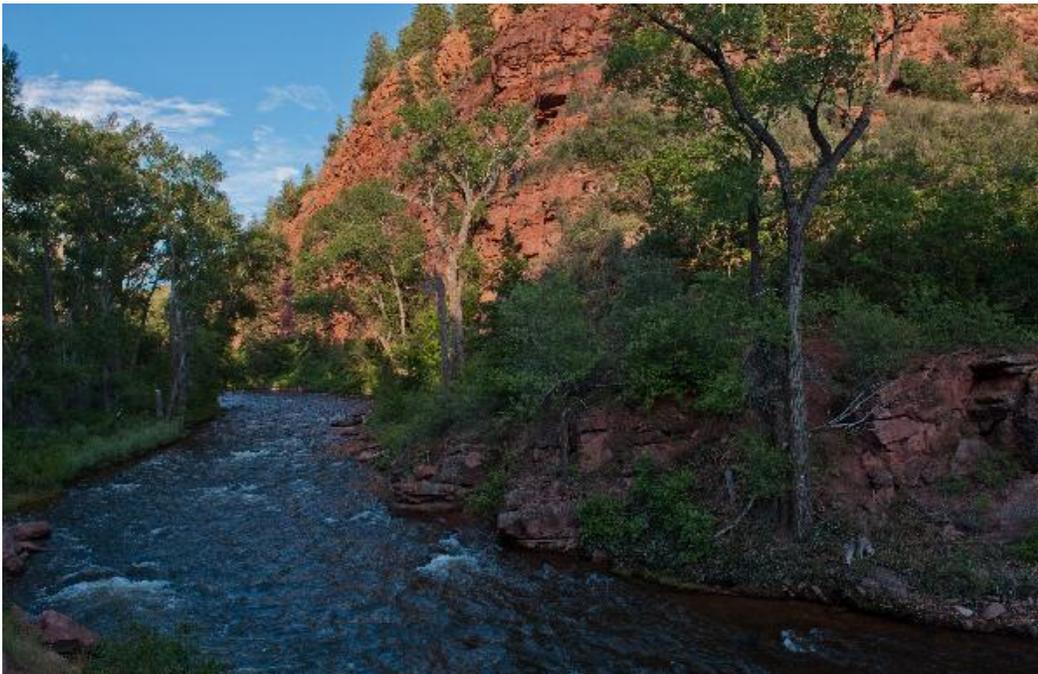


# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program

## Draft Eligible Project Types and Evaluation Criteria for Review and Comment



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Policy and Administration

September 2016

## **Mission Statements**

The U.S. Department of the Interior protects America's natural resources and heritage, honors our cultures and tribal communities, and supplies the energy to power our future.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

Act	Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Subtitle A of Title IX of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, P.L. 111-11 (42 USC 10364)
CWMP	Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Department	U.S. Department of Interior
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FOA	Funding Opportunity Announcement
FY	fiscal year
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART	Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow

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## I. Request for Comments

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) will begin to provide funding for the Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) Phase II watershed management projects in fiscal year (FY) 2017, to support local watershed groups in implementing collaborative solutions to water management issues. All funding will be awarded through a competitive process, using established criteria.

**This document explains the eligible project types and evaluation criteria Reclamation will use to allocate funding for these CWMP Phase II projects. With this document, Reclamation is seeking comments on these draft eligible project types and evaluation criteria.**

The FY 2017 Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for CWMP Phase II projects will be posted to grants.gov in January 2017. For information on FY 2017 funding opportunities for the CWMP, please see Reclamation's website at: <http://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/cwmp/index.html>.

### I.A. Opportunity to Comment

Reclamation invites other Federal agencies, the public, not-for-profit organizations, for-profit companies, academic institutions, States, Tribes and local governments, and the public to comment on the draft eligible project types and evaluation criteria, below, **by October 28, 2016**. Comments on the draft eligible project types and evaluation criteria may be sent to **Ms. Avra Morgan at [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov) or the address below:**

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Avra Morgan  
84-51000  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225-0007

For questions regarding the CWMP or the opportunity to comment on draft eligible projects and funding criteria, please contact Ms. Avra Morgan at (303) 445-2906 or [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov).

## I.B. Background

The U.S. Department of Interior's (Department) WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) Program establishes a framework to provide Federal leadership and assistance on the efficient use of water; integrating water and energy policies to support the sustainable use of all natural resources; forming strong diverse partnerships with States, tribes, and local entities; and coordinating with others on water conservation activities.

The CWMP contributes to the WaterSMART strategy by providing funding to watershed groups to develop and implement local solutions to improve water quality and the ecological resilience of rivers, streams, and riparian areas; conserve water for multiple uses; and reduce conflicts over water through collaborative conservation efforts in the management of local watersheds. Ecological resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change, so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.

In accordance with the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Subtitle A of Title IX of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, P.L. 111-11 [42 USC 10364] (Act), Reclamation may fund Phase I projects to establish or further develop a watershed group, and Phase II projects to implement watershed management projects. Since 2012, Reclamation has approved \$2.4 million in funding to establish and develop 30 watershed groups under Phase I of the program. After finalizing the project types and criteria in this document, Reclamation will begin providing funding for Phase II, watershed management projects, in FY 2017.

Applicants eligible to apply for Phase II funding will include established watershed groups that represent a diverse group of stakeholders, have completed a watershed restoration plan, and are capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources (see Sec. 6001(5) of the Act for definition of "watershed group"). Additionally, Reclamation will give some preference to small or medium sized watershed groups representing an area roughly equivalent to an U.S. Geological Survey sub-basin, also sometimes termed a watershed.<sup>1</sup> Proposed Phase II projects will be required to be completed within 2 years of the award date. In addition, applicants for Phase II funding will be required to cost share 50 percent

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<sup>1</sup> These basins are defined as a region/subregion/basin/subbasin and are assigned eight-digit hydrological unit code. These basins are listed in geographical order in [http://water.usgs.gov/GIS/wbd\\_huc8.pdf](http://water.usgs.gov/GIS/wbd_huc8.pdf) and provided as a searchable database in <https://gdg.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

or more of the total project costs. Cost share contributions may be made through cash or in-kind services from the applicant or third-party partners.

## II. Draft Eligible Project Types – For Public Comment

The following list of potential projects eligible for funding under Phase II of the CWMP was developed based on review of completed watershed restoration plans and discussions with multiple experts involved in watershed groups and restoration activities. *Section II.A includes primary eligible project types and section II.B includes supplemental project types. Projects that fall under section II.B are not eligible as standalone projects under this program, but are eligible as a sub-component of another eligible watershed management project as described in section II.A.* Reclamation welcomes your comments on these potential project types, including suggestions of additional proposed projects that should be considered, suggestions for clarifications or revisions, or other comments.

### II.A. Primary Project Types

#### II.A.1. Restoration Activities

Eligible restoration activities that improve the ecological resilience of rivers, streams, other freshwater systems, and riparian corridors within the watershed may include, but are not limited to:

- **Improving Stream Channel Structure and Complexity:** Activities that improve channel structure and complexity to improve or maintain habitat and protect and stabilize stream/river banks. For example: removing fish passage structures; roughening channels; and using large woody material or other materials to create diverse flow regime, restore side-channels, or protect banks.
- **Restoring or Enhancing Floodplains:** Activities that reconnect floodplains to the current hydrology to provide floodplain habitat and reduce bank erosion and flood risk downstream. For example: excavating the floodplain surface, reconnecting floodplains to streams by lowering or removing levees and berms, and raising the channel bed surface and narrowing the channel's effective width.
- **Restoring or Enhancing Riparian Vegetation:** Activities that restore riparian vegetation to improve the health of freshwater and riparian ecosystems, to reduce erosion, reduce flood risk, and restore habitat. For

example: restoring trees and other vegetation (including native species), restoring wetlands, increasing groundwater infiltration, and installing fences to protect vegetation and stream banks from livestock and wildlife.

- **Invasive Species Prevention/Control:** Activities to prevent or mitigate the impacts of invasive species likely to negatively impact the river/stream or riparian ecosystem. For example: preventing the establishment of an invasive species, and removing or controlling an invasive species that has negatively impacted the river/stream or riparian ecosystem.
- **Increasing In-stream Flows:** Activities that increase the total flow in a river or stream to provide ecological benefits, such as improving the health and abundance of fish or other aquatic species. For example: increasing groundwater recharge into streams or reducing surface water diversions through small-scale water conservation projects and improved efficiencies.
- **Improving Habitat through Water Management Activities:** Water management activities that improve habitat and otherwise benefit freshwater and riparian ecosystems within the watershed. For example, influencing water temperature or improving the timing of available flows to improve aquatic conditions by: identifying, protecting, or reconnecting cool water sources; changing the location of water withdrawals and/or discharges; and updating system operations (e.g., changing reservoir releases).

### II.A.2. Water Quality Activities

Eligible activities include projects that improve the water quality within the watershed. To be eligible, projects must improve the ecological resilience of the river, stream, or riparian systems within the watershed. Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

- **Urban Runoff Mitigation and Reduction:** Activities that remove contaminants from urban runoff before the water reaches waterways. For example: installing stormwater capture devices, reducing impervious surface area, and restoring vegetation buffers, including wetlands.
- **Agricultural Runoff Mitigation and Reduction:** Activities that remove contaminants from agricultural runoff before the water reaches waterways. For example: installing berms around agricultural lands to prevent runoff and constructing settling ponds and wetland buffers.

- **Mining and Forestry Remediation:** Activities that mitigate and restore areas affected by mining, forestry operations, and wildfires. For example: remediating impacts from mines, restoring areas after clear-cutting to prevent runoff, and controlling erosion after wildfires to reduce sediment loading in rivers and streams.
- **Other Water Treatment Projects:** Other water treatment activities that provide ecological benefits by improving water quality. For example: treating discharge to improve water quality of freshwater ecosystems.

## II.B. Supplemental Project Types

### II.B.1. Monitoring, Modeling, and Mapping

Eligible activities include projects that use monitoring, modeling, and mapping tools to inform science-driven management of the watershed. To be eligible, projects must contribute to the improvement of the ecological resilience of the river, stream, or riparian systems within the watershed. *Note: Projects composed entirely of monitoring, modeling, or mapping components are considered planning projects and are not eligible as standalone projects under this program. However, monitoring, modeling and mapping activities are eligible as a sub-component of another eligible watershed management project as described in sections II.A and II.B.* Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to:

- **Monitoring Activities:** Activities that monitor physical conditions and the health of animals, plants, and other organisms. For example: monitoring hydrology and channel structure and complexity; monitoring plant and animal communities' health; implementing a long-term water quality monitoring program to provide a basis for scientific assessment of water quality and associated management needs; and characterizing water quality near monitoring sites.
- **Modeling and Mapping Activities:** Activities that develop or use models, decision support tools, and maps to support watershed management. For example: using hydrologic modeling to evaluate potential alterations to operational reservoir releases for ecological benefits.

## III. Draft Evaluation Criteria – For Public Comment

The following evaluation criteria (III.A. – III.D.), **listed in descending order of priority**, are proposed for use by the Application Review Committee to rank proposals for watershed management projects, submitted under the CWMP Phase II projects FOA. Reclamation welcomes your comments on these draft evaluation criteria, including suggestions of additional criteria that should be considered, suggestions for clarifications or revisions, or other comments.

### III.A. Criterion A: Project Benefits

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the project will improve the ecological resilience of the river, stream, or riparian systems within the watershed. Proposals containing a well-supported and detailed description of both quantifiable and qualitative benefits will receive the most points under this criterion. Responses should include an explanation of how all estimates were determined. Applicants will be asked to address *all applicable* categories concerning the benefits of the project.

#### III.A.1. Benefits to Specific Species and Habitats

- Will the project benefit a species within the watershed? If so, how? Is the project expected to increase the local population of the species? Is the project expected to improve the health of individuals within the population? To what extent will the species benefit from the project?
- What is the status of the species that will benefit from the project (e.g., native species, federally threatened or endangered, state listed species)?
- If the proposed project will benefit federally listed threatened or endangered species, is the species subject to a recovery plan or conservation plan under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)? Has critical habitat been designated for the species? To what extent will the proposed project increase the likelihood of delisting, or otherwise improve the status of the species? If the species is not yet listed, to what extent will the project reduce the likelihood of listing?
- Will the project benefit habitat? If so, how? Will the project increase the habitat acreage, or improve the health or connectivity of the habitat? To what extent will the project benefit habitat?

### III.A.2. General Benefits to Freshwater and Riparian Ecosystems

- Will the project benefit the ecological resilience of the freshwater or riparian ecosystems in other ways? If so, how? Will the project contribute to an increase in biodiversity in the watershed, increase resilience to climate change, reduce flood risk, reduce bank erosion, or mitigate wildfire impacts? To what extent will the project benefit ecological resiliency?

### III.A.3. Benefits to Water Quality and Quantity

- Will the project result in long-term improvements to water quality? If so, how? Will the project establish a long-term, science based water quality monitoring program? Will the project reduce urban or agricultural runoff? Will the project mitigate mining or forestry activity? Will the project implement additional water treatment? To what extent will the project benefit water quality?
- Will the project result in improved management of water supplies through implementation of water conservation activities (e.g., metering devices, pipe lining, and alternative landscaping) or operational changes (e.g., withdrawals or discharge location or timing changes)? If so, how? Will the improved management increase in-stream flows or otherwise increase the ecological resiliency of the stream/river or riparian system? To what extent will the project improve water management?

### III.A.4. Other Watershed Benefits

- Will the project benefit watershed stakeholders in ways not addressed in the preceding questions? If so, how? Will the project reduce water conflicts within the watershed? Will the project provide benefits to recreation or other water uses not mentioned above? To what extent will the project benefit watershed stakeholders?

## III.B. Criterion B: Watershed Planning and Preparedness

This criterion evaluates the extent to which an existing watershed restoration plan supports the proposed watershed management project(s). Watershed restoration plans do not require Reclamation approval, but must address multiple issues related to water sources within the watershed, must provide support for the proposed project, and must have been prepared by the watershed group.

Applicants will be requested to attach the watershed restoration plan that they rely on in responding to this criterion.

- Describe how your proposed watershed management project is supported by the existing restoration plan.
  - Does the proposed project implement a goal or need identified in the restoration plan?
  - Describe how the proposed project is prioritized in the referenced restoration plan.
- Describe your watershed restoration plan, including the issues it addresses, when it was developed, and the process used to develop the plan. Was the restoration plan developed through a collaborative process? Was it developed with input from multiple stakeholders?

### III.C. Criterion C: Project Implementation

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the watershed group is capable of proceeding with the proposed project upon entering into a financial assistance agreement. Applicants that describe a detailed plan (e.g., estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates) will receive the most points under this criterion.

- Describe the implementation plan for the proposed project. Please include an estimated project schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work, including major tasks, milestones, and dates. Also, include a detailed project budget outlining costs for specific tasks.
- Describe any permits that will be required, along with the process for obtaining such permits.
- Identify and describe any engineering or design work performed specifically in support of the proposed project.
- Describe any new policies or administrative actions required to implement the project.

### **III.D. Criterion D: Performance Measures**

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the applicant will monitor the progress and effectiveness of the project.

- Please describe the performance measures that will be used to quantify actual benefits to the water quality and ecological resilience of the watershed upon completion of the project. Include support for why the specific performance measures were chosen. If this project is part of an adaptive management strategy for the watershed, describe how the project fits into the adaptive strategy.

### **III.E. Criterion E: Nexus to Reclamation**

This criterion evaluates the extent that the proposal demonstrates a nexus between the proposed project and a Reclamation project or activity. Applicants should describe the nexus between the proposed project and a Reclamation project or activity, including:

- How is the proposed project connected to a Reclamation project or activity?
- Is there a Reclamation project within the watershed or is the watershed otherwise affected by a Reclamation project?
- Will the proposed work contribute water to a basin where a Reclamation project is located?
- Will the project help Reclamation meet trust responsibilities to any tribe(s)?
- Does the proposed project support implementation of a relevant Department of the Interior initiative?