

Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed
Management Program: Phase 1 Grant Application

January 2018

Project Applicant:

Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101

Project Manager:

Emma Reesor, Executive Director
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
emma@riograndeheadwaters.org
(719) 589-2230

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background	4
Project Location	5
Technical Project Description	7
Applicant Category and Eligibility	7
Goals and Objectives	8
Approach	8
Scope of Work	9
Evaluation Criteria	14
Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance	21
Required Permits or Approvals	21
Project Budget	22
Budget Proposal	22
Budget Narrative	23
Appendix A: Letters of Support	26
Appendix B: Official Resolution	32

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Title: Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Project Location: The Rio Grande Basin in Colorado, including the Rio Grande from Rio Grande Reservoir to the State Line; Conejos River from Platoro Reservoir to the confluence with the Rio Grande; Saguache Creek from the United States Forest Service boundary to the Town of Saguache

Date: January 29, 2018

Applicant Name: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Applicant Address: 623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
Alamosa County, Colorado

Grant Request: \$35,000

Matching Funds: \$238,260

Total Project Budget: \$273,760

Project Summary: The Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (Project) is a stakeholder driven watershed restoration planning effort for Colorado's Rio Grande Basin (Basin). There are many environmental and water supply challenges facing the Basin, including prolonged drought, climate change, forest fires, extensive beetle kill, aging water infrastructure, endangered species, degraded habitat, and other anthropogenic impacts. Diverse stakeholders across the Basin have gathered to complete stream management plans (SMPs) on priority rivers in order to plan for environmental, recreational, and water supply needs for future generations. The SMPs will utilize existing data regarding the physical condition of reaches and data collected through targeted sampling. The collection, summary, and application of the data will be completed with ongoing stakeholder participation. The SMPs will result in identified goals that will further the efforts of the communities of the San Luis Valley to improve flows and physical conditions of priority streams for environmental, recreational, and community benefits. Requested WaterSMART funds will be leveraged by significant state and local dollars to complete the SMPs. The proposed project contributes to the goals of the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program by assisting the community in the completion of critical watershed planning with diverse stakeholder involvement.

Project Timeline:

Stakeholder engagement for the project began in 2017 with a series of planning meetings to develop the scope of work. Project implementation will begin in summer 2018 when grant funding is secured. The project will be underway for over one year, with an estimated completion date of November 1, 2019.

Federal Nexus:

The planned SMPs will include private, state, and federal land. Federal land includes USFS Rio Grande National Forest, lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management San Luis Valley field office, and USFWS Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. The project area encompasses two Bureau of Reclamation projects: The Closed Basin Project and Platoro Reservoir.

BACKGROUND

The Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek are located in Colorado's Rio Grande Basin (Basin), a unique watershed with a high desert valley floor surrounded by the San Juan Mountains to the west and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east. The Basin is largely dependent on snowmelt from the mountains for its water supply, which experiences peak runoff annually in May and June. Summer monsoons make smaller contributions to water supply. Streamflow is highly variable seasonally and year-to-year. Limited reservoirs exist throughout the Basin to help moderate fluctuations in streamflow and to provide agricultural users water in the irrigation season. No reservoirs exist on the mainstem or tributaries of Saguache Creek. Most irrigators are reliant on in-stream flows and use surface diversions to receive water. In addition to rivers and diversions, water users obtain water from a pair of aquifers.

The Basin has a rich history of water development, with many of the oldest adjudicated water rights in Colorado. By 1900, the Basin's water was already over-appropriated. Today, irrigators continue to face scarcity as water supplies shrink and variability increases in a changing climate.

The Basin's primary water use and economic driver is agriculture. Agriculture accounts for 99% of water used in the Valley. While municipal and industrial water use is low, it is also dependent on a sustainable water supply. In addition, water is critical to the recreation and environmental values of the Basin. The Basin's tourism industry, much of which is water dependent, accounts for 11% of employment in the area. Popular recreational activities include angling, hunting, wildlife and bird watching, winter sports, camping, rafting, paddling, and boating activities. The Basin has an abundance of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife populations, rare and important habitats, diverse ecosystems, and exceptional recreation opportunities. However, the increasingly water-short nature of the Basin makes sustaining these attributes challenging. All depend on adequate and healthy water resources.

The Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek originate in the Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF). Because the majority of the watershed is forested, forest health is a key concern. The forests within the RGNF are in transition following recent landscape-scale disturbances, such as wildfires, long-term drought, and beetle and disease outbreaks. Additional threats to the forests include invasive species, climate change, and future land use changes. The effects of these disturbances on the health of the watershed are a cause of serious concern, as the health of the upland forests directly impacts the health of the rivers and their tributaries. As such, there is urgency in the need to prioritize restoration of ecosystem functions throughout the forest and riparian areas, conserving critical habitat and water quality in the affected waters.

In addition to forest health, the Basin's river health is dependent on its riparian ecosystems. The Basin contains thousands of miles of riparian areas, which serve important functions as transition areas between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Naturally functioning riparian areas perform integral hydrologic functions, including

aquifer recharge, erosion and flood control, and water filtration. In addition, riparian areas in the Basin provide critical habitat for a variety of wildlife, including the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher and threatened Yellow-billed cuckoo. Many of the riparian areas in the Basin have been degraded over time and no longer optimally perform these important ecosystem functions.

Largely affected by riparian and forest health, native fish populations are at risk in the Basin. Most notably, the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Rio Grande chub, and Rio Grande sucker have seen a reduction in populations due to predation and competition from non-native fish species and habitat degradation from activities such as recreation, road construction, over grazing, other land use activities, and historic mining.

While local stakeholders and water users recognize the vital need to implement projects to address these diverse concerns, the current condition of many rivers in the Basin is largely undocumented. This project will engage stakeholders in the process of developing SMPs for priority river systems in the Basin, in order to better understand the environmental, recreational, and community water needs and identify opportunities to improve the health of the Basin's streams and watershed.

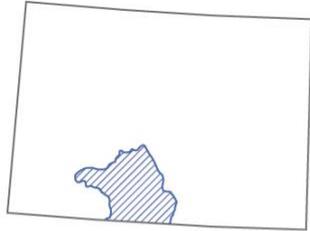
PROJECT LOCATION

The Project addresses watershed planning needs the Rio Grande Basin in Colorado. Project will work across the Basin to develop SMPs for the following priority stream reaches:

1. Rio Grande from Rio Grande Reservoir to the New Mexico State Line. This reach covers approximately 180 river miles.
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010001 and 13010002
2. Conejos River from Platoro Reservoir to the confluence with the Rio Grande. This reach covers approximately 90 river miles.
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010005
3. Saguache Creek from the United States Forest Service (USFS) boundary to the Town of Saguache. This reach includes approximately 58 river miles.
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010004

See Figure 1 (page 6) for a map of the project location. For more detailed reference, refer to the Google Earth File attachment included in the grant packet.

Rio Grande, Conejos, and Saguache Creek SMP



Location Map:
Colorado



**KEY
PROJECT REACHES**

- RIO GRANDE
- CONEJOS RIVER
- - - - SAGUACHE CREEK
- US FOREST SERVICE
- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
- US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
- PRIVATE LAND

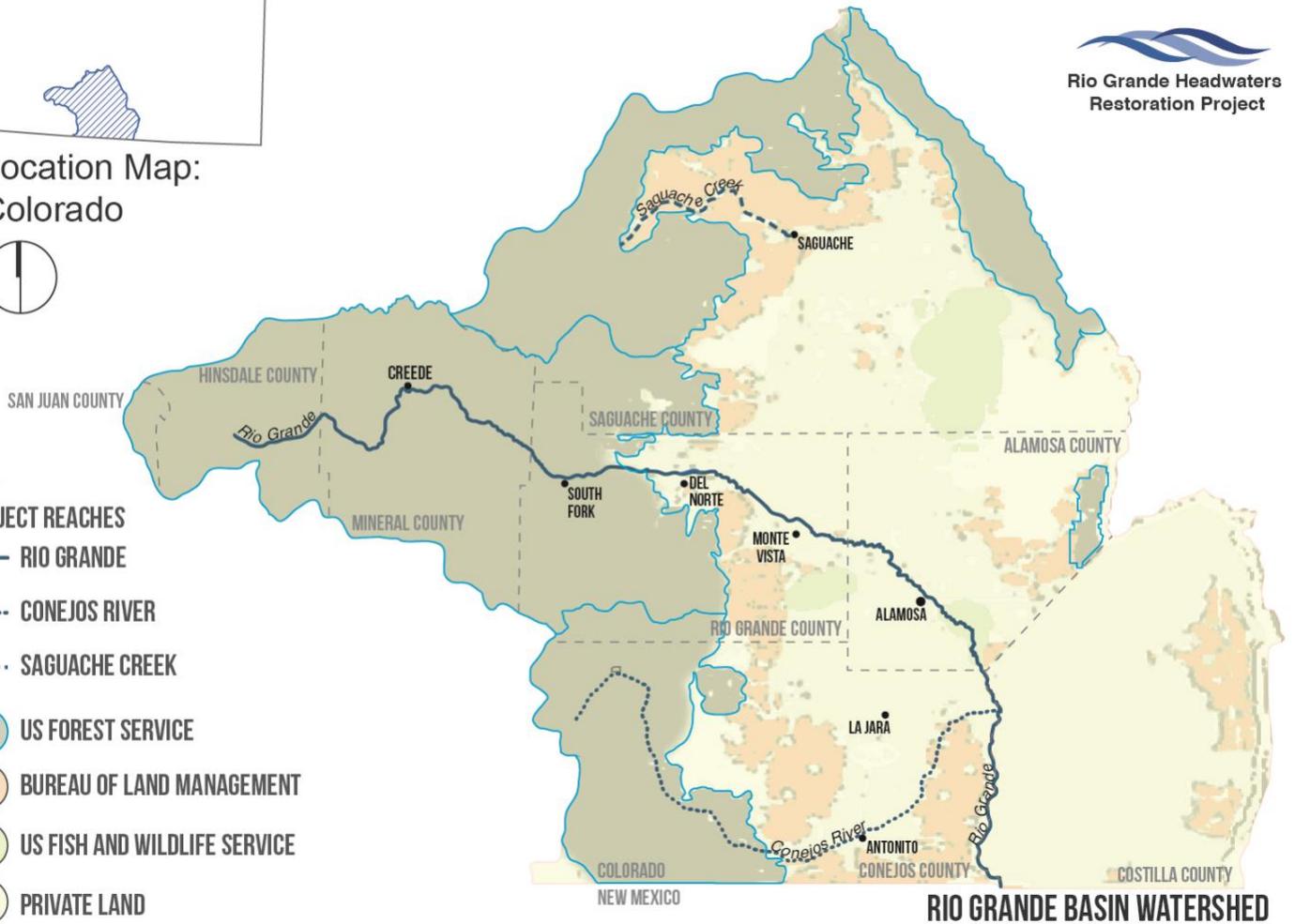


Figure 1: Map of Rio Grande, Conejos, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan Locations

TECHNICAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Applicant Category and Eligibility

The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (Foundation) is seeking funding for the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (Project) as an *existing watershed group*. The Foundation meets all the grant eligibility requirements for an existing watershed group set forth in the grant program's FOA. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Colorado and serves as the fiscal agent and governing body for the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP). Formed in 2001, the RGHRP is a local watershed group with the mission "to restore and conserve the historical functions and vitality of the Rio Grande in Colorado for improved water quality, optimal agricultural water use, riparian habitat, wildlife and aquatic species habitat, recreation, and community safety, while meeting the requirements of the Rio Grande Compact." The RGHRP was formed to implement the recommendations of a restoration study completed in 2001. The 2001 Study was prompted by local stakeholders due to a realized deterioration of the historic functions of the Rio Grande, which include providing high quality water, healthy riparian areas, fish and wildlife habitat, and a functioning floodplain. The 2001 Study analyzed the condition of the riparian area and structures along a 91-mile reach of the Rio Grande and provided recommendations for improvement. In addition to the 2001 Study, the RGHRP has coordinated two other watershed planning efforts, the 2016 Lower Rio Grande Study and the 2017 Upper Rio Grande Watershed Assessment.

The RGHRP implements the recommendations of the 2001 Study through the following programs: Riparian Restoration and Streambank Stabilization, In-stream Infrastructure Improvement, Watershed Stewardship, and Outreach and Education. The program projects have resulted in improved upland and in-stream habitat, streambank stability, floodplain function, water quality, diversion efficiency, recreation, and community engagement. Most recently, the RGHRP completed two diversion dam replacement projects. The old dams were inefficient, hazardous, and impassable by boats and fish. The RGHRP worked with the irrigation companies to replace the dams with new structures that efficiently divert water for agriculture, while allowing for fish and boat passage. Additionally, the RGHRP stabilized streambanks and restored aquatic and riparian habitat surrounding the new structures, improving overall river function. Since 2001, the RGHRP has partnered with over 60 landowners and multiple ditch companies to improve the condition of over 11 miles of river in the San Luis Valley.

This project will build on the community's momentum towards the continued effort of watershed planning through the creation of SMPs on priority streams. To do this, the Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable has formed a committee of diverse stakeholders to further develop SMPs across the Basin. The SMP Committee prioritized the project reaches, developed the project scope of work, and is committed to assisting in the project by participating in the project's technical advisory group. Because of the RGHRP's past experience in watershed planning and capacity as a watershed group, the RGHRP will serve as the project manager and grant applicant for the project.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the project is to develop comprehensive SMPs for priority stream reaches in the Rio Grande Basin. The creation of the SMPs will include robust community and partner engagement, characterization of the physical condition of the streams using field sampling and consolidation of existing information, prioritization of ecological, recreational, and community values, development of goals for flows and physical conditions to protect and enhance streams, and establishing methods and associated opportunities and constraints to make progress toward goals. The resulting SMPs will be used by members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to inform multi-objective projects to restore and protect the natural and cultural resources within the Rio Grande watershed.

Project objectives are as follows:

1. Maintain and build on the coalition of community partners engaged in stream management planning through frequent and robust stakeholder engagement throughout the project.
2. Summarize and obtain information regarding the biological, hydrological, and geomorphological condition of identified stream reaches in the Rio Grande watershed.
3. Define and prioritize environmental, recreational, and community values.
4. Develop goals to improve flows and physical conditions needed to support values.
5. Outline actions to achieve measurable progress toward maintaining or improving goals.
6. Identify opportunities and constraints for implementation of projects, and additional data needed to inform project development.

Project Approach

The project addresses Watershed Restoration Planning (Eligible Projects, Task B) needs facing the Basin by completing SMPs for portions of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek. Stakeholders in the Rio Grande Basin have a robust history of working together to address water needs. The project will build on the past stakeholder partnerships and previous watershed studies to develop SMPs for priority stream reaches in the Basin.

The Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable has formed a SMP Committee, which has met to prioritize project reaches and develop the project scope of work. In addition, the SMP Committee is committed to assisting in the project by participating in and organizing the project TAG. The TAG will include representatives from water user groups, local environmental and recreation interests, agriculture water users, and state and federal agencies in order to ensure that the diverse environmental, recreational, and community needs of the Basin are represented throughout the SMP process.

Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will include the following stakeholders:

- RGHRP (Project Manager)
- Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD)
- San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District (SLVWCD)
- Conejos Water Conservancy District (CWCD)
- United States Forest Service (USFS)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
- Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- San Luis Valley Trout Unlimited (TU)
- American Whitewater (AW)
- San Luis Valley Irrigation District (SLVID)
- Rio Grande Water Users Association (RGWUA)
- Conejos Water Users Association (CWUA)
- Saguache Creek Water Users Association (SCWUA)
- Colorado Division of Water Resources (CDWR)

The project will be managed by the RGHRP. The RGHRP has a proven track record of successfully managing projects to improve the condition of the Rio Grande through collaboration with local, state, and federal partners since 2001. The projects, which include a combination of riparian restoration, diversion and headgate rehabilitation, watershed stewardship, and outreach and education, have resulted in improved upland and in-stream habitat, streambank stability, floodplain function, water quality, diversion efficiency, recreation, and community engagement. RGHRP Executive Director Emma Reesor will oversee the implementation and administration of the project. A full-time project coordinator will be hired to facilitate the completion of project tasks.

SCOPE OF WORK

The project tasks, methods, and deliverables are summarized as follows:

Task 1 - Stakeholder Engagement: Maintain existing interest and continually build engagement in stream management planning by facilitating frequent and open conversations with diverse interests in the Rio Grande Basin.

- **Method/Procedure:** The project coordinator will establish a TAG, which will include the existing Rio Grande Roundtable SMP Committee, partners from water user groups, local environment and recreation interests, agriculture water users, and state and federal agencies. The coordinator will provide project status updates and seek feedback at regular organization meetings including the regular meeting of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable, RGWCD, SLVWCD, and CWCD. The coordinator will also seek feedback from the diverse water user groups across the Basin. The coordinator and TAG will hold periodic public and committee meetings to review data

and draft recommendations, and seek community feedback. These meetings and other status updates will be shared through popular mediums in the San Luis Valley, such as the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable website, in newspapers, and on the radio.

- **Deliverable:** A representative and diverse coalition of community partners working to ensure the stream management planning process is completed in an open, inclusive manner with clear, actionable goals to protect and improve prioritized ecological, recreational, and community values.

Task 2 - Summarize Existing Information: Review and summarize existing relevant information regarding the physical condition of the reaches, existing watershed plans and assessments, and land management directives.

- **Method/Procedure:** The project coordinator will compile existing information in a summary document that outlines the known physical conditions of the stream reaches. The coordinator will arrange interviews with technical experts and resource managers as needed to gather additional subject matter and interpret the documents. Relevant studies and documents include (but are not limited to):
 - Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan
 - Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) Plan
 - Rio Grande National Forest Federal Reserve Water Rights Decree
 - Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Plan
 - US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Refuge Management Plan
 - Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project 2001 Master Restoration Plan (2001 Study)
 - 2016 Lower Rio Grande Study
 - 2017 Upper Rio Grande Watershed Assessment
 - Rio Grande Natural Area Plan
 - San Luis Valley Habitat Conservation Plan
 - Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) aquatic sampling and stocking information
 - RGWCD Groundwater Management Plans
 - CWCB's 2006 diversion structure inventory of the Rio Grande and Conejos River
- **Deliverable:** A compilation of known data for the biological, hydrological, geomorphological, and physical conditions of the study reaches; an understanding of gaps in information where baseline or follow-up sampling is needed.

EXISTING WATERSHED STUDIES AND PLAN FOR THE RIO GRANDE

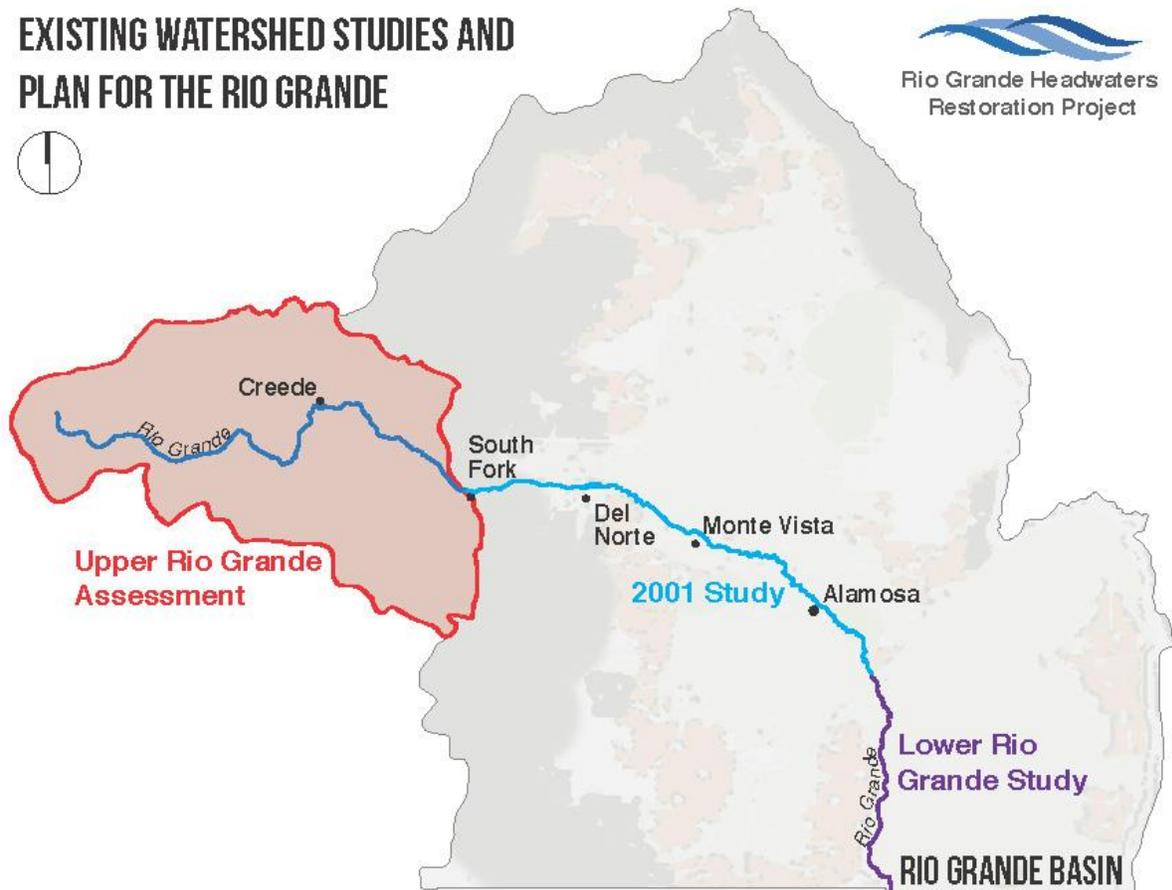


Figure 2: Map of existing watershed planning studies and plans for the Rio Grande in Colorado

Task 3 - Biology, Hydrology, Geomorphology, and Physical Conditions Assessment:

Use targeted sampling to assess current biological, hydrological, geomorphological, and physical conditions of the study reaches.

- Method/Procedure: The condition of the Rio Grande from the headwaters to the state line has been documented through the 2017 Upper Rio Grande Watershed Assessment, the 2001 Study, 2016 Lower Rio Grande Study, and other management plans (Figure 2). Task 2 will inform the TAG of needs for updates to the 2001 Study and the project coordinator will initiate targeted sampling accordingly. The RGHRP, SLVWCD, and SLVID will facilitate access to and assist with characterization of diversion and headgate condition, and surrounding riparian condition assessments on the Rio Grande. The condition of the Conejos River and Saguache Creek is largely undocumented. Therefore, the project coordinator, with input from the TAG, will develop a sampling strategy. The sampling strategy will include floating the river where possible (it is certain that at least two thirds of the

Conejos river can be floated; Saguache Creek cannot be floated), using field and aerial information to break the river into homogenous subreaches. Sampling will be conducted representative locations in each subreach that includes channel cross sections, pebble counts, plant community identification, macroinvertebrate sampling, assessments of floodplain function and connectivity, flow readings, and notes on the condition of structures such as bridges, diversions, headgates, and homes within the floodplain. The Conejos Water Conservancy District will facilitate access to and assist with characterization of the Conejos River, and the Saguache Creek Water Users Association will facilitate access to and assist with characterization of Saguache Creek. Streamflow data will be compiled and analyzed using graphical methods. A description of temporal and spatial hydrologic trends will be prepared for each reach, and flow adequacy for nonconsumptive and consumptive needs will be assessed in concert with the biological and geomorphological observations. The project coordinator will complete sampling within their expertise and coordinate contractors, committee members, and technical experts to complete the remaining data collection. The coordinator will compile and summarize the data for the SMPs. The TAG will review the data and provide feedback on the findings and presentation of results.

- Deliverable: A written assessment and associated maps and tables of biological, hydrological, geomorphological, and physical conditions of the study reaches on the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek.

Task 4 - Identify and Prioritize Ecological, Recreational, and Community Values: Utilize community feedback, stakeholder engagement, data from Tasks 2 and 3, and a partnership with American Whitewater to identify the extent of recreation opportunities within the study reaches, summarize distribution of aquatic habitat and species, define priority ecological and floodplain functions, and determine community values.

- Method/Procedure: The project coordinator and American Whitewater (AW) will work with the TAG, agency partners, water users, recreational boaters and fishermen, and environmental interests to identify the location and types of river based recreation opportunities within the study reaches. Project partners will collaborate with AW to complete a boatable days study on the Rio Grande between Rio Grande Reservoir and the Del Norte gage and on the Conejos River between Platoro Reservoir and the Mogote gage. The boatable days study will identify the flows needed for whitewater boats, rafts, kayaks, paddle boards, and fishing crafts, the frequency with which those flows are present, and potential changes in boatable days due to climate change and water projects. The project coordinator will work with Trout Unlimited, outfitters, fishermen, and CPW to characterize distribution of fish species, locations of and flows to support different types of fishing, and desired flows and physical conditions to support aquatic management objectives. The project coordinator and community stakeholders will review field data and identify specific locations of importance within the stream reaches for flood protection, upland and aquatic habitat, water quality protection, agricultural water diversions, groundwater recharge, and sediment transport capacity. The data developed in Tasks 2, 3, and 4 will be used by the TAG and stakeholders to identify and prioritize recreation, ecological, and community values within the study reaches.

- Deliverable: An inventory and understanding of the interplay between the types and location of river based recreation, aquatic habitat and species distribution, fluvial and floodplain functions, groundwater recharge, and agriculture water use in the study reaches. Prioritized ecological, recreational, and community values with spatial and temporal considerations.

Task 5 - Develop Goals and Identify Methods for Implementation: Utilize the assembled data regarding the physical condition of the stream reaches to develop goals and potential methods to improve and protect the identified ecological, recreation, and community values.

- Method/Procedure: The project coordinator will present the data assembled in Tasks 2, 3, and 4 to the TAG, project cooperators, and different stakeholder groups. Feedback from partners will help determine if information gaps exist and, if so, identify the best methods for obtaining missing information. Additional information may be collected in a future phase of the project. The project partners will utilize the physical data and prioritized ecological, recreation, and community values to quantify numeric flow ranges and physical conditions to support values within each reach and subreach. The partners will determine the types of multi-purpose projects that could improve physical conditions, such as in-river structure updates, headgate automation, additional measurement devices, fish passage construction, furthering the flow programs (See Attachment A – TU support letter), riparian restoration, floodplain connectivity, flood protection, and aquifer recharge. Partners will also identify temporal, geographical, legal, or administrative constraints and opportunities that may limit or assist in the ability to meet goals and utilize implementation methods.
- Deliverable: Well defined goals and methods to protect and improve the ecological, recreation, and community values in each of the stream reaches, with an understanding of limitations, constraints, and opportunities.

Task 6 – Report Preparation and Project Administration: Administer the project effectively by completing all necessary contracts, status reports, and internal and external documents. Ensure Tasks are completed within approved costs and timelines.

- Method/Procedure: The RGHRP will administer the project and oversee the project coordinator. This includes completing contracts with the CWCB, BOR, project partners, and contractors; managing invoices, budgets, and reimbursement requests; and completing reports. Additionally, the RGHRP will perform Project oversight; making certain implementation is timely and accordance with the Scope of Work.
- Deliverable: All appropriate contracts, external and internal reports, and Project activities completed within planned period and anticipated costs.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criterion A: Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)

A requirement of any successful watershed planning effort is a robust stakeholder participation and diverse representation. In order to ensure the project meets this requirement, the Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable’s SMP Committee, which represents environmental, recreational, agricultural, and municipal water users and water managers, has thoughtfully compiled the list of organizations and individuals that will serve on the project TAG. TAG members include local, state, and federal agencies, water user groups and local watershed groups in order to represent the community, both geographically and ideologically.

The table below lists member organizations of the TAG and water use they will represent.

Technical Advisory Group Member	Sector Represented
Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project	Local watershed groups, river health, and environment
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable	All water users
Rio Grande Water Conservation District	Agricultural water users, groundwater management
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District	Small well owners basin-wide
Conejos Water Conservancy District	Agricultural water users in the Conejos River watershed
USFS Rio Grande National Forest	Public land management, forest health, recreation
Bureau of Land Management	Public land management, environment and recreation
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Public land management, endangered species, environment, and recreation
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Private land management, financial and technical resources for implementation
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Public land management, water rights holder, recreation, and environment
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Statewide water supply planning, project implementation
Trout Unlimited	Native trout recovery efforts
American Whitewater	Recreation
San Luis Valley Irrigation District	Rio Grande Reservoir owner, agricultural water users north of the Rio Grande
Rio Grande Water Users Association	Agricultural water users in the Rio Grande watershed
Conejos Water Users Association	Agricultural water users in the Conejos

	River watershed
Saguache Creek Water Users Association	Agricultural water users in the Saguache Creek watershed
Colorado Division of Water Resources	Water administration

The SMP Committee was intentional in compiling this list of partners to make up the TAG in order to represent water user groups, local environmental and recreation interests, agriculture water users, and state and federal agencies. Throughout the SMP process, the project coordinator will also seek feedback from additional water user and community groups. The coordinator and TAG will hold periodic public and committee meetings to review data and draft recommendations, and seek community feedback. These meetings and other status updates will be shared on the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable website, in newspapers, and on the radio. These steps will be taken to ensure the stream management planning effort includes and represents the diversity of water uses across the Basin.

The SMP process will also help improve dialogue and relationships between Federal land managers (USFS, BLM, and USFWS) and the surrounding community and private landowners. This will allow for the development of public private partnerships that will further strategies to improve watershed and stream health across ownership boundaries. The result of these efforts will be a representative and diverse coalition of community partners working to ensure the stream management planning process is completed in an open, inclusive manner with clear, actionable goals to protect and improve prioritized ecological, recreational, and community values.

The primary objective of the SMP committee is to develop SMPs for priority streams across the full geographic extent of the Basin. The SMP committee highlighted the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek as priority reaches due to their importance to water supply and environmental, agricultural, and recreational users, and stakeholder engagement on these streams. In addition, these stream reaches occupy the majority of the major watersheds that make up the Rio Grande Basin. The result of the project will be development of SMPs for the following stream reaches:

1. Rio Grande from Rio Grande Reservoir to the State Line
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010001 and 13010002
2. Conejos River from Platoro Reservoir to the confluence with the Rio Grande
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010005
3. Saguache Creek from the United States Forest Service (USFS) Boundary to the Town of Saguache
 - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 13010004

Much of the focus in past watershed planning efforts in the Basin has been on the Rio Grande corridor. However, the condition of the Conejos River and Saguache Creek is largely undocumented. This project will address the need for planning for within these watersheds through the development of SMPs. The TAG members have been broadly

recruited to assist with the project to ensure that the full geographic scope of the project is represented. For example, the USFS and BLM represent significant landowners in the project watershed. As such, they will be critical members of the TAG. In addition, water user groups in each watershed will be included in the TAG and stakeholder engagement process to ensure the project accurately represents the geographic scope of the project area.

Figure 3 is a location map that illustrates the geographic boundaries of the project area. The map also highlights the public and private landownership within the Basin.

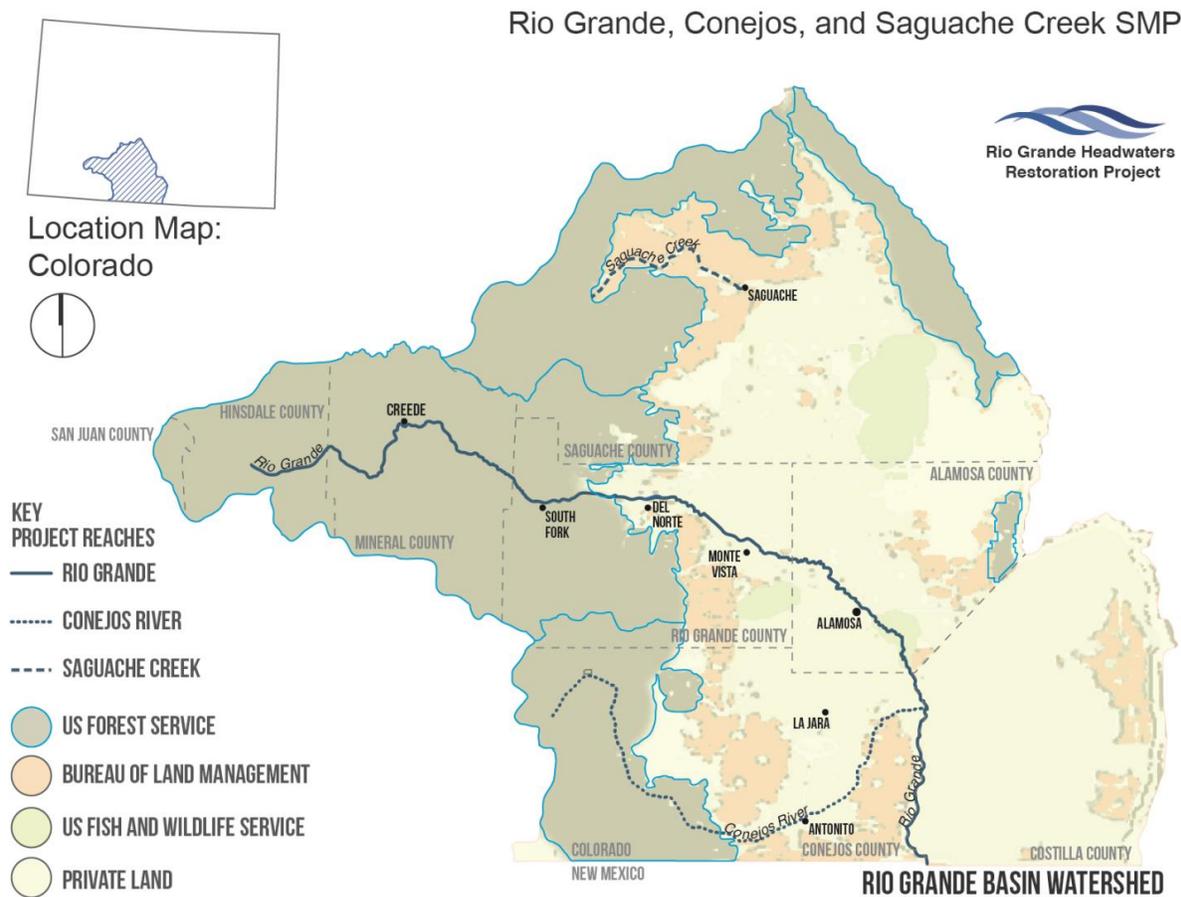


Figure 3: Project location map and public and private landowner boundaries

As shown on Figure 3, planned SMPs will include private and federal land. Federal land within the project area includes USFS Rio Grande National Forest, lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management’s San Luis Valley field office, and USFWS Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. Each federal agency will be represented on the TAG, covering the geographic boundaries shown on the Figure 3 map.

In addition, the following list describes the geographic areas that the remaining TAG members work within:

- Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project: Works basin-wide to improve river health.
- RGWCD: Works in Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache, Alamosa, and Conejos Counties to improve water management and conservation.
- SLVWCD: Works on the Rio Grande and Closed Basin in Hinsdale, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Alamosa Counties.
- CWCD: Works in the Conejos River and Rio de los Pinos watersheds. Operates the BOR owned Platoro Reservoir.
- NRCS: Works basin-wide with a focus on private, agricultural lands.
- CPW: Owns properties and significant water rights throughout the watershed.
- Colorado Water Conservation Board: State organization working to across Colorado and in the Basin to provide technical assistance and financial support for project implementation.
- Trout Unlimited: Works basin-wide to improve the condition of the Basin's coldwater fisheries.
- American Whitewater: A non-profit working nationally to conserve and restore whitewater resources.
- SLVID: Agricultural water users north of the Rio Grande between the towns of Center and Monte Vista. Owns and operates the Rio Grande Reservoir.
- Rio Grande Water Users Association: Agricultural water users in the Rio Grande watershed.
- Conejos Water Users Association: Agricultural water users in the Conejos River watershed.
- Saguache Creek Water Users Association: Agricultural water users in the Saguache Creek watershed.
- Colorado Division of Water Resources: Works basin and statewide to administer water rights and Interstate Compacts.

Criterion B: Addressing Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

There are many challenges facing the Rio Grande, Conejos River and Saguache Creek and their watersheds. Each watershed is dependent on highly variable streamflow driven by snowpack. Season and year-to-year variability coupled with limited reservoir storage creates challenges as water users and managers plan for drought and uncertainty from climate change projections.

In addition to future water supply shortages, each watershed faces critical environmental issues. The Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek originate in the Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF), which is being affected by infestations of spruce bark beetle, wildfire, climate change, mining and other anthropogenic impacts. The effects of these disturbances on the health of the watershed are a cause of serious concern, as the health of the upland forests directly impacts the health of the rivers and their tributaries.

The Basin's river health is also dependent on its riparian ecosystems. Riparian areas across the Basin provide critical habitat for a variety of wildlife, including the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher and threatened Yellow-billed cuckoo. In addition, healthy riparian areas provide vital ecosystem functions, including streambank stability, floodplain function and resiliency, and capacity of the river to transport sediment. Many of the riparian areas in the Basin have been degraded over time and no longer optimally perform these important ecosystem functions.

Largely affected by riparian and forest health, native fish populations are at risk across the Basin. The Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Rio Grande chub, and Rio Grande sucker have seen a reduction in populations due to predation and competition from non-native fish species and habitat degradation from activities such as recreation, road construction, over grazing, other land use activities, and historic mining.

Finally, recreation in the basin is largely water dependent. The increasingly water-short nature of the basin makes sustaining these attributes challenging. Better understanding recreation's water needs is necessary to help the stakeholders work together to balance diverse water uses.

While stakeholders recognize the vital need to implement projects to address these diverse concerns, the current condition of the major rivers in the basin is largely undocumented. This Project will engage stakeholders in the process of developing SMPs for priority river systems in the basin, in order to better understand environmental, recreational, and community water needs and identify opportunities to improve the health of the basin's streams and watershed.

The project will do this through the following tasks:

1. Task 1 - Stakeholder Engagement: As described above, robust stakeholder engagement and collaboration is critical to the success of this project.
2. Task 2: Summarize Existing Information: The TAG and project coordinator will partner with Federal, state and local agencies and other stakeholders to compile existing information, including all relevant studies and land management plans. This existing data and scientific research will inform the SMP process and identify where additional data is needed to further the SMP efforts.
3. Task 3: Physical Conditions Assessment: Targeted sampling will meet the data gaps identified in Task 2. Partners will work with federal, state and private landowners to complete sampling, ensuring that all environmental, cultural, and safety regulations are met.
4. Task 4: Identify and Prioritize Ecological, Recreational, and Community Values: In collaboration with the TAG and stakeholders, and utilizing the data from Task 2 and 3, ecological, recreational and community values will be identified.
5. Task 5: Develop Goals and Identify Methods for Implementation: Using the assembled data regarding the physical condition of the stream reaches, stakeholders will develop goals and methods to improve and protect the identified ecological, recreation, and community values.

6. Task 6: Project Administration and Report Preparation: The project manager will make certain that project implementation is timely and in accordance with the scope of work and all requirements.

The resulting SMP reports will serve as valuable tools for each watershed and the entire basin. The SMPs will provide the data necessary for stakeholders to implement multi-benefit projects that improve the health of the streams and watersheds in the basin, addressing the needs described above in a holistic manner.

Examples of projects include, in-river structure updates, headgate automation, additional measurement devices, fish passage construction, further developing instream flow programs, riparian restoration, floodplain connectivity, flood protection, and aquifer recharge opportunities. The SMPs will provide partners the data needed to inform and develop these projects to address the needs facing the Basin.

Criterion C: Implementation and Results (25 points)

The Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable SMP committee and the RGHRP have developed the project scope of work, timeline and plan for implementation. The planned schedule for each task is listed below:

1. Task 1 - Stakeholder Engagement: This task informally began in 2017 with the formation of the Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable SMP committee. The SMP committee developed the project scope of work and compiled a diverse list of partners to serve on the TAG. The task will formally begin as soon as grant funding is secured.
 - a. Planned Start Date: June 1, 2018
 - b. Planned End Date: November 1, 2019
 - c. Task Milestones: Stakeholder engagement will be facilitated throughout the project timeline. Specific activities will include, hiring a SMP project coordinator, TAG meetings, project updates provided to diverse water user groups, periodic public and committee meetings.
2. Task 2: Summarize Existing Information: The project coordinator will work with Federal, state, and local entities to compile existing information that outlines the known physical condition of the stream reaches.
 - a. Planned Start Date: June 1, 2018
 - b. Planned End Date: September 1, 2018
 - c. Task Milestones: Coordinator will compile all relevant data and arrange interviews with technical experts and federal, state and local resource managers, upon completion of the data summary, the coordinator will work with the TAG to plan for follow-up sampling to address data gaps.
3. Task 3: Physical Conditions Assessment: Complete sampling to assess current condition of the study reaches.
 - a. Planned Start Date: August 1, 2018
 - b. Planned End Date: August 1, 2019

- c. Task Milestones: Contractors and TAG will complete a sampling plan and schedule based on data gaps identified in Task 2; contractors will coordinate with volunteer field staff and the TAG to complete all required sampling; contractors will complete a written assessment and create associated maps documenting the condition of the study reaches.
- 7. Task 4: Identify and Prioritize Ecological, Recreational, and Community Values: In collaboration with the TAG and stakeholders, and utilizing the data from Task 2 and 3, ecological, recreational and community values will be identified.
 - d. Planned Start Date: September 1, 2018
 - e. Planned End Date: August 1, 2019
 - f. Task Milestones: Complete boatable days study with American Whitewater and stakeholders, develop an inventory and understanding river based recreation needs, aquatic habitat and species distribution, fluvial and floodplain functions, groundwater recharge, and agriculture water use in the study reaches. Prioritize ecological, recreational, and community values with spatial and temporal considerations.
- 4. Task 5: Develop Goals and Identify Methods for Implementation: Using the assembled data regarding the physical condition of the stream reaches, stakeholders will develop goals and methods to improve and protect the identified ecological, recreation, and community values.
 - a. Planned Start Date: March 1, 2019
 - b. Planned End Date: September 1, 2019
 - c. Task Milestones: Through TAG and community meetings, stakeholders will define goals and methods to protect and improve the ecological, recreation, and community values in each of the stream reaches, with an understanding of limitations, constraints, and opportunities.
- 5. Task 6: Project Administration and Report Preparation: The project manager will make certain that project implementation is timely and in accordance with the scope of work and all requirements.
 - a. Planned Start Date: June 1, 2018
 - b. Planned End Date: November 1, 2019
 - c. Task Milestones: The Coordinator will work with the TAG to complete SMP reports and GIS mapping. The Project manager will complete appropriate contracts, external and internal reports, and ensure project activities completed within planned period and anticipated costs.

For a detailed description of each project task, see the complete Scope of Work in the Technical Proposal (page 9-12).

The project will utilize and complement the goals of federal, state, and regional planning efforts. The following is a list of the of existing plans and data the will be incorporated into the project:

- Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan
- Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) Plan
- Rio Grande National Forest Federal Reserve Water Rights Decree
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Plan

- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Refuge Management Plan
- Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project 2001 Master Restoration Plan (2001 Study)
- 2016 Lower Rio Grande Study
- 2017 Upper Rio Grande Watershed Assessment
- Rio Grande Natural Area Plan
- San Luis Valley Habitat Conservation Plan
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) aquatic sampling and stocking information
- RGWCD Groundwater Management Plans

By working across landowner boundaries, the SMPs will provide a comprehensive approach for stakeholders to develop and implement projects that improve the condition of specific stream reaches and the health of the greater watershed.

Criterion D: Nexus to Department of Interior Initiatives (10 points)

The planned SMPs will benefit and support several Department of Interior facilities. The project area includes land managed by the Bureau of Land Management's San Luis Valley Field Office and USFWS Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, the project area includes two Bureau of Reclamation projects: The Closed Basin Project and Platoro Reservoir.

The partners will work with the Department of Interior to determine types of multi-purpose projects that could improve physical stream conditions such as in-river structure updates, headgate automation, additional measurement devices, fish passage construction, furthering instream flow programs, riparian restoration, floodplain connectivity, flood protection, and aquifer recharge. Partners will also identify temporal, geographical, legal, or administrative constraints and opportunities that may limit or assist in the ability to meet goals and utilize implementation methods.

This project will benefit these Federal facilities and public lands by creating a framework for stakeholders to partner with Department of Interior and other federal agencies to implement multi-purpose projects to address the needs facing the watershed. By working across jurisdictional boundaries, stakeholders can identify opportunities to develop and implement public-private partnerships, benefiting the watershed as a whole.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance:

All project sampling will be completed in full compliance with environmental, cultural resources, and employee safety regulations. Partners will provide sampling plans to all partner agencies and will work with each landowner to ensure proper access and compliance is met.

Required Permits or Approvals:

No permits are required for the completion of the project. The project coordinator will work with the TAG and project partners to complete all required approvals prior to any monitoring and data collection. The project coordinator will work with federal and state partners when conducting data collection on public lands to ensure that all environmental, cultural resources and employee safety compliance is met.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan: Budget Proposal								
Budget Item Description and Responsible Party	Cost per Unit	Quantity	Quantity Type	TOTAL COST	Source of Funds			
					BOR WaterSMART Grant (Requested)	Non-Federal Cash Match	In-Kind Contributions	
Contractual								
Task 1: Stakeholder Engagement								
SMP Coordinator Contractor	\$ 75.00	120	Hour	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	100	Hour	\$ 2,300.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,300.00	
Task 2: Summarize Existing Information								
SMP Coordinator Contractor	\$ 75.00	150	Hour	\$ 11,250.00	\$ -	\$ 11,250.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	80	Hour	\$ 1,840.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,840.00	
Task 3: Physical Conditions Assessment								
Botany Contractor	\$ 75.00	160	Hour	\$ 12,000.00	\$ -	\$ 12,000.00	\$ -	
Aquatic Contractor	\$ 75.00	70	Hour	\$ 5,250.00	\$ -	\$ 5,250.00	\$ -	
Hydrology Contractor	\$ 75.00	206	Hour	\$ 15,450.00	\$ -	\$ 15,450.00	\$ -	
Geomorphology Contractor	\$ 75.00	260	Hour	\$ 19,500.00	\$ -	\$ 19,500.00	\$ -	
SMP Contractor - Infrastructure Analysis	\$ 75.00	260	Hour	\$ 19,500.00	\$ -	\$ 19,500.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	300	Hour	\$ 6,900.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,900.00	
Volunteer Field Staff	\$ 23.00	90	Hour	\$ 2,070.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,070.00	
Task 4: Identify and Prioritize Ecological and Recreation Values								
SMP Coordinator Contractor	\$ 75.00	92	Hour	\$ 6,900.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,900.00	\$ -	
American Whitewater Partnership	\$ 74,960.00	1	Lump Sum	\$ 74,960.00	\$ -	\$ 74,960.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	60	Hour	\$ 1,380.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,380.00	
Task 5: Develop Goals and Identify Methods for Implementation								
SMP Contractor	\$ 75.00	510	Hour	\$ 38,250.00	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 21,250.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	100	Hour	\$ 2,300.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,300.00	
Task 6: Project Administration and Report Preparation								
SMP Contractor - Mapping	\$ 75.00	200	Hour	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 13,000.00	\$ -	
SMP Contractor - Report Preparation	\$ 75.00	200	Hour	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ -	
Technical Advisory Group	\$ 23.00	160	Hour	\$ 3,680.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,680.00	
Salaries and Wages								
Emma Reesor, Executive Director (Task 6 - Project Administration)	\$ 35.00	300	Hour	\$ 10,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ -	
				TOTAL	\$ 273,030.00	\$ 35,000.00	\$217,560.00	\$ 20,470.00

Budget Narrative

The total budget for the project is \$273,030; project partners are requesting \$35,000 from the BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Grant Program. The majority of project expenses are contractual (\$262,760) and the remaining includes salary and wages (\$10,500). Project expenses details are described below.

Contractual Expenses:

The project applicant, the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, will work with the TAG to hire a contractor to be the SMP project coordinator. The project coordinator will facilitate the project and hire any additional contractors needed to complete specialized technical assessments.

A breakdown of the work to be accomplished by contractors by task is as follows:

1. Task 1: Stakeholder Engagement: The SMP project coordinator will work with the TAG to facilitate stakeholder meetings. The coordinator will provide status updates and seek feedback from water user groups and hold periodic public meetings. The budget proposal allows \$9,000 for the contacted coordinator to complete this task. An additional \$2,300 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG.
2. Task 2: Summarize Existing Information: The SMP project coordinator will review and summarize existing information regarding the condition of the stream reaches, existing watershed management plans and assessments, and land management directives. The budget proposal allows \$11,250 for the contracted coordinator to complete this task. An additional \$1,840 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG.
3. Task 3: Physical Conditions Assessment: The project coordinator will work with contractors to complete targeted sampling to assess biological, hydrological, geomorphological, and physical conditions of the study reaches. The budget proposal allows \$71,700 for contractors to complete this task. In addition, \$6,900 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG, primarily to assist with the infrastructure analysis. Finally, \$2,070 of in-kind support will be provided by volunteer field staff, which will assist with field sampling.
4. Task 4: Identify and Prioritize Ecological, Recreational, and Community Values: The SMP project coordinator and TAG will utilize community feedback, stakeholder engagement, and a partnership with American Whitewater to identify the extent of recreation opportunities within the study reaches, summarize distribution of aquatic habitat, and define priority ecological and floodplain functions. American Whitewater will work with partners to complete a recreation inventory and boatable days study. The budget proposal allows \$6,900 for the contracted project coordinator to complete this task. An additional \$74,960 is budgeted for American Whitewater to complete the recreation inventory and boatable days study.

Finally, \$1,380 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG for the completion of this task.

5. Task 5: Develop Goals and Identify Methods for Implementation: The SMP project coordinator will utilize the assembled data regarding the physical condition of the stream reaches to develop goals and potential methods to improve and protect the identified ecological, recreation, and community values. The budget proposal allows \$38,250 for the contracted project coordinator to complete this task. An additional \$2,300 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG.
6. Task 6: Project Administration and Report Preparation: The SMP project coordinator will work with the TAG to complete GIS mapping and final report preparation. The budget proposal allows for \$30,000 for the contracted project coordinator to complete this task. An additional \$3,680 of in-kind support is committed by the TAG.

A more detailed explanation of each task can be found on page 9 – Scope of Work.

Budget estimates were developed by the SMP committee in consultation with contractors and managers of other SMP projects across Colorado. The SMP committee determined the rate of \$75 per hour is reasonable for the specialized contracted technical services required for the scope of this project.

In addition, the project partners will contract with American Whitewater to complete a recreation inventory and boatable days study. American Whitewater will work with the TAG, agency partners, water users, recreation boaters and fisherman and environmental interests to identify the location and types of river based recreation opportunities within the study reach. The contact for American Whitewater's services is budgeted at the lump sum amount of \$74,960.

In-kind contributions include hours (valued at \$23/hour) volunteered by technical experts, resource managers, and field staff throughout the SMP process.

Salary and Wages:

The Foundation's Executive Director, Emma Reesor, will be the project manager. Project manager's tasks will include completing all necessary contracts, status reports, and internal and external documents. Additionally, the project manager will perform project oversight; making certain implementation is timely and in accordance with the Scope of Work. For the project manager position, the project budget includes \$10,500, which allows for 300 hours at the rate of \$35 per hour. This amount includes a budgeted 60 hours for the project manager to comply with all required BOR reporting requirements, including final project report and evaluation.

Total Project Costs:

Project partners are requesting \$35,000 from the BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Grant Program to support the project budget. Nonfederal cash match totaling \$217,560 has been secured through state grants and local support. An additional \$20,470 of in-kind contributions has been committed to the project by members of the TAG.

The project budget totals \$273,030.

APPENDIX A – Letters of Support



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Divide Ranger District-Del Norte Office

13308 West Highway 160
Del Norte, CO 81132
719-657-3321
TDD: 719-657-6038
FAX: 719-657-6035

Date: January 30, 2018

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Dear Application Review Committee,

On behalf of the Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF), Divide Ranger District, I am writing to express support of and commitment to participate in the creation of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (SMP). The headwaters of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek originate in the Rio Grande National Forest, which includes over 1.8 million acres of forest that ring the Rio Grande Basin in Colorado. The RGNF makes up much of the Rio Grande Basin's water supply and is home to many of Basin's reservoirs.

Just like many forests across the west, the RGNF is affected by a variety of impacts, including extensive beetle kill, wildfires, and drought. The effects of these disturbances on the health of the watershed are a cause of serious concern, as the health of the upland forests directly impacts the health of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, Saguache Creek, and their tributaries in upper reaches. Adaptive management and collaborative partnerships will be critical to maintaining and improving forest health and protecting the Basin's water supply. The Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek SMP will bring diverse stakeholders together to better understand the ecological and recreation needs of these priority rivers as well as create opportunities for partners to work across landowner boundaries to improve watershed health.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support and look forward to participating in the development of SMPs for priority rivers in the Rio Grande Basin. With diverse participation, the SMPs will be an incredible resource for future projects and partnerships. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this valuable project.

Sincerely,

Martha A. Williamson

MARTHA A. WILLIAMSON
District Ranger



Caring for the Land and Serving People

Printed on Recycled Paper



Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101

January 21, 2018

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Dear Application Review Committee,

The Rio Grande Basin Roundtable wishes to express support for the funding request submitted by the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation for the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (SMP). The project scope of work was developed by the members of the Roundtables stream management plan committee, which has broad representation from agriculture, water management, watershed health, recreation, and environmental stakeholders. The committee prioritized the stream reaches on the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek for the first phase of stream management planning in the Rio Grande Basin in Colorado because of the broad interest in strategic planning and existing collaborations in these basins. The committee members feel that working across the watershed will be a uniting effort where residents from different communities with different interests will learn from one another.

In addition to being a priority of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable, the project supports the Colorado Water Plan's measurable objective to have stream management plans for 80% of locally prioritized streams by 2013. This project will also provide information that will be useful in furthering goals of the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to pursue funding through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program. We look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,



Nathan Coombs, Chair
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable



Kevin Terry, Rio Grande Basin Project Manager, Colorado Water and Habitat Project

January 22, 2018

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Dear Application Review Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation's grant request for the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (SMP). I serve on the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable as the representative for Recreation and I am a member of the Roundtable's SMP committee.

Through my position with Trout Unlimited's Western Water and Habitat Program, I have been working closely with members of the water community in the Rio Grande Basin to find mutually beneficial ways to improve river flows for fish, wildlife, recreation, surface water irrigators, and well users. Through our Winter Flow Program, we have improved winter flows below Rio Grande Reservoir, Beaver Creek Reservoir, and Platoro Reservoir, while simultaneously achieving the needs of the water users and the Colorado Division of Water Resources. The program has resulted in outstanding non-consumptive benefits that have improved the ecological function of the rivers by re-operating reservoirs in a way that maximizes the benefits of the most critical resource in the San Luis Valley. The win-win solutions have brought our community together and increased opportunities for cooperative management basin wide.

The SMP project is an opportunity for water users and managers, boaters, fishermen, nonprofits, and state and federal agencies to continue to refine and develop solutions for environmental and recreational water needs that coincide with more traditional consumptive water use.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my support and look forward to participating in the development of our stream management plans.

Sincerely,

Kevin Terry
Rio Grande Basin Project Manager

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization
840 Grande Ave, Suite B, Del Norte, Colorado 81132
(970) 799-7682 • kterry@tu.org • www.tu.org



January 22, 2018

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Dear Application Review Committee,

American Whitewater is writing to express support for the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan (SMP). Founded in 1954, American Whitewater (AW) is a national non-profit organization with a mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely". American Whitewater represents the interests of over 80,000 direct and affiliate club members that reside in, or visit, Colorado and place high value on the states rivers and creeks. We are writing in support of efforts to develop a long-term vision for these valued rivers and confirm our commitment of matching funds for the project

American Whitewater has met with member of the Rio Grande Roundtable SMP committee and is coordinating the recreation flow needs assessment for the SMP. Together, the committee and AW will identify the focus areas and priorities of the assessment, which will include recreation reaches on the Rio Grande and Conejos Rivers. The committee and AW will work closely throughout the project.

American Whitewater and the SPM project coordinator will seek public input and encourage engagement from water users and residents in communities throughout the San Luis Valley in Colorado. We are seeking a Colorado Water Plan Implementation grant for a portion of the recreation assessment, of which we are matching with conditional financial support, in the amount of \$39,200 from Foundations and partner support in the amount of \$11,760.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. We encourage the BOR to award this grant to the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation. Please contact me if you have any questions

In cooperation,

Nathan T. Fey
American Whitewater

Rivers need to be Protected, Restored, and Enjoyed!



Conejos Water Conservancy District
P. O. Box 550
Manassa, CO 81141
Cwcd1971@hotmail.com
Phone 719-843-5261 fax 5452

January 22, 2018

US Department of Interior - Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

Dear Application Review Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Conejos Water Conservancy District (CWCD) to express our support and commitment to participate in the creation of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan.

CWCD operates Platoro Reservoir, which provides water for the farms and ranches and an augmentation program on the Conejos River. We have also facilitated projects to improve the condition of gaging and diversion structures throughout the river with the result of improved flow management. In recent years, we have partnered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Trout Unlimited to find opportunities to increase the winter flows from Platoro reservoir for the benefit of downstream fisheries.

Strategic restoration plans and goals have not yet been established for the Conejos River. As such, the CWCD is eager to work with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable's Stream Management Plan committee, and the community to assess the physical condition of the river, develop goals to improve the flows and riparian condition, and prioritize implementation projects. The CWCD will commit in-kind support through facilitation of community and stakeholder feedback, participation in planning meetings, and coordination of access for physical conditions assessments. We estimate this commitment as \$5,000.

The creation of a stream management plan for the Conejos will be a great accomplishment and resource for future projects. I encourage your support on this request for funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Coombs".

Nathan Coombs, Manager

623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-2230
Heather@slvwcd.org



January 29, 2018
Heather R. Dutton, Manager

US Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1
Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plan

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District's support for the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation's application to the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program. The District operates an augmentation program within five counties in the San Luis Valley. Through our operations, we replace injurious depletions to the Rio Grande caused by pumping of domestic, commercial, and municipal wells. This program ensures existing senior water rights are protected while allowing for economic and domestic growth in the San Luis Valley. Additionally, the District is a leader in the local and state water communities, working with partners to address timely issues such as groundwater sustainability, compliance with the Rio Grande Compact, and water supply protection. The District partnered with the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) almost 20 years ago to complete the 2001 study, a restoration master plan for 91 miles of the Rio Grande. Since that time, the District has remained committed to implementation of the 2001 study and supported efforts by the Foundation to improve river health in the Rio Grande Basin.

The Foundation's proposed project provides a great opportunity for the community to build on existing data to assess the condition of the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek, and to develop goals to protect the important values associated with those river systems. Of critical importance is the identification and implementation of projects to protect the quality and quantity of Colorado's water supply in the Rio Grande Basin. The District will be an active partner in the stream management planning efforts by providing staff time for the technical advisory team. The District will also contribute \$5,000 to the project and will continue to partner on implementation of efforts to protect the priorities recognized through the project.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Foundation's application and hope you will look fondly on their request for funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather R. Dutton".

Heather Dutton

President: Randall Palmgren, Center, CO
Vice-President: Darius Allen, Alamosa, CO; Secretary/Treasurer Marcie Schulz, Alamosa, CO;
Directors: Richard Davie, Del Norte, CO; M. Dee Greeman, Alamosa, CO; Charles Griego, Alamosa, CO;
Steve Keller, Monte Vista, CO; Tyler Neely, Del Norte, CO; Karla Shriver, Monte Vista, CO; Tuck Slane, Hooper, CO.

Appendix B: Official Resolution

Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation Resolution 01-2018

Title: Resolution to Apply for Funding and Comply with Requirements of the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program

Whereas, the Bureau of Reclamation has requested proposals for the 2018 WaterSMART Program, Cooperative Watershed Management Program, which includes Task B, Watershed Restoration Planning;

Whereas, the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, a Colorado non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in good standing has the legal authority to enter into an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation;

Whereas, the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation has the authority to apply on behalf of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and act as the fiscal agent for the acceptance and management of any funds awarded through the WaterSMART Program;

RESOLVED, that the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation will apply for funding to complete the Rio Grande, Conejos River, and Saguache Creek Stream Management Plans and will work with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet all requirements, such as deadlines, set forth in the financial assistance agreement, if selected for funding through the WaterSMART Program;

RESOLVED, that the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation is capable of providing the amount of funding and in-kind contributions specified in the funding plan;

RESOLVED, the signature of the President of the Board of Directors signifies the review and approval of the application submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation;



Steven Russell
President, Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Date: January 29, 2018

Witnessed by:



Michael H. Gibson
Secretary/Treasurer, Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Date: January 29, 2018