

# **WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 for Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024**

*Bureau of Reclamation Notice of Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362*

## **Mesa Conservation District**

*Grand Valley Water Committee:*

*Building Community, Capacity and Developing Solutions*

**December 1, 2023**

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## TECHNICAL PROPOSAL AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

### Executive Summary

The Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) leverages stakeholder diversity to include the historically underserved and address issues related to water quality and quantity. The goal of GVWC is to collaboratively plan and implement thoughtful projects that promote overall watershed health and drought resilience to address previously identified threats. The primary issues affecting the project area known as the Grand Valley Watershed (GVW) are: projected hotter and drier conditions, population growth and urbanization pressures that threaten the Valley's agricultural heritage and critical habitats, stretching over-allocated water supplies, and increasing conflicts over diminishing water resources. Such issues are further complicated by aging (and in some cases, failing) irrigation water delivery systems, elevated levels of contaminants, and new residents and landowners who do not understand how their actions impact the community watershed. GVWC serves a section of the Colorado River Watershed (CRW) known as the Grand Valley Watershed. The GVW is located in Mesa County and a small portion of Garfield County in Western Colorado. The GVWC is made up of committed stakeholders from State and Federal agencies, environmental nonprofits, municipalities, agricultural producers, recreationists, and concerned citizenry. With the requested funding, the GVWC is eager and confident to complete all outlined activities in this proposal from January 2025 to December 2027.

**Project Duration:** 3 years

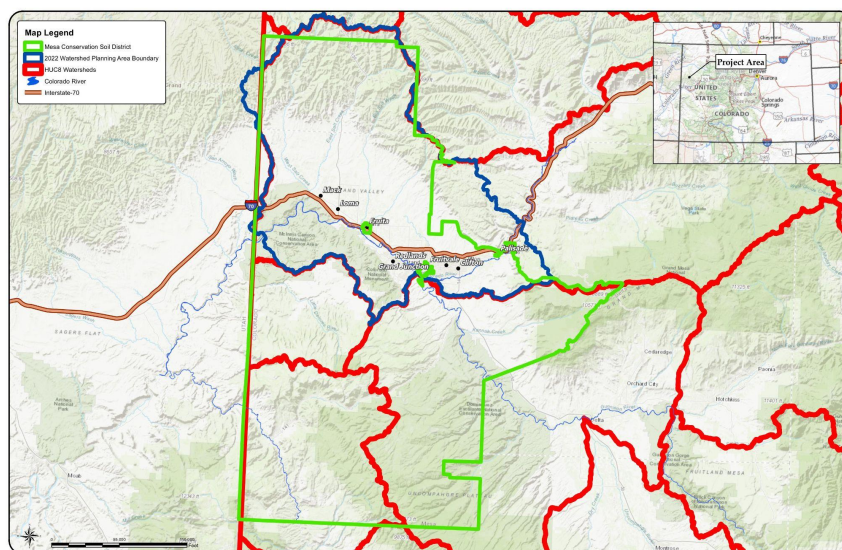
**Project Start Date:** January 2025

**Estimated Project Completion Date:** December 2027

**Located on Federal Facility or Federal Land:** None of our projects will be implemented on federally owned land.

### Project Location

*Figure 1: The Proposed Project Area*



Originating along the Continental Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park, the Colorado River runs approximately 1,400 miles to the Gulf of California in Mexico. The Colorado River Basin Watershed (CRBW) provides water to 7 states and 40 million people and is listed as the most threatened river in the United States ([Co. Rvr. Basin Fact Sheet](#)). The Grand Valley Watershed (GVW) is the focus of this

proposal and is situated in the lower third of the Upper Colorado River Basin (UCRB). The GVW comprises the downstream portion of the Colorado Headwaters-Plateau Watershed (CHPW) (Hydrologic Unit Code: [14010005](#)). The GVW and its many tributaries, including the confluence with the Gunnison River, defines over twenty USGS HUC 12 watersheds with numerous stream segments listed as condition unknown or impaired ([epa.gov](#)).

The GVW drains over 1400 square miles surrounding the Grand Valley in Western Colorado (Figure 1), or roughly 773,736 acres that includes 564,472 acres (73%) of federally owned lands, 4,876 acres (2%) of state and locally owned lands, and 193,097 acres (25%) of private lands. The diverse ecosystem supported by the GVW, ranges from low valleys along the Colorado River corridor (4,550 feet at the confluence of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers) to higher elevations along mesa tops (10,092 feet at the headwaters of Rapid Creek on Grand Mesa) with ridge lines separating watershed boundaries. These ecosystems include the protected 15-mile reach of the Colorado River that supports the recovery efforts of four rare native fish species that are listed as either threatened or endangered and live only in the CRB.

The mainstem of the Colorado River runs through the GVW, meandering through a patchwork of urban and rural settings from DeBeque through the towns of Palisade and Clifton, the cities of Grand Junction and Fruita, on to the Utah State line. The planning area also includes a section of the Gunnison River from Bridgeport, Colorado to its confluence with the Colorado River. The mountain snowpack from the GVW headwaters on and near the Grand Mesa, provides the bulk of the domestic water supply for Mesa County and runs through Federal National Forest lands.

The priority section of the CPHW chosen by GVWC for all proposed activities outlined in this application is the critically important Grand Valley Watershed (GVW). The designated project area was chosen as the focal point for GVWC work within the larger HUC8 Watershed because it is within the boundaries of the Mesa Conservation District (fiscal agent and applicant) and encompasses the highest population density, water quality and water availability issues within the District boundaries. GVWC is actively working on outreach with other Conservation Districts and entities in the larger HUC8 watershed for potential partnering opportunities. Several maps linked in sub-criterion E1.1.2. Geographic Scope, illustrate the inbuilt connections to the CPHW that allow for potential partnership in that larger watershed.

### **Applicant Category**

Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) is applying as an existing watershed group, Category B. Mesa Conservation District (MCD) is the fiscal agent and applicant, as well as an active participant partner in GVWC. The broad mission of all Conservation Districts is to coordinate assistance from all available sources: public and private, local, state and federal, to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resources concerns ([National Assoc. of Conservation Districts](#)). Sponsoring the GVWC is directly aligned with the goals of MCD.

The formation of the GVWC grew out of an informal alliance known collectively as the “Grand Valley Stakeholders” (GVS). In late 2022, the GVS approached MCD seeking a qualified entity to act as fiscal agent and applicant for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Phase 1 grant to form a watershed group, following an unsuccessful attempt the prior year. In Feb. 2023, MCD organized a meeting of the GVS to determine if stakeholders

were still interested in pursuing the formation of a watershed group and to ascertain if they would support MCD taking an applicant/leadership role. This meeting was well attended and MCD determined that they could act as fiscal agent and applicant, but also as an active participant in the watershed group.

MCD decided to apply as an existing watershed group based on the strong history of GVS collaboration prior to the formation of GVWC. MCD based this decision upon the GVS initiatives and plans already developed, and their consistent attendance at MCD strategic planning events in 2023 (*see Table 3 in section E.1.3: Readiness to Proceed*). Knowing that stakeholder commitment was strong enough to support the formation of a formal watershed group to enhance coordination between these diverse, yet related, initiatives, in July of 2023, the MCD Board of Supervisors formally adopted the GVWC as a permanent standing committee (*see attached Official Resolution*). In August 2023, a Steering Committee was formed to establish a framework and determine the mission and vision of the group. The GVWC had its first full stakeholder meeting on November 9, 2023 to determine what activities the group would like to prioritize for 2024, and in 2025-2027, when this funding would come available if we are awarded this opportunity (*meeting minutes are available upon request*).

The GVWC anticipates collaborating on several projects that local landowners requested help with in 2024. The CWMP funding would be pivotal to GVWC's ability to engage in the next steps to increase our long-term capacity to conduct watershed management activities in an effective, adaptable, and sustainable way.

### **Applicant Eligibility**

MCD is a political subdivision of the state under C.R.S. 35-70-106 based in Grand Junction, Colorado with a volunteer, elected or appointed Board of Supervisors that own land within District boundaries. The Board Supervisors, staff, and volunteers provide a good representation of diverse stakeholder interests in the GVW (*see Table 1 below*). MCD is acting as a participant, the fiscal agent/applicant, and governing body for the GVWC which meets the definition of a watershed group as defined in Section 6001(6) of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act. Conservation Districts (CD) are the epitome of grassroots leadership, and in fact, a 2023 study revealed an overwhelming preference by agricultural landowners to have a local agency such as a CD coordinating water related efforts ([survey](#)). MCD is well positioned and ready to provide a long term home and activity coordination of the GVWC.

See Section E1.1.1 Watershed Group Diversity for a list of active stakeholder organizations and entities. Table 1 below illustrates the diversity of membership brought by the MCD Board of Supervisors and Staff. The GVWC actively seeks to broaden this diversity and we see that as an ongoing objective as outlined in Task B.

MCD will act as the Project Sponsor responsible for implementing the scope of work, overseeing the contractors, and be the single point of contact to Reclamation for the contracting, accounting, and reporting requirements for the funding.



**Table 1: Current MCD Board members and staff:**

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Role</b>   | <b>Organizations Represented</b>   |
|----------------|---|--|
| Albert Ruckman | MCD President<br>GVWC Steering Committee<br>GVWC Standing Committee   | Ruckman Family Orchard<br>Orchard Mesa Irrigation District<br>Retired Engineer     |
| Michael Lobato | Vice President<br>GVWC Steering Committee<br>GVWC Standing Committee<br>CMU Tech Ag Advisory Council                                | CSU Research Assistant<br>Lobato Farms<br>Matrix Resource Technologies             |
| Judi DeVore    | MCD Sec/Treas<br>GVWC Steering Committee<br>GVWC Standing Committee<br>Co. Master Irrigator Strg. Com.                              | Mesa Conservation District   |
| Hannah Holm    | MCD Board Supervisor<br>GVWC Steering Committee<br>GVWC Standing Committee  | American Rivers<br>River Corridor Initiative<br>Desert Rivers Collaborative        |
| Brian Adams    | MCD Board Supervisor  | Mesa Conservation District<br>Green Junction Farmstead                             |
| Katie Radavich | Assoc. Brd. Supervisor<br>GVWC Standing Committee   | KLJ Engineering<br>Redlands Irrigation Company                                     |
| Frank Nemanich | Assoc. Brd. Supervisor<br>Mesa Cty Library Discovery<br>Garden Advisory Council   | Citizens for Clean Air<br>Cross Orchards Historic Site                             |
| Andrea Datz    | MCD District Manager<br>GVWC Coordinator<br>Co. Master Irrigator Strg. Com.<br>CMU Tech Ag Advisory Council<br>RCI Advisory Council | Mesa Conservation District   |
| Holly Stanley  | MCD Asst. Dist. Mngr.<br>GVWC Standing Committee  | CMU Environmental Scientist<br>CSU Research Assistant<br>CMU Hutchins Water Center |

## **Project Description**

With a formal watershed group in place the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) alongside the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment approved the 2022 Grand Valley Water Plan, and the many other plans and initiatives (*detailed in Table 3 in section E.1.3 - Readiness to Proceed*) to guide us. The GVWC proposes activities in the following Task areas as logical next steps:

- Build and maintain the capacity of the GVWC to achieve its mission and goals.
- Increase community awareness of the GVWC and its activities.
- Develop a robust “Watershed Management Matrix” to identify and prioritize projects across the many existing watersheds, local government plans, and initiatives.
- Complete pre-design work on 2-4 projects including site identification, research of site specific environmental compliance needs, and development of timelines and milestones.

## Approach

Throughout 2024 the GVWC will continue developing our framework for working together collaboratively so that the group is well positioned and ready to move forward on the proposed activities outlined below. The proposed activities in Task areas B, and C will provide essential momentum to continue developing a coordinated, strategic approach to protecting the future of water in the GVW, as well as the implementation of 2-4 projects identified through the new Watershed Management Matrix we will develop as part of this project.

### Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning

Under Task B, a successful CWMP Phase I grant would enable GVWC to maintain a structure for the full group of stakeholders to come together and coordinate their work, as well as increase community awareness of GVWC and its activities. GVWC seeks to develop and apply collaborative exploratory scenario planning and adaptive management practices throughout our activities and projects in order to enhance our ability to respond efficiently and effectively to the complexities of natural resource management in our ever evolving watershed.

#### *Task B1: Maintain the Grand Valley Water Committee:*

GVWC intends to engage in the following activities to facilitate ongoing engagement with stakeholders and coordination of each other's work. Examples of activities in this task area include: hosting and organizing all stakeholder meetings, developing tools to track and coordinate our work, creating a shared event "hub", and assigning project teams to carry out priority actions.

GVWC will conduct full stakeholder meetings bi-annually. The GVWC management team (MCD staff) is responsible for outlining the meetings and their objectives, formulating an overall 3-year plan to guide the group's activities based on notes from Committee meetings, develop meeting materials, set dates, send invitations and reminders, facilitate meetings, and provide any follow up materials. These meetings serve as the primary exploratory planning sessions where stakeholders meet one another face to face, assimilate new data, ideas, perspectives, concerns and needs. Internal communications will be maintained via regular newsletters. GVWC will develop and maintain a website, a "Watershed Management Matrix" and a public facing "Database" that demonstrates the ongoing work of the Committee.

As projects are identified, "Project Teams" will be assigned to take actions outside of the regular bi-annual meetings. MCD staff will host monthly GVWC meetings with "Project Team Leads" to get updates on progress, challenges or barriers to progress, and identify needs required to move forward for the next month. These "Project Teams" will take initial steps on an activity without the assistance of hired consultants such as: identifying team members needed to complete a project/activity, identifying funding sources, and determining which organizations are best positioned to take on specific tasks. If the group discovers a task beyond its internal capacity, the group may develop a Scope of Work or Request for Proposals and coordinate efforts to apply for additional funding to pay for said work.

#### *Task B2: Implement a Communications Plan:*

A key component of watershed planning in our region hinges on developing campaigns that inform the general public in order to foster changes in mindset and behavior around water. Without this community awareness, none of the initiatives we implement will make a significant

or sustainable difference in water conservation. In every meeting held in 2023 this subject of community engagement and education came through as one of the major challenges in the GVW. GVWC proposes to craft and enact a communications plan that fosters community engagement, understanding of GVWC and partner initiatives to encourage voluntary participation in, and adoption of, the Committee's priority actions and programs/workshops.

In addition, GVWC proposes expanding on the website created in 2024 to add branding, create a centralized place for stakeholders to access data and information, link to meeting resources, and a calendar of meeting dates and times. The website implementation would include the development of a public facing "Resource Hub" where our conservation partners and stakeholders can share resources, programs, and the type of assistance each offers, including developing an interactive map illustrating the geographic area of priority for each stakeholder/partner. Possibilities for outreach might include a 'Shared Events Calendar' hosted on the GVWC website, paid posts on Facebook or other social media sites, newsletters, and/or radio.

In addition, GVWC proposes to attend and provide in-person updates to local government commissions, stay engaged with other concurrent initiatives in the GVW, provide branded content for groups to share in their newsletters and outreach materials, and promote the work of GVWC via social and other news and media outlets. We find that this kind of community outreach and engagement also brings community members and elected officials into the planning conversations. This is why communication is included among the watershed restoration planning tasks.

#### *Task B3: Develop a Watershed Management Matrix:*

In order to accurately identify and prioritize 'nexus' projects within the proposed watershed area, GVWC will research the existing community and watershed plans to identify common watershed concerns and develop strategies for addressing those concerns. An MCD staff member will coordinate: conduction of literature review, compiling existing data and reports, identifying gaps in data, and developing shared educational materials. MCD staff and GVWC stakeholders will also gather data through community outreach and stakeholder meetings to help inform the planning process. Common challenges and strategies identified through research and outreach will be used to create a robust 'Watershed Management Matrix' that GVWC will maintain and update as the primary tool for helping the Committee identify priority projects in Project Year 3.

During year 1, GVWC proposes to build out the "Watershed Management Matrix" by reviewing existing watershed and municipal plans and engaging in community outreach. GVWC will develop its collaborative process to clearly define a program to create a model that can be replicated for ongoing use. GVWC intends to use information gathered from projects developed in 2024 to assist in defining project criteria that zero in on priority locations and the restoration methods that work best in the GVW. The program outline will also include timelines, an application process, and define expectations for future construction phases.

#### **Task C: Watershed Project Design**

Through this grant, GVWC intends to develop 2-4 "shovel ready" projects identified using our "Watershed Management Matrix" developed during Project Year 1, beginning with building relationships with willing landowners, through to completion of engineered plans. Under Task C, a successful CWMP Phase 1 grant would allow GVWC to: hone in on projects with maximum



impact on the priority needs of the GVW (‘nexus’ projects) and complete design and engineering for 2-4 projects that are ready to apply for construction funding upon completion of this Project.

*Task C1: Complete an analysis to identify specific project locations.*

Using the communications plan developed in year 1, GVWC will begin to announce that we are seeking projects more widely with targeted outreach to landowners and media outlets at the beginning of year 2. Using the application process developed in year 1, GVWC will begin soliciting applications and adding potential projects to the “Matrix”, along with project recommendations from stakeholders during our full stakeholder meeting early in the year.

As these project ideas come in, “Project Teams” will form to conduct initial scoping, site visits and conceptual design recommendations to gather data to add additional information to the “Matrix”. Prior to the second full stakeholder meeting in September, team leads come together to review and rank the potential projects based on the “Matrix”. At the full stakeholder meeting in September, the ranked projects are presented by the Project Coordinator and the full stakeholder committee votes on 2-4 restoration projects that will be funded for project design. “Project Teams” will be assigned to begin initial scoping and coordination of landowners with project partners.

*Task C2: Complete site-specific project design and engineering*

During year 3, GVWC will hire contractors to complete final engineered project designs, including managing each project through the design phase. GVWC will develop a contractor scope of work and follow the adopted procedures developed in year 1 to select contractors and finalize contracts. Contracted work will be overseen by GVWC to ensure the design process is in alignment with program criteria. Landowner agreements and partner coordination for each project will be handled by GVWC. This task will result in 2-4 “shovel-ready” designs that GVWC and our partners can use to seek funding for construction in 2028..

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope**

#### *E.1.1.1. Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity*

**Provide an explanation of the specific individuals, entities, and organizations already participating in the watershed group** The Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) currently consists of an interdisciplinary membership of stakeholder partners connected with: State and Federal agencies, domestic and irrigation water providers, municipal planners and managers, conservation non-profits, agricultural producers and landowners, engineers and professional consultants. (*See Table 2 below*).

**Is the current participation representative of the affected stakeholders within the watershed?**

The GVWC is already representative of affected stakeholders, but will continue outreach as missing stakeholder groups are identified.

*Table 2: GVWC Stakeholders and Partners*

| Grand Valley Water Committee Stakeholders and Partners              |   |
|---|---|
| Mesa Conservation District  | CSU Cooperative Extension                               |
| Natural Resource Conservation Service                               | Green Junction Farmstead                                |
| Colorado River Water Conservation District                          | Lobato Farm   |
| Ute Water Conservancy District                                      | Ruckman Family Orchards                                 |
| Clifton Water   | City of Fruita  |
| Grand Valley Irrigation Company                                     | City of Grand Junction                                  |
| Grand Valley Water Users Association                                | RadEarth Solutions                                      |
| Orchard Mesa Irrigation Company                                     | Private residents and landowners                        |
| River's Edge West   | American Rivers   |
| Desert Rivers Collaborative   | CSU Western Colorado Research Center                    |
| River Corridor Initiative   | Bureau of Land Management                               |
| Colorado Mesa University/Ruth Powell Hutchins Water Center/CMU Tech | Mesa County (planning/public works/stormwater division) |
| SGM – engineering and consulting                                    | KLJ – engineering and consulting                        |

**Provide a description of the stakeholders that are involved, what their involvement in the group entails, and reference any letters of support or pledges/donations from affected stakeholders.**

**Government Entities Represented:** Mesa Conservation District ([MCD](#)) with an advisor from Colorado State Conservation Board ([CSCB](#)), Natural Resource Conservation Services ([NRCS](#)), CSU Tri-River Cooperative Extension ([CSU Ext.](#)), and The Colorado River Water Conservation District ([CRD](#)) all hold seats on the GVWC. MCD is the fiscal agent for this grant and acts as governing body for the GVWC, MCD staff coordinates GVWC meetings and oversees projects. There is a letter of support signed by MCD Board members and staff. A representative from NRCS sits on the Committee in an advisory role and NRCS can provide technical support and funding of future projects on private lands. CSU Ext. has a representative on the Committee and provides technical assistance in a wide variety of areas related to the projects outlined in this proposal. CSU Ext. signed the GVWC letter of support. CRD signed the GVWC letter of support and has committed to holding a seat on the Committee and can provide funding and technical support.

**Domestic Water Providers Represented:** [Ute Water Conservancy District \(UWCD\)](#) and [Clifton Water](#) (CW) are stakeholder partners who hold seats on the Committee. UWCD has pledged funds to help with GVWC administration and grant writing, and submitted a letter of support. Both can act as fiscal agents/applicants for future funding opportunities and Clifton Water signed the GVWC letter of support. **City of Grand Junction** is its own water provider and has representation on GVWC, as stakeholders in the GVW and also signed the GVWC letter of support.

**Irrigation Water Providers Represented:** Grand Valley Water Users Association ([GVWUA](#)), Grand Valley Irrigation Company ([GVIC](#)), Orchard Mesa Irrigation District ([OMID](#)) hold a seat on the Committee. GVWUA signed the GVWC letter of support. GVIC and

OMID GVWC members were actively involved in the GVWC steering committee and now hold seats on the permanent committee. OMID signed via the MCD letter of support. All three entities can potentially act as fiscal agents on future grants.

**Agricultural Producers Represented: Green Junction Farmstead, Lobato Farms and Ruckman Family Orchards** are all represented via the MCD Board of Supervisors and have signed the MCD letter of support. Two of these farmers sat on the steering committee to organize the GVWC. Agricultural producers are key stakeholders that have not historically had representation in watershed groups in the GVW. **Lifetime Ag** is a large regenerative ag farm that also raises cattle and has committed to joining GVWC though they have not participated yet.

**Conservation Non-Profits Represented: River's Edge West ([REW](#)), Desert Rivers Collaborative ([DRI](#)), and American Rivers ([AR](#))** are Conservation Non-Profits focused on various aspects of river corridor health and resilience. REW and AR are on the Core Team for the **Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative ([RCI](#))**. See letters of support from REW and AR. These organizations provide valuable technical input as well as possible fiscal restoration partners on future projects.

**Municipal Representation: The City of Grand Junction ([GJ](#)), City of [Fruita](#) and Mesa County ([MC](#))** all have committed seats on the GVWC. GJ and MC signed the GVWC letter of support, and the City of Fruita committed a letter of support. MC Planning and Public Works/Storm Water Drainage representatives sat on the Steering Committee and now hold seats on the GVWC. They have been active partners throughout the development of this group.

**Engineers and Consultants Represented: [SGM](#), [KLJ](#) and RadEarth Solutions** are engineering and consulting firms that have representatives on GVWC. SGM signed the GVWC letter of support and has been heavily involved with the GVS for many years. KLJ/RadEarth Solutions are represented on the MCD Board and signed that letter of support. Engineers and consultants are aware of potential conflicts of interest and procedures are in place to avoid them. Some of these consultants have been involved with the water community in the GVW for so long they bring extremely valuable insight to meetings.

Private residents and landowners: Most of the GVWC members are **resident and landowner stakeholders** in the GVW. Landowners provide valuable insight into practical/on the ground challenges and can help GVWC identify potential project areas. GVWC has letters of support from **Summer Hill HOA, Alexander Ditch Company** (a small irrigation lateral managed by the landowners) along with several individuals.

**Educational Institutions represented: Colorado Mesa University ([CMU](#)), Colorado Mesa University Technical College ([CMU Tech](#)), and CSU Western Colorado Research Center ([CSU WCRC](#))** all have representation on GVWC. These institutions act in an advisory capacity, provide facilities for meetings and partner to host educational events. CMU and CMU Tech both signed the GVWC letter of support. CSU WCRC committed a letter of support and signed the GVWC letter. CMU Tech was involved in the steering committee as well.

**Provide details on how you plan to target affected stakeholders to ensure that your group will represent a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed.** Sub-tasks identified under Task B will aim to ensure that new members or other collaborating organizations are included in this Project. As outlined in Table 3: Tasks and Milestones, a permanent Project Team will be formed early in year 1 that is devoted to stakeholder outreach.

**Description of the structure of the watershed group. Is there a formal membership process or is participation more informal?** GVWC is set up as a permanent standing committee under the governance of MCD. Membership is by invitation and determined informally by the current group of stakeholders based on identified gaps in representation. Decisions are made on a consensus basis during stakeholder meetings. The MCD board can vote on any decisions that need a formal record to document and intends to support the GVWC to get work done. MCD is governed by 5 elected or appointed unpaid Board Supervisors that serve 4 year terms.

#### *E.1.1.2. Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope*

**Provide a map illustrating the geographic boundaries of the area in which the watershed group will work.** The Grand Valley Watershed (GVW) is depicted in Figure 1 and defines the geographic scope of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). There are 23 unique sub-basins within this area. The GVW consists of developed lands within the urbanized areas of Grand Junction and Fruita, irrigated croplands primarily supplied by canals on the north and southside of the Colorado River within the Grand Valley, and natural lands along the foothills and into the headwaters of the tributaries. According to the 2019 National Land Cover Database, within the GVW, approximately 6.2% of the land cover is developed lands, 6.8% is croplands, and 87.0% is natural lands (Figure 1).

**Location or boundaries of the stakeholder groups within the area** A map illustrating the boundaries of all the stakeholder groups is not available. Each GVWC stakeholder entity that has specific geographic boundaries is detailed below.

**Indicate which stakeholders are currently involved in the group** The stakeholders currently involved in GVWC are outlined in Table 2 in sub-criterion E.1.1.1 Watershed Group Diversity.

**Which will be targeted through outreach.** GVWC will actively seek membership representing national forest land and some of the more remote regions of the Valley such as Glade Park. Historically, agricultural producers have not been at the table and we are already changing that. In general, we aim to involve private landowners more than in the past. Landowner education and awareness are key to the success of watershed planning efforts.

**If a map of stakeholder locations cannot be provided, please describe the geographic scope of the area to the best of your knowledge, including where specific stakeholders are located within the watershed.** (see live links to images of available maps of each entity's territory) The combined territory of MCD ([map](#)) and NRCS encompasses the 577,497 acres of private lands within the GVW boundary. The MCD map shows the CD boundaries relative to the rest of the state of Colorado and includes its Watershed Association which encompasses the entire HUC8 Colorado-Plateau Headwaters watershed. A BLM ([map](#)) representative plans to begin attending meetings in 2024, covering 980,382 acres ([per Mesa County Planning Statistics](#)). CRD ([map](#))

covers the entirety of the GVWC project area and the entire HUC8 watershed. The domestic water providers involved are **UWCD** and **CW** ([map](#)), both work tirelessly to ensure the delivery of high quality potable water to the Grand Valley's 155,703 residents and counting. These entities stay in close communication and coordinate efforts to meet the ever evolving needs of the community, including ensuring that adequate water flows reach the 15-mile reach to support endangered fish habitat, and staying closely involved with groups like GVWC. Three of six irrigation water providers are represented: **GVIC**, **OMID**, and **GVWUA** ([map](#)). Between them, they irrigate nearly 90,000 acres. GVWUA and OMID share ownership of the Vinelands Power Plant, producing green energy for the power grid and using that diverted power water to supplement flows to the 15-Mile Reach to benefit the endangered fish and help ensure Endangered Species Compliance. GVWC has orchardists, market garden, and regenerative livestock producers represented. **Agricultural production represents 342,534 acres** in the GVW. GVWC current members represent the unique growing conditions from Orchard Mesa and Palisade to Fruita and Loma on the western end of the valley. **REW**, **DRC** ([map](#)), **RCI** ([map](#)), and **AR** combined cover the entire territory of the GVW, focusing on the river corridors of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers. The Cities of **GJ** ([map](#)) and **Fruita** ([map](#)) cover the territory defined by their city boundaries. In addition, here is a [map](#) of the GJ regional water districts. **Mesa County** ([map](#)) planning and storm water drainage/public works are also involved.

**Describe the extent to which the watershed group already represents the geographic scope of the area.** GVWC has stakeholder and partner representation across the entire GVW including both private and public lands as illustrated in the linked maps/description above.

**Describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will target stakeholders that represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the watershed group will work.** GVWC continues targeting key stakeholders through the tasks proposed in this application. Targeted outreach will include assigning a 'Stakeholder Outreach Team', inviting groups to participate in GVWC meetings and discussions, visiting these groups to listen and understand their priorities on their turf; i.e. Commission meetings, farm field days, at community events, homeowners association meetings, etc., share stories of collaboration and celebrate successes through newsletters, website content and press releases.

**Describe why you have chosen to work within the watershed area you described.** GVWC chose the downstream portion of the Colorado Headwaters-Plateau Watershed (Hydrologic Unit Code: [14010005](#)) because it is the most heavily populated part of the watershed and therefore has the most issues with water quality, availability and threatened habitat. The GVW was defined to capture the drainage areas with the greatest influence on the water quality, water supply, and river function of the Grand Valley. In addition, this area has water quality impairments related to excess selenium, total recoverable iron, and Escherichia coli (E. coli) which are currently the subject of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) being developed by the CDPHE – WQCD. Portions of the Planning Area are also experiencing further water quality challenges with the post-fire debris flows from the East Troublesome Fire in Grand County, the Grizzly Creek Fire in Garfield County, and the Pine Gulch Fire in Mesa County. In addition to TMDL concerns the defined boundaries of work include the areas of highest population, water usage and issues with water loss due to aging infrastructure, transit evaporation and seepage.



## E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B: Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs

### E.1.2.1. Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

#### **Critical issues and needs in the Grand Valley Watershed include:**

- Water quality concerns
- Steadily increasing growth and development, including land use changes, leading to declining ecological resilience
- Water supply and availability concerns exacerbated by increased climate variability and drought
- Threats to biodiversity and critical habitat due to persistent drought
- Lack of public understanding and engagement to address water quality and quantity concerns

**Water Quality Concerns:** Water quality in the GVW is involved in the TMDL Program and actively researching sources of contaminants. The CDPHE approved [2022 Grand Valley Watershed Plan](#) focuses specifically on issues of water quality and will serve as the primary guiding document when GVWC considers water quality issues in our planning efforts.

Increased urbanization in The Grand Valley has led to an overall increase of non-point source (NPS) pollution across the watershed. Rainwater and urban lawn irrigation runoff mobilize pollutants across impermeable surfaces like land, roads, and parking lots into storm drains where they end up in our streams and ultimately the Colorado River. Common urban pollutant runoff includes: gas, oil and other fluids that leak from cars, pet waste, garbage, salt and sediment from roads, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. The persistent drought and lower water levels in streams and rivers increases the concentration of pollutants and raises water temperatures, threatening critical wildlife habitat.

The extensive and aging irrigation system (referenced in the Project Location section) is the lifeblood of thousands of acres of croplands, supporting local agriculture and local food supply in the region. Both flood and sprinkler irrigation are common in many areas of the Grand Valley; irrigation of disturbed soils can mobilize salt and selenium that exist naturally in the Mancos shale soils and become runoff into the rivers and streams. During the winter months, livestock are commonly fenced in fields adjacent to riparian areas, contributing to loss of vegetation, erosion, bank instability and sediment pollution.

Both agricultural irrigation and urban runoff during precipitation events mobilize naturally occurring salts into the groundwater, to nearby streams and back to the river. Recent microbial source tracking efforts by USGS, funded by Grand Valley stakeholders, indicates the primary e-coli contributors are canines and ruminants such as deer. Bovine and equine E. coli numbers were not primary contributors during the timeframe the study sampled.

The Grand Valley entities have increased water quality testing with the help of the USGS and the Colorado River District. Mitigating water quality issues can be addressed by continuing to increase test sites, provide assistance and funding for mitigation, and ramping up public outreach to educate on water quality. As our population increases and urban and agricultural properties

collide, understanding these water quality issues and how to best manage them will be paramount in supporting the health of our citizens, the watershed, and the natural environment.

**Growth and Development:** Per the 2023 [Mesa County Master Plan](#), Mesa County has experienced ongoing growth over the past several decades, and this growth is expected to continue. Mesa County's population is projected to grow from 155,703 in 2020 to approximately 202,000 by 2040 according to the State Demographer, an equivalent increase of about 2,300 people per year. The projected percentage increase over this future 20 year period is approximately 30%. Similar to population increases, the number of households are projected to grow significantly, from an estimated 63,133 in 2020 to approximately 83,000 by 2040. The county's total households grew by 8.7% from 2010 to 2020. The Grand Valley holds its roots in agriculture, but that heritage is threatened by growth and development in our agriculturally rich lands. 2023 sees a push for changes in development codes and planning to push urbanization into city centers with higher density housing and less sprawl. Subdivisions in rural areas create conflict where suburban and agricultural lands intersect and compete for finite water resources. Both high density and urban sprawl dramatically increase the amount of impermeable surfaces and turf that contribute to water contamination issues.

**Water Supply and Availability:** The GVW has access to a finite supply of water that could be surpassed as the demand for water increases with community growth. Historically the GVW has been able to supply domestic water exclusively from high altitude water storage from snow melt on the Grand Mesa. The GVW has been heavily impacted by persistent moderate to severe drought conditions for the longest running stretch in history. In 2020, the Colorado River ran at historic lows of 1,000 cubic feet per second, down from 30,000 the year before. For the first time, in 2021 Ute Water made the decision to utilize their Colorado River water rights to augment domestic water supplies from their high altitude storage in anticipation of a back-to-back-to-back forecasted below average snowpack.

The long term drought has shifted soil hydrology in the high country such that even in good snowfall years (2021 and 2022) the snow melt is sucked into the dry ground in the high country and diminishes the runoff that normally charges our reservoirs. Water providers in the GVW have drought plans in place and have so far managed to maintain water supplies to residents, but in 2020 they were at 75% of capacity and as the drought conditions persist are always seeking other sources of water to augment the growing residential needs.

As a result of the 2002-2003 drought, the City of Grand Junction, Clifton Water District, the Town of Palisade and Ute Water Conservancy District collectively embarked upon the development of a regional Drought Response Plan. The Drought Response Plan (DRP) was designed to provide Governing Boards and City Councils with a set of options to consider when dealing with a prolonged drought event. One of the key components of the DRP was to initiate the [Drought Response Information Project \(DRIP\)](#) to provide public education through all sources of media on why and how to reduce per capita consumption across all water use classes in the respective service areas.

Land use changes from rural to urban along with conservative irrigation practices utilizing best available technologies reduces the impacts of overwatering on water quality concerns, but also

reduces overall ground water recharge. The multi-decadal ongoing persistent drought, increasing demand, and climate changes in the GVW have had a profound impact on agricultural production, critical wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism. Hotter and drier conditions add additional stressors to fish and wildlife species as water temperatures rise and die back occurs of native plant species that no longer can survive in such harsh conditions. Efforts to restore wildlife habitat as non-native plant species take hold are challenging with a decreasing water table. The recreation and tourism industry is incredibly dependent on the Colorado and Gunnison rivers and yearly flows which impacts a diverse set of recreational activities from fishing and boating to birding and sightseeing.

**Threats to biodiversity and critical habitat:** The persistent drought lowers flows in the Colorado River threatening the 15-mile reach area that provides critical habitat and breeding grounds for four endangered fish species. The riparian zone along the river is also a critical habitat for the endangered Yellow Billed Cuckoo. Trees on the Grand Mesa, chronically stressed by drought, have become susceptible to the Ips beetle, fungal infection and other damaging insects. Weakened by drought, large stands of Aspen trees are dying off at unprecedented rates the likes of which have not been seen before. This forest is becoming ripe for wildfires that would threaten the source waters for the entire GVW along with crucial drinking water supplies. The tree canopy on the valley floor is also impacted by the Ips Beetle and Ash Borer, the summer treeline now dotted with leafless trees that have succumbed. Non-native, invasive species, particularly tamarisk and Russian olive (TRO) along the river corridor, thrive on the drought conditions, pushing out native species that are weakened. TRO contributes to river channelization and simplification and leads to increased wildlife risk in the riparian corridor. Where the desert environment used to host many varieties of wildflowers and cacti, cheat grass savannas are taking over, greatly increasing the risk of wildfire in upland areas as well.

**Public Understanding and Engagement:** The Grand Valley Watershed (GVW) has an increasing influx of new community members, many of whom are unfamiliar with the particular hydrological and ecological challenges of living in a semi-arid high desert, or of the ongoing efforts by local partners to keep our watershed healthy and resilient. In all of our planning meetings to date, the consistent theme is the necessity for ongoing education and outreach to local landowners, Homeowners Associations, developers, real estate agents, and municipal water users. GVWC recognizes that without an educated public, many of the efforts to improve water quality and resilience will fail. Several key federal, state and regional planning efforts are already in place to address water quality and quantity issues across the state of Colorado. A common theme among all of these plans is the need to increase public awareness, engagement and coordination.

Although water managers do such a good job ensuring users have access to high quality drinking water and ample irrigation, while still maintaining critical flows to endangered fish habitat along the Colorado River much work still needs to be done to educate and inform the general population of the critical nature of our water situation in the face of persistent drought and climate uncertainty. The culture of the Grand Valley fosters a perception that water is an inexhaustible resource. Common unhelpful public perceptions include:

- Water is undervalued because it is inexpensive compared to other areas.

- Senior water rights create the illusion that water availability is secure and inexhaustible.
- There is little incentive to conserve because shareholders believe if they don't use their shares they will lose them.

If GVWC does nothing to educate the public, given the predictions of hotter and drier conditions alongside growing population, we run the risk of curtailment, which threatens the entire economy of the Grand Valley.

The site-specific planning and design proposed in the project will target activities identified based on the “Watershed Management Matrix” that is developed during Year 1. No specific sites have been chosen at the time of this application. The Committee anticipates targeting projects such as irrigation laterals that are in open concrete ditches, unlined, or outdated, and HOA subdivisions that want to replace turf with a waterwise landscaping plan. These are projects that tend to be more expensive and complicated than homeowners can pull together on their own, and an area of work that is not being covered by other groups or organizations. These kinds of projects afford GVWC the opportunity to work at the heart of two areas already identified as larger than average contributors to water use inefficiencies and NonPoint Source pollution.

To sum up, a successful CWMP grant would provide critical capacity support to help GVWC succeed in our plans to build a resilient watershed in an educated and waterwise community.

#### *E.1.2.2. Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits*

##### **Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning**

GVWC recognizes that the critical and complex needs of our watershed are most effectively addressed with strategic planning and a collaborative approach. This project provides the logical next steps to continue developing the structure for stakeholders to come together regularly to coordinate their work, support ‘Project Teams’ that implement priority actions identified by the Committee, and provide much needed community awareness of GVWC and its work. By coming together, this diverse group of stakeholders enhances the impact of our actions by leveraging partnerships and capacity to reach new and larger audiences, identify ‘nexus’ projects and develop them so they are ready for construction funding.

##### **Based on current information, what are the expected benefits of the proposed activities?**

The activities outlined in Task B will create a clear structure for current GVWC members to continue developing best practices for working together. Reviewing existing plans and building the “Watershed Management Matrix” will help us efficiently, effectively identify and prioritize projects to fulfill our mission of getting projects on the ground. The communications plan will increase the visibility and credibility of GVWC, making it easier to gain buy-in from the community at large.

**To the extent possible, describe the anticipated benefits. Provide quantitative and qualitative support for the expected benefits.** One of the Task B activities is to evaluate existing data and plans to identify the priority concerns in GVW. GVWC has defined target projects as ‘nexus’ projects, or projects that will demonstrate benefits across multiple identified

areas of concern. GVWC members know, for example, that GVW is impacted by water quality issues. A clear benefit of piping an irrigation lateral would be to reduce seepage that contributes to water quality issues. A piping project would become a ‘nexus’ project by taking into account that piping a ditch may adversely affect habitat that sprung up in response to the water seepage in the open ditch. GVWC intends to consider how to pipe a lateral in such a way that critical wildlife habitat is preserved. Another example, targeting HOA subdivisions to help them reduce or eliminate non essential turf will reduce the amount of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides running off into streams. A subdivision project becomes a “nexus” project by encouraging the adoption of native or low water vegetation that cools the ground, reduces runoff, and increases biodiversity. All of the projects GVWC takes on will strive to improve water quality, habitat and diversity, reduce the risk of wildfire and improve availability of water for domestic and irrigation supplies as well as streamflow in the Colorado River. In 2024 GVWC will continue studying the effects of such projects alongside ongoing and expanded study of NonSource Point contamination.

**What stakeholders will benefit from the proposed project?** All of the stakeholders of GVWC will benefit from the activities in Task B.

**To the extent known, describe the project(s) for which the watershed group will complete a design.** At the time of submission, specific project locations are unknown. Part of this proposal would be to develop our “Watershed Management Matrix” (*see Task B above*) which would help us prioritize and locate projects by year 2, beginning of year 3 at the latest.

**What type of site-specific project design and engineering will the watershed group complete?** GVWC intends to develop projects focused in two areas: on aging, leaking, open, concrete irrigation laterals that are contributing to evaporation losses and contributing to the mobilization of salt and selenium into drainages, and HOA subdivisions that want to replace turf in common areas. Both of these types of projects are notoriously difficult for property owners to coordinate and fund without assistance.

**To the extent possible, describe and quantify the potential benefits of the watershed management project that would result from the design?** By bringing together our diverse stakeholders, GVWC can provide technical and financial assistance to help these homeowners design and fund projects that also take into account managing the high silt load endemic here, along with creating or maintaining wildlife habitat, reducing or eliminating NonSource Point contamination, and planning for ground cover over new piping that prevents invasive weed growth.

### **E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed**

The Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) stands ready to proceed in implementation of the activities detailed in the above proposal. Below, Table 2 illustrates a plan of action beginning in



January of 2025 through December of 2027, a detailed Budget and Budget Narrative attached describing how GVWC will utilize the funding requested.

*Table 3: Tasks and Milestones*

| TASKS AND MILESTONES   | START DATE    | END DATE                           | RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLETION  |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Task B1: Maintain the Grand Valley Water Committee</b>  |               |                                    |   |
| <b>B1.1:</b> Host bi-annual full stakeholder meetings  | February 2025 | December 2027                      | GVWC Coordinator – currently Andrea Datz  |
| <b>B1.2:</b> Develop 3-year plan and assign a Project Team   | February 2025 | March 2025                         | A Project team will assemble to work on this.   |
| <b>B1.3:</b> Assign Project Team for stakeholder outreach  | February 2025 | December 2027                      | Assigned Project Team lead will be accountable for completion.  |
| <b>B1.4:</b> Host monthly Project Team Leader meetings   | March 2025    | December 2027                      | GVWC Coordinator  |
| <b>Task B2: Develop a Communications Plan</b>  |               |                                    |   |
| <b>B2.1:</b> Website upgrade add branding and resource hub for stakeholders  | March 2025    | August 2025<br>Ongoing maint.      | This will be contracted to KW Graphics to setup, MCD staff maintains  |
| <b>B2.2:</b> Develop Conservation Partners Hub for sharing resources and services with the public                  | March 2025    | September 2025<br>Ongoing Maint.   | KW Graphics set up, MCD staff maintains   |
| <b>B2.3:</b> Develop and maintain shared events calendar to promote programs and workshops hosted by GVWC partners | February 2025 | March 2025<br>ongoing through 2027 | KW Graphics set up, maintained by MCD staff   |
| <b>B2.4:</b> Create a Project Team to Develop newsletter and campaigns to promote GVWC activities                  | April 2025    | July 2025<br>ongoing               | Project Team lead is accountable for July deadline, MCD staff will assist in ongoing communication efforts. |
| <b>Task B3: Develop a Watershed Management Matrix</b>  |               |                                    |   |
| <b>B3.1:</b> Assign Project Team for development of Watershed Management Matrix                                    | February 2025 | December 2025                      | Project Team lead is accountable for December deadline, GVWC Coordinator will monitor progress monthly      |
| <b>B3.2:</b> Research existing watershed and municipal plans to identify common issues and strategies              | February 2025 | July 2025                          | Project Team Lead   |
| <b>B3.3:</b> Gather data and use it to create the Watershed Management Matrix                                      | August 2025   | December 2025                      | Project Team Lead, contract technical assistance if needed  |

*Table 3: Tasks and Milestones (continued)*

|   |                |                       |  |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|--|
| <b>B3.4:</b> Establish application process with timelines and expectations for future construction. Begin using the Matrix                              | October 2025   | December 2025 ongoing | Project Team Lead will get Matrix ready for presentation. Full GVWC stakeholders will have access and utilize. |
| <b>Task C1: Complete Analysis to Identify Specific Site Locations</b>   |                |                       |  |
| <b>C1.1:</b> Establish Project Team to engage in targeted outreach to landowners and media outlets promoting the program and seeking project applicants | January 2026   | March 2026            | Project Team lead will oversee progress and report to GVWC Coordinator at monthly meetings                     |
| <b>C1.2:</b> Form Project Teams for new project submissions: conduct initial scoping, site visits and design recommendations                            | March 2026     | August 2026           | Project Team leads will oversee project submissions and report to GVWC Coordinator at monthly meetings.        |
| <b>C1.3:</b> Input project data gathered during initial scoping into the Project Management Matrix  | August 2026    | September 2026        | Project Team for the Watershed Management Matrix   |
| <b>C1.4:</b> Rank the projects and select 2-4 projects for implementation in 2027   | September 2026 | September 2026        | To be determined by full GVWC Committee at regular fall meeting.   |
| <b>C1.5:</b> Develop procedures for hiring contractors  | September 2026 | December 2026         | A Project Manager would be hired to oversee project design and management                                      |
| <b>Task C2: Complete Site-Specific Design and Engineering</b>   |                |                       |  |
| <b>C2.1:</b> Assign Project Teams to each of the 2-4 projects selected  | January 2027   | January 2027          | To be determined by full GVWC stakeholders at regular January meeting  |
| <b>C2.2:</b> Coordinate Landowner agreements and organizations for each project   | January 2027   | February 2027         | MCD staff along with GVWC Coordinator and Project Manager  |
| <b>C2.3:</b> Project Team for each project develops scope of work and hires design team   | January 2027   | March 2027            | Project Team leads under supervision of Project Manager  |
| <b>C2.4:</b> Finalize Contracts   | March 2027     | March 2027            | Project Manager with MCD staff   |
| <b>C2.5:</b> Design and engineering of 2-4 projects   | March 2027     | December 2027         | Project Manager oversees   |

In order to build a robust Watershed Management Matrix to help identify and prioritize projects, GVWC proposes researching the many existing initiatives and plans already developed by many of our stakeholders outside the context of GVWC. Following is a list illustrating the plans and initiatives already identified that we can research to find common concerns and strategies across these valuable initiatives.

Table 4: Water Resource Initiatives in the GVW

| <b>Recent and current water-resource initiatives in the Grand Valley, representatives of which have joined the GVWC:</b>                               |   |
|--|---|
| <b>CDPHE-WQCD- Grand Valley Watershed Plan (GVWP): 2022</b>  | GVS led watershed plan focused primarily on tributary stream water quality concerns. PRIMARY planning document for GVWC                           |
| <b>Desert Rivers Collaborative (DRC): (2015-)</b>  | The DRC focuses on protecting and restoring native riparian habitat in Mesa & Delta counties.   |
| <b>Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Project: (1988-)</b>  | Project to recover 4 endangered or threatened fish species, with a focus on flow and habitat conditions of the 15-mile Reach in the Grand Valley. |
| <b>Grand Valley Water Quality Project: (2020)</b>  | Creation of analytical water-chemistry baseline for the Colorado River in the Grand Valley.   |
| <b>Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative (RCI): (2020)</b>  | Initiative to address the need for coordination, planning, and collaboration along the river corridors of the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers.       |
| <b>Grand Mesa Wildfire Resiliency Partnership: (2022)</b>  | Development of plans to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire effects in critical watersheds on and adjacent to the Grand Mesa.          |
| <b>Mesa County Master Plan: (2023)</b>   | Guides development and provides a framework for appropriate land use decisions for unincorporated Mesa County.                                    |
| <b>Previous Mesa Conservation District stakeholder activities, which will also feed into the GVWC work</b>   |   |
| <b>Exploratory Scenario Planning: (March 2023)</b>   | Widely attended Exploratory Scenario Planning Workshops that fleshed out possible future scenarios and strategies for adaptive planning.          |
| <b>MCD Local Work Group: (May 2023)</b>  | Tasked to identify the top priorities so as to direct NRCS in prioritizing programs and funding for 2024.   |
| <b>List of existing Plans and Initiatives already identified that will be included in the research to develop a robust Watershed Management Matrix</b> |   |
| Survey (2023): Agricultural Water Users' Preferences for Addressing Water Shortages in the Colorado River Basin  |   |
| Colorado Basin Implementation Plan (BIP)   |   |
| CWCB Colorado Water Plan   |   |
| BOR Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program  |   |
| One Grand Junction – City of Grand Junction Master Plan  |   |
| City of Grand Junction Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space  |   |
| City of Fruita Strategic Plan  |   |

Here is a link to a folder where these documents are being downloaded and gathered for when the Project Team is ready to begin researching them to help build the Watershed Management Matrix: [Link to Resources Folder](#)



## E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities

### E.1.4.1. Climate Change

Western Colorado has already experienced significant warming and reduced stream flows due to climate change ([reference](#)). The GVW definitely feels the impacts of climate change. In addition to reduced streamflows, residents have witnessed heavy snows in October causing massive damage to trees, earlier than normal spring warming followed by frosts that damaged trees and reduced production, and longer than “normal” hot, dry spells in the summers without the typical “monsoon” season.

**Please provide specific details and examples on how the project will address the impacts of climate change and help combat the climate crisis.** The activities proposed in this project will help stretch water supplies reduced by climate change. Ditch piping projects will reduce losses from both seepage and evaporation, and landowners will be educated to be more efficient in their water use, leaving less water standing in fields and lawns and to choose less thirsty landscaping plants that can better handle hotter conditions. In addition, projects that promote soil health will enhance carbon storage in the ground ([reference](#)).

**Does this proposed project strengthen water supply sustainability to increase resilience to climate change?** Yes, activities outlined in this project will pull from the existing Colorado Basin Roundtable 2022 Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) ([reference](#)) and serve as a basis for water supply planning in the GVW. In accordance with this plan and with input from the GVS (regional experts and land and water managers in the Grand Valley prior to the formation of the Grand Valley Water Committee) key issues related to drought, increasing climate and water temperatures, and wildfire prevention and impacts were also integrated into the 2022 Watershed Restoration Plan ([link to Plan](#)).

**Does the proposed project contribute to climate change resiliency in other ways not described above?** This Project will reduce climate pollution; increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and drought, protect public health, and conserve our lands, waters, oceans, and biodiversity; specifically: combat the climate crisis as described in E.O. 14008, by adhering to the guidance provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s (CWCB) Colorado Water Plan, CWCB’s 2019 Technical Update, and the Colorado Basin Roundtable’s Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). These documents address the impacts of climate change and outline a framework for Colorado’s communities to integrate resilience strategies into their respective planning efforts.

### E.1.4.2. Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities

[Using the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#), two tracts within the proposed watershed boundaries are classified as disadvantaged and/or underserved. The GVWC intends to prioritize projects that impact water quality and stand to improve public health and safety by addressing water quality. Both tracts identified as disadvantaged and underserved are considered at low income or poverty

level with unemployment and high housing costs endemic. Projects undertaken by GVWC will ensure these residents maintain access to clean drinking water, improve water efficiency to reduce monthly water costs (or prevent rising water bills). The local NRCS office supports disadvantaged and historically underserved with the following under contract: 35-40% Beginning Rancher/Farmer, 5-10% Socially Disadvantaged, 2 Limited Resource, roughly 20% of Beginning Farmer/Ranchers are Veterans.

#### *Tribal Benefits*

There are no Tribes currently represented within the Grand Valley Watershed and therefore this project has no direct benefit to any Tribe. The project does not support Reclamation's Tribal trust responsibilities or a Reclamation activity with a Tribe. Indirectly, however, anything done to improve the quality of the water entering the Colorado River stands to benefit all downstream users, including any Tribes receiving water from the Colorado River. If the Grand Valley can become more efficient water users, the possibility exists for more water to be available downstream which could also have potential benefits to Tribes.

## PROJECT BUDGET

*Table 5.—Summary of Non-Federal Funding Sources*

| FUNDING SOURCES   | AMOUNT           |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Non-Federal Entities</b>   |                  |
| 1. <b>*In-kind Contribution:</b> GVWC Members participation in meetings | \$61,200         |
| <b>Non-Federal Subtotal</b>   | \$61,200         |
| <b>REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING</b>                                    | <b>\$300,000</b> |

#### Budget Narrative

For in-depth discussion of the Budget Narrative, please refer to Attachment B - Budget Detail and Narrative.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE

**Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment? 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.** This Project will not impact the surrounding environment and will not engage in any earth disturbing, measurement, monitoring or field work that would adversely affect air, water quality or quantity or animal habitat. One of GVWC's goals is to thoughtfully design projects to not only minimize impacts, but enhance the positive impact of said projects.



**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?** There are four species of endangered fish that live in the stretch of Colorado River known as the 15-mile Reach that is included in this project scope: the razorback sucker, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, and bonytail chub. The project area also includes critical nesting and breeding habitat for the yellow-billed cuckoo. Approximately 3,100 acres of land along the Colorado River within and near Grand Junction, Colorado were identified as critical habitat. None of GVWC's proposed activities would adversely impact these species or their critical habitat.

**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.** There are critical wetland habitats within the project boundaries that could potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as "Waters of the United States", however, this Project will not involve earth disturbing work, measurement, monitoring or fieldwork and therefore will not impact "Waters of the United States".

**When was the water delivery system constructed?** Grand Valley Water Users Association went online when the Roller Dam was completed in 1913.

**Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system?** This project will not directly modify or affect any physical infrastructure features. This project may result in engineering designs that include modifications to irrigation features, but no construction activities will be funded by this grant.

**Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?** There is one structure in the irrigation district listed on the National Register of Historic Places: The Grand Valley Diversion Dam in Palisade, however, it will not be impacted by any of the project activities. The Grand Valley Power Plant on OMID's lot is a historic structure, as is the Roller Dam and every single ditch rider house in the 55 mile section of GVVUA. The Stub Pump house is a historic structure, too. Everything we do has to go through a cultural survey.

**Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?** There are no known archeological sites in the proposed project area.

**Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?** The proposed project will not have an adverse impact 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?** The proposed project will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or any other impacts on Tribal lands.

**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?** The proposed project will address the current presence of noxious and invasive weeds and result in prescriptions for managing and reducing them for habitat improvement purposes. Efforts to manage tamarisk and other secondary weeds have been ongoing since 2006. A key objective of this planning process is to pinpoint areas where this type of restoration should continue based on hydrologic conditions and land use plans for the river corridor.

### **REQUIRED PERMITS OR APPROVALS**

No permits or approvals are required for the proposed activities.

### **OVERLAP OR DUPLICATION OF EFFORT STATEMENT**

GVWC recognizes that stakeholder and partner organizations are pursuing efforts that could overlap with this project, however these concurrent and contiguous efforts are not duplicative and will serve the efficient implementation of this project. In addition, GVWC is unaware of any requests that will accomplish the same outcomes of this Project at this time.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

No actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of grant submission.

### **UNIFORM AUDIT REPORTING STATEMENT**

MCD was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year.

### **SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if Applicable)**

I, Andrea Datz, serving as GVWC's Authorized Official, certify that I have not made, and will not make any payment prohibited by CFR Part 18.

### **LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Letters of support from the following entities are included in Appendix/Attachment A:

1. GVWC Members
2. MCD Board Members
3. City of Fruita
4. Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy
5. Colorado Cattlemen's Association and Co. Ag Water Alliance
6. CSU Western Colorado Research Center
7. John Winder PhD
8. Kirsten Kurath
9. River's Edge West
10. Summer Hill HOA

11. Alexander Ditch Company
12. Ute Water Conservancy District
13. American Rivers

Other: Letter of “District in good standing” Colorado State Conservation Board

#### **OFFICIAL RESOLUTION**

MCD Official Resolution included in Appendix/Attachment B

#### **UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER:**

Mesa Conservation District maintains current registration with SAM.gov and our UEI is:  
9677171200000

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

### **Letters of Support**

Attachments below include letters of support as listed above.

### **Official Resolution**

Attached below is an Official Resolution from the Mesa Conservation District Board of Supervisors in support of this application.

### **Other**

Letter of “District in Good Standing” from Colorado State Conservation Board for Mesa Conservation District

E-signature verification from DocuSign is available upon request.

# Grand Valley Water Committee

2738 Crossroads Blvd

Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

Date: November 28, 2023

To: Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

The stakeholder members of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) stand behind Mesa Conservation Districts (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. The stakeholders believe in the value of bringing together our diverse membership to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow.

We, the below signed stakeholders, support the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including capacity building, by contributing to fund MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. We stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and the stakeholders signing here believe the Conservation District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.



We, the stakeholder members of GVWC support this effort and commit to participate through committee membership, collaboration and partnership.

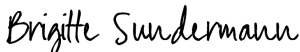
We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely, the current members of the Grand Valley Water Committee:

DocuSigned by:  
  
262E22DE0B03428...

Horticulture Specialist

CSU Extension

DocuSigned by:  
  
FC46234971D5486...


VP Tech Ed & Workforce Development

CMU Tech

DocuSigned by:  
  
8D176EE45FCB44E...


Interim Director, Hutchins Water Center at CMU

Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative Member

DocuSigned by:  
  
AE6C3523B6124D3...


Director of Science and Interstate Matters

Colorado River Water Conservation District

DocuSigned by:  
  
A79336CF6429443...

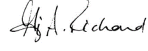
Utilities Director

City of Grand Junction

DocuSigned by:  
  
77F0B0BB1DD94E7...

Senior Engineer

SGM, Inc.

DocuSigned by:  
  
829DDC15672C48E...

Director

CSU Western Colorado Research Center

DocuSigned by:

*Shannon Wadas*

7FDC7E13A1F14A2...

Associate Director

RiversEdge West

DocuSigned by:

*Ty Jones*

C8EE4195A559496...

District Manager

Clifton Water District

DocuSigned by:

*Tina Bergonzini*

D8F87EADC6D942A...

General Manager

Grand valley Water Users Association

DocuSigned by:

*Scott Mai*

2DE393F188E449F...

Public Works Director

Mesa County



Mesa Conservation District  
2738 Crossroads Blvd  
Grand Junction, CO 81506

### Official Board Resolution

During a regular meeting of Mesa Conservation District (MCD) Board of Supervisors on July 10, 2023, the following resolution pertaining to a grant application to the Bureau of Reclamation was proposed and approved by the Board of Directors:

WHEREAS the mission of MCD is to to support leadership, expertise, funding, and education that bring together the diverse interests in our watershed to enhance, protect and conserve our priceless natural resources toward a vibrant, abundant future for our entire community;

WHEREAS the proposed activities in the prepared application support the mission of MCD;

WHEREAS MCD has the staff capacity and support from its Board and partners to perform the direct and indirect tasks proposed in this application;

Be it resolved:

1. That the MCD Board of Supervisors is in full support of the funding application, "Grand Valley Water Committee: Build Capacity and Outreach, Development of Watershed Management Matrix, Locate and Develop Priority Watershed Projects" to the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program, Phase I, a program of the Bureau of Reclamation;
2. That MCD District Manager, Andrea Datz, is authorized to submit this application, via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), on behalf of MCD; and
3. That MCD Board and staff will work with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet all established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement and necessary for the completion of proposed activities.

Signed and Dated:

DocuSigned by:

*Albert Ruckman*

11/29/2023

Albert Ruckman  
2023 Board President



325 E Aspen  
Suite 155  
Fruita CO 81521

Phone:  
970-858-3663

Fax:  
970-858-0210

E Mail  
fruita@fruita.org

Web Site  
fruita.org

City Manager's Office  
970-858-3663

City Clerk/Finance  
970-858-3663

Community  
Development  
970-858-0786

Engineering  
970-858-8377

Human Resources  
970-858-8373

Public Works  
970-858-9558

Recreation Dept.  
970-858-0360

Wastewater Treatment  
Facility  
970-858-4081

November 22, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

The City of Fruita stands behind Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. The City of Fruita believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow.

The City of Fruita supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group including capacity building. This includes coordinating and facilitating meetings, conducting outreach, and gathering data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. These stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase

*Honor the Past – Envision the Future* **FRUITA**

1, 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and believes the Conservation District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.

The City of Fruita supports this effort because it is important to bring together stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on the various watershed issues that face our communities and agencies.

We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Bennett", written over a horizontal line.

Michael Bennett  
Fruita City Manger





November 30, 2023

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Mesa Conservation District Application - WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

On behalf of the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, representing the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD.

As part of our broader missions to improve quality of life through sustainable land use and water management, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and its Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, in partnership with Arizona State University, launched the *Planning for Water Resilient Agriculture Project* to help rural western communities tackle complex water issues and areas of uncertainty through a unique exploratory planning process (XSP). Our first pilot XSP workshop was held in March 2023 in Mesa County in partnership with the Mesa Conservation District to examine challenges and opportunities affecting water and agriculture in the region and to map out strategies to address resiliency for a range of possible futures. The GVWC was established through this collaborative engagement process and the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders who had been working toward this end for a year recognizing opportunities for successful watershed projects would be better achieved through collaboration rather than in siloed efforts.

The Babbitt Center can attest that MCD is a strong partner and is well positioned to take the lead as the fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. We have been enthusiastic about working with MCD as the lead convener of the XSP workshops in Mesa County. They jumpstarted the effort to build the GVWC watershed coalition, which officially formalized in August 2023, and in collaboration with a diverse bench of partners, continue to facilitate and lead post-XSP workshop implementation efforts that include conducting focused research and coordinating support for short and long-term watershed projects. MCD is a strong local capacity builder as evidenced by their ability to coordinate and bring diverse stakeholders together through numerous, well attended strategic planning sessions that are designed to support a sustainable future for the Grand Valley region.

The Babbitt Center provided a small amount of funding to MCD to support early coordination of post-XSP workshop implementation which helped the initial organization of the GVWC watershed coalition. This WaterSmart grant funding will be a valuable lever that will allow them to continue and build momentum for ongoing development of the GVWC program of work and will have direct impact on its progress by contributing the necessary funding to maintain and increase the diversity and function of



the group, to build capacity by supporting MCD staff who will coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across multiple water resource management planning efforts. Potential projects include facilitating outreach and education; advancing innovation among agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities to incorporate nature-based solutions, water conservation and efficiency; upgrading aging water delivery systems; and improving water quality and availability.

The Babbitt Center will continue to offer knowledge resources and expertise to support MCD's coordination of the region's watershed implementation efforts as we believe in the value of projects that help groups ensure water resources meet the demands of both people and nature to simultaneously support prosperous communities and healthy watersheds.

I strongly urge you to support approval of this grant request that will help the Grand Valley region leverage strategic opportunities to shape a secure water future for their watershed.

Sincerely,



Kristen Keener Busby, AICP  
Associate Director for Practice and Partnerships  
The Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a center of  
The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy  
[kbusby@lincolninst.edu](mailto:kbusby@lincolninst.edu)





7000 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Lakewood, CO 80214  
303.431.6422  
[info@coloradocattle.org](mailto:info@coloradocattle.org)  
[www.coloradocattle.org](http://www.coloradocattle.org)

November 10, 2023

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

Colorado Cattlemen's Association's (CCA) Ag Water NetWORK supports Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. The watershed planning process brings together diverse stakeholders, including agricultural voices, to provide guidance and focus on areas of need and assist stakeholders in addressing challenges within the watershed.

Agricultural production is a vital part of the Grand Valley watershed. CCA's Ag Water NetWORK supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to build capacity, coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach, and gather data from stakeholders - especially agricultural producers - to guide strategic planning and identify demonstration projects that advance stakeholder-identified goals.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders, recognizing the challenges of getting projects done through siloed efforts. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as a fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 grant opportunity. Throughout 2023, MCD conducted research and hosted various well-attended strategic planning sessions that identified interest in forming a watershed group under the umbrella of the MCD. Mesa Conservation District officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and is well-positioned to lead the watershed planning and implementation effort.

CCA supports the approval of the Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant request.

Sincerely,

Colorado Cattlemen's Association  
Executive Vice President



**WESTERN COLORADO  
RESEARCH CENTER**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**Western Colorado Research Center**  
**3170 B ½ Road**  
**Grand Junction, CO 81503**  
**(970) 434-3264**

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

Colorado State University's Western Colorado Research Center (CSU WCRC) stands behind Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. CSU WCRC believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow.

CSU WCRC is an agricultural research center in Colorado's Agricultural Experiment Station, with a mission to support the agricultural community of western Colorado. Our mission includes supporting climate and water-smart agricultural practices and one of our research farms focuses on water resources. We look forward to participating in the Grand Valley Water Committee to fulfill our mission to work toward solutions to our water-related challenges in agriculture and the Colorado River Basin and to support drought resilience of the Grand Valley.

Agricultural water use is a major driver in the water systems of the Grand Valley and WCRC can play a valuable role contributing to the CWMP development process. We will provide expertise related to both water and agriculture to support the GVWC and the watershed planning efforts. We can contribute capacity to support community meetings, outreach, and education. Additionally, our participation on the committee can inform and enhance our research decisions to best support the needs of the agricultural community in the Grand Valley.

WCRC supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including providing support to MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our

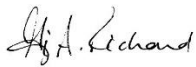
agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. These stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and CSU WCRC believes the Conservation District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.

The WCRC is currently collaborating with the MCD to offer a Master Irrigator's program for agricultural community in the Mesa Conservation District. The program will build a community of ag producers who share and learn from each other to support more efficient irrigation practices and enhance the drought resilience of their farms. We have a strong relationship with MCD and look forward to continuing to collaborate and support each other's efforts.

We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gigi A. Richard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gigi" being more prominent.

Gigi A. Richard, Ph.D.  
Director, Western Colorado Research Center  
Colorado State University



**John A. Winder, PhD**  
**874 Summer Bend Court**  
**Grand Junction, CO 81506**

November 15, 2023

US Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

I strongly support Mesa Conservation District's application for a Phase I Grant from the Cooperative Watershed Management Program. The grant will pave the way for individuals with diverse knowledge and backgrounds to collaborate under the auspices of the Grand Valley Water Committee.

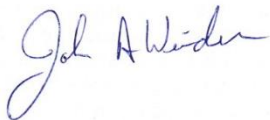
As a former Associate Dean for Extension at Washington State University and member of the Washington State Conservation Commission, I have personally interacted with Conservation Districts throughout the West, and I recognize their strength in bringing people together to forge solutions to complex environmental and economic issues. I have been especially impressed by the work that is being done by the Mesa Conservation District to bring agriculture, urban governments, NGOs, higher education, the private sector, and many other stakeholders to the table to get the job done. There is a passion for addressing watershed issues in the Grand Valley, and future

collaborations fostered by the work of the Grand Valley Watershed Committee will be front and center in this endeavor.

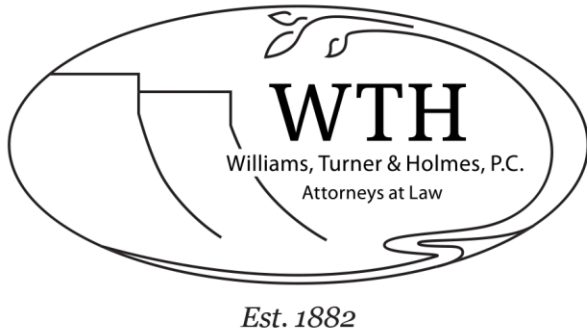
Issues related to watershed health are complex. Solutions not only require application of appropriate technologies but also require the ability to gain alliances and consensus among individuals with different backgrounds. When properly harnessed this diversity creates powerful organizations capable of seeing opportunities that were not visible to individuals residing in their respective silos. I truly believe that the Grand Valley Water Committee represents the diversity of thought and technical expertise necessary to forge a brighter future for the watersheds of Western Colorado. And I am sure that the Mesa Conservation District possesses the unique ability to culture this collaboration.

The future of communities in the Western US is dependent on the presence of healthy and productive watersheds. There is hard work to be done, and your support will help our communities become more resilient in the face of the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John A. Winder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John A. Winder.



**Williams, Turner & Holmes, P.C.**

858 Grand Avenue, Suite 1  
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501

**KIRSTEN M. KURATH**

Shareholder  
kmkurath@wth-law.com  
970-242-6262, Ext. 236

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December 1, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) Application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 Grant

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

As a local water attorney in Grand Junction, I work with several irrigation water providers, domestic water providers, ranchers, individuals, environmental organizations, and educational organizations in Mesa County who rely on the Colorado River and/or Gunnison River, who are involved in protecting these rivers or who are educating others about the importance of these rivers to our community. I support the efforts of MCD and the Grand Valley Water Committee in developing a cooperative watershed management program to benefit our multi-use community. I strongly urge the approval of MCD's grant request.

Sincerely,

WILLIAMS, TURNER & HOLMES, P.C.

*/s/ Kirsten M. Kurath*

Kirsten M. Kurath



November 28, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

RiversEdge West is writing this letter in support of Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. RiversEdge West believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate. This is a centerpiece of RiversEdge West's organizational mission towards restoring riparian ecosystems through education, collaboration and technical assistance.

RiversEdge West understands the importance and complexity of maintaining a successful stakeholder group and is therefore supportive of the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including capacity building to fund MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing watershed plans and resource management.

In addition, RiversEdge is co-leading a Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative (RCI) to address the acute need for land use planning along the Gunnison and Colorado rivers in Mesa and Delta Counties. This initiative complements and enhances the work of the GVWC. RiversEdge West has committed to participating on the GVWC and MCD has committed to participating on the RCI Advisory Committee as both initiatives are unique in their approach and goals, while also being complimentary from a wider, watershed perspective.

RiversEdge believes the Conservation District is well positioned to lead the GVWC and to strategically move forward with a WaterSMART Phase I grant and we strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Shannon Wadas  
Associate Director  
Rivers Edge West  
[swadas@riversedgewest.org](mailto:swadas@riversedgewest.org)  
970-256-7400

FEIN 27-0007315

[www.RiversEdgeWest.org](http://www.RiversEdgeWest.org)

P.O. Box 1907 | Grand Junction, CO 81502

Advancing the restoration of riparian lands through collaboration, education, and technical assistance.



November 15, 2023

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

**Summer Hill HOA Board of Directors**, Grand Junction, Colorado, as representatives of the HOA membership, stands behind Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. Ute Water believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow with water consumption, waste, and soil impact increasing.

**Summer Hill HOA** supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including capacity building by contributing to fund MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. These stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and **Summer Hill HOA Board of Directors** believes the Conservation District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.





**Summer Hill HOA Board of Directors** is responsible for a community of 198 individual homes with a diverse landscape including native grasses, lawn/turf, mature and new trees, 4 ponds, and 4 creeks fed from the Grand Valley Canal. We therefore support this effort and commit to participate through ongoing meetings with Mesa Conservation and NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service in conjunction with our local governmental agencies to investigate the possibilities and opportunities available.

Our aligned objectives are to maximize the community use and conservation of all available, and certainly precious, soil and water resources. With Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) at the forefront of this endeavor, we are eager to demonstrate what a committed community, with help from a resource like MCD, can accomplish.

We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.  
Sincerely,

Summer Hill HOA  
Board of Directors

Ms. Lizabeth R. Beerman  
Mrs. Kathy Moran  
Mrs. Jean Gauley  
Mr. Ken Stephenson

# Alexander Ditch Co., Inc.

P.O. Box 368  
Fruita, CO 81521-0368

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

The Alexander Ditch Company (ADC) stands behind Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. ADC believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow.

ADC supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including capacity building by contributing to fund MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

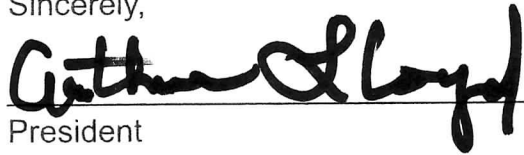
The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. These stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially

adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and ADC believes the Conservation District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.

The board of the Alexander Ditch Company supports this effort. Alexander Ditch Company consists of 110 property owners and growing. Coordinating our efforts to pipe our failing concrete lined ditches could not be done without the technical support and financial assistance the Grand Valley Water Committee provides. The Alexander Ditch Company commits to participate by actively working with GVWC to get help piping our lateral, and hope our project becomes an example of best practices GVWC can use to help other small laterals with piping, water sharing agreements, incorporation and education.

We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur O. Lloyd", written over a horizontal line.

President

Date: November 8, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225



Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

Ute Water Conservancy District stands behind Mesa Conservation District's (MCD) application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC). The GVWC is a recently formed watershed group acting as a permanent Standing Committee of MCD. Ute Water believes in the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in the face of a changing climate that is predicted to be hotter and drier, while our population continues to grow.

Ute Water supports the ongoing development of the GVWC to maintain and increase the diversity and function of the group, including capacity building by contributing to fund MCD staff to coordinate and facilitate meetings, conduct outreach and gather data to guide GVWC strategic planning sessions, and other steps necessary to aid in prioritizing projects and coordinating efforts across the multiple existing long range and watershed plans covering different aspects of water resource management in our area. Potential project types include upgrading aging water delivery systems, supporting education and innovation among our agricultural producers, homeowners, and municipalities that incorporate habitat enhancement and water efficiency; and improving water quality and availability for our multi-use community.

The GVWC was born out of the interest of more than 80 diverse stakeholders recognizing the challenges to getting projects done through siloed efforts. These stakeholders have been working together for several years toward this end. MCD was approached late in 2022 to act as fiscal agent and applicant for the CWMP Phase 1 2023 Grant opportunity. Throughout 2023 MCD conducted research and hosted a variety of well attended strategic planning sessions that provide a natural segue and the necessary relationships to form a watershed group governed by MCD. MCD officially adopted the formation of the GVWC in August 2023 and Ute Water believes this Special District is well positioned to take the lead on this endeavor.

Ute Water Conservancy District supports this effort in protecting water quality and quantity in the Grand Valley and commits to participate through project funding and involvement. We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Dave Payne, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a cursive 'Payne'.

Dave Payne  
Assistant General Manager



December 3, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

I am writing to express the support of the American Rivers Southwest Region team for the Mesa Conservation District's application for a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant, on behalf of the Grand Valley Water Committee.

The American Rivers Southwest team endorses the Grand Valley Water Committee's mission to bring together diverse stakeholders to cooperate and collaborate on projects that enhance the capacity of our regional watersheds to be resilient in a hotter and drier future. This mission is strongly aligned with our team's desire to drive solutions for rivers and communities' ability to heal and thrive in the face of climate change and human impacts.

I have been closely involved in the project of forming the Grand Valley Water Committee, and am committed to continuing to serve on the committee and help guide its work. In addition to representing American Rivers, I am also a member of the Mesa Conservation District board and on the core team directing the Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative, which has also committed to participating in the Committee's work. I strongly believe that the Grand Valley Water Committee, with the resources provided by this grant, will greatly enhance our community's ability to coordinate across disparate, more targeted projects to better steward and enhance the resilience of our watershed.

I strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hannah Holm", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Hannah Holm  
Associate Director for Policy, Southwest Region  
American Rivers  
Grand Junction, CO





**AGRICULTURAL  
EXPERIMENT STATION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

**WESTERN COLORADO RESEARCH CENTER – GRAND VALLEY**

1910 L Road  
Fruita, Colorado 81521

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support of Mesa Conservation District for the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant. The Grand Valley Water Committee (GVWC) outlined in the proposal addresses critical water management challenges facing our region, and its implementation would undoubtedly contribute to sustainable water use and conservation efforts.

The Mesa Conservation District's initiative aligns perfectly with the goals and objectives set forth by the US Bureau of Reclamation. By fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders within the watershed, GVWC aims to enhance the overall efficiency of water resource management. This coordinated approach is vital for addressing the complexities of water allocation, quality, and conservation in the western Colorado region. As a dedicated advocate for environmental stewardship and sustainable water practices, I firmly believe that supporting this project is an investment in the long-term resilience of our local water resources. Mesa Conservation District has a history of successful resource conservation projects. Their expertise, coupled with the proposed GVWC, positions them as a reliable and effective partner for the US Bureau of Reclamation. I am confident that the implementation of this project will not only benefit Mesa County but also serve as a model for other regions facing similar water challenges. Please consider the immense value and impact that the GVWC would bring to the region and its stakeholders.

I look forward to witnessing the positive outcomes that this collaborative effort can achieve.

Sincerely,

Dr. Perry Cabot  
Extension Professor, Irrigation and Water Resources



## **Mesa Conservation District**

2738 Crossroads Blvd., Ste. 102  
Grand Junction, CO 81506

Date: November 28, 2023

To: Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:

The Board of Supervisors of Mesa Conservation District is honored to act as fiscal agent, applicant and host to the Grand Valley Water Committee. Formed as a permanent standing committee in August of 2023, the Grand Valley Water Committee brings together a growing collective of diverse stakeholders who hold a common vision of the necessity of collaboration in the stewardship of our water resources.

The opportunity to form a watershed group under the umbrella of the Conservation District is a new concept. Mesa Conservation District believes this is a unique and valuable opportunity for our District that gives us a purpose and role in the community we have not enjoyed before now. The stakeholders that form the GVWC have shown strong support for the strategic planning sessions we held in 2023, giving us confidence that they are as committed to this endeavor as we are!

Mesa Conservation District is prepared and committed to seeing this project through should GVWC receive this funding. We strongly support the continuing development and work of the GVWC and thank you for your consideration.

We strongly urge the approval of this grant request.

Signed below by the Board of Supervisors and staff of Mesa Conservation District:

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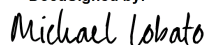
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11/29/2023

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Albert Ruckman - President  
Ruckman Family Orchards  
Orchard Mesa Irrigation District

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Michael Lobato - Vice President  
Lobato Family Farms  
Matrix Resource Technologies

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Judith DeVore - Secretary/Treasurer

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Hannah Holm - Board Supervisor  
American Rivers  
River Corridor Initiative

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Brian Adams - Board Supervisor  
Green Junction Farmstead

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Katie Radavich - Assoc. Board Supervisor  
KLJ Engineering

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Frank Nemanich - Assoc. Board Supervisor  
Clean Air for Colorado

DocuSigned by:



11/28/2023

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Holly Stanley - Asst. District Manager  
Environmental Scientist

DocuSigned by:



11/28/2023

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Andrea Datz - District Manager

September 13, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

Mesa Conservation District is a district in Good Standing under the Colorado State Conservation Board's requirements as of this day, September 13, 2023.

The Conservation District has adhered to the requirements as listed below:

Minimum Standards (a) - (g) were established by the State Conservation Board to certify districts' eligibility to receive State Grant Funds. These minimum standards are established as requirements in the Colorado Soil Conservation Act and completed in or for the current calendar year.

- Complete & submit Long Range Plan (CRS 35-70-108(1)(k))
- Complete & submit General Fund Budget (CRS 29-1-103(1))
- Complete & submit Audit or Exemption from Audit to State Auditor by statutory deadline (CRS 35-70-108(1)(l))
- Complete & submit Board of Supervisor List and Elections if applicable for calendar year (CRS 35-70-107(1)(a)(l))
- Have & use District Seal (CRS 35-70-108(1)(j))
- Complete & submit current District Bylaws (CRS 35-70-107(2))
- Provide the public with timely notice of meetings (CRS 24-6-402 (2) (c))

Nikki Brinson  
Colorado State Conservation Board  
District Operations Manager  
P 303.869.9041 | C 303.842.3108  
305 Interlocken Parkway, Broomfield, CO 80021Person



**Andrea Datz** 2073 I Road, Fruita, CO81521

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Date: 12/4/23

Bureau of Reclamation  
Cooperative Watershed Management Program  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear CWMP Grant Review Committee:


In February 2021 I attended my first meeting of Mesa Conservation District. At the time, I had no idea what a Conservation District was, or what purpose they served. That night the then Board of Supervisors was meeting to vote on dissolving Mesa CD and merging with Delta CD. By some miracle, enough people happened to attend that night that an entirely new Board was appointed that night, myself among them...

As a private landowner who has lived in the Grand Valley for more than 20 years, I have watched the effects of the changing climate impact my own 10 acre home. Where I used to easily maintain 5 acres of grazing land, now I can barely maintain 1 acre. I became interested in how I could rebuild the health of my own property and better manage the limited water resources available to me. That's what led me to that first meeting of MCD.

Joining MCD afforded me the opportunity to engage with the organizations and entities that are working tirelessly 'behind the scenes' to ensure that the residents of the Grand Valley have fresh, clean, abundant water, clean air, reliable local food access, and on and on..

For the past year, I have been involved in organizing and attending countless workshops and meetings, talking to the people who are now stakeholders in the GVWC, and I am so very impressed by their knowledge, their passion, and their commitment. From water delivery, to municipal management, to local farmers and ranchers, I can attest to the level of creativity, perseverance and dedication in this group.

I strongly recommend approval of this funding opportunity so that this group can be supported to do even more good work! I am honored to be a part of GVWC.



Andrea Datz  
District Manager for MCD and Coordinator for GVWC