Building Capacity for community engagement in watershed restoration planning in the Flint-Rock Watershed of western Montana

Appendices

1. Executive Summary

Date: January 2021

Applicant: Granite Conservation District-Granite Headwaters Watershed Group

City/County/State: Philipsburg, Granite County, Montana.

Granite Conservation District (Granite CD) is applying to the Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) on behalf of Granite Headwaters Watershed Group (GHWG). Granite CD is the fiscal agent for the associate committee watershed group. GHWG is a local citizen and stakeholder group that promotes the sustainable use and preservation of natural resources and watershed health in the Flint-Rock watershed of western Montana. Granite CD and GHWG propose to build capacity and foster community engagement in efforts to find local solutions to water quantity, water quality, and fisheries issues in the Flint-Rock watershed. GHWG will engage a diverse network of stakeholders, improve upon existing watershed plans, and, in partnership with Trout Unlimited (TU), develop priority projects necessary to improve the health of the watershed. With support from CWMP funds, GHWG will hire a coordinator to lead outreach and education activities to involve the watershed community in watershed planning and project identification efforts. TU will provide technical expertise to help GHWG prioritize and develop community-supported projects, some of which will occur on federally managed lands. GHWG and TU will implement the proposed activities over a period of two years and leverage additional funding and resources to expand the capacity of this growing stakeholder network, implement priority projects, and accomplish measurable results in the Flint-Rock Creek watershed. The estimated project completion date is 09/2023.

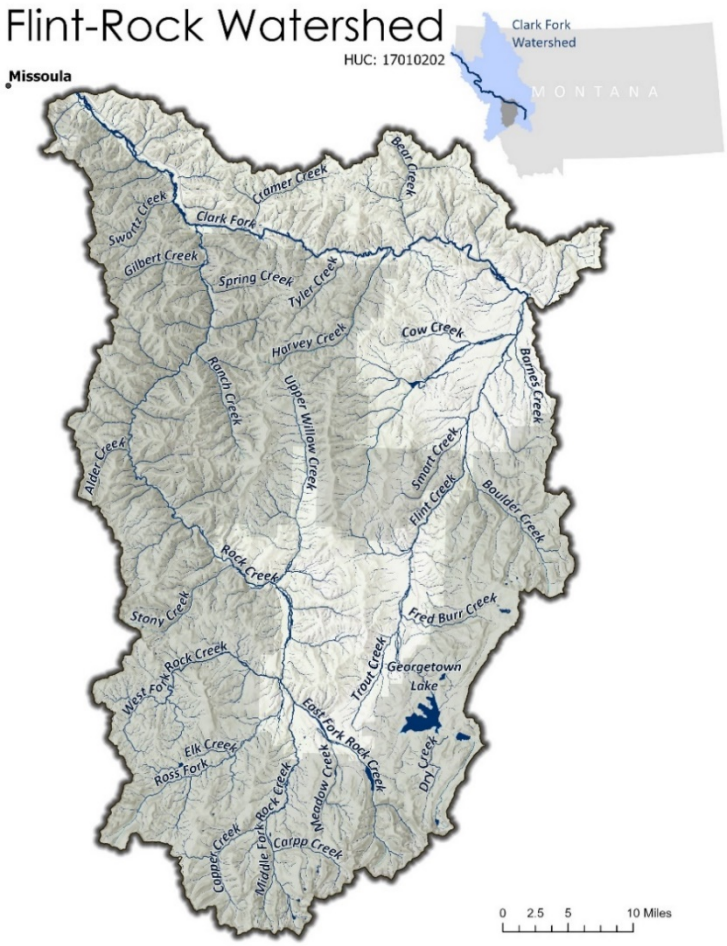
Background Information

The Flint-Rock watershed in western Montana spans approximately 920,000-acres and is renowned for its agricultural productivity and recreation opportunities. The watershed remains one of the last strongholds of large, producer-owned family farms and ranches in western Montana while supporting a strong tourism industry. The drainage encompasses the popular Rock Creek recreational fishery as well as threatened bull trout habitat. The Flint-Rock watershed is challenged by legacy land use impacts and threats from increased development pressure. In the face of these ongoing threats, community leadership and engagement in watershed protection and restoration activities will help preserve the cultural heritage and natural resources of the Flint-Rock watershed.

By partnering with TU on this joint proposal, GHWG will continue to work with TU and community on the Fred Burr Creek project and identify other critical watershed needs through outreach and planning activities; meanwhile, TU will provide the technical expertise to help prioritize projects and develop project designs to prepare for project implementation.

2. Project Location

The Flint-Rock Creek Watershed is located in Granite County, Montana and surrounds the county seat of Philipsburg, Montana. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Flint-Rock Creek Watershed is the 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) 17010202.



Map 1. Project Location- The Flint-Rock Watershed

Approximately 2,200 residents live within the Flint Creek watershed. Philipsburg (pop. 911) and Drummond (pop. 315) are the largest towns. Other population centers include Maxville and Hall. The majority of land ownership in the Flint Creek area is private (51.9%) with remaining land ownership including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the state of Montana. Over 80% of the Rock Creek side of the watershed is managed by the USFS, and the rest of the land is owned by private landowners, BLM, and DNRC, with nearly 9,500-acres under conservation easements. There are only 500 residents and no major population centers in Rock Creek.

3. Technical Project Description

Applicant Category: Granite CD is the fiscal agent applying on behalf of GHWG. GHWG is an Existing Watershed Group and associate committee of the Granite CD. If awarded, Granite CD will manage the financials and reporting requirements in coordination with GHWG.

GHWG has been active in watershed restoration and planning activities since its initiation in 2006. The group was initiated at a public meeting convened by local citizens due to mounting concerns from residents about the state of Flint Creek and issues affecting the water resources. For 15 years, GHWG has brought stakeholders together to discuss and find collaborative solutions to local issues and promoted responsible use of the natural resources in the watershed while protecting the rural lifestyle of the communities therein. This mission is achieved by the following activities: hosting public watershed meetings; educating members on natural, human, and socio-economic resource issues; developing solutions for resource challenges that protect or enhance rural lifestyles and strive to improve the resources within the area; and partnering with federal, state, and county agencies and other organizations to coordinate and fund watershed improvement activities.

In 2014, GHWG completed the Flint Creek Watershed Restoration Plans (WRP) that identifies water quality, water quantity, and fish passage as critical watershed needs or issues in the area. As part of that effort, GHWG identified management opportunities associated partners for natural resource restoration goals in the Flint Creek watershed. Since completion of the WRP, GHWG has partnered with various agencies and other groups on natural resource issues in the area.

During the last several years, the group's major focus has been the high priority water quality restoration project on Fred Burr Creek, tributary to Flint Creek. Fred Burr Creek is contaminated with mercury and other heavy metals from a historic mill site. It is a critical watershed issue and human and environmental health concern. GHWG partnered with TU to address the issue and develop a process to clean up the contamination from the mill. GHWG and TU have worked with landowners, agencies, engineers, and consultants to complete multiple phases of data collection and analysis. This ongoing multi-year, high priority effort demonstrates that GHWG is a proactive group, willing to work collaborative partners to address critical watershed issues.

Most recently, GHWG has sought funding to hire a watershed coordinator to increase capacity and re-establish goals and priorities for the group. This proposal is an outcome of that effort.

Eligibility of Applicant*:* Granite CD is a local government agency applying on behalf of GHWG, which is a non-regulatory, non-profit association representing a cross-section of area residents who live within and or own real property within the watershed, the "Steering Committee", as well as federal, state, and county officials who serve as advisors on the "Technical Advisory Committee". Since 2006, GHWG committee membership has

representatives from the major industrial sectors of the area and demonstrated an ability to identify resource issues and restoration opportunities, all the while balancing multi-stakeholder interests with respect to the use of natural resources in the watershed. Granite Headwaters mission is to promote the responsible use of the watershed's natural, human, and socio-economic resources to protect and enhance the rural lifestyles valued by our communities. GHWG believes the best way to achieve its mission is through community outreach and education and successful identification, development, implementation, and demonstration of model projects.

Existing Watershed Group Membership: GHWG membership representation includes the recreation and tourism business, agricultural industry, fishing and recreation interests, Flint Creek residents, Rock Creek residents, public resource management, and local government (Granite CD, County Roads, and City of Philipsburg).

Goals: The following goals for the project are based on a combination of critical needs identified in previously completed watershed restoration plans and other basin-wide reports as well as recent goals identified for and by the watershed group. Granite Headwaters Watershed Group identifies the following goals to be achieved through the activities proposed in this project:

1. Increase GHWG organization capacity to sustain the group in the long term;
2. Increase local participation in GHWG programs and GHWG leadership positions;
3. Understand community concerns, identify water resource issues and develop programs to effectively address them;
4. Identify local cooperative solutions that improve irrigation infrastructure for water users while benefitting water quality and/or fisheries;
5. Develop "shovel-ready" projects to improve water quality, water quantity and/or fisheries in priority streams.

Approach:

With fiscal sponsorship from Granite CD, GHWG is the entity in the watershed best positioned to represent the local community and reach these watershed restoration goals. Not only does GHWG have a desire to generate enthusiasm and participate in restoration projects, but the group is composed of community residents and landowners who are directly affected by these water resource issues. Support from Trout Unlimited will provide the technical expertise necessary to help prioritize projects and conduct on-the-ground activities to scope and develop priority projects.

While multiple Bureau of Reclamation Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 grants have been awarded in western Montana, none of the previous proposals have covered the Flint-Rock watershed. If awarded, this project will be the first time CWMP Phase 1 grant funding is available in this geographic area. Funds will be used to support the additional capacity necessary for the locally driven watershed group to establish strong leadership and increase community participation in watershed restoration planning through outreach and education activities. Through this process, GHWG will advance local solutions to critical watershed issues by identifying community-supported project priorities. With technical expertise from TU, GHWG will develop these multi-benefit priority projects into shovel-ready projects for implementation.

Ongoing efforts by GHWG and TU on the high priority Fred Burr Creek Project is a prime example of GHWG's proactive, community-driven approach to finding local solutions to critical water resource issues. The effort to restore water quality from mercury and other heavy metal contamination in Fred Burr Creek has been a long-term, complex, critical need in the watershed. GHWG has led the effort to engage and garner community support for the project and clean up, while TU has helped raise funds to hire consultants and engineers to complete the data collection and analysis and assist with interpretation of assessment results. This multi-year, collaborative effort demonstrates GHWG's proactive approach to cooperation with partners to address critical watershed issues.

To achieve the goals of this proposal, GHWG and TU will complete the following Tasks and activities:

Task A. Watershed Group Development

A1. Hire a Watershed Group Coordinator and build organizational capacity

1. Hire watershed coordinator position through GHWG hiring committee.
2. Build sustainable funding plan to support and increase capacity of GHWG for the long term.

GHWG will create a hiring committee that includes an advisor from the Granite CD board to hire a part-time GHWG coordinator position to increase the group's capacity to manage and coordinate watershed group activities. The hired coordinator will work with the steering committee to develop a 5-year funding plan to sustain the organizational capacity for the long-term.

A2. Improve organization structure to foster long term effectiveness and growth

1. Update GHWG Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Goals.
2. Evaluate the need for legal counsel or support for group structure, articles of incorporation and by-laws.

3. Develop a process by which the GHWG can document the interests and needs of the community and identify projects that address common goals for both the community and GHWG.
4. Continue to diversify the GHWG Steering Committee to reflect community demographics

The coordinator will work with GHWG Steering Committee to review and update the mission, vision statement, and goals of GHWG as necessary and identify what, if any, roles are necessary and beneficial for watershed group longevity. As part of that process, GHWG will assess the structure of the group, and look to other, successful watershed groups to determine whether additional membership or roles are necessary and evaluate the need for legal counsel or support. The coordinator will also help the group to develop a process for documenting community interests and needs. Over the course of the project, GHWG will continue efforts to recruit new membership and diversify its Steering Committee.

A3. Conduct outreach activities and stakeholder meetings to establish broader participation

1. Conduct regular public meetings.
2. Educate students and adults about watershed health through existing local educational programs
3. Organize and host a series (2-3) watershed tours of successful projects.
4. Build an outreach tool kit that may include a combination of the following or other ideas: improving the website, creating regular newsletters, creating social media platforms, developing signs at project sites.

GHWG with support from the group coordinator will conduct regularly scheduled public meetings, organize and host watershed tours, and build an outreach tool kit. GHWG will also assess opportunities to partner with local groups and educate students and adults about watershed health through existing educational or environmental programs.

Task B Watershed Restoration Planning

B1. Revise and improve upon existing watershed restoration plans based on the best available science

1. Review and update the Flint Creek Watershed Restoration Plan.
2. Review and update the Rock Creek Watershed Restoration Plan.

GHWG and TU will reexamine the existing restoration plans and use the best available science from recent research and monitoring data, adapted best management practices, identified critical watershed restoration needs and project priorities to update those plans. Stakeholder discussions

from outreach activities completed under Task B2 and B3 will also be incorporated into plan updates.

B2. Gain a better understanding of landowner and stakeholder interests and needs in the watershed

1. Conduct survey of potential new watershed group members and long-time community members to gauge interest in the types of projects and level of participation in those projects that will improve water management and supply, water quality, and/or fisheries
2. Assess project opportunities and identify priority water quantity, quality and/or fisheries projects
3. Build and maintain relationships through landowner visits in priority project areas

GHWG will complete both landowner visits and conduct a survey of landowners and watershed residents to better understand the community's needs and interests regarding critical watershed issues. GHWG Technical Advisory Committee members and other interested stakeholders will discuss identified projects and project priorities.

B3. Develop general watershed management project implementation priorities and plan for implementation

1. Finalize ESA-threatened species bull trout recovery plan.
2. Identify priority projects and any additional data collection or information needs in order to develop Task C projects.

TU will work with USFWS, and FWP, and USFS fisheries biologists to build upon and finalize the draft bull trout recovery plan. TU and the GHWG Technical Advisory Committee will identify priority projects and any additional information that needs to be collected in order to develop the projects under Task C1. GWHG and TU will reach consensus on which projects to implement before completing Task C.

Task C. Watershed Management Project Design

C1. Develop site-specific projects to improve water management, water quality, water quantity, and/or fisheries

1. Complete characterization of water quality impairments on Fred Burr Creek
2. Develop plan for environmental and cultural review/compliance of projects
3. Develop a riparian vegetation/streambank stabilization restoration pilot project for use as a demonstration site in the watershed
4. Develop design for one priority bull trout habitat improvement project
5. Develop and design one-two priority water quantity, water quality, and/or fisheries projects

TU will complete site-specific characterization of water quality impairments on Fred Burr Creek by continuing ongoing assessment work in conjunction with the project consultant. TU will identify types of site-specific environmental compliance that is necessary to implement identified projects. TU will develop the scope of work and project design for three to four site-specific priority projects in the watershed.

4. Evaluation Criteria

Criterion A— Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope

Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

GHWG was founded 15 years ago on principles of local representation and collaboration. Since then, its diverse membership has been reflective of the community demographics and affected stakeholders in the watershed. GHWG recognizes that inclusive stakeholder representation is critical to carrying out the group's mission to promote sustainable natural resource use while protecting the rural character of Granite County. Letters of support for this proposal are reflective of that history and the continued support of the group from the community and affected stakeholders. GHWG is committed to maintaining existing and fostering new relationships with community members and affected stakeholders to foster growth and recruit broader membership and participation.

● Affected Stakeholders

Over the past 15 years, GHWG has had member representation from the major sectors in Granite County and has partnered with a diversity of affected stakeholders on water resource planning and restoration opportunities in the watershed. GHWG will continue to have either membership representation or partnership with the following affected stakeholders:

- **Local Government** – Granite CD, Granite County Roads, City of Philipsburg
- **Agricultural Producers**
  As far back as the 1800s, agricultural producers have composed the largest sector of the social fabric, economy, and culture. Flint-Rock watershed of Granite County. Upper Rock Creek and the Flint Creek Valleys have historically been an agricultural dominated landscape and still today supports several traditional, multigenerational producer families. Agriculture is predominately irrigated hay and grazing for cattle. In Rock Creek, a total of 3,405-acres in the watershed are classified as agricultural lands for grazing, irrigated hay or crop production (MTNHP, 2016). At ~23,000 head, livestock outnumber the human population in Granite County by 10:1 (National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2012).
- **Irrigation Districts and Private Irrigators**
  Most agricultural producers in the Flint-Rock watershed irrigate land for grazing livestock or producing crop. In total, an estimated 22,500 acres are irrigated in the watershed. There are two irrigation districts in the watershed: Allendale Water Users and Lower Willow Creek

Water Users. In addition, many irrigators are unaffiliated with irrigation districts and manage individual or shared irrigation diversions.

- **Rock Creek and Flint Creek Residents**
  Local Business and Chamber of Commerce: Retail, Recreation & Tourism
  Outdoor recreation and tourism is a fast-growing sector of the economy in the Flint-Rock watershed; there are many outfitting, guiding, lodging, and other recreation and tourism businesses throughout the watershed.
- **Fishing and outdoor recreation**
  The watershed is renowned for its outdoor recreation and fishing. Tourists come from all over the world to experience the recreation opportunities provided by the Flint-Rock watershed.
- **Environmental Conservation**: Clark Fork Coalition, Trout Unlimited, Five Valleys Land Trust
- **Public Land and Resource Manager**s: US Forest Service- Lolo National Forest, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Montana Natural Resource Damage Program, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Department Natural Resources and Conservation.

● Current Watershed Group Membership

The following list of group members demonstrates how GHWG has worked to represent the various stakeholders in the watershed. The steering committee comprises individuals and entities that live within and/or own real property within the watershed. Federal, state, and county agencies and other stakeholders serve as advisors on the technical advisory committee. This diverse group membership has and will continue to make GHWG successful at taking on issues of concern for the community with community support when it comes to making decisions to address those issues that also impact the community.

2020 Granite Headwaters Steering Committee Members

The management group has a 12-member Steering Committee elected by the general membership and comprising a President, Vice President, ten members representing different sectors. Membership representation includes the following sectors: agriculture, recreation, business/retail, development/construction/real estate, homeowners/residents, recreation and tourism, and fishing

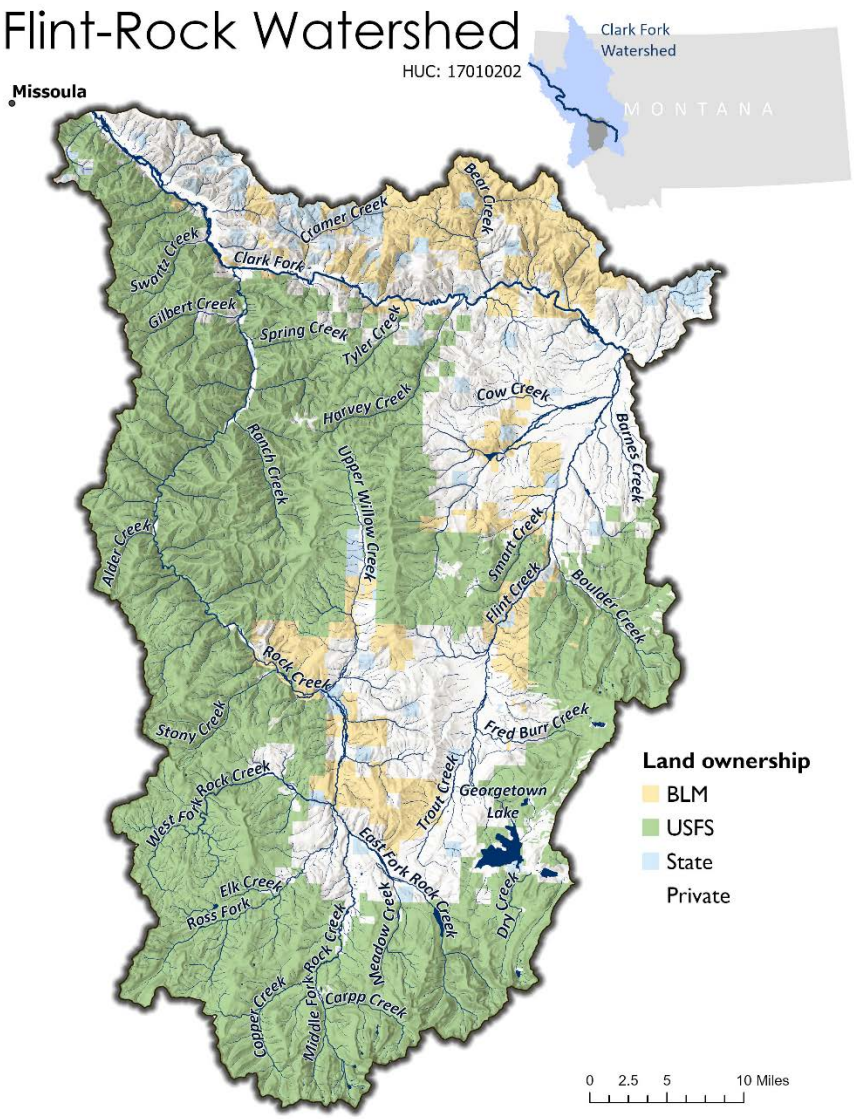
2020 GHWG Technical Advisory Committee

Technical advisers to the management group represent Montana FWP, USFS, Granite county government, USFS, Clark Fork Coalition, and Trout Unlimited.

GHWG will conduct outreach to solicit participation from additional stakeholders in the watershed. Details of how GHWG will target affected stakeholders to ensure that the group continues to represent a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed are included in this proposal in Tasks A2 and A3. These tasks are specifically geared toward diversifying existing membership and engaging more of the community in identifying issues and local solutions to ongoing water supplies, water quality, and fisheries issues in the Flint-Rock watershed.

Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope

The project area encompasses the entire HUC 8 Flint-Rock watershed (HUC 17010202). GHWG will maintain existing relationships and member representation from Upper Flint Creek and Upper Rock Creek, the portions of the watershed in which the group has been most active in the past. At the same time, the group will work to establish new relationships with landowners and other stakeholders throughout the entire drainage to better address critical watershed needs and issues on a basin-wide scale. Tasks A2 and A3 and B2 detail the planned outreach activities to achieve the above-stated objective.



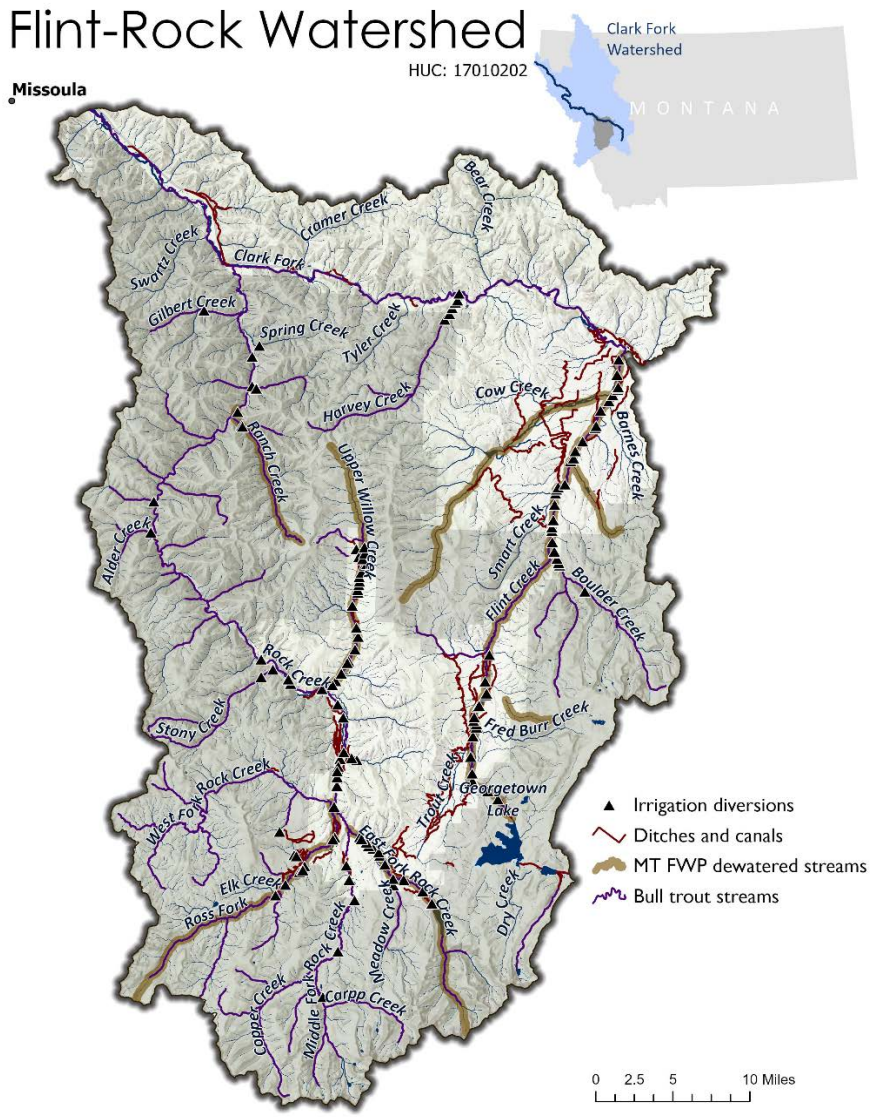
Map 2. Geographic extent- The watershed group will work throughout the Flint-Rock watershed. Major public landowners and resource manager stakeholders are currently involved in the group; current group membership also includes representation from private landowner residents and agricultural producers. Headwaters are managed by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, and lower Rock Creek is largely managed by the Lolo National Forest. Valley bottoms are privately owned, and most land use is for agricultural production. Smaller parcels of land are managed by Montana State Trust and the Bureau of Land Management. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks manages the streams and riparian areas in the watershed.

Evaluation Criterion B — Addressing Critical Watershed Needs

Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

GHWG and TU are in a good position to collaborate and develop local, cooperative solutions to water quantity, water quality, and fisheries issues in the watershed, because both groups have

completed Watershed Restoration Plans: GHWG completed the WRP for Flint Creek in 2014 and TU completed the WRP for Rock Creek in 2018. GHWG and TU have expertise in basin-scale watershed planning and a general knowledge of streams or areas that need restoring as well as opportunities to restore them. The collective knowledge of the big picture issues will enable these two groups to build upon their stakeholder network and take the next step to identify and prioritize projects to address watershed issues.



Map 3. Critical Watershed Issues - Water Quantity, Water quality, and Fisheries.

Water Quantity:

Aerial imagery indicates that there are approximately 22,500 irrigated acres in the watershed. Most of the irrigation occurs in Flint Creek and upper Rock Creek, where

irrigation water is supplied by irrigation diversions on nearby streams or reservoirs. Many of the diversion structures and the associated water delivery infrastructure are outdated, which causes inefficient water withdrawals and challenges water managers. High demand for water combined with inefficient water withdrawals causes periods of dewatering in portions of the watershed. These events negatively impact agricultural producers and create conflicts between water users and fisheries.

There is an opportunity to identify local solutions to maintain streamflows during the irrigation season and secure water instream during periods of water shortage streamflow to benefit water quality, fisheries, and irrigators. Through the activities under Tasks B1, B2, and B3, GHWG and TU will identify and evaluate site-specific opportunities to expand natural storage, upgrade irrigation diversions to improve water use efficiencies, and lease water rights instream. Activities will focus on outreach and identification of projects that result in notable water savings in the following priority dewatered areas: lower Flint Creek, lower Ross Fork Rock Creek, Upper Willow Creek, South Fork Lower Willow Creek, and Ranch Creek. Priority projects will be identified based on the potential to improve water availability while also producing basin-scale water security to mutually benefit water users and watershed health. Project priorities will be developed in partnership with a diverse set of stakeholders.

Water Quality:

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) assessment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) identifies waterbodies contaminated by non-point source pollution and found 11 streams or stream reaches in Flint Creek and 9 waterbody segments in Rock Creek contaminated by non-point source pollution. The primary sources of pollution in the watershed are sediment and metals. Metals and metal contamination are legacy impacts from hard-rock abandoned mine sites throughout the basin. Over 150 abandoned mine have been surveyed by Montana Bureau of Mines & Geology in the watershed with many labeled as a priority for remediation. Sediment pollution is from old road networks, culverts, grazing management, streambank erosion due to lack of riparian vegetation. Water depletions for irrigation exacerbate the pollution impairments in multiple streams.

Activities completed by GHWG and TU under Tasks A3, B1, B2, and C1 will address critical water quality issues through continued project planning efforts and outreach and planning to develop new projects. Activities in Tasks A3 and B2 include community outreach and education to identify opportunities to clean-up abandoned mines and/or reduce sedimentation by either improving streambank stability or replacing problem road crossings. Tasks B1 and B2 include planning activities to assess project priorities, and Task C1 includes activities to continue assessment efforts and complete the water quality impairment characterization in Fred Burr Creek. C2 activities also include the development of one-three other priority water quality improvement projects, including

the development of one sediment reduction and riparian habitat improvement project that can serve as a demonstration to other landowners in the area. Project opportunities and priorities to improve water quality in stream reaches will focus on priority areas of Flint Creek, Upper Willow Creek, East Fork Rock Creek, Ranch Creek, and Scotchman Gulch.

Aquatic Species of Concern:

The Flint-Rock watershed supports resident and migratory populations of threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and native westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhyncus clarki lewisi*), a Montana State Species of Concern. Long-term survey trends show a decline in bull trout redd counts in the watershed, and localized water temperature increases are threatening these fish. The USFWS Bull Trout Recovery Plan designates Flint Creek and tributary, Boulder Creek, as critical habitat streams, and it designates the entire Rock Creek watershed a core habitat area for bull trout. Temperature models show that portions of the Flint-Rock watershed will maintain the cold-water temperatures needed to sustain both westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout into the future, and Rock Creek is considered the largest coldwater habitat patch within the Columbia Headwaters. These factors indicate that restoration gains in the Flint-Rock watershed are a regional priority for bull trout and likely to achieve sustained success.

There are multiple opportunities to improve habitat and fish passage for bull trout recovery in the Flint-Rock area. Projects identified to replace bull trout passage barriers or improve habitat and water quality that benefit the highest number of ESA-listed species will be prioritized. Tasks B1, B2, B3, and C1 will all contribute to the identification and development of a recovery plan and specific projects.

Fish Passage

The migratory life-history of native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout makes them especially vulnerable to the impacts of fish passage barriers as they frequently complete long-distance migrations to spawning or seek thermal refuge in tributaries. Impediments to upstream and downstream migration can reduce population numbers and overall population health. Undersized road culverts and irrigation diversion structures throughout the watershed have been identified and assessed to impede upstream fish migrations and/or block downstream movement by entraining fish in irrigation ditches. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) have prioritized restoration efforts to remove and reduce fish passage barriers in the Flint-Rock watershed to improve fisheries habitat connectivity for ESA-threatened bull trout and other fish species.

Inventories of irrigation diversions and road crossings completed by FWP and TU identify fish passage barriers in the watershed. Barriers are relatively straightforward issues to

remediate once identified, but they can be expensive projects. Planning activities completed under Tasks B1, B2, and B3 will contribute to the identification of community supported, priority fish passage barrier removal projects. Task C1 will contribute to the development of at least one priority project to remove a passage barrier and reconnect habitat for ESA-listed bull trout.

Conflicts over Water

The combination of water quantity, water quality, and fisheries issues in the Flint-Rock watershed often results in conflicts over water resources. Balancing these issues to stretch water supplies for fisheries and water users (agricultural and/or developers) is a challenge. GHWG believes that partnership building is the only way to identify these issues and create cooperative solutions to priority conflicts in the watershed.

Through outreach and education opportunities described in Tasks A3, B2, and C2, GHWG and TU will identify options to resolve these conflicts. GHWG and TU have expertise in reducing conflicts between residents, agriculture, and fisheries/water quality. Examples include the ongoing project work to build community support for the water quality restoration project on Fred Burr Creek, riparian fencing projects, and upgrading diversions to improve irrigation efficiency and reduce entrainment in irrigation diversions. These projects have multiple benefits and help improve water supplies for both the landowner and fisheries.

Sub-criterion No. B2. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Task A - Water Group Development:

A1. Hire a Watershed Group Coordinator and build organizational capacity

The purpose of this task is to build GHWG organizational capacity and leadership by hiring a watershed coordinator and developing a funding plan for the group. GHWG and Granite CD will jointly develop the position description and hiring process. GHWG will make recommendations to Granite CD for the purpose of hiring a coordinator. The new coordinator will work with members of the watershed group Steering Committee to develop a sustainable funding plan for the group. The goal for this task is to establish long-term watershed group effectiveness through increased capacity to coordinate and manage watershed group activities that lead to improved community engagement as well as new partnerships. The coordinator will improve the capacity of the watershed group to complete the activities described in Tasks A2, A3, B1, and B2.

A2. Improve organization structure to foster long term effectiveness and growth

The purpose of this task is to review and update the watershed group mission, vision statement, goals and update as necessary. It is also to incorporate legal counsel into GHWG Steering or Advisory Committees if necessary. The group has considered whether legal expertise is necessary for the group to help it navigate restoration project planning and implementation. GHWG will reevaluate this issue and decide if appointing someone to the committee in a legal advisory role is necessary for long-term group effectiveness. A third activity will be to develop a process for the GHWG to document the interests and needs of the community. Lastly, GHWG will continue efforts to recruit new membership which reflects the demographics of the community and affected stakeholders. Diversifying the Steering Committee to reflect the community demographics will help understand the diversity of community concerns and interests. Unlike the other activities in this Task, this effort will take place throughout the entire project period. Having leadership support to complete these activities will help establish a strong foundation and create a smooth path forward for GHWG to achieve its goals and address critical watershed needs.

A3. Conduct outreach activities and stakeholder meetings to recruit new members and establish broader participation

The purpose of this task is to increase outreach activities and establish broader participation from stakeholders, residents, agencies, businesses, and other sectors of the community in the planning process to address critical watershed needs. GHWG will host regularly scheduled public meetings, organize and host watershed tours, build an outreach tool kit, and assess opportunities to partner with other groups to educate students and adults about watershed health through existing programs. These outreach activities will help the watershed group to build partnerships and trust with the watershed community. In turn, these relationships will improve the efficacy of GHWG efforts to identify critical watershed restoration needs and develop priority projects to address those needs.

Task B - Watershed Restoration Planning*:*

B1. Revise and improve upon existing watershed restoration plans based on best available science

GHWG will update the existing Watershed Restoration Plans. Updated plans will ensure future projects are based on the best science and information available. Updates will reflect current conditions, best available science and management practices, and any new critical watershed needs and/or priorities. GHWG and TU will incorporate information from recent monitoring and research as well as findings from landowner visits, the resident survey, and other relevant information gained through outreach activities from Tasks A3, B2, and B3. Updating these documents also provides GHWG the opportunity

to contact resource managers, landowners, and other stakeholders about monitoring data, recent research, current watershed priority needs, thus building upon these partnerships.

B2. Gain a better understanding of landowner and stakeholder interests and needs in the watershed

The purpose of this task is to complete a series of outreach activities to help address conflicts between agriculture and ESA-species, water quality, and fish passage and help GHWG gain a better understanding of the landowner and stakeholder interests and needs with respect to critical watershed needs in the basin. The GHWG Technical Advisory Committee will look closely at the data for projects identified through outreach activities and assess priorities based on the combined benefits to water users, water quality, and fisheries. The committee will invite technical experts to present information, identify data gaps to be collected before project development, and present priority project ideas to the GHWG Steering Committee for group consensus on chosen projects before Task C1 is completed.

B3. Develop general watershed management project implementation priorities and plan for implementation

The purpose of this task is to coordinate with agencies and other stakeholder partners to develop priority project implementation plans. Since 2017, TU has led an effort to work with USFWS and identify and prioritize bull trout fish passage and habitat improvement projects in Rock Creek with input from USFWS and other agency, organization, and partners including, FWP and the USFS**.** GHWG and TU will work with these partners and use information gathered from the other outreach and planning activities completed in this proposal to finalize an ESA-threatened species bull trout recovery plan for the entire Flint-Rock watershed. At least one project identified in this final plan will be scoped and a designed in Task C1. The Technical Advisory Committee will assess priority project ideas and identify additional information needs in order to complete project development. The Technical Advisory Committee will present priority projects to the Steering Committee for consensus on which projects will be developed in Task C1.

Task C - Watershed Management Project Design

C1. Develop site-specific projects to improve water management, water quality, water quantity, and/or fisheries

The purpose of this proposed task is to continue implementing the next phase of work from an ongoing project and develop shovel-ready water quantity, water quality, and/or fisheries projects that were identified in Task B for implementation. As part of this Task, GHWG and TU will complete a final characterization of water quality impairments on Fred Burr Creek by working with the project consultant to analyze the latest soil and water samples from the area. Data gaps will be identified, and additional samples collected as necessary. This is a high priority project in which TU

and GHWG have been engaged in for several years. The activity will contribute to the management of the critical water quality issue in the watershed.

TU will also work with the Reclamation's environmental and cultural resources staff to determine what site-specific compliance will be necessary for the priority projects upon implementation. TU will develop an environmental and cultural review and compliance plan for multiple projects in the scoping and development phase at once to streamline the review process once the priority projects are ready for implementation.

Specific projects that will be designed for implementation are not yet identified. The project types included in this proposal are based on opportunities to address critical watershed issues that have been identified in previous restoration planning efforts. TU will develop the scope of work and project design for a riparian vegetation, sediment reduction, and streambank stabilization pilot project for use as a demonstration site in the watershed; one priority bull trout habitat improvement project, and one-two priority projects that improve water quality, water quantity, and/or fisheries. Depending on design requirements, surveys or information collected in the scoping or design process may be completed in-house by a TU technician or project coordinator staff or subcontracted to an engineering or consulting firm. Similarly, depending on the project design requirements, TU project staff may complete the design in-house (i.e. basic bank stabilization or revegetation designs) or the design work may be subcontracted to an engineering or consulting firm (i.e. fish screen or culvert upgrade design).

Evaluation Criterion C— Implementation and Results

Sub-criterion No. C1—Project Implementation

Granite CD can comply with all program requirements and timeframes. Granite CD administrative staff have experience managing grants, distributing funds to sub-contractors and sub-recipients, and have budgeted overhead expenses to cover time and ensure compliance with administration and reporting requirements. Granite CD confirms that all federal procurement standards for subcontracting will be followed. The timeline and milestones outlined below is the general plan to complete the proposed activities within this 2-year grant period.

Activity	Milestones	Timeline							
		Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1 Q3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q2	Y2 Q3	Y2 Q4
Task A: Watershed Group Development									
Estimated Cost: $ 33,000									

A1. Hire Facilitator and Build Organizational Capacity	Facilitator hired; 5-year funding plan developed								
A2. Improve Organization Structure	Mission and vision statements and goals updated; membership representation includes all major community sectors								
A3. Conduct outreach activities and stakeholder meetings	Regular meeting schedule established; 2-3 watershed tours hosted; outreach tool-kit plan developed								
Task 2: Watershed Restoration Planning									
Estimated Cost: $ 33,500									
B1 Revise existing Watershed Restoration Plans	Flint Creek and Rock Creek WRPs updated								
B2. Gain better understanding of landowner and stakeholder needs in the community	Survey conducted; focus group to work with landowners on project identification established; landowner visits completed								
B3. Develop general watershed management project implementation priorities and plan for implementation	ESA-threatened bull trout recovery plan finalized; priority projects to be developed in Task C1 identified								
Task 3: Watershed Management Project Design									
Estimated Cost: $ 33,485									
C1. Develop site-specific projects to improve water management, water quality, water quantity, and/or fisheries	3-4 developed and designed projects that are "shovel-ready" for implementation.								

Sub-criterion No. C2—Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts

Capacity funding under this proposal will support GHWG and TU efforts to meet the relevant recommendations of the following agency planning efforts:

Basin-wide Planning Documents

Planning Document	Author, Year	Relevant Recommendations
Flint Creek Watershed Restoration Plan	Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, 2014	Identifies priority watershed restoration opportunities: reduce streambank erosion, restore Fred Burr water quality, remove fish passage barriers
Granite County Long Range Plan	NRCS, Granite Conservation District, and Granite County (TU is a collaborator), 2020	Water resource issues to be addressed: -improving habitat for fisheries through increased instream flows, removal of passage barriers, increased irrigation efficiencies, fish screens, and riparian health -Drought Resiliency: Restoring and improving hydrological conditions through riparian health, beaver dam mimicry, wetland restoration and enhancement, increased streamflow volume and duration, alternative stock water sources, and increased irrigation efficiency. -Clean-up of heavy metals from mining -address non-point-source pollutants. -Education: Provide information to landowners on innovative conservation practices.
Montana State Water Plan	DNRC, 2015	- Support water use efficiency and water conservation - Increase flexibility to manage water supplies through storage and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure - Provide sufficient protection for instream flows - Support coordinated efforts to protect ESA-listed species

The activities in this proposal will also help meet priority recommendations from several other reports on fisheries, and water quality, including to following:

Water Quality		
Planning Document	Author, Year	Relevant Recommendations

2017 Nonpoint Source Management Plan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2017	Recommendations include: “Improve communication on NPS pollution issues among Montana’s agricultural community”, and “Promote practices and activities that help minimize the impacts of hydrologic modifications.”
Rock Creek Temperature and Tributary Sediment Total Maximum Daily Loads and Framework Water Quality Improvement Plan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2011	Provides “Implementation Strategies and Recommendations” for water quality improvement in each of the following categories, “agriculture”, “forestry and timber harvest”, “riparian areas, wetlands, and floodplains”, “unpaved roads”, “bank hardening/floodplain development”, “mining”
Flint Creek Planning Area Sediment and Metals TMDLs and Framework Water Quality Improvement Plan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2012	Provides “Implementation Strategies and Recommendations” for water quality improvement in each of the following categories, “agriculture”, “forestry and timber harvest”, “riparian corridors and wetlands, “unpaved roads”, “bank hardening/floodplain development”, “mining”, and “metals”

Fisheries		
Author, Year	Author, Year	Author, Year
US Forest Service Bull Trout Conservation Plan	US Forest Service Bull Trout Conservation Plan USDA, 2013	Identifies restoration strategies, by subbasin, with high significance to Bull Trout (improvements to temperature, pools, sediment or barriers).

Columbia Headwaters Recovery Unit Implementation Plan for Bull Trout ("Implementation Plan")	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2015	Identifies the following recovery actions for the Flint-Rock watershed: - Remove fish passage barriers - Prioritize Flint Creek and Boulder Creek for stream habitat enhancement to restore fisheries; - Upgrade or relocate problem roads by increased application of BMPs, and remediating sediment producing hot spots on roads and road crossings in Rock Creek; - Supply cold water through acquisition, irrigation efficiencies, or development of new sources to strengthen connectivity in Rock Creek; and - Prioritize Rock Creek and tributaries for restoration
Prioritization of Areas in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin for Fishery Enhancement	NRDP Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, 2018	Identifies the following management activities for fisheries improvement in the Flint-Rock watershed: -Flow Augmentation: purchase or lease water rights or improve irrigation system efficiency. - Riparian habitat protection and/or improvement: install riparian fencing, manage grazing, reestablish woody plants, create conservation easements, purchase land - Fish passage improvement: replace culverts, improve irrigation diversions, construct fish screens on diversions -Sediments reduction/bank stabilization: re-establish woody plants, reconstruct streambanks/channels, improve roads
Draft Rock Creek Watershed bull trout recovery plan	Trout Unlimited, 2020	Identifies bull trout fish passage and habitat improvement projects in the Rock Creek watershed

An Inventory and Prioritization of Irrigation Diversions in the Rock Creek Watershed	Trout Unlimited, 2018	Identifies irrigation diversion in Rock Creek and prioritizes irrigation diversion fish passage barriers

E*.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D— Department of the Interior and Bureau of Reclamation Priorities* *(10 points)*

The WaterSMART proposal completed by GHWG and TU will provide support for the following the Department of Interior and Bureau of Reclamation priorities, including, (1) creating a conservation legacy, (2) modernizing infrastructure through public-private partnerships, (3) restoring trust with local communities by improving relationships and communication, and (4) improving water supplies for rural communities.

1a) Utilizing science to identify best practices to manage land and water resources and adapt to changes in the environment:
GHWG and TU's proposed work to identify restoration priorities will be driven by science and data monitoring from State and federal resource managers. Activities are based on recommendations from the DOI U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for ESA-species Bull Trout and BOR BLM (see letters of support from USFWS and BLM). GHWG and TU will work closely with Service staff in advance of project implementation and use the best available science to develop a bull trout recovery plan for the Flint-Rock watershed. Proposed activities in this proposal to continue the ongoing work to restore water quality to Fred Burr Creek will be guided by scientific analysis of data collection efforts and BOR BLM priorities and recommendations.

1b) *Revising and Streamlining the environmental and regulatory review process while maintaining environmental standards:*
Proposed activities in this proposal will streamline the environmental and regulatory review process through coordinating with State and federal land and water resource managers in early phases of project identification and scoping and through the development of an environmental and cultural resources permitting plan for multiple projects at one time. Advance coordination with agency permitting staff will streamline the permitting process while maintaining environmental standards to restore water quantity, water quality, and fisheries in the watershed.

2) Modernizing Infrastructure:
One of the goals of this proposal is to identify local cooperative solutions that improve irrigation infrastructure for water users while benefitting water quality and/or fisheries. Proposed activities

will develop projects to upgrade infrastructure, including irrigation diversions, water delivery systems and water storage.

3) Restoring trust with local communities:
GHWG and TU will continue to build trust by fostering communication and relationships in local communities. A goal of this proposal is to "understand community concerns and identify water resource issues to address them". To achieve that goal, GHWG and TU will conduct one-on-one conversations and host public meetings in the local communities with community members, governors, and state and federal resource managers.

4) Improving water supplies for rural communities
A goal of this proposal is to "develop "shovel-ready" projects to improve water quality, water quantity and/or fisheries in priority stream". GHWG and TU will identify opportunities and strategies to stretch water supplies through expanded natural storage and improved water use efficiencies. Proposed activities will identify opportunities to improve water supplies in priority areas where water quantity is a critical issue affecting agricultural producers.

1. Budget Proposal

Table 1. Total Project Cost Table

Cost to be reimbursed with the requested Federal funding	$99,985.00
Costs to be paid by the applicant	$0.00
Value of third-party contributions	$0.00
Total Project Cost	**$99,985.00**

Table 2. Budget Proposal

Budget Item Description	Computation		Unit	Total Cost
	Unit Price	Quantity		
Salaries and Wages				
Watershed Coordinator, GHWG	$ 45.00	1,000	Hours	$45,000
Fringe Benefits				
Travel				
GHWG	$ 0.560	1,570	miles	$879.0
Subrecipient				
Trout Unlimited				$37,004
Equipment				
None	0	0	NA	$0.00
Supplies and Materials				
Meeting Supplies	$ 300.00	1	Lump Sum	$300
Contractual				
Survey Technician, Restoration Consultant, or Engineer	$50-150	1	Lump Sum	$ 11,000
Total Direct Costs				$ 94,183
Indirect Costs				
Granite CD Overhead @ 6.16% MTDC	6.16%	1	Modified Total Direct Costs	$ 5,802
Total Project Cost				**$ 99,985**

Table 3. Subrecipient Budget Details

Budget Item Description	Computation		Unit	Total Cost
	Unit Price	Quantity		
Salaries and Wages				

Tess Scanlon, Project Coordinator, TU	$ 24.98	799	Hours	$19,959
Technician, TU	$ 16.00	60	Hours	$960
Fringe Benefits				
Tess Scanlon, Project Coordinator, TU @ 47%	$9,381.00	1	Lump Sum	$9,381
Technician, TU @ 47%	$451.00	1	Lump Sum	$451
Travel				
TU	$ 0.560	3,990	miles	$2,234
Equipment				
None	0	0	NA	$0.00
Supplies and Materials				
None	0	0	NA	$0.00
Contractual				
None	0	0	NA	$0.00
Total Direct Costs				$32,534
Indirect Costs				
13.74% NICRA	13.74%			$4,470
Total Project Cost				**$37,004**

2. Budget Narrative

Budget narrative

These funds will provide additional and improved capacity for GHWG to secure a watershed coordinator position and secure a leadership position. Furthermore, funds will enable GHWG and TU to find local solutions to water quality and quantity issues and to improve fisheries. Support from Granite CD to secure a GGWG coordinator position and the technical support from TU to develop the technical aspects of the proposal and priority project designs if awarded the funds, drastically increases the watershed group's ability to secure financial support, community engagement, and a sustainable future. Without grant funding, GHWG will continue to seek capacity funding opportunities to support a part-time watershed coordinator position. And because many capacity opportunities are smaller in size, GHWG will likely need to secure multiple funding awards in order to hire a qualified part-time (0.50 FTE) position.

The proposed budget does not include costs to be incurred prior to the award.

Salaries and wages

Salaries and wages for one part-time (0.5 FTE) GHWG and one full-time TU employees will be based on the actual costs incurred. The TU Technician will incur hours on an as needed basis during the project period. The hours in Table 2 are approximate, based on projected salaries and wages for 2021.

Fringe Benefits
Fringe benefits for GHWG part-time staff will be 0% of grant-funded salary and wages, and 47% for the two TU employees.

Travel
Travel expenses will be based on federal mileage reimbursement rates, currently budgeted at $0.56/mile. Estimated travel for GHWG is based on estimated travel for two project tours (five vehicles 157 miles round trip per tour. Estimated Travel for TU is based on approximately 27 round-trip trips between Missoula, MT and Philipsburg, MT (150 miles).

Equipment
Grant funds will not be used to purchase equipment as part of the proposed project.

Materials and Supplies
A total of $300 in materials and supplies expenses is provided to include all necessary items for stakeholder meetings and outreach such as but not limited to, meeting room bookings, media equipment, printed materials including project maps and plans, and meeting advertisements. Printing costs are estimated based on recent invoices from similar work completed at the local UPS Store.

Contractual
Contractual expenses will be incurred as-needed basis for survey, engineer, and channel restoration design. Because specific projects and project designs are yet to be determined through the proposed activities in this proposal, no precise cost breakdown is available to date. However, project designs which require contracted services will be incurred at an estimated amount of 15% or less of the total project cost.

Contracts will be awarded based on competitive rates. Rates are expected to fall within the following ranges: Survey technician, $50-80/hour; Engineered Design, $100-150/hour; and Restoration Consultant, $65-100/hour. This equates to 153-460 hours of contracted services.

Third Party In-kind Contributions
No official funding commitment from third parties have been made. The following groups and agencies have indicated they will provide estimated in-kind contributions during the lifetime of the project: Trout Unlimited (TU): $37,470 (1,500 hours at $24.98/hr). TU expects to spend at least $18,735 per year on additional staff time dedicated to project planning and development. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: $1,760 (40 hours at *$44/hr). It is estimated that MFWP will provide an estimated 40 hours of in-kind services through participation in stakeholder meetings (10 hours), and provision of technical assistance and (30 hours). Montana Natural Resource Damage Program: $1,750 (40 hours at *$44/hr). It is estimated that NRDP will provide 40 hours

of in-kind services through participation in stakeholder meetings (10 hours), and provision of technical assistance and project recommendations (30 hours).
Irrigators: $4,480 (140 hours at *$32/hour). It is estimated that representatives of the irrigation community (average of eight participants) will contribute 140 hours of in-kind services for this project through participation in stakeholder meetings (10 hours/representative for total of 80 hours), as well as coordination, follow up, and individual meetings with the Working Group (60 hours cumulative for all representatives).
*All costs derived from MDEQ's "Estimating the Value of Volunteer Labor", 2014

Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Costs
There are no costs associated with environmental and regulatory compliance for the proposed project.

Indirect Costs
Indirect costs will be applied to all applicable budget categories of the proposed budget. Granite CD will incur a 6.16% modified total direct cost indirect rate on all expenses incurred and on the first $25,000 of TU's subaward. TU will incur indirect costs according to a federally negotiated indirect rate of 13.74% at will be assessed on all TU direct costs.

Third Party Funding Sources
There are no letters of commitment from third party funders, however there are multiple contributing partners that will provide in-kind contributions to make the project successful. Letters of project support are from many of the in-kind contributing partners.

Appendix 2. Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

The proposed planning and outreach activities do not require environmental or cultural resources compliance review. The activities do not involve impacts to soil, air, water or habitat. Projects that result from planning efforts may require environmental and resource review but will occur after the proposed project period and will not be paid for through CWMGP funds.

Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? Please briefly describe all earth-disturbing work and any work that will affect the air, water, or animal habitat in the project area. Please also explain the impacts of such work on the surrounding environment and any steps that could be taken to minimize the impacts.

The proposed project will not impact the surrounding environment.

Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?

No federally-listed or proposed species will be impacted by the proposed activities.

Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as "Waters of the United States"? If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.

No wetland impacts will be incurred by the proposed activities.

When was the water delivery system constructed?

Multiple water delivery systems constructed over the last century will be assessed during the project period by the completion of proposed planning activities, but no physical changes or construction will be completed under this grant.

Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.

Several water delivery systems constructed over the last century will be considered as part of this proposal, but no changes will be made to them under this grant. These funds are specifically for planning purposes.

Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.

There are no buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are no known buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation districts within the Flint-Rock Watershed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?

No archeological sites will be impacted by the proposed planning activities.

Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?

No, the proposed project will not have a disproportionately high or adverse effect on low income or minority populations.

Will the proposed project limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands?

No, the proposed project will not limit access to or ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands. This project includes planning activities only.

Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?

No, the proposed project will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the Flint-Rock Watershed.

Appendix 3. Required Permits or Approvals

No permits or approvals are required for the proposed activities. If permits or approvals are necessary for project implementation, Granite Conservation District will acquire all necessary permits.

United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Montana Ecological Services Office
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1
Helena, Montana 59601-6287
Phone: (406) 449-5225; Fax: (406) 449-5339

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815
Denver, CO 80225

January 12, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) reviewed the Granite Conservation District, Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited application for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 Grant for the Flint-Rock watersheds. The Service fully supports the actions outlined in the proposal. The development of functional watershed groups is instrumental for developing partnerships and implementing projects on the ground. Rock Creek and Flint Creek support important populations of bull trout needed for recovery. This proposal provides the initial steps for addressing several of the primary threats to recovery.

The Service has worked with numerous partners in the past on fish passage and habitat improvement projects including mine reclamation, stream restoration, culvert removal/replacement, revegetation, road decommissioning, and more; both in Flint and Rock Creeks and surrounding watersheds. Our previous cooperative restoration work with Trout Unlimited in the Clark Fork watershed of western Montana has led to new funding sources and project opportunities in the area.

The combined efforts of these groups to build the capacity of the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, develop a diverse network of stakeholders, and design future restoration projects is necessary and vital to bull trout recovery in these watersheds. The partners are requesting funding to complete a robust body of work that will help leverage staff, funding, and other resources to implement additional bull trout projects, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Funds from the BOR WaterSMART program will be essential to helping the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, Trout Unlimited, and other partners to build the capacity of this growing network of stakeholders to accomplish measurable results in the Flint-Rock watershed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration to complete these important projects and planning efforts.

Sincerely,

Daniel Brewer

Daniel Brewer
Bull Trout Recovery Coordinator, Montana

Bureau of Reclamation,

This letter of support is in reference to Trout Unlimited's application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Grant solicitation, closing January 19.

Trout Unlimited and the Bureau of Land Management have partnered both formally and informally, enhancing aquatic habitats and water quality across the field office including Rock Creek and Flint Creek but also in the Blackfoot River basin. Without exception, Trout Unlimited has proven to be a reliable and capable partner, often bringing expertise and resources to projects not readily available within the BLM as well as a different perspective on various aspects of a project to help ensure the most current and successful methods are utilized.

As a "stakeholder" in these watersheds, the BLM wholly supports Trout Unlimited being awarded a grant which would allow them to work with Granite Headwater Watershed Group to investigate issues and plan and implement actions to restore, enhance and/or conserve water quality and quantity and aquatic habitat within the Rock Creek/Flint Creek drainages. The Missoula Field Office of the BLM manages terrestrial and aquatic habitat throughout both of these drainages. A key component of the Field Office's mission is to provide healthy habitat for a wide array of aquatic life, including game fish, bull trout, non-game fish and aquatic invertebrates. The BLM also supports multiple uses of these resources, working to find a balance between habitat conservation and resource allocation to consumptive users. The task list Trout Unlimited has drafted, outlining activities to work with Granite Headwaters Watershed Group on, to improve overall water production and quality in the Flint/Rock basins, definitely supports the objectives of BLM managed water and aquatic resources.

In the past couple years, the BLM has partnered with Trout Unlimited on several projects, including the Silver King Mine Reclamation project in the Rock Creek drainage. This project included the removal of contaminated tailings spread over several acres of land and spilling into a small tributary to Rock Creek. Trout Unlimited's involvement included the re-alignment of the straightened stream channel, re-vegetation and bio-engineering to boost vegetative recovery and stability, and strategic placement of structures to influence pool development and maintenance. BLM is currently working with Trout Unlimited to assess the severity of contamination and risks associated with mine pollutants on Fred Burr Creek. Other recent projects include road decommissioning in riparian areas and improved stream crossings associated with bull trout critical habitat.

The BLM's past experience and knowledge of Trout Unlimited's success stories, coupled with the detailed outline of steps that will be taken to identify issues and work to improve water quality and quantity in these watersheds, leaves no hesitation in recommending Trout Unlimited as a recipient of the WaterSMART grant.

Best regards,

Erin Carey
Missoula Field Office Manager
Bureau of Land Management

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Lolo National Forest | Building 24, Fort Missoula
Missoula, MT 59804-7297
406 329-3750

January 12, 2021

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to offer my support of the Granite Conservation District, Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited's application for a Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant. The Lolo National Forest manages a large portion of the lands in the lower Rock Creek watershed and is committed to activities that improve water quality, stream function, fisheries, public outreach/education and stewardship actions that result in greater watershed resilience. The Lolo has worked with numerous partners in the past on projects as varied as mine reclamation, stream restoration, culvert removal/replacement, revegetation, road impact remediation, beaver mimicry, citizen science monitoring, and more – both in Rock Creek and surrounding watersheds. Our previous cooperative restoration work with Trout Unlimited in Ninemile Creek and several other streams in the Middle Clark Fork River has garnered numerous regional and national awards and led to new funding sources and project opportunities in the area.

Current collaborative efforts are building important capacity of the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group with goals to improve existing watershed plans, develop a diverse network of stakeholders, and design an array of projects that are vital to the future health and resiliency of the Rock Creek watershed. The funding requested will greatly assist these groups towards their goals, and I have no doubt their efforts will lead to a robust workload for many years to come.

Adequate funding for this work is challenging to say the least and funds from the BOR WaterSMART program will be essential to helping the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, Trout Unlimited and other partners build the capacity of this growing network of stakeholders to accomplish measurable results in the Rock Creek watershed We look forward to more collaboration in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration to complete these important projects and planning efforts.

Sincerely,

/s/ Traci Sylte

Traci L. Sylte, PE
Water, Soils, and Fisheries Program Manager
Lolo National Forest

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to offer my support of the Granite Conservation District, Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited application for a Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant. Pintler Ranger District on Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest manages lands in the Upper Rock Creek and Flint Creek watersheds. The Beaverhead- Deer Lodge National Forest is committed to activities that improve water quality, fisheries, public outreach and education and natural resource management in the area. Pintler Ranger District has worked with numerous partners in the past on projects as varied as mine reclamation, stream restoration, culvert removal/replacement, revegetation, road decommissioning, and more – both in Rock Creek and surrounding watersheds in the Upper Clark Fork River. Our previous cooperative restoration work with Trout Unlimited in western Montana led to additional project and funding opportunities in the area.

The combined efforts of these groups to build the capacity of the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, improve upon existing watershed plans, develop a diverse network of stakeholders and design future projects is necessary and vital to the future health of the watershed. They are requesting funding to complete a robust body of work that will help leverage our staff, funding and other resources, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

BOR WaterSMART funds are essential in helping the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, Trout Unlimited and other partners. These funds build the capacity of this growing network of stakeholders to accomplish measurable results in the Flint and Rock Creek watersheds. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration to complete these important projects and planning efforts.

Sincerely,

Paul Hooper
West Zone Fisheries Biologist Pintler Ranger District Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE PROGRAM

TIM FOX
ATTORNEY GENERAL

1720 9TH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-0205 (OFFICE)
(406) 444-0236 (FAX)

PO BOX 201425
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1425

January 18th, 2021

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815

RE: NRDP's Letter of Support for Trout Unlimited's (TU) Cooperative Watershed Management Proposal

Dear Mr. Weakland,

The Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) supports Trout Unlimited's (TU) Cooperative Watershed Management Program Proposal (Proposal).

NRDP, as outlined in the *Upper Clark Fork Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans* (updated February 2019) (*Restoration Plans)*, works to restore the terrestrial and aquatic resources of the Upper Clark Fork River Basin (UCFRB). NRDP's goals in the UCFRB and in the Flint and Rock Creek drainages include efforts to:

1. Restore the UCFRB trout fishery by improving recruitment of fish from tributaries.
2. Replace lost trout angling in the UCFRB by improving trout populations in tributaries, and
3. Maintain or improve native trout populations in the UCFRB to preserve rare and diverse gene pools and improve the diversity and resiliency of the trout fishery.

According to the *Restoration Plans* and the *Prioritization of Areas in the Upper Clark for River Basin for Fishery Enhancement* (January 2018) (*Prioritization Plan*), Flint Creek is a Priority 1 Tributary and Rock Creek is a Priority 2 Tributary. Both Priority 1 and 2 streams are currently funded for restoration work in the *Restoration Plans,* and the *Prioritization Plan* recognizes the benefit of pursing and implementing restoration actions on all identified priority 1 and 2 streams.

TU's Proposal to create a Cooperative Watershed Management Program with Granite Conservation District and the Granite Headwaters Group to plan, prioritize, and develop projects to restore watershed health and fisheries fulfills, in part, NRDP's goal to improve trout populations and maintain native trout populations. NRDP supports this Proposal and recognizes that this program will complement and improve upon fisheries restoration work that NRDP is completing in the area.

Sincerely,

Beau Downing

Beau Downing
NRDP Restoration Project Manager

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to offer my support of the Granite Conservation District, Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant. The Philipsburg Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit organization located within the largest municipality in the Flint and Rock Creek Watersheds and is committed to supporting local businesses, both in and out of city limits. Public outreach and education on topics such as these are a priority.

Increasing the capacity of Granite Headwaters Watershed Group to bring together a diversity of community members and stakeholders and develop restoration projects is critical for to the future of Philipsburg businesses. They are requesting funding to educate and engage the community in projects that will bring in additional resources to protect the historic culture of this rural valley for both our town and the county at large.

BOR WaterSMART funds that increase the capacity for Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited to accomplish restoration planning will protect business interests and their way of life in the Flint Creek and Rock Creek watersheds. These watersheds are the lifeblood at the center of the Philipsburg community and Granite County. It is necessary to improve, protect, and tend to these water bodies. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration to complete these important projects and planning efforts.

Sincerely,
Heidi Beck-Heser
Corresponding Secretary
Philipsburg Chamber of Commerce

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations
Attn: Mr. Edmund Weakland
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27815
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to offer my support of the Granite Conservation District, Granite Headwaters Watershed Group and Trout Unlimited application for a Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant. Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks is committed to activities that improve water quality and quantity, fisheries, public outreach and education, and natural resource management in the area. Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks has worked with numerous partners in the past on watershed restoration projects such fish passage improvement, stream restoration, culvert removal/replacement, revegetation, road decommissioning, and more – both in Flint Creek and Rock Creek and surrounding watersheds. Our previous cooperative restoration work with Trout Unlimited and Granite Headwaters Watershed Group in Flint Creek has led to additional project and funding opportunities in the area.

The combined efforts of these groups to build the capacity of the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, improve upon existing watershed plans, develop a diverse network of stakeholders, and design future projects is necessary and vital to the future health of the watershed. They are requesting funding to complete a robust body of work that will help leverage their staff, funding and other resources, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Funds from the BOR WaterSMART program will be essential to helping the Granite Headwaters Watershed Group, Trout Unlimited and other partners build the capacity of this growing network of stakeholders to accomplish measurable results in the Flint and Rock Creek watersheds. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration for funding these important projects and planning efforts.

Sincerely,

Brad Liermann, Rock-Flint Cr. Fisheries Biologist, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Appendix 5. Resolution

A letter of resolution will be submitted within 30 days of the application filing date. Granite Conservation District board was unable to meet before the due date for the proposal due to impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic. The board voted to authorize and approve the obligations associated with the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 grant, and an official resolution will be approved, certified, and sent to the BOR CWMP on or before February 20, 2021.