Application to the U.S Bureau of Reclamation

Under funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362

WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed

Management Program Phase I for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Empowering Water Sustainability in the Sulphur Springs Valley

August 31, 2024

Applicant

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Executive Summary

August 31, 2024

The Sulphur Springs Water Alliance (SSWA), located in Cochise County, Arizona, is dedicated to addressing critical water resource challenges in the Sulphur Springs Valley, an area spanning 12 HUC10 watersheds within the San Pedro-Willcox and Rio De Bavispe watersheds. This region, known for its agricultural significance, faces severe groundwater depletion, earth fissures, and land subsidence, with residential wells running dry. The SSWA was formed by a consensus among local stakeholders, recognizing the urgent need for a collective approach to safeguard the valley's water resources. In collaboration with the Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD), SSWA will focus on restoring watershed health and promoting sustainable water use. Through the proposed three-year project, SSWA aims to formalize as a 501(c)(3) organization, develop a comprehensive watershed restoration plan, and implement water recharge and conservation projects, such as the Turkey Creek Bed Restoration Project. SSWA will also conduct extensive community outreach and educational initiatives, engaging local stakeholders, including agriculturalists and residents, to foster a collective effort in safeguarding the watershed. This project is expected to be completed by July 2028 and will significantly affect the impacts of water scarcity, ensuring the long-term viability of both the watershed and the communities that depend on it.

1 Project Location

The Sulphur Springs Valley is located in Cochise County, Arizona, surrounded by the Dragoon Mountains to the west and the Chiricahua Mountains to the east. Covering approximately 2,860 square miles, it's known for its agricultural significance, particularly in corn, cotton, alfalfa, chile seed, wine grapes, and pecan cultivation.

The Sulphur Sp`rings Water Alliance (SSWA) has selected a plan boundary based on the watersheds that overlap the Sulphur Springs Valley, spanning portions of Cochise and Graham counties. As shown in Figure 1, the SSWA planning boundary is composed of 12 HUC10 watersheds (reference Table 1) from portions of 2 HUC6 watersheds, the San Pedro-Willcox and Rio De Bavispe watersheds. Note, the portions of the Glance Creek-Whitewater Draw (1508030104) and Rio Anibacachi-Rio Agua Prieta (1508030110) within Mexico have been excluded from the plan boundary to simplify planning efforts. The map shows how the Sulphur Springs Valley is located over the Willcox and Douglas Groundwater Basins, with the surface and groundwater basins aligning well. Figure 1 also shows the major drainages in the plan boundary, with intermittent and perennial reaches shown in increasing bold, highlighting how little surface water is available in the region.

Table 1: HUC 10 Watersheds within SSWA Plan Boundary

HUC Code	Watershed Name
1505020101	Upper Ash Creek
1505020102	Grant Creek
1505020103	Lower Ash Creek
1505020104	Pinery Creek
1505020105	Turkey Creek
1505020106	Bar X Wash-Dry Lake
1505020107	Willcox Playa
1508030101	Ash Creek-Sulphur Springs Valley
1508030102	Headwaters Whitewater Draw
1508030103	Leslie Creek-Whitewater Draw
1508030104	Glance Creek-Whitewater Draw
1508030110	Rio Anibacachi-Rio Agua Prieta

2 Application Category

The Willcox-San Simon NRCD is sponsoring the development of the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance. SSWA is choosing to apply for this funding as a new watershed group located in Cochise County, Arizona. This is expanded upon in Section 3 Eligibility of Applicant

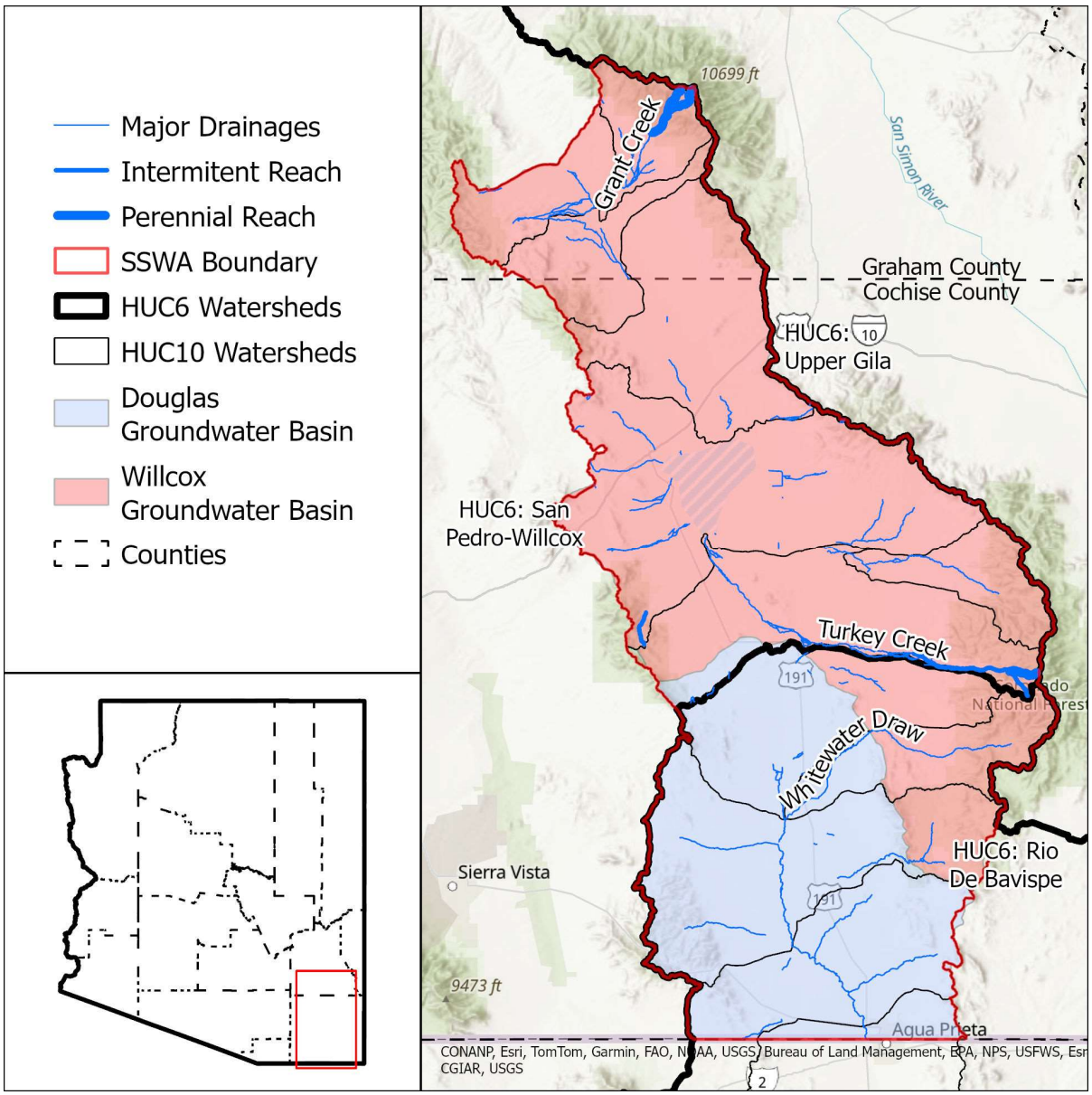

Figure 1: SSWA Planning Boundary

The SSWA began when local community members came to a consensus that the Sulphur Springs Valley was in dire need of developing groundwater solutions in order to sustain our groundwater basins. The region has been facing several critical issues: residential wells have run dry, with many residents unable to afford deeper drilling. Earth fissures have appeared, and in some areas, the ground subsided several inches. Outside of the Douglas Groundwater Basin which is in the process of forming an Active Management Area, regulations on well drilling and groundwater pumping are limited to registration when installing or deepening wells. Recent efforts to

establish an Active Management Area for the Willcox Basin were not successful. Many attributed this failure to a lack of local input to this management structure.

With the invaluable assistance from the Lincoln Institute and Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy and the Arizona Water Innovation Initiative at Arizona State University, a group of engaged stakeholders gained momentum for alternative planning and management strategies. Recognizing the importance of a collective approach, a 2-day planning workshop was organized in 2023, which brought together over 45 local residents and experts. During these intensive sessions, participants collaborated to brainstorm and develop over 50 innovative strategies aimed at water management, economic development, and enhancing community resilience.

The workshop was a melting pot of ideas and perspectives, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among attendees. The participants included agriculturalists, residential domestic water users, business owners, natural resource stewards, and government officials, ensuring a comprehensive approach to tackling our water challenges. We agreed the most crucial strategy was the formation of a community stakeholder partnership, which would ensure ongoing collaboration and effective implementation of the proposed solutions.

As a key outcome from this workshop and strategy development, the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance (SSWA) was established. Since its inception, SSWA has been growing steadily, continually expanding its reach and impact. The partnership has since become a cornerstone of our community's efforts to safeguard our groundwater resources and promote sustainable development. During our strategic planning session SSWA created three subcommittees to help further the goals developed from the workshop. These goals will be met by addressing 50 strategies. The overarching themes for these strategies focused around recharge and reduction, education and adaptation, and community representation.

Our Economics, Planning & Management subcommittee's strategy is to connect local representatives, communities, and professionals directly with state and local officials, fostering a more inclusive and transparent dialogue. Within this framework, they play a pivotal role in orchestrating strategic initiatives to navigate the political landscape.

Next, our Water Conservation and Sustainable Ag Subcommittee focuses on water recharge initiatives. Leveraging resources from the Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD), our efforts concentrate on evaluating and enhancing existing practices. Engaging in state and local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) technical meetings further fortifies our commitment to sustainable water management practices. These collaborative strategies ensure the longevity and vitality of our water resources and agricultural landscapes. Currently this subcommittee is working on the Turkey Creek Bed Restoration Project. This project will restore damaged areas to Turkey Creek and will increase water recharge.

Finally, our Education and Community Subcommittee has a collective mission to educate and inform our residents. Through comprehensive education and outreach initiatives, we aim to empower our community with knowledge and understanding. This entails supporting and expanding programs such as the Future Farmers of America (FFA), engaging with academic institutions like the University of Arizona and Arizona State University, and fostering

mentorship opportunities to equip young individuals with essential skills and insights. Collaboration with organizations like the Farm Bureau and direct outreach to farms further amplify our educational efforts. This subcommittee has already hosted a table at the Willcox Steamfest partnering with ASU to spread the word about SSWA's efforts and gathering information from attendees about their opinions on rural water. In addition we have hosted a public theater screening of our SSWA documentary video and hosted a live Q&A session at the end.

Collectively SSWA's vision is a vibrant local economy that operates with consideration of the valley's natural resources, maintains its rich agricultural heritage and community, and avoids unnecessary damage to its wildlife and scenic landscapes. The SSWA's mission is to foster effective management and conservation of water resources through partnership and collaboration.

3 Eligibility of Applicant

The Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) is a conservation district located in Southern Arizona and is the applicant. The Willcox-San Simon NRCD is sponsoring this application for the purpose of developing SSWA into a New Watershed Group. The primary source of water in the Sulphur Springs Valley is groundwater and currently more water is being used than is being recharged in the basin. The SSWA's ability to promote the sustainable use of water resources is covered in Section 2.

Water scarcity significantly affects the Willcox-San Simon NRCD. The NRCD includes within its bounds diverse landscapes, including mountainous regions and flat, open, arid to semi-arid rangelands (Willcox-San Simon NRCD, 2023). Livestock and wine grapes are raised within these rangelands. The Arid nature of the region naturally comes with water scarcity. Additionally the region has experienced a greater-than-average drought frequency across the most recent two decades (Willcox-San Simon NRCD, 2023). This has caused additional strain on the District's water resources. This strain impacts the agricultural producers, stressing their ability to produce, potentially impacting the economic viability of these operations.

The NRCD is capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources through its deep experience, the support it receives through the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts, and its proven ability to secure grant funding. The NRCD is a member of the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts. The Arizona Conservation Districts have more than 80 years of experience managing natural resources. Conservation districts are in a position to guide policy and align goals with producers, land managers, and landowners. The NRCD connects these groups of people and helps promote sustainable resource management. In March 2024, the NRCD secured a $5,000 grant (with matching funds from AACD) to support cultural resource surveys for Tribal lands (Willcox-San Simon NRCD, 2023). They have also recently been awarded a WIFA grant in 2024 to aid in funding for the Turkey Creek Bed Restoration Project. Through its long history in the state, network of stakeholders, and history of projects, the NRCD has demonstrated an ability to promote the sustainable use of water resources.

4 Project Description

The goals for this project are to (Task A) continue the development of the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance as a Watershed Group, and (Task B) create a Watershed Restoration Plan.

As part of Task A, the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance will host an initial group development workshop with its stakeholders. The workshop will include a series of goals:

Kickoff Pre-Planning for the Watershed Assessment: The workshop will lay the groundwork for the watershed assessment by bringing together key stakeholders to discuss preliminary plans, identify critical areas of concern, and outline the scope of the assessment.

- **Finalize Organizational Structure**: This will include finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Articles of Incorporation, and other essential legal and organizational documents. A key outcome will be the formalization of the SSWA as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- **Team Building**: To ensure cohesive collaboration, the workshop will include team-building exercises aimed at fostering trust and cooperation among the diverse group of stakeholders.

Beyond this initial workshop, SSWA will organize a series of follow-up workshops to support the ongoing planning, writing, and implementation of the Watershed Restoration Plan. These workshops will:

- **Collaborate with Community and Alliance Partners**: We will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including local residents, agricultural producers, and local officials, to ensure that the plan reflects the needs and values of the community.
- **Develop Informational Materials**: Educational outreach will be a critical component, with materials designed to inform and engage on the importance of watershed management.

In addition we will participate in community events and advance group development and stakeholder outreach. By being actively present in the community, we aim to raise awareness about the importance of watershed restoration and foster a sense of ownership among local stakeholders. The SSWA will work to expand its membership, strengthen the connections with our community, and continue to build a robust network of engaged stakeholders.

Task B involves the development of a Watershed Restoration Plan. This plan will be a detailed roadmap for preserving and restoring the Sulphur Springs watershed. Key activities include:

- **Completing the Comprehensive Watershed Restoration Plan**: The plan will be based on data gathered through assessments, input from stakeholders, and best practices in watershed management.

- **Planning and Prioritizing Watershed Management Projects**: Once the plan is in place, the SSWA will identify and prioritize a specific project that will have the greatest impact on watershed health. This project will be aligned with the community's goals and the overall vision for the watershed.

We have hired a Watershed Coordinator to manage this process. The coordinator will play a central role in overseeing all aspects of the project, ensuring that tasks are completed and on time. They will work closely with facilitators, stakeholders, volunteers and various committees to guide the project through its stages. The Chair, Vice Chairs and members will provide oversight and strategic direction, ensuring that the work remains aligned with the community's vision. The Watershed Coordinator will be supported by outside contractors (e.g., facilitators, designers, interns).

This project is crucial for the valley because it aims to protect and restore the health of the Sulphur Springs watershed, a vital resource for the community. By continuing to develop the SSWA and creating a watershed restoration plan, we are not only preserving the environment but also empowering local stakeholders, both in agriculture and the broader community, to take an active role in managing their natural resources. Over the next three years, through workshops, outreach, and education, we will build a strong, informed community capable of making decisions that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the watershed.

5 Evaluation Criteria

5.1 Criteria A – Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope

5.1.1 Sub-Criteria A.1 – Watershed Group Diversity

As described in Section 2, SSWA's formation fulfilled the highest priority strategy identified during the 2023 watershed planning workshop. Participants in the workshop and the SSWA are listed in Table 2. These interests are expected to continue participation through the duration of the project.

Table 2: 2023 Watershed Planning Workshop and SSWA Participants

Interest Represented	**Organizations**
Businesses	Feed Store, Realtors, Chamber of Commerce, Construction, Business Development Centers
County Government	Cochise County Environmental Projects, County Supervisor, Planning & Zoning, Development Services
Education	School Board Members
Non-Government Organizations	Environmental Scientists, Cuenca Los Ojos, Water Defenders, Arizona Land and Water Trust
Irrigated Agriculture	Small Farms, Farm Bureau, Large Farms, Tree Nut Farms, Vineyards, Orchards

Interest Represented	Organizations
Local Government	City of Willcox, City of Douglas
Water Suppliers	McNeal Water Company, Elfrida Water District
Private Property Owners	
Ranches	Sierra Bonita Ranch, YY Ranch, White Water Draw NRCD, Willcox-San Simon NRCD
Thermoelectric Providers	SSVEC, Sulphur Springs Electric Coop., Arizona Electric Power Co-op

As shown in Table 2, the previous workshop and participants in the SSWA represent diverse interests, including livestock grazing, land development, tourism, irrigated agriculture, environmental organizations, local and county governments, water supplies, private property owners, and representatives from disadvantaged communities. As part of group development efforts, the Watershed Coordinator will conduct outreach to include stakeholders from state agencies (e.g., Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Game and Fish Department), federal agencies (e.g., United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management), and recreation groups to ensure the diverse range of interests in the watershed are represented in our group. Outreach activities are detailed in Section 5.3. Note, there are no known hydroelectric producers, timber production, or Tribal lands in the plan boundary.

The SSWA plans to be a membership organization, with members referred to as Partners. The SSWA is composed of a Chair, two Vice Chairs, and Partners. Decisions are typically made on a consensus basis of all Partners. If Partners are unable to arrive at consensus, the Chair and Vice Chairs of the SSWA will vote to make a decision. The Chair and two Vice Chairs are voluntary positions, with final approval by the Partners. One Vice Chair will each come from the Willcox and Douglas Groundwater Basins, reference Map 1. Vice Chairs fill in on behalf of the Chair if the Chair is not available. Every two years, the Chair will be replaced by a Vice Chair, and that newly vacated Vice Chair will be filled by another Partner. If there are no volunteers, the vacancy will be filled by a randomly selected Partner. Partners will suggest prospective Partners to the Chairs for approval. Prospective Partners will then attend a few meetings and decide if they want to apply for Partnership in the organization. Partners will have to sign our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and join one of our three subcommittees to best address their needs.

Our MOU is under development and documents this preliminary organization and decision making structure. The draft MOU documents many other key organizational aspects, including the mission statement:

> The SSWA's vision is a vibrant local economy that operates with consideration of the valley's natural resources, maintains its rich agricultural heritage and community, and avoids unnecessary damage to its wildlife and scenic landscapes. The SSWA's mission is to foster effective management and conservation of water resources through partnership and collaboration.

The MOU also documents our goals:

1. Recharge and Reduction: The only way to address the imbalance in the valley's water budget is to increase supplies and reduce demand.
2. Education and Adaptation: We will seek out and share knowledge about the valley's water resources, communities' difficulties, and all opportunities to maximize the value of each gallon of water.
3. Commitment and Representation: Responsible stewardship is an ongoing process which must represent the interests of all community members and future generations.

The MOU documents a cooperative, consensus-based focus for planning and work and includes provisions for a periodic review/update, approvals, and modifications.

5.1.2 Sub-Criteria A.2 – Geographic Scope

As described in Section 1 and shown in Figure 1, the plan boundary is composed of 12 HUC 10 watersheds from 2 HUC 6 watersheds. This boundary was selected because it is the contiguous Sulphur Springs Valley. The Valley overlays the Willcox and Douglas Groundwater Basins, the primary water supply for the Sulphur Springs Valley.

Figure 2 and Table 3 show and summarize land ownership within the Sulphur Springs Valley. By far, the largest category of landowner is Private Land, followed by state trust, National Forest, and Bureau of Land Management. BLM and the Forest Service have not yet participated in the SSWA because outreach has focused on private land owners, including representatives from across the geographic region. Table 2 highlights how the broad diversity of private landowners and interests have participated in our efforts. Early in this proposed project, the Watershed Coordinator will conduct targeted outreach to seek the input of the Forest Service, BLM, and other stakeholders that have not yet participated in SSWA efforts.

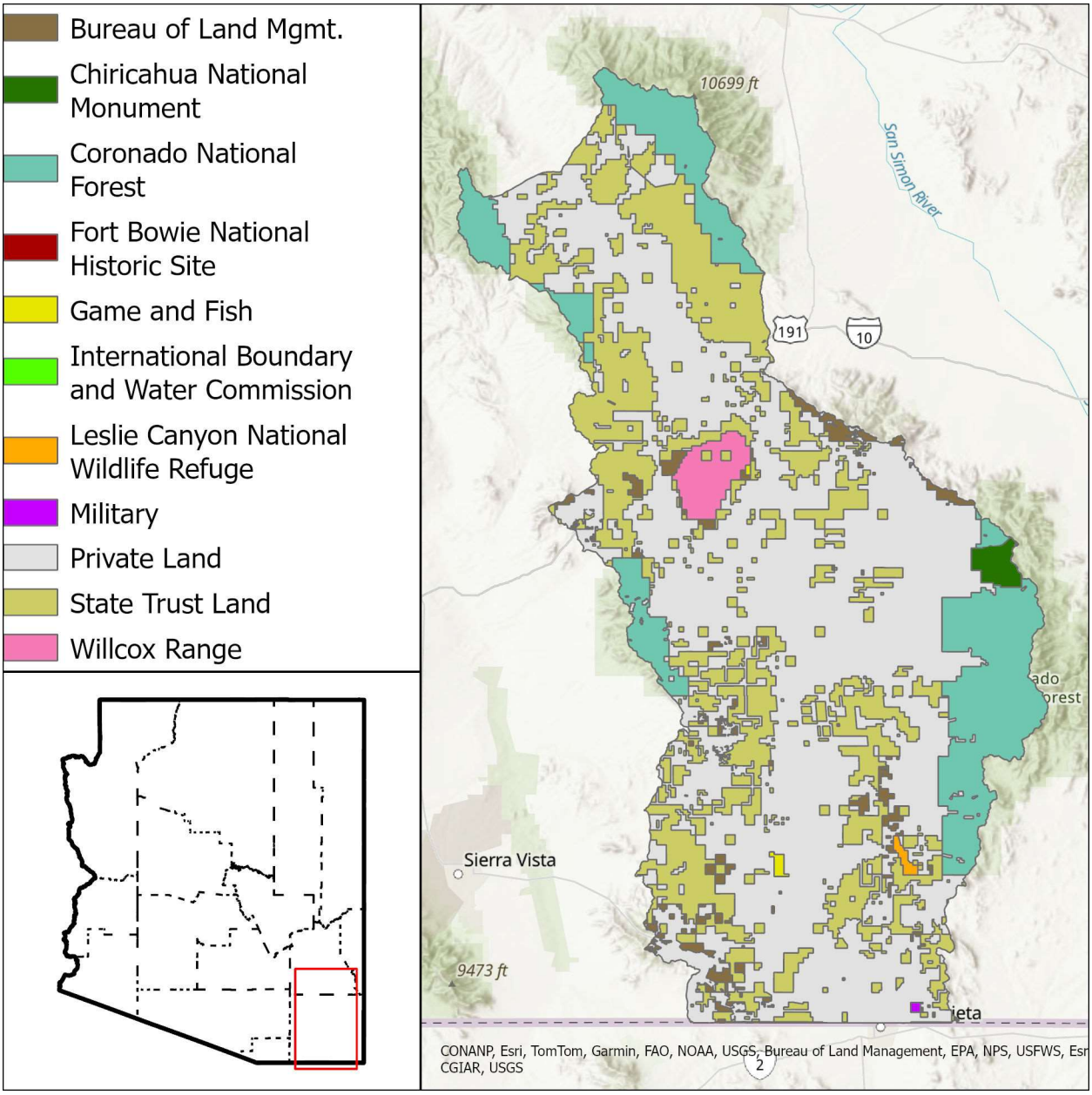

Figure 2: Land Ownership Map

Table 3: Land Ownership

	Area		
Land Owner	**Acres**	**Sq mile**	**%**
Private Land	1,004,813	1570	54.9
State Trust Land	490,239	766	26.8
Bureau of Land Management	43,796	68.4	2.4

	Area		
Land Owner	**Acres**	**Sq mile**	**%**
Game and Fish	2,171	3.39	0.1
Coronado National Forest	245,573	384	13.4
Fort-Bowie National Historic Site	14.8	0.023	0.0
Willcox Range	27,294	42.6	1.5
Chiricahua National Monument	11,307	17.7	0.6
Military Reservation	642	1.00	0.0
International Boundary and Water Commission	128	0.201	0.0
Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuge	2,776	4.34	0.2
Total	**1,828,755**	**2,857**	**100.0**

5.2 Criteria B – Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs

5.2.1 Sub-Criteria B.1 – Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

The most critical issue within the plan boundary is the decline in groundwater table elevations. Quantifying groundwater level declines across the basin is difficult due to its rural nature. There are few requirements for reporting depth to groundwater in the area, and so analysis must rely on the publicly available Groundwater Site Inventory from the Arizona Department of Water Resources. These select wells undergo periodic measurement, but have limited spatial and temporal resolution. Groundwater pumping in excess of natural and human-facilitated recharge has resulted in declines as summarized in Table 4 and Figure 3.

Table 4: Groundwater Declines in Willcox and Douglas Basin (Kyl Center for Water Policy at Morrison Institute, 2023)

Groundwater Basin	Willcox	Douglas
Median Groundwater Decline (Feet per Year)	-2.70	-1.29
Number of wells measured	26	14
Duration (years	20	20
Range of Change (feet)	-141.9 to -2.3	-76.4 to -1.6
Median Change (feet)	-53.6	-23.7

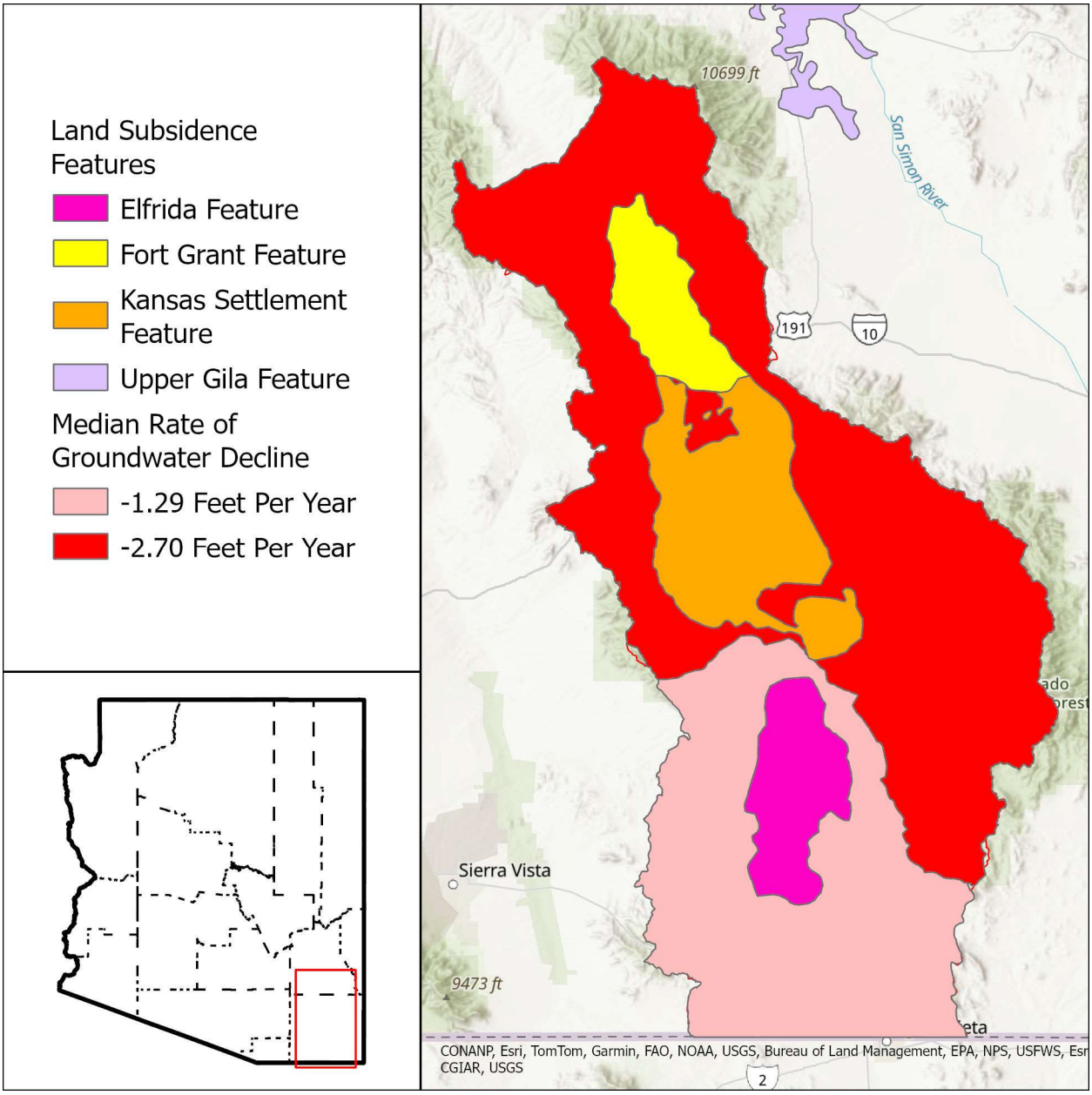

Figure 3: Groundwater Decline and Subsidence Features (Kyl Center for Water Policy at Morrison Institute, 2023)

Groundwater declines leads to compaction of soils and alluvium, resulting in land subsidence. Differential land subsidence occurs when adjacent regions subside at different rates, frequently as a result of underlying geology. Differential subsidence can cause earth fissures, worsening erosion, damaging property and infrastructure (e.g., pipelines, roads, canals, bridges, buildings). The Sulphur Springs Valley contains three of the 21 total subsidence features that are significant

enough to be tracked within the state by ADWR. These features routinely see subsidence rates in excess of 7 cm/year.

In Southeastern Arizona, the effects of climate change are expected to be realized as increased temperature and decrease in total precipitation. Increased temperatures are expected to increase water demand for irrigated agriculture to offset increased evapotranspiration and for industrial cooling to offset increased temperature. These demands are likely to be met by increased groundwater pumping. Decreases in total precipitation will result in lowered natural groundwater recharge rates, further exacerbating groundwater level declines.

Declining water tables would likely increase the number of wells running dry, disproportionately impacting lower income water users that are unable to afford the cost of deepening wells. Lower groundwater table elevations also increases power requirements for pumping water, reducing the economic viability of regional agriculture. Typically, deeper groundwater results in decreased water quality, both in contaminant content that is potentially harmful to human and animal health and in sediment that can have deleterious effects on pumping equipment.

Increases in temperature and decreases in total precipitation can result in decreased moisture content of fuels, increasing wildfire risk. Further, these shifts in climate frequently create conditions more favorable for invasive species. These invasive species often burn at higher intensities than the native species they replaced, worsening wildfire risk. Higher intensity and longer duration wildfires can create hydrophobic layers on soil surfaces, increasing runoff and decreasing natural groundwater recharge. Runoff events after fires frequently result in large flash floods that can damage downstream infrastructure (bridges, roads, buildings).

5.2.2 Sub-Criteria B.2 – Project Benefits

As described in Section 5.2.1., the most significant regional concern is groundwater table decline and its associated impacts on water supply, water quality, subsidence, and human health. Groundwater pumping is the primary water supply, and the increased mismatch between groundwater pumping and recharge has resulted in rapid declines to groundwater levels. Some wells have begun to run dry, and it is expensive to deepen wells. This has resulted in conflict over the issue.

There have been multiple failed efforts to establish an Active Management Area for the Willcox Groundwater Basin. Active Management Areas are regions where tighter groundwater regulations are administered by the state water authority, the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR). Local residents frequently acknowledge that groundwater regulations are needed, but feel the state-run controls of an Active Management Area do not meet local needs.

The watershed planning workshop from which the SSWA was formed has demonstrated the most positive progress in resolving these conflicts. By including broad and frequently opposing interests (e.g., both large irrigated agriculture and environmental groups participated) in developing our goals and strategies, we have begun to build common grounds to address these water issues. Progress with the SSWA has been so well received that our group was featured in a statewide news article they covered our documentary screening and the hope that is being instilled in members of the community (Migoya, 2024). We will continue to use this approach to

develop a non-confrontational and collaborative space to encourage diverse interests to identify, discuss, and solve pressing water issues. Our proposed plan to use subcommittee meetings to drive progress on planning efforts allows for interested Partners to participate in the areas that are most important to them. Then, our facilitated workshops will allow full membership review and participation in key planning milestones. This approach has been used by other watershed groups (e.g., Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative) and will build on our past success from the 2023 planning workshop.

The development of priority strategies to address regional water issues was a key success from the 2023 planning workshop. Diverse, and sometimes opposing, interests were able to agree on key strategies for implementation, and this project will continue to implement these strategies. The first priority strategy is the formation and the development of the SSWA, which this project will clearly facilitate. The second order strategies include increasing communication, breaking down silos between organizations, collaborating, and finding and prioritizing projects to increase recharge. These strategies demonstrate our commitment to consensus-based decision making and will be well answered through our proposed development of a watershed management plan. Our planned outreach and education campaign, including workshops, tabling at events, newsletters, education seminars, will also help address our educational second order strategies. Our third order strategies include balancing local and state oversight on groundwater, identifying trial conservation programs/irrigation improvements, and identifying data gaps/coordination on data collection efforts. Integrated planning and the proposed coordination amongst stakeholders will help address these strategies. The good alignment between our proposed project and the strategies developed by our broad stakeholder network shows that this project will be widely beneficial and meets the needs of the whole community.

Many of the climate change vulnerabilities (e.g., agricultural loss, wildfire risk, flooding risk, building loss rates) described in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.4 are exacerbated by groundwater table elevations. Decreasing precipitation and declining groundwater increase the production costs of agriculture and increase the challenges of combating wildfire. Low antecedent soil moisture and increased precipitation intensity exacerbate flooding. By using integrated watershed management planning, we can develop plans that consider these multiple dimensions and co benefits for selecting projects. For example, green stormwater projects held retain runoff to reduce flooding, encourage groundwater recharge, and help mitigate urban heat islands. Similarly, managing invasive grasses and mesquite encroachment through native grassland restoration can help reduce evapotranspiration, reduce flooding, and reduce fire risk while providing improved forage for cattle. Effects from these efforts will be broadly realized across all populations in the plan boundary.

5.3 5.3 Criteria C – Readiness to Proceed (20 Points)

Table 5 breaks down the Watershed Restoration Plan by major milestones. The anticipated start of the project is in July of 2025 with a completion date of quarter two 2027.

The majority of these tasks will be facilitated by our Watershed Coordinator. The Watershed Coordinator will report directly to the Chair and be responsible for management of the contractors (e.g., facilitators, interns, designers).

We will utilize the help of facilitators in pre meeting planning and preparation, guiding and managing our series of workshops. They will also be instrumental in keeping everyone on task, organized and engaged as we build our watershed restoration plan. Water is a controversial topic in our valley. Discussions with other groups have gotten very heated in the past. It's important to us to have a neutral third party to help keep everyone in a productive and cooperative mindset.

We are also planning on using interns to help us with volunteer coordination, outreach and education, and technical support. They will also assist us with writing short informative educational articles about water resources and groundwater conservation in Arizona, state authority on new groundwater management districts, past and current legislative proposals for rural districts, overview of INA/AMAs, rural conservation measures in the West, and issues related to dry wells and subsidence impacts.

We are also going to look for an intern from the University of Arizona for GIS and planning work.

Other tasks to be completed by the Coordinator are outlined below. This is also broken out into more detail in Table 6.

- Organizing all meetings and events
    - Coordinating schedules
    - Finding meeting facilities for in-person meetings
    - Scheduling virtual meetings
    - Finding and organizing educational speakers
    - Developing meeting agendas
- Grant organization and reporting
- General stakeholder identification and outreach activities
- Planning, support and communication
- Project management

The description of each milestone contains summaries of major work that must be completed by the coordinator, facilitators, and other contractors (e.g., develop baseline assessment). Supporting tasks include:

- Interviews with stakeholders
- Literature review
- Data searches and analysis
- Mapping and other data visualization
- Site visits
- Document review cycles
- Authoring reports

Table 5: Year 1-3 Milestones

Milestones	Description	Timeframe
Group Development Workshop 1	• Kickoff Project • Finalize MOU/Articles of Incorporation, ETC. ○ Becoming 501(c)(3) • Pre-planning - begin watershed assessment • Brainstorm and document watershed issues • Gather data sources and references from stakeholders • Team Building Element	August 2025
Planning Workshop 1	• Goals of watershed plan process • Outreach - plans for interviews - who should we talk to • Survey preparation • Brainstorm desired conditions, issues, potential projects, project cites. • Results to date • Educational Element	January 2026
Planning Workshop 2	• Review baseline assessment • Document feedback on baseline assessment • Refine list of desired conditions and potential projects • Brainstorm project evaluation criteria • Discuss data gaps and develop strategies to resolve	May 2026
Planning Workshop 3	• Review updated baseline assessment • Document additional feedback on baseline assessment • Refine project evaluation criteria • Refine data gap resolution strategies • Review concerns • Brainstorm project types and locations	September 2026
Planning Workshop 4	• First draft completed • Review first draft of completed plan • Review project prioritization plans • Document feedback	February 2027

Milestones	Description	Timeframe
Planning Workshop 5	• Final draft completed • Review final draft • Discuss next steps, select one project for detail design	July 2027
Design Review	• Review 30% status of detail design	June 2028

Table 6: SSWA General Meetings & Tasks

Task	Description	Timeline
Educational Webinars & Seminars	• Have 2 webinars/ seminars a year • Work with stakeholders to identify topics of interest • Identify and work with multiple subject matter experts (e.g., hydrogeologists, policy experts) to create workshops to educate our local stakeholders and community on rural groundwater • Use our network of stakeholders (e.g., UA Extension, county experts), to identify speakers and hold educational webinars	All Years
Monthly SSWA Meetings		All Years
Monthly Subcommittee Meetings	Education and Community Water Augmentation Economics, Planning, and Management	All Years

Task	Description	Timeline

Stakeholder Identification and Outreach	Initial focused outreach:
	• Interview based approach:
	  o At the beginning, plan on asking all stakeholders you currently have, who else they think we should be talking to.
	  o Then, have targeted outreach where we invite those stakeholders to participate. Also ask them who else they think we should be talking to.
	  o Have a final round of targeted outreach to invite those stakeholders to participate.
	• Search state (e.g., ADEQ, other permitting agencies) and federal records for stakeholders in the plan boundary, invite them to participate.
	Ongoing throughout the project:
	• Continue looking for new stakeholders and stakeholders who haven't participated.
	• Tabling at events.
	• Monthly email newsletters - status, breaking news, opportunities
	• Annual paper newsletters with fundraising asks
		All Years

Interviews with stakeholders	• Look for landowners in areas with good recharge potential and prioritize outreach there. • Site visits	All Years

5.4 Criteria D – Presidential and Department of Interior Priorities

5.4.1 Climate Change (EO 14008)

Section 5.2.1 summarizes many of the expected impacts of climate change, including increased agricultural loss, wildfire risk, flood risk, and damage to infrastructure. The integrated watershed management and planning proposed here can help address these issues. Working with stakeholders to identify recharge projects for implementation can help address groundwater declines by increasing recharge. Planning projects to capture rainwater and conserve groundwater use will help mitigate the decrease in total precipitation expected as a result of climate change.

By working with multiple agencies and stakeholders from across the region, priority restoration projects and areas can be identified to reduce wildfire and flooding risk. Managing invasive vegetation and restoration with native grasslands can create lower intensity fire regimes,

reducing wildfire risk. Coordination of low tech process based restoration projects (e.g., small rock detention structure, other natural infrastructure in dryland streams) can reduce flood risk by slowing runoff in the uplands of the watershed. Green stormwater infrastructure projects can be used to further reduce storm surges in urban areas, assisting with mitigation of urban heat island effects.

An integrated approach to reducing runoff velocity via upland low tech process based restoration with downstream green stormwater infrastructure reduces risks to public safety by reducing the magnitude of flash flood events. Restored watershed function will also improve the ecosystem services provided by healthy vegetative and animal communities, including air and water quality benefits, decreasing exposure to contaminants that affect human health. Low tech process based restoration frequently improves habitat, helping improve biodiversity and wildlife connectivity.

Beyond improving recharge, providing targeted education on best practices to address stakeholder identified concerns (e.g., domestic water conservation, benefits of alternative crops) will help reduce groundwater overdraft. Different visualization tools will be developed to communicate key geospatial data related to watershed function to different audiences, improving understanding of water issues and increasing the ease of coordination for watershed restoration projects.

5.4.2 Disadvantaged and Underserved Communities (EO 13985)

Table 7 summarizes the disenfranchised communities and the dimensions of vulnerability (Council on Environmental Quality, 2023). The most frequent dimensions are climate change (including agricultural loss rate, population loss rate, projected flood risk, expected building loss rate). Legacy pollution can be addressed through restoration. Climate change benefits are described in Section 5.4.1. Waste and wastewater discharges can be addressed through coordinated restoration - reclaim that wastewater for recharge. Treat through restoration wetlands? Extend benefits to all communities through full region of plan.

Health (diabetes, heart disease), Transportation (transportation barriers), Housing (lack of indoor plumbing, lead paint), Energy (energy costs), Workforce Development (linguistic isolation, poverty, low income, unemployment, high school education), likely not to be directly addressed based on the scope of the project. However, there are secondary benefits to many of these. Maintaining groundwater elevation ensures adequate supplies of cooling water are important for maintaining energy costs.

Table 7: Disadvantaged and Underserved Census Tracts in Plan Boundary

Census Tract	Dimensions	Census Tract	Dimensions
04003000201	• Climate Change • Low Income	04003001100	• Climate Change • Health • Water and wastewater • Low Income

Census Tract	Dimensions	Census Tract	Dimensions
04003000202	• Climate Change • Low Income	04003000600	• Climate Change • Health • Low Income
04003000100	• Climate Change • Health • Transportation • Low Income	04003000902	• Climate Change • Energy • Health • Workforce Development • Low Income
04003000203	• Climate Change • Energy • Legacy Pollution • Transportation • Low Income	04003000901	• Energy • Health • Workforce Development • Low Income
04003000500	• Climate Change • Energy • Legacy Pollution • Transportation • Low Income	04003000800	• Climate Change • Health
04003001000	• Climate Change • Housing • Low Income	04003000700	• Climate Change • Low Income • Workforce Development

5.4.3 Tribal Communities

This project does not directly serve or benefit a Tribe through public health and safety, water quality, new water supplies, economic growth opportunities, or improving water management. It does not support Reclamation activity with a Tribe.

6 6 Project Budget

The following table summarizes the budget for this project:

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-Federal Entities	
1. N/A	$0
Non-Federal Subtotal	$0
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	$299,764.97

- Contractual: $254,900.00
  - Part-time Watershed Coordinator estimated 30 hours per week based on Bureau of Labor Statistics Natural Science Manager position with consideration for other watershed coordinator estimated roles ($140,000)
  - Facilitator based on estimate received ($76,000)
  - GIS and Plan Internships ($10,000)
  - Designer ($21,000)
  - Survey Facilitation based on estimate to create a short survey to gain countywide feedback ($7,5000)
- Supplies: $15,113.61
  - Food and non-alcoholic drinks for 18 in-person meetings including: ($8,100)
    - 1 Kickoff full day workshop
    - 5 Planning workshops
    - Quarterly in person meetings all three years
  - Print materials including brochures, other mailings and banners for educational booths ($3,000)
  - Subscription services ($4,013.61)
    - Website hosting and domain renewal
    - Microsoft Suite and Adobe Standard
    - Newsletter and Constant Contact
    - Quickbooks
- Other Direct Costs: $2,500.00
  - Facility rentals for 18 in person meetings ($1,900)
  - Estimated 501(c)(3) filing fees ($600)
- Indirect Costs: $27,251.36
  - Based on NRCD indirect cost rate of 10%

7 Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water

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

The proposed project serves to develop a watershed group and author a watershed restoration plan, so there should be no impact from these efforts.

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 listed endangered species and critical habitat (Mexican spotted owl and chiricahua leopard frog) in the plan boundary, but they will not be affected by the planning efforts proposed by this project.

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.

Many streams, including Whitewater Draw, Turkey Creek, Ash Creek, and Leslie Creek, potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as "Waters of the United States". The proposed group development and planning efforts will not impact the streams.

When was the water delivery system constructed?

Not applicable, the proposed project does not modify a water delivery system.

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

The planning efforts will not result in the modification of or effects to any irrigation systems.

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

There are many buildings, structures, and features within the plan boundary that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The group development and planning efforts proposed by this project will not impact any of these buildings, structures, or features.

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

There are archeological sites in the plan boundary. The planning efforts proposed by this project will not impact archeological sites.

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

The proposed project serves to develop a watershed group and author a watershed restoration plan, so there should be no impact from these efforts.

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 serves to develop a watershed group and author a watershed restoration plan, so there should be no impact from these efforts.

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 serves to develop a watershed group and author a watershed restoration plan, so there should be no impact from these efforts.

8 Required Permits or Approvals

There are no known permits or approvals necessary for the proposed work. Any necessary permits or approvals from county, state, and federal agencies that may be identified during this project will be obtained as part of this project.

9 Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

There is no expected overlap between this proposal and any other anticipated proposal or project in terms of activities, cost, or commitment of key personnel.

10 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

No actual or potential conflicts of interest have been identified at the time of submission.

11 Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

The applicant does not expect to spend more than $750,000 in Federal Award funds in a fiscal year.

12 References

Arizona Department of Water Resources. (2024). *Land Subsidence in Arizona*. From https://www.azwater.gov/hydrology/field-services/land-subsidence-arizona

Council on Environmental Quality. (2023). *Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool*. From https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5

Kyl Center for Water Policy at Morrison Institute. (2023). *Groundwater Level Changes in Arizona Sub-Basins*. From https://asu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=40ab99d10a224d6c83818fb0e1c153e0

Migoya, C. (2024, August 29). *In the Willcox and Douglas Groundwater Basins, Residents Bet on Unity to Solve Issues*. From AZcentral: https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-water/2024/08/29/sulphur-springs-water-alliance-looks-for-common-ground-in-water-issues/74909992007/

Willcox-San Simon NRCD. (2023). *Willcox-San Simone NRCD Conservation Action Plan*. From https://www.aacd1944.com/willcoxsan-simon

14 Letters of Support

Cochise County
Board of Supervisors

Public Programs...Personal Service
www.cochise.az.gov

ANN ENGLISH
Supervisor
District 2

July 19, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Graber:

Cochise County is pleased to provide this letter of support for the establishment of a watershed restoration partnership in the Sulphur Springs watershed of southern Arizona. A watershed partnership would support our county's adopted Strategic Plan Priorities to "Promote Environmental Solutions" and "Participate in community-driven policy development for water issues in the Sulphur Springs Valley."

A watershed partnership in the Sulphur Springs Valley will provide opportunities for needed collaboration and actionable steps forward to enhance the well-being of the community and protect the health of the watershed for the benefit of natural areas, agriculture and individual water users. Diverse interest groups and community members bring diverse knowledge, expertise, and perspective to the resolution of watershed-wide issues. Working together provides an excellent opportunity to generate a common understanding and the shared knowledge required for holistic watershed management, which can address vulnerability and resilience of natural resources and human water uses. Such an understanding is critical to effectively guide watershed management.

A partnership of the various non-profit organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, industrial leaders, and community members will facilitate watershed-scale conservation and sustainable water management. Engaging stakeholders in exploring water management solutions increases their commitment to achieving shared goals. A neutral forum for discussion of shared concerns will improve trust and reduce potential conflict among the participants. We see the establishment of a watershed partnership as an important step toward regional cooperation to address water adequacy, flooding, and recharge issues. While Cochise County has no jurisdiction over water adequacy per se, it does have purview over floodplains and recharge opportunities.

The County looks forward to working closely with community partners to ensure the success of a watershed partnership in the region. This area is in need of a group that brings all interests together and operates on a watershed-wide basis. In cooperation with local stakeholders, the proposed watershed partnership will create a tangible benefit

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520-432-9200
520-559-3768 cell
520-432-5016 fax
aenglish@cochise.az.gov

for our region of Arizona. We are enthusiastic about the work and support the creation of a watershed partnership.

Sincerely,

Ann English

Ann English
Chair, Cochise County Board of Supervisors

BABBITT CENTER
FOR LAND AND WATER POLICY
A Center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

August 25, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Sulphur Springs Water Alliance Application - WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Grant

Dear Ms. Graber:

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 a WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Grant to institutionalize and sustain the momentum and actions for a recently formed watershed restoration partnership in the Sulphur Springs Valley of southern Arizona. Like many rural regions in Arizona, the Sulphur Springs Valley is facing groundwater declines while attempting to balance a multitude of community needs including protecting its agricultural heritage and economy and supporting quality of life for residents.

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 *Exploratory Scenario Planning for Water Resilient Agriculture Project* to help rural communities in the Western United States tackle complex water issues and areas of uncertainty through a unique community planning initiative.

In September 2023, we led our second community-based, exploratory scenario planning (XSP) workshop in Cochise County, Arizona to help stakeholders envision and plan for the implications of uncertain economic, social and climate trends in water and agriculture. The two-day XSP workshop brought together participants with varied perspectives from two groundwater basis in the Sulphur Springs Valley representing different sectors, including multi-generational and newer agricultural interests, homesteaders and residents, city and county representatives, and other business and community leaders. The workshop provided the time and space for the participants to confront challenging issues, fostered collaboration, and identified mutual goals for shared paths forward.

An immediate post-workshop outcome was the desire to move forward through a collaborative watershed group dedicated to effective management and conservation of the region's water resources. The Sulphur Springs Water Alliance (SSWA) was formed to encompass the priorities of farming, business and community leaders in both groundwater basins and helps them stay in regular communication, share information, ideas, progress reports, and volunteer opportunities in different working groups to implement strategies. Members are working in agreement and have consensus to focus efforts on

reducing groundwater pumping, increasing aquifer recharge and educating the community about conservation actions. They are exploring a variety of interventions they can pursue to accomplish strategies. The workshop was filmed and turned into a video titled "Agriculture & Water in the West: A Community Takes Charge" to capture how they were able to find common ground.

The Babbitt Center can attest that the Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District is a strong partner and is well positioned to take the lead as the fiscal agent and applicant for this CWMP Grant opportunity. We have been enthusiastic about working with the Willcox-San Simone NRCD as one of the lead champions of our XSP workshop efforts. They helped jumpstart the effort to build the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance and continue to facilitate and lead implementation efforts that include coordinating support for short and long-term watershed projects.

The Babbitt Center committed professional resources to support sustained engagement throughout the XSP workshop project, which included a small amount of funding to support initial coordination of post-workshop implementation actions. The CWMP Grant funding will secure the SSWA's watershed partnership ability to keep moving forward building an ongoing program of work that facilitates the necessary watershed-scale conservation and sustainable water management solutions for the region.

The Babbitt Center is enthusiastic about the long-term impact of this work and will continue to offer professional knowledge to support the region's watershed implementation efforts. We believe in the value of the SSWA efforts to ensure their water resources meet the demands of both a prosperous community and a healthy, resilient watershed.

I strongly urge you to support approval of this grant request to help the SSWA leverage strategic opportunities to shape their secure water future.

Sincerely,

Kristen Keener Busby, AICP
Associate Director for Program Implementation
The Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a center of
The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
kbusby@lincolninst.edu

RIVERVIEW

Riverview, LLP
5292 S Kansas Settlement Road
Willcox, AZ 85643

July 27, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation: Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Graber:

My name is Micah Fehr from Riverview, LLP and I support the establishment of a watershed restoration partnership in the Sulphur Springs watershed. A watershed partnership would help sustain our business (and many other local businesses) for generations to come by giving a voice to the local community stakeholders. A community that can come together to discuss complex issues and seek resolutions lends itself to being a vibrant, adaptable place to live, while maintaining the heritage of the past. Riverview strives to be a good neighbor and steward its resources well while providing a strong economic engine in the community. We look forward to actively participating in such a partnership.

A watershed partnership here in the valley will generate collaboration and forward movement in water conservation. The economic well-being of the community, the health of the aquifer, and the natural beauty of the land are all relevant issues that will be brought to the table. A partnership that includes voices and perspectives from a diverse cross section of the community will generate the most comprehensive list of possible resolutions to the watershed's issues. Working together creates a culture of understanding that is invaluable in living and working together in this place we call home.

This partnership will bring together a variety of non-profit organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, industry leaders, and community members who are engaged in exploring water use and management solutions. The partnership will create a neutral forum for discussion and a respectful place for differing perspectives to be shared. Establishing a watershed partnership is a significant step toward communication, collaboration, and resolution to the long-standing concerns around water.

Riverview looks forward to working together with community stakeholders to find a solution to the water concerns facing our valley. We believe there is a way to work and live together that conserves water, preserves the heritage of the past, protects nature and builds toward a bright future. My colleagues and I are enthusiastic about the work and support the creation of a watershed partnership.

Sincerely,

Micah Fehr
General Manager of AZ Operations

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Cooperative Extension

COCHISE COUNTY

450 S. Haskell Ave. Ste. A
Willcox, AZ 85643
Ofc: 520-384-3594
Fax: 520-384-3681

1140 N. Colombo Ave.
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
Ofc: 520-458-8278
Fax: 520-458-5823

https://extension.arizona.edu/cochise

August 12, 2024

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

RE: WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) funding opportunity

I am writing to express my support of Sulphur Springs Water Alliance (SSWA) in applying for Phase I funding of the WaterSMART CWMP.

SSWA is a diverse group of stakeholders with a vested interest in the water of the Sulphur Springs Valley in Cochise County, Arizona. Membership of SSWA includes private property owners, local governments, farmers, ranchers, educators, and environmentalists, just to name a few. Cochise County is host to multiple disadvantaged communities where wells are going dry due to lack of effective water management in the area.

SSWA is a grassroots organization in its infancy whose focus includes addressing the imbalance in the valley's water usage by recharge and reduction in water use; seeking out and sharing knowledge about the valley's water resources, difficulties and opportunities; and ongoing stewardship that represents the interests of all community members.

Other watershed groups have come and gone due to lack of funding or lack of cooperation among stakeholders. But SSWA brings a unique group of people to the table with common long-term goals for the valley.

Part of Cooperative Extension's mission is to bring opportunity to rural communities, and this project aligns very closely with our mission. I wholeheartedly endorse the formation of a watershed group in the Sulphur Springs Valley and Phase I funding would assure the Alliance's success.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carol Holden
County Extension Director
Associate Agent, Economic Development
Cochise County Office
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Office: 520-766-3601 | Cell: 520-507-0413
carolholden@arizona.edu

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Tucson Conservation Center
1510 E Fort Lowell Rd
Tucson, AZ 85719

Tel (520) 622-3861

nature.org

August 23, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Notice of Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362

Dear Ms. Graber:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is pleased to provide this letter of support for the establishment of a watershed restoration partnership in the Sulphur Springs watershed of southern Arizona. TNC is a non-profit, non-governmental charitable organization whose mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Arizona alone, TNC has protected more than 1.5 million acres of lands important to people and wildlife and has harnessed science and partnerships to keep Arizona rivers flowing and its forests and grasslands healthy for the people and wildlife that depend on them. In addition to our own project work, we support partners as they collaborate on water resource management, conservation, and restoration that supports watershed health and grows Arizona's overall resilience.

A watershed partnership in the Sulphur Springs Valley will provide opportunities for needed collaboration and actionable steps forward to enhance the well-being of the community and protect the health of the watershed for the benefit of natural areas, agriculture and water users. A partnership of the various non-profit organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, industrial leaders, and community members will facilitate watershed-scale conservation and sustainable water management. Engaging stakeholders in exploring water management solutions increases their common understanding and commitment to achieving shared goals. A neutral forum for discussion of shared concerns will improve trust and reduce potential conflict among the participants. We see the establishment of a watershed partnership as an important step toward regional cooperation to support integrated land and water management and upland restoration for the benefit of habitat and watershed function.

The Nature Conservancy believes that diverse, locally led collaboration is essential to support Arizona's water resources and the communities and ecosystems that depend on them. We are glad to see this collaboration take shape in the Sulphur Springs Valley and are pleased to support their application to create a watershed partnership.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Schonek

Kimberly Schonek
Arizona Water Program Director, The Nature Conservancy

Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory
Arizona State University

Arizona Water Innovation Initiative

August 27, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Graber:

On behalf of the Arizona Water Innovation Initiative's Impact Water - Arizona program at Arizona State University, I am writing to express our strong support for the Sulphur Springs Water Alliance's application for the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Grant. As a program committed to fostering community engagement and driving innovative water solutions, we believe that this partnership is crucial for advancing sustainable water management in the Willcox and Douglas groundwater basins.

The objectives of the WaterSMART CWMP—bringing together diverse stakeholders to collaboratively address local water management challenges—are in close alignment with our mission at Impact Water - Arizona. By harnessing diverse expertise, this partnership has the potential to inspire knowledge-sharing, active engagement, and transformative change, ensuring a secure and resilient water supply. The focus on developing a watershed partnership that operates on a consensus basis, represents a wide range of interests, and strives to improve water availability resonates with our commitment to community-driven solutions.

We are particularly enthusiastic about the proposed activities under this grant, especially the mission-critical outreach initiatives focused on reducing crop water usage, educating the community about water conservation, and enhancing the potential for water recharge. These efforts are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of water resources and for implementing the strategies developed during our Exploratory Scenario Planning for Water Resilient Agriculture workshop held last September.

The support and collaboration facilitated by this grant will be instrumental in turning the strategies from the workshop into actionable plans, benefiting both the watershed and the broader community. Establishing a watershed partnership is a vital step toward fostering regional cooperation to address the critical issue of declining groundwater supplies.

Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory
Arizona State University

Arizona Water Innovation Initiative

Please keep us informed of the outcome of your proposal submission. We wish you the best of luck and look forward to the positive impact this grant will have on water resources and the community.

Sincerely,

Susan Craig

Susan Craig, Program Director
Impact Water – Arizona
ASU, Arizona Water Innovation Initiative

CITY OF DOUGLAS

Embracing our Heritage, Advancing our Future

August 20, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation
Water Resources and Planning Office
Attn: Ms. Robin Graber
Mail Code: 86-6300
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Graber:

The City of Douglas is pleased to provide this letter of support for the establishment of a watershed restoration partnership in the Sulphur Springs watershed of southern Arizona. A watershed collaboration would benefit the management of critical water resources and support a healthy watershed. The City hopes that increasing groundwater levels will contribute to the overall resilience of the Douglas and Willcox Groundwater Basins.

A watershed partnership in the Sulphur Springs Valley holds the promise of fostering a sense of hope and optimism in our community. It will provide opportunities for much-needed collaboration and actionable steps forward to enhance the well-being of the community and protect the health of the watershed for the benefit of natural areas, agriculture and individual water users. Diverse interest groups and community members bring diverse knowledge, expertise, and perspectives to resolve watershed-wide issues. Working together provides an excellent opportunity to generate a common understanding and the shared knowledge required for holistic watershed management, which can address the vulnerability and resilience of natural resources and human water uses. Such an understanding is critical to effectively guide watershed management.

A partnership between non-profit organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, industrial leaders, and community members will facilitate watershed-scale conservation and sustainable water management. Engaging stakeholders in exploring water management solutions increases their commitment to achieving shared goals. A neutral forum for discussion of shared concerns will improve trust and reduce potential conflict among the participants. We see establishing a watershed partnership as an essential step toward regional cooperation to

CITY OF DOUGLAS

Embracing our Heritage, Advancing our Future

address issues of the valley's scarcity of water and our commitment to finding solutions for reducing water usage and creating more recharge to our basins. The City of Douglas looks forward to working closely with community partners to ensure the success of a watershed partnership in the region. This area needs a group that brings all stakeholders together.

The City of Douglas is grateful for your potential support and looks forward to the opportunity to work closely with community partners to ensure the success of a watershed partnership in the region. This area is in need of a group that brings all interests together and operates on a watershed-wide basis. In cooperation with local stakeholders, the proposed watershed partnership will create a tangible benefit for our region of Arizona. We are enthusiastic about the work and support the creation of a watershed partnership. Your support and collaboration are crucial to the success of this initiative.

Sincerely,

Holly Elise Moore

H. Elise Moore, P.E., M.P.A.

Public Works Director/City Engineer
City of Douglas

425 E. 10th Street, Douglas, AZ 85607 | Tel: (520) 417-7335 | www.douglasaz.gov