WaterSMART Funding for Stream Restoration

Opportunities for Watershed Groups

Avra Morgan – TNC

Nathan Boyer-Rechlin – Audubon

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Presentation Overview

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Opportunities for Watershed Groups & How to Scope A Competitive Stream Restoration Proposal

- WaterSMART Funding Opportunities
  - Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP)
  - Enhancing Water Resources Projects (EWRP)
  - Applied Science
- What advantages & opportunities do you have as a Watershed Group?
- What opportunities do these programs offer stream restoration projects?
- Application Requirements and Tips
  - How to Make Your Stream Restoration Proposal Successful
  - Project examples
- Questions

WaterSMART Funding Opportunities

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Open Now

Good option for entities that are not watershed groups

	Enhancing Water Resources Projects	***Cooperative Watershed Management Program***	***Applied Science***
Project Types	▪ Multi benefit projects/ restoration	▪ Establish/expand group; planning; design; prioritizing and scoping projects	▪ Modeling, forecasting, data and dashboards
Funding Amounts	▪ Up to $3M per project; $6M max total cost; $60M available ▪ Cost share: 25% or 50%	▪ $300k/project; $100k per year; $25M available ▪ Cost share: 0	▪ $6M, $400k per project ▪ Cost share: 50%
Deadline	First deadline: September 9, 2026 Second Deadline: September 8, 2027	▪ October 7, 2026 ▪ February 24, 2027 ▪ September 1, 2027 ▪ February 15, 2028	▪ April 13, 2027
News you can use	Best WaterSMART NOFO for OTG LTPBR Projects.	▪ Only Open to Watershed Groups **or** organizations convening a WSG ▪ Watershed planning, project scoping and design. ▪ Not for project implementation	▪ Tie your project to water management issues ▪ For non-watershed groups who do not qualify for CWMP

Opportunities for Watershed Groups

CWMP

- Funding is only available to Watershed Groups*
- No Cost-Share Required
- Can Fund Multiple Components – Project Design, Management Planning, etc..
- Time to Scope Proposals: 4 rounds of funding over two years
- Can fund stakeholder engagement

*other organizations can apply **only** if supporting the creation of a new watershed group, and these applications can also include other components such as design or watershed planning.

EWRP

- Watershed Groups are the only type of NGO who can apply independently, without a public partner.
- Applications from Watershed Groups are reviewed & assessed separately from other applications.
- Time to scope Water Smart specific proposal for the 2027 deadline

Opportunities for Stream Restoration

CWMP

- Addresses the “design bottleneck”
- Can fund watershed planning, such as Wildfire Ready Watershed or IWMPs that will make projects more competitive for CWCB grants.
- Award ceiling of up to $300k could fund multiple components & meet multiple design needs.
- Can fund baseline monitoring including water quality & invertebrate studies.

EWRP

- Up to 25% of total project cost can go towards monitoring, including:
  - Purchasing & installing monitoring equipment
  - Pre-project monitoring
  - Developing a long-term (5 year) monitoring plan
  - 1 year of post project monitoring
- Multi-component projects that include fuels mitigation, high-tech restoration approaches, invasive species management, and agricultural collaborations.
- Can fund pre-fire projects

What qualifies as a "Watershed Group"

It is VERY Important to demonstrate you meet each requirement in your applications for both EWRP and CWMP

Existing Watershed Groups must meet the definition in the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Section 6001(6):

- A grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues in the watershed;
- Capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed;
- Make decisions on a consensus basis; and
- Represents diverse stakeholders including hydroelectric producers; livestock grazing; timber production; land development; recreation or tourism; irrigated agriculture; the environment; municipal water supplies; private property owners; Federal, state and local governments; Tribes; and disadvantaged communities.

Considerations

- Board run organizations meet the 'consensus-based decision making' requirement
- Having board members representing different sectors, history of partnership with different sectors, or targeted outreach in planning or project prioritization can demonstrate diverse stakeholder representation

Application Tips

You got this!

Get Ready	*Get Registered*	*Provide Support and Make your Case*
Choose the right NOFO	Grants.gov	Answer every question and argue that you fit the criteria
Contact the Program Coordinator	SAM.gov	Provide support – citations, facts, tables, charts
Look at past successful applications	UEI	Align project scope and budget Budget Narrative must show Federal and non-Federal Costs

Application Tips

- Watch the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART webinars for details on application requirements
  - Make sure you meet the screening requirements (see NOFO or Reclamation's WaterSMART webinar)
  - Do not wait to get your online accounts set up; SAM.gov, Grants.gov & UEI

- Read the NOFO thoroughly and contact the Program Coordinator as early as possible.

- Scope your project specifically for each NOFO to ensure you get points for each category

Application Tips

Language and Themes to Emphasize: Words Matter

Out

Previous Administration

- Climate change
- Disadvantaged communities
- Nature based solutions
- Planning
- Benefits

In

This Administration

- Drought
- Local control
- Resilience to wildfires and drought
- Infrastructure
- Metrics

Presidential and DOI Priorities

Identify Relevant Presidential/DOI Priorities to Cite

- *Do not dismiss this criterion, provide a brief but supported response*
- *The E.O.s listed are only examples: Point to other Federal priorities for restoration projects:*

- **E.O 14313 Establishing the President's Make America Beautiful Again Commission (July 3, 2025)**
  - Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources
  - Recover fish and wildlife populations through collaboration
  - Encourage voluntary conservation efforts
  - Access to clean drinking water
  - Restore aquatic ecosystems to improve water quality and availability
- **Colorado River Basin: "Supports water management and enhanced operational flexibility in Reclamation States, with priority given to the Colorado River Basin. … [In particular,] projects that could clearly lead to wet water being conserved in Lake Mead or any of the Colorado River Storage Project Initial Units."**
- **E.O. 14181 (January 24, 2025) Emergency Measures to Provide Water Resources in CA. Water delivery during drought.**
- **S.O. 3446 (Nov. 26, 2025), Directs Reclamation to empower districts, Tribes and water partners, and to accelerate water and power infrastructure.**

CWMP and EWRP

Overview

Cooperative Watershed Management Act appropriations are allocated under two funding opportunities:

- **Cooperative Watershed Management Program (Phase I)**

  Supports watershed group development, watershed management planning, and the design of on-the-ground watershed management projects. Only open to watershed groups, group members, and fiscal agents.

- **Enhancing Water Resources Projects (Phase II)**

  On-the-ground implementation of watershed management projects. Open to watershed groups, NGOs, irrigation and water districts, local government entities, states, Tribes

CWMP Grants – Applicant Eligibility

Who is applying?

Existing or New Watershed Group:

1. **Existing Watershed Group:** If your group has been active in the watershed and has previously conducted watershed planning, apply as an existing watershed group even if your group is not incorporated as a legal entity (i.e., through an eligible group member or fiscal sponsor). If you have received a CWMP grant previously, apply as an existing group.

2. **New Watershed Groups:** If you group is just getting started and has done very little watershed planning and requires more support to build the capacity group, apply as a new group.*

3. A member of a watershed group or fiscal agent may apply if they are a state, Tribe, local or special district, local governmental entity, interstate organization, institute of higher education, or a non-profit organization.*

***see the BOR WaterSMART webinar for information on convening a watershed group**

CWMP Phase I

Eligible Activities

Watershed restoration planning

- Mapping, data, modelling, other technical analyses
- Baseline studies (e.g., water quality, water quantity, vegetation surveys, invertebrate surveys)
- Developing goals or benchmarks
- Completing a new or updating an existing watershed restoration plan
- Developing general watershed management project concepts
- Identify and prioritize watershed management projects
- Monitoring, measurement and fieldwork costs cannot exceed 50% of total project costs

CWMP Phase I

Eligible Activities

Planning for project implementation and design

- Evaluating site alternatives to identify specific locations
- Developing project requirements and evaluating design alternatives
- Completing modeling, data collection, and other technical analyses to evaluate impacts of proposed restoration
- Carrying out relevant studies (environmental, biological, cultural, engineering)
- Preparing design drawings
- Preparing cost estimates and developing a project implementation plan

CWMP Grants – Project Examples

Existing Watershed Groups

Example 1:

Coalition for Poudre River, Lower Cache la Poudre River, CO

- Existing group focused on ecological health through community collaboration.
- Floodplain area and riparian habitat degraded by grazing and Ag. Will build on prior grant to bring 30% design to 80% for restoration of Reach 16 to connect river to floodplain and reduce flood risk and improve habitat.

Example 2:

Lefthand Watershed Oversight Group, St. Vrain Watershed, CO

- Existing watershed group will expand watershed planning to address increased fire frequency and intensity (e.g., Marshall fire). Will develop wildfire risk assessment, lead a watershed scale analysis, and prioritize river restoration projects that complement forest mitigation projects.

CWMP Phase I

Criteria A, B

A. Diversity and Geographic Scope

- How will you encourage collaboration with diverse stakeholders?
- Why is the geographic extent your group's work is focused on appropriate? Small-medium HUC 8 sized groups prioritized.
- Provide letter of support and maps

B. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Needs

- Critical issues: Describe issues, severity, and provide support
- Project benefits: how will your project address the critical issues? What stakeholders will benefit from your project?
- If doing project design, describe the conceptual restoration project and how it will address the critical issues

Merit Review Scoring Criteria	Points:
A. Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope	25
B. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs	25
C. Readiness to Proceed	15
D. Presidential and Department of Interior Priorities	30
E. Voluntary Cost-Share	5
Total	100

CWMP Phase I

Criteria C, D, and E

C. Readiness to Proceed

- Your schedule should have clear milestones – use a chart
- Budget should relate to milestones in the schedule

D. Presidential Priorities

- See prior slide. Note: Could your planning or design lead to wet water conserved in Colorado River Storage Project Initial Units?

E. Voluntary Cost Share

- In kind contributions can be counted

Merit Review Scoring Criteria	Points:
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E. Voluntary Cost-Share	5
Total	100

CWMP Phase I

Application Tips

Describe your Watershed Group

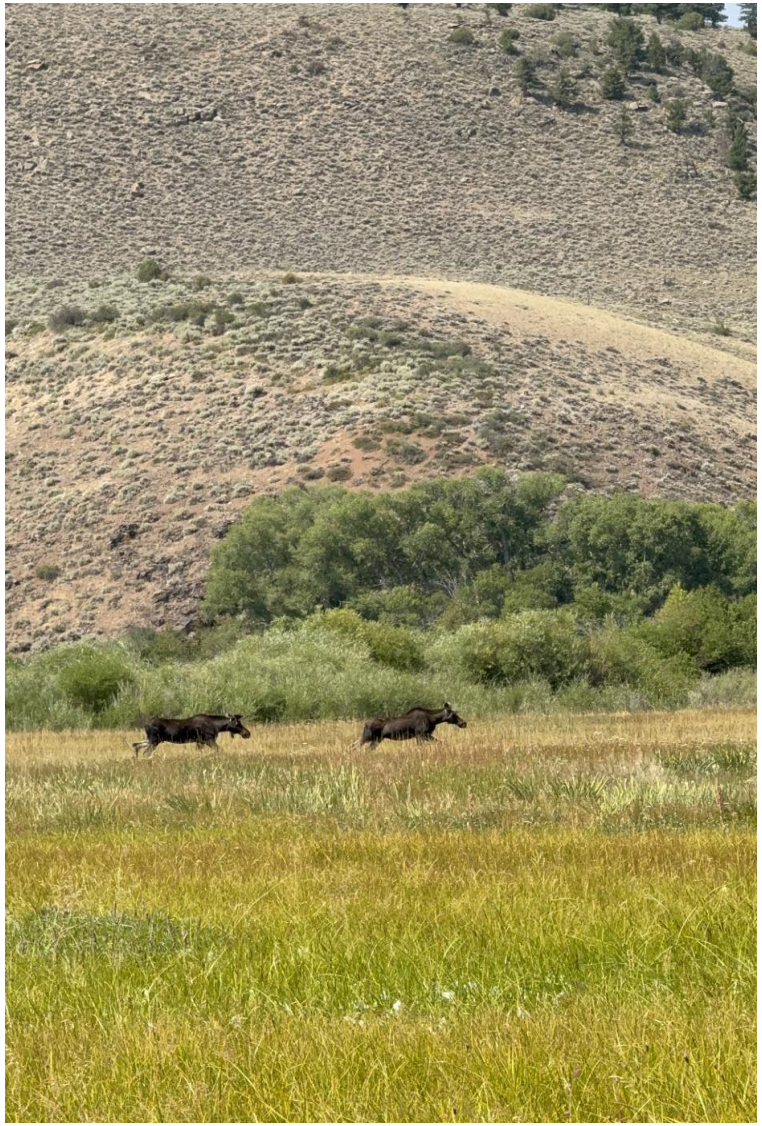
- Diversity can be established by showing that any of your board members or partners represent the interest of different sectors. Also talk about how you will engage stakeholders from across sectors, and how your work will benefit other sectors.

Explain the Nexus to Water Resources Management

- If your project will address wildfire mitigation, explain how that will benefit water quantity and quality by reducing risk of increased sediment and debris or damaged infrastructure from fire damage.

Always Provide Support

- Provide plenty of support, qualitative and quantitative, for your answers, e.g., reference reports, scientific analyses, provide charts and data, maps and letters of support.



EWRP

Applicant Eligibility

All Applicants:

- Within these limits, you can submit multiple applications under a single funding opportunity, if the project scopes are not duplicative
- Applicants may request up to $3M per project and total cost may not exceed $6M
- Applicants may request up to $3M per project and total cost (multiple projects) may not exceed $9M per award period

Category A applicants

- Public organizations such as states, tribes, irrigation/water districts, water utilities.

Category B applicants

- NGOs that are required to partner with a Category A partner to submit an application

Category C applicants

- Watershed groups as defined in the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Section 6001(6).
- Partnering with a Category A partner
    - **Agricultural partner is preferred/the most beneficial**
    - Only requires 25% match
    - Need to demonstrate partner engagement **beyond** just a letter of support, such as
        - Regular planning/oversight meetings
        - Sub-contracting certain parts of project management
- Submitting Individually
    - If you cannot find a Category A partner
    - Required 50% match

EWRP

Eligible Projects

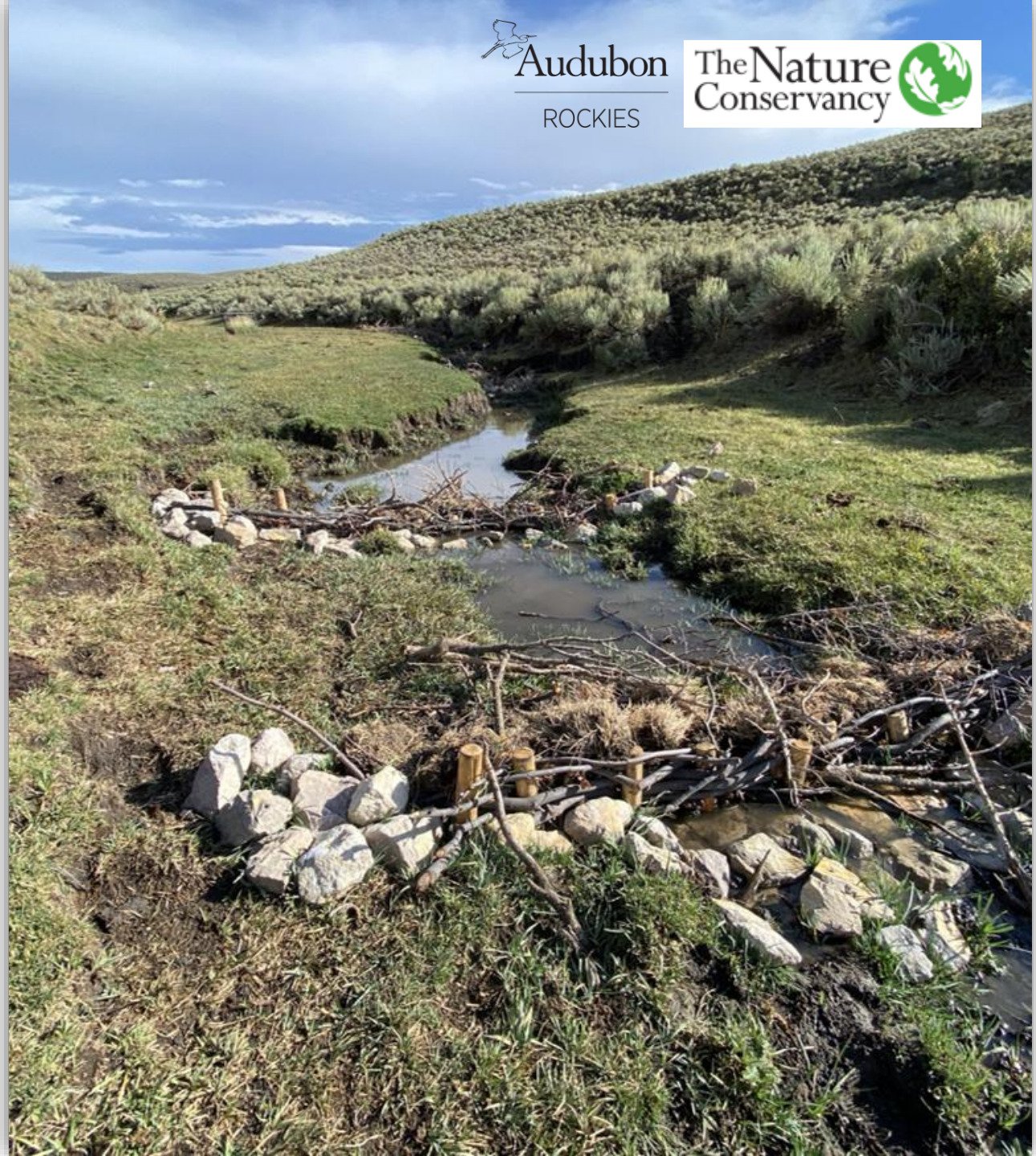
1. Water supply reliability
2. Strategic water management
3. Restoration
4. Monitoring plans
5. Project specific stakeholder engagement and outreach
6. Invasives species treatment
7. Fisheries management
8. Forest management

EWRP

Eligible Projects

Restoration

- Restoration of aquatic, riparian, or floodplain habitat
- Restoration of lateral floodplain and/or wetland connectivity with a river channel
- Implementation of beaver dam analogs, post-assisted log structures, wetland construction for treatment of irrigation water or stormwater flows
- Water quality or temperature improvement actions



EWRP

Eligible Projects

Monitoring plans

- Development of a monitoring plan, pre-construction monitoring, installing monitoring equipment and 12 months of post construction monitoring. Can't exceed 25% of total project costs.

Stakeholder engagement

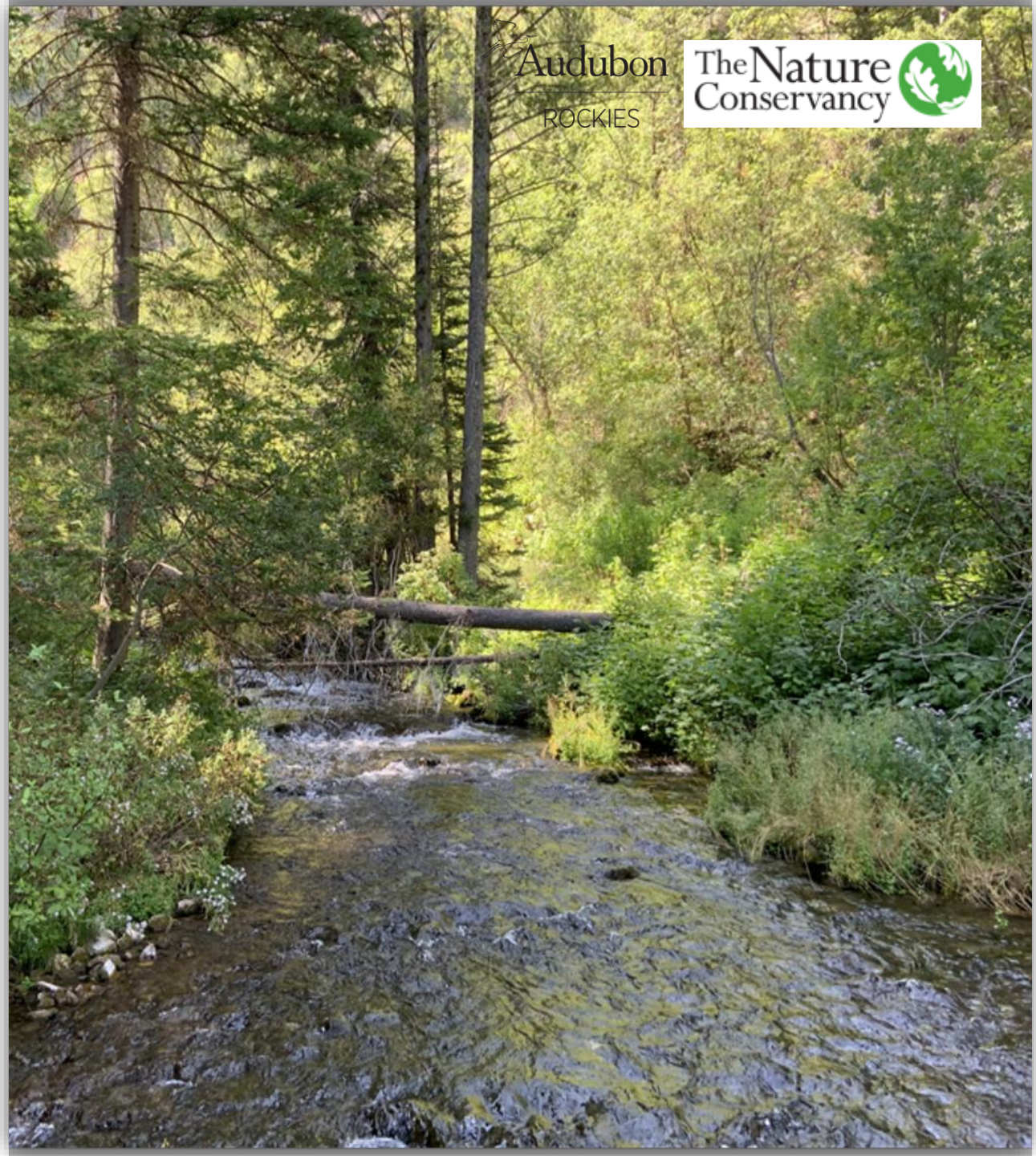
- Project-specific stakeholder outreach regarding final planning and construction processes with diverse stakeholders

Invasives species treatment

- Treat or remove invasive vegetation and revegetate; removal of non-native fish

Forest Management

- Fuels management and post-fire restoration. Must have nexus to water resources or water management. Will only fund once per footprint.



EWRP

Restoration and Multi-Benefit Project Examples

Example 1:

Headwaters Alliance, Willow Creek in North Creede, CO

- The Alliance established 2.2 acres of vegetated floodplain and restored 3,300 linear feet of Willow Creek by incorporating boulder riffles, engineered log jams, and other structures within the stream channel, stabilizing erosive streambanks and addressing temperature and sediment transport, and protecting critical infrastructure.

Example 2:

Ruby Valley Conservation District, MT

- The District partnered with TU to complete a multi-benefit habitat restoration and irrigation infrastructure protection project, restoring a 7,700-foot side channel so water could reach irrigators through the Gideon-Root Ditch and to provide high-quality fish habitat. They upgraded the headgate to allow fish passage, improve efficiency, and reduce maintenance requirements

EWRP

Criteria

A. Project benefits: Quantitative and qualitative support for benefits to multiple users, stakeholders and interests and critical infrastructure, fisheries, recreation, the economy, and avoiding conflicts.
- Water supply, quality and system benefits
- Fish and wildlife benefits
- Project performance and monitoring

B. Project planning and support: Was the project identified through a prior planning document through a collaborative process with diverse stakeholders?
- Project identified through a planning document developed collaboratively with input from diverse stakeholders?
- Current stakeholder support for the project.

C. Readiness to proceed
- Design and engineering
- Environmental and cultural compliance
- Project schedule and budget

D. Presidential and DOI priorities (See CWMP slide)
- See America the Beautiful priority
- Could this project result in additional water in an initial unit of a Colorado River Basin project?

E. Construction priority:
- Tangible or built "hard" infrastructure prioritized

F. Cost-share priority: Can you exceed the minimum by 5%?

Merit Review Scoring Criteria	Points:
A. Project benefits	40
B. Project planning and support	15
C. Readiness to proceed	15
D. Presidential and Department of Interior priorities	20
E. Construction priority	10
F. Cost-Share priority	5
Total	105

EWRP

Design

Criterion D Readiness to proceed

- Design and engineering
- Environmental and cultural compliance
- Project schedule and budget
- *Projects at an advanced stage of engineering, generally 60% final design, are prioritized under this criterion.*

Considerations

- Review committee considers the nature of the project when assessing design readiness. NBS/ process-based restoration design progression looks much different than a formally engineered structure.
- NBS projects should include:
  - A narrowed list of the types of structures
  - Target quantities
  - As narrow a target reach of stream as possible
  - Explain the adaptive process and how they will reach/ make final design and siting choices.
  - Applicant needs to show that the design has evolved beyond a conceptual level (sticks somewhere in the river vs. 7 PALS, 13 BDA's in this half mile stretch of this specific creek to achieve X benefits),
  - Must be ready to advance to environmental compliance proceedings

EWRP

Construction Priority

Criterion E Construction Priority (10 Points)

- Tangible or built “hard” infrastructure prioritized

Considerations

- Full points under this criterion will be reserved for 'traditional' hard infrastructure components such as diversion modifications, hardened engineered fish weirs/ ramps, and other similar activities.
- Review committee will be encouraged to consider NBS in the middle point range
- Projects such as removal of invasives or riparian planting, with no infrastructure components may receive no points under this criterion.
- Multi-component projects where one component could qualify as hard infrastructure should be entitled to the full amount of points

EWRP

Application Tips

Explain Benefits to Water Resources Management and Multiple Sectors

- Nexus to water supply or delivery – needs to align with the Bureau of Reclamation's purpose.
- It is critical to describe the benefits of your restoration project in terms of how the project will improve water management, i.e., benefits to water supply, water quality, endangered species management, AND BENEFITS TO MULTIPLE SECTORS OF WATER USERS, e.g., benefits to agriculture, municipalities, recreation, tribes, avoiding water conflicts, and supporting economies.
- Including a water supply infrastructure component & working with agriculture will be very helpful, if you have the opportunity.

Always Provide Support

- Make the case that your project is a good fit and provide plenty of support, qualitative and quantitative, for your answers, e.g., reference reports, scientific analyses, provide charts and data, maps and letters of support.

Applied Science

Project Types

Modeling:

Develop or improve models to improve flexibility in water management. Includes hydrologic, reservoir operations, groundwater, and other models.

Data, Dashboards and Decision Support Tools:

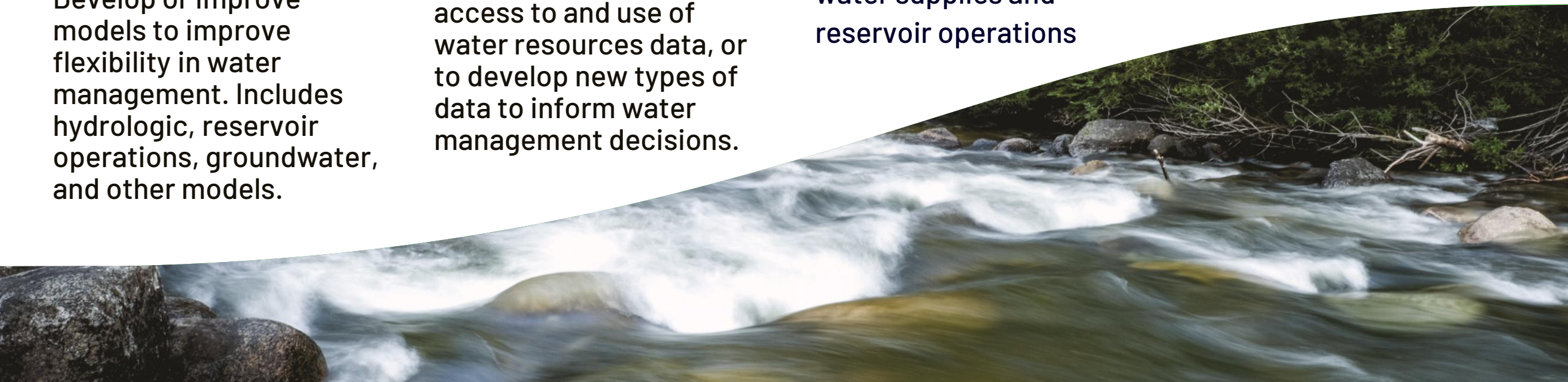
Projects to improve access to and use of water resources data, or to develop new types of data to inform water management decisions.

Forecasting:

Develop, improve, or adapt forecasting tools and technologies to enhance management of water supplies and reservoir operations

Forecasting with Snow Measurement Data:

Improve water supply forecasting by integrating snow measurement data, such as aerial light detection and ranging (LiDAR) snow surveys.



Applied Science Projects – Project Examples

Data and mapping benefitting watershed health

Example 1:

Tuolumne County, Stanislaus and Tuolumne River Basins in California

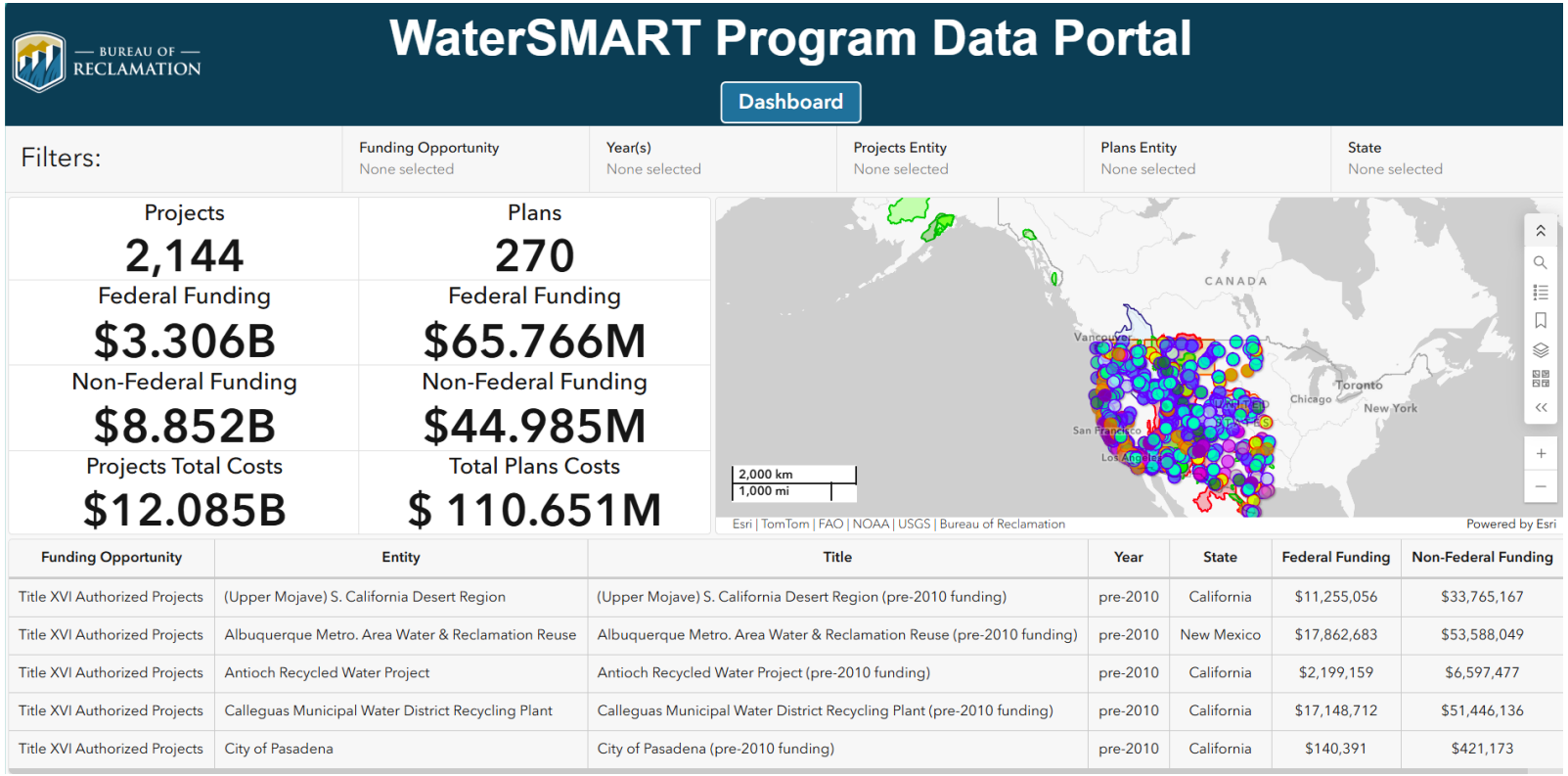
- Develop information **to improve watershed restoration treatments** by quantifying and analyzing impacts of climate, watershed management, and **wildfire** on **watershed health** to provide a scientific basis for **advancing nature-based climate solutions** for wildfire risk reduction and fire management decisions.

Example 2:

World Wildlife Fund, Rio Grande River, New Mexico

- Map vegetation and estimate water savings benefits of **replacing invasive riparian vegetation species** with native pants to reduce evapotranspiration on the Rio Grande. Resulting water savings will benefit ecosystems, compact compliance, and agriculture.

Reclamation Resources



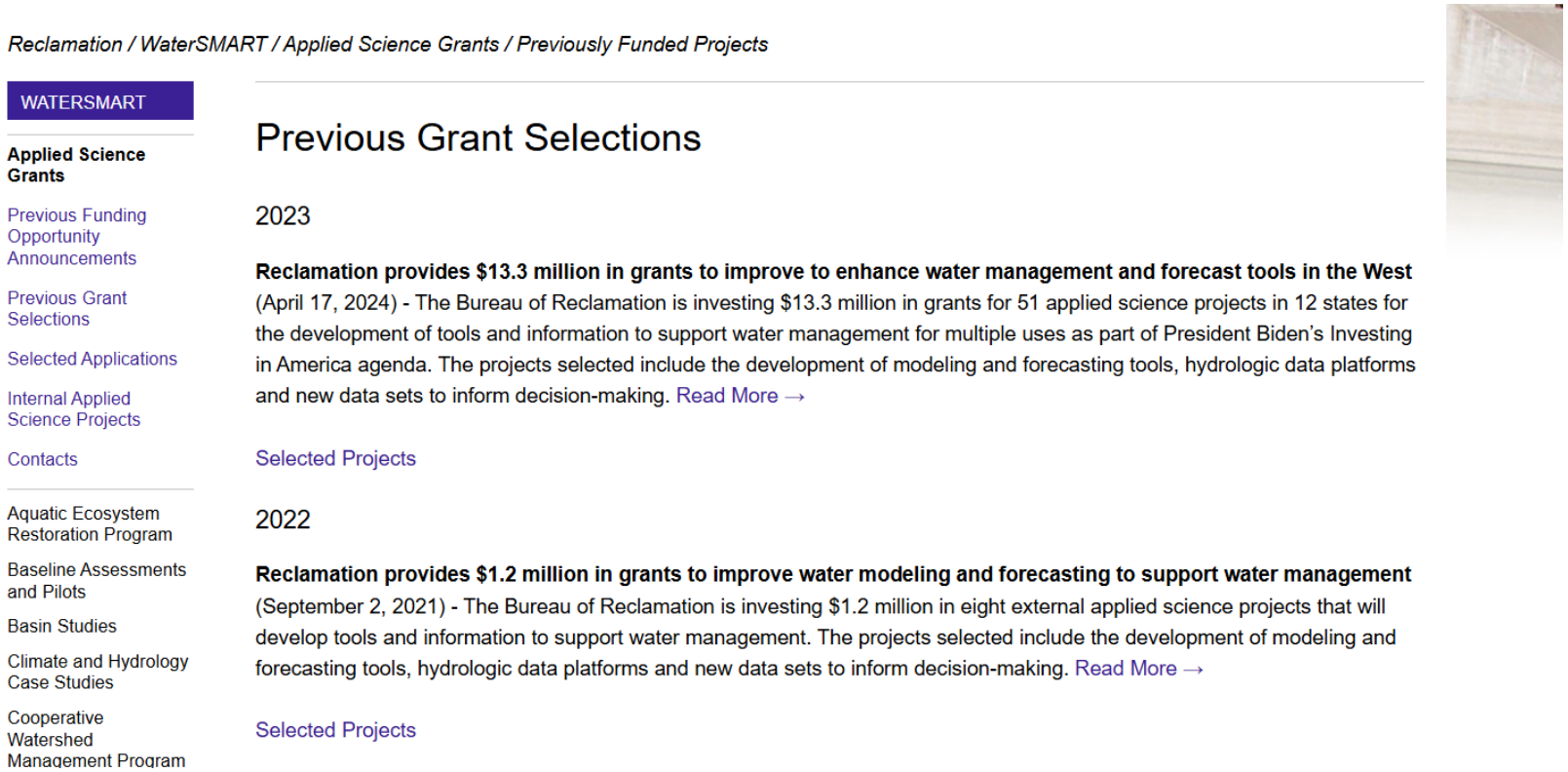
Funding Opportunity	Entity	Title	Year	State	Federal Funding	Non-Federal Funding
Title XVI Authorized Projects	(Upper Mojave) S. California Desert Region	(Upper Mojave) S. California Desert Region (pre-2010 funding)	pre-2010	California	$11,255,056	$33,765,167
Title XVI Authorized Projects	Albuquerque Metro. Area Water & Reclamation Reuse	Albuquerque Metro. Area Water & Reclamation Reuse (pre-2010 funding)	pre-2010	New Mexico	$17,862,683	$53,588,049
Title XVI Authorized Projects	Antioch Recycled Water Project	Antioch Recycled Water Project (pre-2010 funding)	pre-2010	California	$2,199,159	$6,597,477
Title XVI Authorized Projects	Calleguas Municipal Water District Recycling Plant	Calleguas Municipal Water District Recycling Plant (pre-2010 funding)	pre-2010	California	$17,148,712	$51,446,136
Title XVI Authorized Projects	City of Pasadena	City of Pasadena (pre-2010 funding)	pre-2010	California	$140,391	$421,173

WaterSMART website: www.usbr.gov/watersmart/

Yampa River at Carpenter Ranch

Reclamation Resources

- WaterSMART website: www.usbr.gov/watersmart/
- See “Previous Grant Selections” for short summaries of selected grants
- See “Selected Applications” for the proposal



Reclamation / WaterSMART / Applied Science Grants / Previously Funded Projects

WATERSMART

Applied Science Grants

Previous Funding Opportunity Announcements

Previous Grant Selections

Selected Applications

Internal Applied Science Projects

Contacts

Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program

Baseline Assessments and Pilots

Basin Studies

Climate and Hydrology Case Studies

Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Previous Grant Selections

2023

Reclamation provides $13.3 million in grants to improve to enhance water management and forecast tools in the West
(April 17, 2024) - The Bureau of Reclamation is investing $13.3 million in grants for 51 applied science projects in 12 states for the development of tools and information to support water management for multiple uses as part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda. The projects selected include the development of modeling and forecasting tools, hydrologic data platforms and new data sets to inform decision-making. Read More →

Selected Projects

2022

Reclamation provides $1.2 million in grants to improve water modeling and forecasting to support water management
(September 2, 2021) - The Bureau of Reclamation is investing $1.2 million in eight external applied science projects that will develop tools and information to support water management. The projects selected include the development of modeling and forecasting tools, hydrologic data platforms and new data sets to inform decision-making. Read More →

Selected Projects

Questions?

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The Nature Conservancy

	CWMP	EWRP
Project Scoping & Stakeholder Engagement	**YES**	**NO**
Site Assessment & Early-Stage Design	**YES**	**NO**
Restoration Design Plan	**YES** (best fit)	**MAYBE –** only if you can show 60% design is completed, target reach, types of structures and design & estimated numbers of structures need to be established. EWRP can fund final restoration design plan – need to frame as the final 40% of design work, not the full design.
Federal & State Permitting	**NO**	**YES**
Environmental Compliance (NEPA/ESA etc..)	**NO**	**YES** – needs be included in the budget (not covered by BOR)
Monitoring Plans & Baseline Monitoring	**YES** – best for watershed scale baseline monitoring & prioritization	**YES** – Project specific baseline monitoring; large amount of $$ available especially for larger projects (25%)
Project Implementation	**NO**	**YES**
Post Project Monitoring (1 year)	**NO**	**YES**