Support

Citations

Fratesi, S.B., R.T. Green, and N. Martin. 2019. *Evaluation of the Devils River Watershed Surface- Water/Groundwater Model for Determination of Pumping Impacts near Finnegan and Dolan Springs*. Prepared for The Nature Conservancy of Texas.

Green, R., 2015. *Pecos/Devils River Watershed Projects Part II*. Texas Water Conservation Association 71st Annual Convention. Available at <https://www.slideshare.net/texasnetwork/3-green-twca-2015>

Purchase, Carol E., Larson, David, Flora, Mark D., and Reber, John. 2001. *Amistad National Recreation Area, Texas Water Resources Scoping Report*. 36 pp. Available at: https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/special_projects/valverde/docs/Amistad%20National%20Recreation%20Area%20Water%20Resources%20Scoping%20Report.pdf

Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). 2018. *Overview of Groundwater Conditions in Val Verde County, Texas*. Prepared by: Texas Water Development Board with cooperation of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Available at: https://www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/special_projects/valverde/index.asp

Upper Rio Grande Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (URGB BBEST). 2012. *Environmental flows recommendations report*. Final submission to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group, Rio Grande Basin and Bay Area Stakeholders Committee and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. *Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan*. Available at: https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Documents/R2ES/Devils_River_Minnow_FINAL_Recovery_Plan.pdf

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. 2014. *Devils River Working Group Action Plan*. Available at: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/devils-river/Documents/working-group-report-2>

Plateau Region J. 2016. *Regional Water Plan*. Available at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/rwp/plans/2016/>

The Nature Conservancy of Texas. 2004. *Devils River Conservation Area Plan*. Available at <https://www.devilsriverconservancy.org/devils-database>

The Nature Conservancy of Texas. 2006. *Water Research plan for the Devils River*. Available on request.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. 2018. *Southwest Rivers Business Plan*. Available at <https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/swrivers/Documents/southwest-rivers-business-plan.pdf>



January 15, 2021

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Attention: Ms. Avra Morgan
Mail Code: 84-27852
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

RE: WaterSMART Watershed Planning Grant – Bostwick Park Water Conservancy District

Dear Ms. Morgan:

Please accept our letter of support for Devils River Conservancy's (DRC) WaterSMART 2021 Grant Application for the Watershed Planning Grant. Audubon Texas is pleased to support the DRC in efforts to resolve conflict, address critical data gaps and create a shared vision for a sustainable and resilient watershed amongst the diverse stakeholders.

Audubon Texas works to conserve birds, wildlife and the places they need to thrive. We also seek to work within broad stakeholder processes to better engage and understand the needs and expectations of the communities where we work. The Devils River Basin is an iconic and ecologically healthy landscape supporting a variety of species of conservation concern. Preservation of the river and basin character and functionality will require thoughtful scholarship and planning to reconcile potentially competing interests.

Supporting this project will certainly yield benefits for the stakeholders who've historically relied on, enjoyed and stewarded the Devils River Watershed.

In closing, we express our full support of this project and hope that the Devils River Conservancy's application receives thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Romey Swanson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Romey Swanson
Director of Conservation Strategy
Certified Wildlife Biologist®
Audubon Texas

DEVILS RIVER ASSOCIATION

15166 Private Road 1500
Del Rio, Texas 78840

January 14, 2021

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Attention: Ms. Avra Morgan
Mail Code: 84-27852
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

RE: WaterSMART Watershed Planning Grant -- Devils River Conservancy

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Devils River Association is historically composed of multigenerational ranchers and landowners within the Devils River Watershed who constitute the stakeholders who are among the most likely to be affected by any eventual watershed management plan. Please accept our letter of support for the Devils River Conservancy's (DRC) WaterSMART 2021 Grant Application for the Watershed Planning Grant. Our association is pleased to support the DRC in efforts to resolve conflicts, address critical data gaps, and create a shared vision for a sustainable and resilient watershed among diverse stakeholders.

Supporting this project will certainly yield benefits for the stakeholders who've historically relied on, enjoyed and stewarded the Devils River Watershed. In closing, we express our full support of this project and hope that the Devils River Conservancy application receives thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,



Joe Joplin

(Interim President)

Vice-President & Treasurer

On behalf of the Board of Directors Devils River Association



Life's better outside.®

January 15, 2021

Ms. Julie Lewey, Executive Director
Devils River Conservancy
201 West 5th Street, Suite 1300
Austin, TX 78701

Commissioners

S. Reed Morian
Chairman
Houston

Arch "Beaver" Aplin, III
Vice-Chairman
Lake Jackson

James E. Abell
Kilgore

Oliver J. Bell
Cleveland

Anna B. Galo
Laredo

Jeffery D. Hildebrand
Houston

Jeanne W. Latimer
San Antonio

Robert L. "Bobby" Patton, Jr.
Fort Worth

Dick Scott
Wimberley

Lee M. Bass
Chairman-Emeritus
Fort Worth

T. Dan Friedkin
Chairman-Emeritus
Houston

Carter P. Smith
Executive Director

RE: Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Dear Ms. Lewey:

I am writing to demonstrate support from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Inland Fisheries Division for this application to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Cooperative Watershed Management Grant Program. The Inland Fisheries Division is responsible for the management and conservation of Texas freshwater fisheries resources, including the diversity of Texas freshwater fishes, mussels, and their habitats. In addition to supporting one of the best Smallmouth Bass fisheries in the state, the Devils River hosts 49 species of native freshwater fishes and mussels, including some of the last remaining viable populations (globally) of six species listed as threatened or endangered. As such, the Inland Fisheries Division recognizes the Devils River watershed as a Native Fish Conservation Area, a designation that facilitates investments by TPWD and partners in habitat restoration, habitat preservation, invasive species management, monitoring, research, and enhancements to sustainable, nature-oriented river recreation.

If selected for funding, this collaborative watershed planning effort would leverage more than two million dollars (\$2M) in ongoing conservation investments by the Inland Fisheries Division and partners in the Devils River watershed. Creation of a holistic watershed conservation plan, assembled in cooperation with a diverse stakeholder group, is necessary for long-term sustainability of the river. Current threats to the river include unregulated groundwater pumping and concomitant reductions in baseflow, habitat fragmentation, and degraded water quality. We are enthusiastic about the opportunity that this initiative provides to develop and implement a plan to mitigate these threats.

If selected for funding, TPWD's Inland Fisheries Division is prepared to assist with stakeholder outreach and engagement, provide scientific expertise, and provide planning assistance in the development and implementation of a Devils River watershed group and watershed conservation plan. Thank you for the opportunity to demonstrate our continued commitment to collaborative conservation for the Devils River.

Sincerely,

Craig Bonds
Inland Fisheries Division Director

CCB:lam

cc: Mr. Tim Birdsong

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744-3291
512.389.4800

www.tpwd.texas.gov

To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Devils River Conservancy Board of Directors

Resolution to: Bureau of Reclamation

The Devils River Conservancy Executive Committee on behalf of the Board of Directors, by vote, and endorsed by a committee quorum on 1/18/2021 so resolves and hereby authorizes and directs Julie Lewey, Executive Director, on behalf of the Devils River Conservancy, to enter into a Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant agreement to conduct collaborative planning, research, analysis, and design to meet water supply and natural resource needs in the Devils River watershed.

DocuSigned by:
Randy Nunn
DD1ED0AD20BB4F1...

Randy Nunn
President
Devils River Conservancy

DocuSigned by:
Alice Strunk
4488BF8196984C6...

Alice Ball Strunk
Vice-President
Devils River Conservancy