



# Environmental Water Resources Projects

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects is a new category of funding to support projects focused on benefits to ecological values or watershed health and that have been developed as part of a collaborative process to help carry out an established strategy to increase the reliability of water resources.

## Eligible Projects

Applicants are invited to leverage their money and resources by cost sharing with Reclamation on Environmental Water Resources Projects, including (1) water conservation and efficiency projects that result in quantifiable and sustained water savings and benefit ecological values or watershed health; (2) water management or infrastructure improvements with benefits to ecological values or watershed health; and restoration projects benefitting ecological values or watershed health that have a nexus to water resources or water resources management. Eligible activities include, but is not limited to, project that:

- Improve the timing or quantity of water available.
- Improve water quality and temperature.
- Improve stream or riparian conditions for the benefit of plant and animal species, fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, watershed health, and ecosystems.
- Restore a natural feature or use a nature-based feature to reduce water supply and demand imbalances or the risk of drought or flooding.
- Projects that otherwise mitigate against the impacts of climate change to fish and wildlife habitats.

Projects that provide benefits to multiple sectors, including projects that benefit ecological values or watershed health and agricultural, municipal, tribal, or recreation water uses, are encouraged and prioritized.

Section 40907 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes additional authority for Reclamation to provide funding for multi-benefit projects that improve watershed health. Reclamation will implement Section 40907 through the WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects, and additional details will be contained in the funding opportunity.

## Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include states; tribes; irrigation districts; water districts; state, regional, or local authorities, whose members include one or more organization with water or power delivery authority; other organizations with water or power delivery authority; and nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of an entity previously described. To be eligible, applicants must be in the Western United States or U.S. Territories. Entities located in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are also eligible to apply.

## Funding Levels

Program funding is allocated through a competitive processes. Applicants for Environmental Water Resources Projects may request federal funding up to \$3 million for projects with total project costs of \$6 million or less to be completed within 3 years. Projects that increase water supply reliability for ecological value and developed as part of a collaborative process may be eligible to receive up to 75% Federal cost-share contribution.

## Featured Projects

In 2022, Rogue Valley Council of Governments was selected to receive approximately \$784,000 to restore natural channel hydrology and fish passage to a highly disturbed reach of Bear Creek within the City of Medford, Oregon. Bear Creek, a tributary to the Rogue River, provides important spawning and rearing habitat for Southern Oregon and Northern California Coasts coho salmon, which are impacted by poor water quality, low flow, and restrictions to fish passage and listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and are a culturally significant species for local tribes. This project will remove three existing barriers and install large wood and gravel to increase suitable habitat for salmon spawning. These actions will improve access to 8 miles of potential spawning and rearing habitat for several native fish species and improve water quality by reducing polluted sediment, increasing oxygenation and decreasing water temperatures. Other project benefits include reducing bank erosion, stream-bed improvements to improve stream functions, and improved aesthetic value of the recreational Bear Creek Greenway multi-use trail. The trail also follows an ancient travel route used by the Shasta and Takelma Indians and restoration of seasonal flow to the ancestral lands provides important benefits to culturally significant species. The project is supported by the Rogue Basin Action Plan and multiple partners, including the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Rogue River Valley Irrigation District, the City of Medford, and the Rogue River Watershed Council.

In 2022, The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with the Maybell Irrigation District, was selected to receive approximately \$1.9 million to improve the instream Maybell diversion on the Yampa River and restore endangered fish habitat in Moffat County, located in northwest Colorado. The existing diversion structure impedes the safe passage of three endangered fish species and one threatened fish species and is a danger to recreational watercraft. The project partners will install a series of boulder grade control structures to maintain water depth, improve fish passage, and reduce boating hazards. The partners will also improve the current diversion structure by filling in large holes that require push-up dams to be annually constructed during low flows, restructuring the stream bed, and installing supervisory control and data acquisition infrastructure to better manage water flow. This project will improve fish passage across the diversion while preserving water rights to agricultural stakeholders. This project is aligned with the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and Maybell Improvement Plan, which involve collaboration by federal, regional, water district, recreational group, and other stakeholders.

**For more information:** Please visit [www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html](http://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html) or contact Avra Morgan, at 303-445-2906 or [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov), or Robin Graber, at 303-445-2764 or [rgraber@usbr.gov](mailto:rgraber@usbr.gov).

For more information on selected projects, visit the WaterSMART Data Visualization Tool at [www.usbr.gov/watersmart](http://www.usbr.gov/watersmart).