

SUSTAINABLE SANGRES WATERSHED ALLIANCE



Applicant:

San Isabel Land Protection Trust

P.O. Box 124

Westcliffe, Colorado 81252

Project Manager:

Linda Poole, Executive Director

linda@sanisabel.org

719.783.3018

Table of Contents

- Executive Summary..... 1
 - Project Summary..... 1
- Background Data..... 2
- Project Location 4
- Technical Project Description 5
- Evaluation Criteria..... 8
- Project Budget..... 25
 - Budget Proposal..... 25
 - Budget Narrative..... 26
 - Funding Plan..... 27
 - Cost Share and In-Kind Contributions..... 27
- Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance..... 28
 - Required permits or approvals: 30
 - National Environmental Policy Act: 30
 - National Historic Preservation Act:..... 30
 - Endangered Species Act:..... 30
- Letters of Project Support..... 30
- Official Resolution 31
- Unique Entity Identifier and System for Aware Management 31

Appendix: Letter of Commitment – San Isabel Land Protection Trust

Technical Proposal and Evaluation Criteria

Executive Summary

San Isabel Land Protection Trust, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to conserve land, water and wildlife in four counties lying east of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in southern Colorado. We are headquartered in the town of Westcliffe in Custer County, Colorado. On November 12, 2019, we respectfully request \$99,923 in federal funding to initiate a **new watershed alliance** in a headwaters region of the Arkansas River. This two-year, \$133,003 project will invite all interested parties – including over 20 diverse stakeholder groups – to a consensus-based, science-informed process to create a shared 100-year vision for watershed health, community resilience and economic prosperity for the 420,681-acre Wet Mountain Valley watershed. Based on that long-term vision, the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will draft an outline for a watershed restoration plan for the Wet Mountain Valley that includes water, forest, riparian and socioeconomic components. All work will be completed by June 30, 2022. The proposed project is not located on a federal facility.

Project Summary

The Alliance will combine the robust strength of broad-based collaborations with wisdom conferred by the best available science on watershed issues and management alternatives. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will incorporate:

- 1) **Science:** We will gather the best available site-specific information on water quality, water balance, current and projected human use, forest and rangeland health, riparian condition, fire threats and wildlife habitat within the watershed. We will determine and prioritize data gaps. We will research best management practices and assess alternatives to meet the 100-year vision for watershed health. This task includes hiring a watershed scientist to lead science efforts, including outreach to government agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations.
- 2) **Consensus-based Collaboration:** All entities and individuals concerned with watershed issues in the Wet Mountain Valley will be invited to participate in a series of six to eight professionally facilitated meetings which will culminate in A) the organizational structure, bylaws and policies for the Alliance; B) a shared 100-year vision for a sustainable and resilient watershed; and C) the framework for a 10-year restoration plan for the watershed. We anticipate that at least 20 unique stakeholder groups will participate, while planning for 30. We will reach out to the Navajo Nation, as recent purchasers of the largest ranch in the Valley, to ensure that they are apprised of this planning effort and to request their participation in the collaborative process. This task

includes hiring a skilled facilitator to help design and lead implementation of the collaborative process.

- 3) **Information and Outreach:** We will issue both open and targeted invitations to ensure diverse stakeholders are represented. We will assemble and widely disseminate the best available informational materials in advance of scheduled meetings. We will reach out on a timely and frequent basis through brochures, newsletters, radio interviews, social media and email blasts with data and information tailored to the interests of stakeholder groups such as water suppliers and well owners; recreation and tourism; real estate and development; agriculture and ranching; timber and wildfire; municipalities and other groups. Several stakeholder meetings will include invited experts to address our watershed-specific issues of concern.
- 4) **Planning for Sustainability:** Our project begins with creating a shared, century-long plan for people and nature to thrive in the Wet Mountain Valley. In all aspects of this work – the governance system we set in place for our alliance, the process by which we hold our meetings, and the restoration plan we build – our actions must be truly feasible while also actively regenerating our landscape, economy and social systems to build resilience to current and looming challenges. Our watershed vision and restoration plan will build toward goals expressed in state and federal plans including EPA’s Watershed Planning guidance, Colorado State Water Plan, Arkansas Basin Roundtable’s Basin Implementation Plan, Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan, Wildfire Mitigation Plans for Custer and Fremont Counties, and water quality initiatives that assist in improving impaired waters listed under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

This planning effort is scheduled to run from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will be led by the San Isabel Land Protection Trust; our office is not located on a Federal facility. Federal lands managed by the USFS and BLM occur within our planning area.

Background Data

Between 2000 and 2017 the population in Custer County grew by 38%, far beyond the national average county growth rate of 15%. The University of Colorado in 2000 analyzed Custer County demography, land use, zoning and marketing data and predicted that without wise planning, nearly 30,000 acres of hayfields, 93,000 acres of livestock rangeland, 18,000 acres of habitat for threatened and endangered species, and 11,000 acres of game species habitat will be lost over the next 25 years. This could affect up to 36% of the lands in the watershed. It would result in a valley unrecognizable from the one today (Sonoran Institute, 2004).

The availability of water limits human carrying capacity throughout Colorado, and the Wet Mountain valley is no exception. Understanding how to live within the constraints imposed by water availability, increasing climate variability, and ongoing development pressures are

challenging local leadership to develop and enact sustainable solutions that support smart growth and economic prosperity.

Wet Mountain Valley ranchers and farmers rely primarily on surface water for irrigation necessary for hay and livestock production that are our agricultural mainstays. But it is groundwater, in both alluvial and fractured rock aquifers, that provides the principal supply for municipal, industrial, commercial and domestic uses. Senior water rights include surface diversions, springs, non-exempt and exempt wells that date back to the early 1860s. Instream flow rights are slowly being developed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board for many tributaries of Grape and Texas Creeks. A complete listing of all the myriad water rights in our watershed is already compiled in a Colorado-based water rights and land platform developed by B3Insight. This tool will help us manage the multiple sources of data needed to understand the current status of our watershed. A Stream Management Plan for the Fremont County reach of Grape Creek, downstream of Lake DeWeese, is soon to be developed by the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative.

Grape Creek and Lake DeWeese are on Colorado's Section 303(d) Clean Water Act list of impaired waters; arsenic contributes to downstream water supply impairments along the Arkansas River immediately upstream of the terminal reservoir for the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, Pueblo Dam and Reservoir. Pueblo Reservoir is a major source of municipal water supplies to the communities of Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Pueblo West and smaller towns downstream of Pueblo Dam. Pueblo Reservoir has recently added hydropower capability through completion of the Broderick Hydropower Plant.

The Wet Mountain Valley watershed faces daunting challenges from 21st century concerns including climate change, water availability, forest and land health, catastrophic fire and flood, development pressures and agricultural buy and dry. It is imperative that we take wise, swift action to safeguard the working wildlands, springs and riparian corridors that are cherished by residents and visitors alike. Aspects of water today are shaping the biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, economic prosperity and quality of life for future generations.

The alluvial aquifer is showing signs of water stress that may impair riparian environments as well as local economics. Our fractured rock aquifers are not monitored or well understood, yet they support most households outside the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff. Fractured rock aquifers underlying the Wet Mountains and DeWeese Plateau are under stress from increasing development density; over pumping may lead to drying wells and the loss of springs and wetlands that support native plants and animals.

As forested uplands experience more catastrophic fire, it is essential that more needs to be done to restore forest health. Climate variability and droughts are increasing, and our communities are increasingly affected by catastrophic wildfires. Since 2002 our two-county area has experienced 11 wildfires totaling 52,424 acres. The most devastating fires have followed drought and extensive beetle-kill in our upland forests, which include lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the state of Colorado. Private lands

at the wildland-suburban interface pose ignition risks and are vulnerable to structure loss. Custer and Fremont Counties have many lands at high risk for future wildfire, and though Community Wildfire Protection Plans have been developed, additional partnerships can help address fire risk related to watershed health.

Project Location

The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will work in the Texas and Grape Creek watersheds. These streams traverse Custer and Fremont Counties of Colorado, with confluences to the Arkansas River approximately 60 - 80 miles upstream and west of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Pueblo Dam and Reservoir. The planning area includes areas in and around the towns of Westcliffe and Silver Cliff, Colorado, located in the heart of Custer County.



The bold blue outline indicates the planning area of concern to the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance. The area comprises the southwest portion of the Arkansas Headwaters (USGS HUC-8 11020001) and includes about 21% of the 1,961,590 acres in this unit. Our planning area includes three HUC-10 watersheds for Grape and Texas Creeks, extending to their confluence with the Arkansas River about 60 miles upstream of Pueblo Dam and Reservoir.

SUSTAINABLE SANGRES WATERSHED ALLIANCE – PLANNING AREA

<u>USGS HUC-10 Code</u>	<u>Watershed</u>	<u>Counties</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Area (acres)</u>
11020000110	Texas Creek	Custer, Fremont	CO	74,173
11020000112	Headwaters: Grape Creek	Custer	CO	226,320
11020000113	Outlet: Grape Creek	Custer	CO	120,188
TOTAL ACRES:				420,681

Technical Project Description

We will perform the following tasks to establish community conversations and planning activities that will be the essential work of the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance.

Task 1. Science: Gather, interpret, disseminate and generate accurate science-based data to form a basis for long-range planning.

- Hire watershed scientist to provide technical expertise and develop scientific data to ground the planning effort. Surface water and groundwater availability and quality are critical resources of interest in this watershed planning effort. Improving forest, rangeland and riparian ecosystem health will be targeted.
- Contract with B3Insight to use and further develop their data analytics tool (B3Insight: Land and Water Planning Tool) that integrates data from federal, state and local sources including water rights, instream flow reaches, land use, wildfire footprints, zoning, geology and other publicly-accessible data themes.
- Assemble and engage a team of science advisors drawing from the technical expertise of stakeholders and outside experts to guide information gathering and dissemination.
- Gather, interpret, summarize and develop data in formats to support 6-8 community-wide consensus meetings.

Deliverables and Milestones: Watershed data compiled in maps, tables, drawings and other depictions conducive to analysis and meeting support.

Task 2. Consensus-Based Collaboration: Continue and expand networking with a diverse group of stakeholders including resource, water, and community groups and share available science to facilitate shared planning for a sustainable future.

- Assemble a diverse core team to guide project implementation. All interested entities may participate, with at least one entity representing categories of science, conservation, agriculture, local government and economic development.
- In the first meeting, develop guidelines for the collaborative process of developing the mission, vision, values and goals of the Alliance.
- Hold first 4 community-wide development and visioning meetings with the goal of building a data-based foundation concerning the status of our watershed and creating a 100-year vision and goals for the watershed. Address water availability and water quality, land health, land use and wildfire from the triple-bottomline of environment, economics, and social systems.
- Arrange for presentations by legal, accounting and other advisors supporting the watershed collaborative.
- Building on the first 4 meetings and progress on Task 4, hold second set of 2-4 community-wide consensus meetings with outcomes including the approval of organizational framework documents such as by-laws.

- In addition to developing mission, vision, goals and by-laws, during the final two meetings, formulate a broad outline for issues of concern to be included in a watershed restoration plan for the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance.

Deliverables and Milestones: Facilitate a total of 6-8 meetings among a diverse set of stakeholders to organize the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance, develop the 100-year vision, goals, mission statement, by-laws and identify the major issues of concern.

Task 3. Information and Outreach: Bring all willing and interested entities and individuals into an effective long-range planning process that provides for resilient watersheds and ecosystems that sustain socioeconomic viability for the next 100 years.

- Core team plans project specifics, hires facilitator, develops public outreach plan including information materials, and plans first year meetings.
- Develop outreach materials to seed conversations based on known issues concerning water availability, water quality, forest health and wildfire. Pose questions around community concerns and the need for long-term vision.
- Investigate tools and options for effective and resilient watershed management including alternatives for regenerative forestry and agriculture; maintaining hydrologic function; wildfire prevention, response, and mitigation; riparian ecosystem management; and smart growth considering the pressures of climate variability and changing land use.
- Review cutting-edge information on alternatives for legal, legislative, incentive-based and entrepreneurial approaches to watershed health and sustainability while promoting economic vitality.
- After each of the first 4 stakeholder meetings, review participation and update outreach efforts to ensure that diverse stakeholder interests are being represented. Where necessary, renew targeted inquiries to bring needed voices to the table.

Deliverables and Milestones: Develop and implement the public outreach plan, identify tools and alternatives, and verify that a diverse group of stakeholders is participating in the planning effort.

Task 4. Planning for Sustainability: Based on the vision, mission, goals and gathered data, A) identify additional baseline data needs, B) build on lessons learned from other successful watershed alliances, and C) develop an outline for a watershed restoration plan.

- Review existing watershed restoration plans with issues similar in scope and complexity to those encountered in the local planning area. A preliminary list of plans with similar watershed concerns include: Purgatoire River Watershed Plan (Purgatoire Watershed Alliance, 2014); Groundwater Issues in Watershed Planning (Madison Watershed Planning, Madison Conservation District, Montana, 2017); Groundwater Management in Watersheds (Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council); Watershed Enhancement Strategies for Groundwater Sustainability, San Joaquin Riverlands Trust, 2017).

- Identify data gaps critical to long-range planning and develop plans to fill those gaps as part of the watershed restoration planning effort. It is already acknowledged that baseline groundwater monitoring in fractured rock aquifers is a key data gap that should be filled as soon as practicable.
- Identify future funding opportunities to develop and implement citizen-based science initiatives that increase community engagement in protecting and improving our watershed. Leveraging cutting-edge groundwater monitoring (WelIntel.com) with individuals willing to volunteer their wells as monitoring wells is one such project already under development by the San Isabel Land Protection Trust.
- San Isabel Land Protection Trust completes project reporting and financial requirements to close out the Phase I WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant.

Deliverables and Milestones: Develop a watershed restoration plan outline, including data gaps to be filled. Complete project reporting and financial requirements for Reclamation to close out the grant by June 30, 2022.

At the conclusion of the two-year project period, the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will be a broad-based, cohesive stakeholder group that is well-positioned to effectively address issues of concern in our watershed planning area.

Evaluation Criteria

A. Evaluation Criterion A. Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope

Sub-Criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity: San Isabel Land Protection Trust will invite all interested parties, including the widest possible diversity of stakeholders, to form the new Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance. All people and groups interested in participating will be welcome to fully engage as partners in the project. The table below lists potential stakeholders we will specifically invite to participate; the list is not exhaustive and will be expanded to include all entities suggested by other stakeholders.

Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance	
Watershed Group Category	Potential Stakeholders
Environment	Trout Unlimited, Sustainable Ways
Environment, Private Property	Other conservation groups and land trusts, including The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Federal	USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal, Hydroelectric	USDI Bureau of Reclamation - Pueblo Field Office
Irrigated Agriculture, Livestock Grazing, Private Property	Custer County Conservation District, Fremont County Conservation District, Colorado Ag Water Alliance, Wet Mountain Valley Water Association, Farm Bureau, Custer County Ag Society, Fremont County Cattlemen’s Association, ranch and farm families in Custer and Fremont counties, 4-H and FFA leaders in Custer and Fremont counties
Land Development	Local Realtors
Land Development, Tourism	Custer County Economic Development Corporation, Fremont County Economic Development Corporation

Local government	Custer County BOCC, Fremont County BOCC, and towns of Hillside, Silver Cliff, Texas Creek and Westcliffe
Local government - Land Use Planning	Planning and Zoning - Custer County, Planning and Zoning - Fremont County
Local Watershed Public Outreach	This project will form the first local watershed group for the Wet Mountain Valley. We will invite established regional groups to participate as well: Arkansas Basin Roundtable, Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, Arkansas River Basin Public Education Participation and Outreach Workgroup
Mining	Mining interests
Municipal Water Supplier	Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District
Private Property	Local HOAs
Recreation, Local Government	Valley Parks and Recreation
Recreation, Tourism	Trails for All, Wet Mountain Saddle Club, Dark Skies of Colorado, All Aboard Westcliffe
State Government	Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State University Extension (Forest Hydrology, Range Resources)
Timber Production	Greenleaf Wood Products, Pueblo Wood Products
Tribal	Navajo Nation (owners of the former Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranches). Note: there are no other known tribal entities active in the watershed
Water District	Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District
Water District, Hydroelectric	Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District

We have talked with most of these entities about the value of watershed planning, and many have expressed interest in collaborating toward watershed health and water sustainability. Over the course of decades, we have established strong relationships with many stakeholders through successful collaborative work related to fire and flood mitigation, weed management, water issues affecting Custer and Fremont Counties, and our efforts toward better integrating land use planning with zoning in Custer County.

We intend to vigorously reach out to all of the listed entities and continue to identify other stakeholders concerned with issues pertaining to water availability, water quality, and overall forest and watershed health. One group with particular relevance to 100-year visioning is youth. We will solicit participation from students in Custer and Fremont counties so that we may incorporate generational viewpoints. Our scope of work includes up to eight stakeholder outreach meetings, supported by online document sharing, newsletters, press releases and letters to the editor of local newspapers, radio broadcasts, email blasts, social media and other proven techniques.

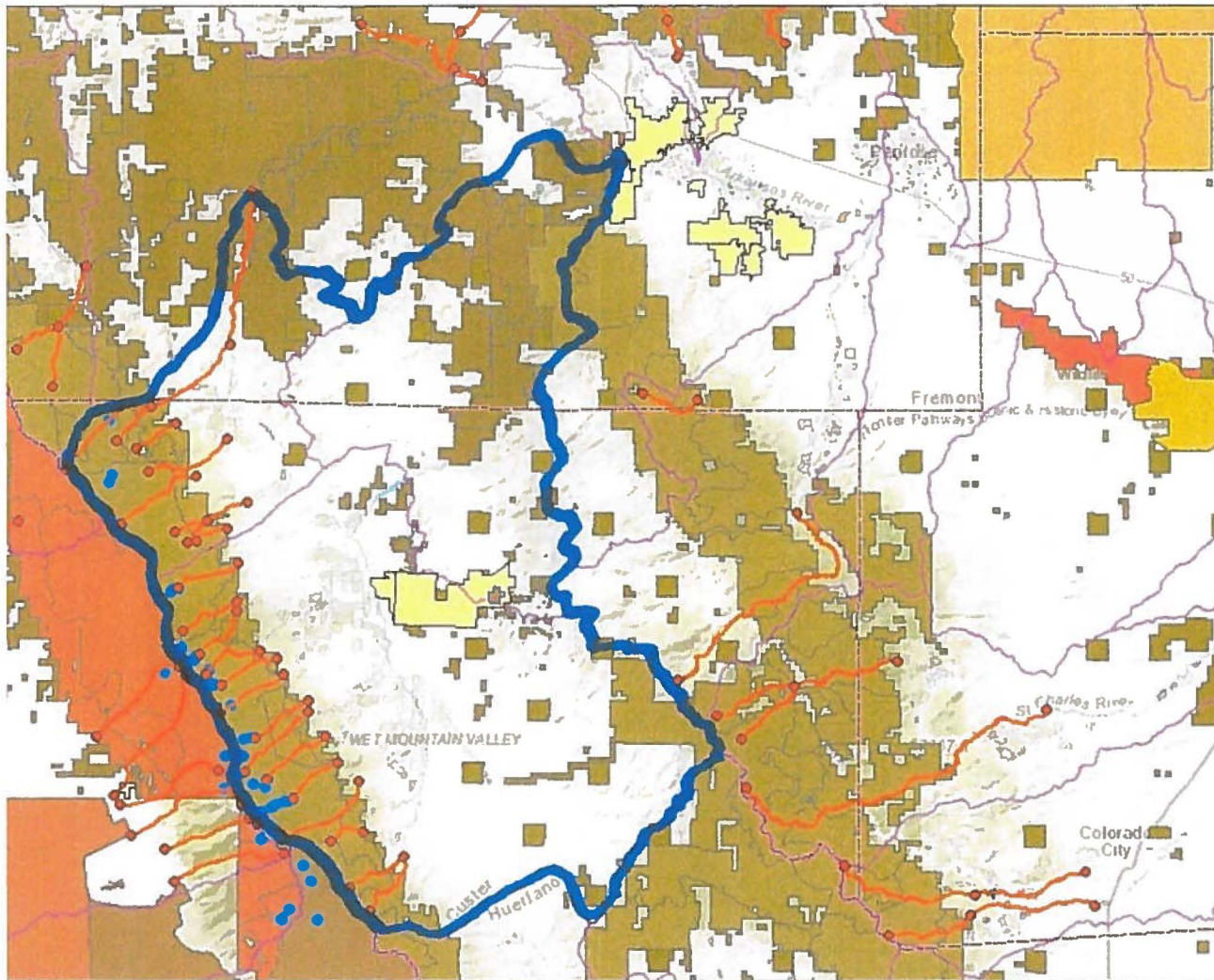
Sub-Criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope: A map and table indicating targeted stakeholders and their areas of operation are provided below. The proposed planning area for the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance is generally outlined in dark blue and includes three HUC-10 watersheds identified in the Project Location section of this proposal. Stream reaches with instream flow water rights are also shown. San Isabel Land Protection Trust holds conservation easements in Custer, Fremont, Pueblo and Huerfano Counties. We partner with federal, state and local governments; conservation organizations, including other land trusts; municipal water providers and water districts; and community development, real estate and other groups promoting sustainable growth, recreation and tourism in our planning area. We are regular attendees at the Arkansas Basin Roundtable and support other regional and local natural resource planning efforts.

Operating Area: 1 = Custer County 2 = Fremont County 3 = Both Counties 4 = In & Beyond Planning Area	Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance	
	Watershed Group Category	Potential Stakeholders
4,1	Environment	Trout Unlimited, Sustainable Ways
4	Environment, Private Property	Other conservation groups and land trusts, including The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
4	Federal	USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service
4	Federal, Hydroelectric	USDI Bureau of Reclamation - Pueblo Field Office
1, 2, 4	Irrigated Agriculture, Livestock Grazing, Private Property	Custer County Conservation District, Fremont County Conservation District, Colorado Ag Water Alliance, Wet Mountain Valley Water Association, Farm Bureau, Custer County Ag Society, Fremont County Cattlemen's Association, ranch and farm families in Custer and Fremont counties, 4-H and FFA leaders in Custer and Fremont counties
3	Land Development	Local Realtors
3	Land Development, Tourism	Custer County Economic Development Corporation, Fremont County Economic Development Corporation
3	Local government	Custer County BOCC, Fremont County BOCC, Towns of Hillside, Silver Cliff, Texas Creek and Westcliffe

1,2	Local government - Land Use Planning	Planning and Zoning - Custer County, Planning and Zoning - Fremont County
4	Local Watershed Public Outreach	This project will form the first local watershed group for the Wet Mountain Valley. We will invite established regional groups to participate as well: Arkansas Basin Roundtable, Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, Arkansas River Basin Public Education Participation and Outreach Workgroup
3,4	Mining	Mining interests
1	Municipal Water Supplier	Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District
3	Private Property	Local HOAs
1	Recreation, Local Government	Valley Parks and Recreation
3	Recreation, Tourism	Trails for All, Wet Mountain Saddle Club, Dark Skies of Colorado, All Aboard Westcliffe
4	State Government	Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State University Extension (Forest Hydrology, Range Resources)
1,2,4 4	Timber Production	Greenleaf Wood Products, Pueblo Wood Products
	Tribal	Navajo Nation (owners of the former Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranches). Note: there are no other known tribal entities active in the watershed
4	Water District	Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District
4	Water District, Hydroelectric	Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District



Map Viewer



Legend

- ISF Termini 2018-10-15
- ISF Stream Reach 2018-10-15
- ISF Lake 2015-01-20
- County
- City
- Public Land
 - BLM
 - BOR
 - CDOW
 - CITY
 - COUNTY
 - FEDERAL
 - FWS
 - JOINT
 - JOINT CITY/COUNTY
 - LAND TRUST
 - METRO DISTRICT

Location

Notes



1: 449,028



This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. Users of this information should review or consult the primary data and information sources to ascertain the usability of the information.

Date Prepared: 11/4/2019 9:10:20 AM

B. Evaluation Criterion B. Addressing Critical Watershed Needs

Sub-Criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues: Water availability, water quality and forest health are the primary concerns in our watershed.

Water supply and availability are being challenged by drought, increased development, high development density overlying fractured rock aquifers, and poorly considered and implemented augmentation plans. These stresses are further exacerbated by heightened climate variability. Landowners are becoming educated when high profile events occur such as the loss of prime hay fields to agricultural buy and dry and augmentation plans that encourage fractured rock over pumping without local aquifer recharge. Of the approximately 4500 wells in Custer County, over 1% (57 wells) have been replaced due to various forms of water and population stressors.

The Arkansas River from the Highway 115 crossing (near Florence, Colorado) to the inlet of Pueblo Reservoir (COARUA04b_A) has water supply use impairments identified on the monitoring and evaluation list by the state of Colorado for arsenic (total) and manganese (dissolved). Impairments listed for Grape Creek from Antelope Creek to DeWeese Reservoir and to the Arkansas River (COARUA15 segments B and C) include impairments for water supply use for arsenic (total); E. coli (a high priority issue tied to recreational use); and aquatic life (macroinvertebrates and temperature). DeWeese Reservoir (COARUA35_A) is on the 303(d)-impairment list with high priority actions for water supply uses (arsenic, total), and aquatic uses (dissolved oxygen and total phosphorus). The stream segment of Grape Creek downstream from the outlet of DeWeese Reservoir is the subject of a stream management planning effort being led by the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, an organization established by the Arkansas Basin Roundtable. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance watershed health plan will incorporate measures to improve water quality along Grape and Texas Creeks (tributaries to the Arkansas River) with specific actions to address listed water quality impairments upstream of DeWeese Reservoir.

Since 2000, 56,500 acres have been lost to wildfires in the Wet Mountain Valley watershed. Larger fires included:

- Cuerno Verde, 2002, 442 acres, 2 homes destroyed
- Iron Mountain, 2002, 4,439 acres, 100 homes destroyed
- Mason Gulch, 2005, 11,357 acres
- Tyndall Gulch, 2006, 541 acres
- Cooper Mountain, 2002, 60 acres
- Locke Mountain, 2002, 16 acres
- Duckett Creek, 2011, 4,300 acres
- Hayden Pass, 2016, 16,754 acres
- Junkins, 2016, 18,761 acres, 26 structures destroyed

Smaller fires in 2019 included the Adobe, Brush Creek, Davenport and Reveille conflagrations. Wildfires have been growing in intensity and are exacerbated during and immediately after periods of drought.

The Fremont County Community Wildfire Protection Plan advocates for continued public outreach, education and implementation of the plan. The Custer County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2007) advocates forest health and stewardship actions including the development of 10- to 100-year plans. Our work through the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will target assisting forest health and pre-fire mitigation actions already identified. The Alliance will update site-specific priorities and proposed actions through collaborative efforts with the U.S. Forest Service, local fire protection districts as part of this watershed planning process.

Sub-Criterion No. B2. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Task A. Watershed Group Development: San Isabel Land Protection Trust will build on existing community outreach and partnerships to stand up this new watershed group, the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance. San Isabel Land Protection Trust works with landowners to steward 133 conservation easements protecting nearly 41,000 acres in perpetuity. Our commitment for perpetuity demands focus on the sustainability of a key resource underpinning the land conservation values – water. We work regularly with landowners to steward and restore upland and riparian areas on their easements, and we collaborate with resource professionals and other conservation groups on various issues affecting conservation easements. In 2018, our community supported San Isabel hiring a hydrologist to begin researching and gathering data on the status of our alluvial and fractured rock aquifers. In 2019, we held 3 community water meetings to address opportunities in watershed planning, what is known about our aquifers, and the monitoring and data gaps that exist. Also, in 2019, we worked with the Custer County Board of Commissioners, the county Planning and Zoning department, and local Soil Conservation District members to discuss ways to better integrate land use with water sustainability. Recent efforts by the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District to introduce a blanket augmentation plan for portions of Custer and Fremont Counties have galvanized the water user community into educating themselves about potential impacts this could have on the sustainability of our water supplies. Over 20 parties opposed this plan and have supported efforts to educate the broader community about water issues affecting us all. San Isabel Land Protection Trust has been at the center of developing a better understanding the interaction of hydrologic resources with sustainable development and land use.

We plan to invite broad participation in watershed planning through targeted, one-on-one invitations to diverse entities identified by current community outreach efforts. We plan to incorporate a broader generational perspective by including representatives

from schools and local youth groups. Our community is comprised of people that make a living off the land and its resources, so maintaining a balance between stewardship and economic sustainability will be key to motivating participants to provide meaningful input. Our past planning partnerships with valley constituents and partners such as the Sonoran Institute have been well received. We will emphasize respectful, constructive, consensus-based collaboration in forming this watershed alliance.

A solid foundation in sound science based on shared data sources and integration of disparate data is crucial to effective watershed planning. We propose to use the B3 Insight Water Rights and Land platform developed for Colorado as the means of integrating publicly available data in a user-friendly, map-based format. The platform includes water rights, streamflow data, instream flow rights, diversion and other structures, water district and other administrative boundaries, county assessor parcel data, groundwater well data, wildfire burn scar data and other publicly-available data sets. Additional data can be integrated as it becomes available. Having a common platform to view and analyze information will be key to collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders.

Task B. Watershed Restoration Planning: This project harnesses the powers of consensus-based collaboration and sound science to connect and inform more than 20 public and private stakeholders currently working with little coordination between, and sometimes in entrenched opposition to, one another. We will gather the best available science to inform our discussions and decisions. Water is our most precious and exploitable resource, and it is greatly impacted by land use practices. There is little available data concerning the hydrogeology of our planning area. The USGS is currently monitoring ~ 30 wells in the alluvial aquifer. There is 1978 USGS water availability study and an aquifer storage study currently underway and expected to be completed in September 2020. There are no studies and no current monitoring activities in the fractured rock aquifers. San Isabel Land Protection Trust is beginning to partner with individual homeowners to seek other grant funding to develop a monitoring well network for the fractured rock aquifers using next-generation technology such as that developed by WellIntel. We will hire a skilled watershed scientist to gather and interpret available data, identify data gaps, and inform the Alliance about the status of our watersheds and aquifers.

Building on the Fremont and Custer County Community Wildfire Protection Plans, we will invite outside experts to discuss forest health and regenerative agriculture with an emphasis on pre-fire mitigation and critical infrastructure protection. Tremendous change becomes possible when worried communities like ours interact with people who have surmounted similar entrenched and complex problems. Some successful collaborations we may invite include Wallowa Resources (Oregon – forestry, grazing and mining issues); Quivira Coalition (New Mexico – regenerative agriculture); Four Forests Alliance (Arizona – forest and hydrologic health, wildfire and conservation-minded economic development).

Through a series of 6 to 8 consensus meetings over a two-year period, we will develop a shared 100-year vision for watershed health. We will prioritize conservation and mitigation actions, information needs, and shared action to address key threats while capitalizing on emerging opportunities, markets and legislation. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance promotes innovative, regenerative approaches to cost-effective, community-based conservation. Our planning effort may inform and inspire other rural natural resource-based communities as they too confront challenges to building a bright future for their headwaters' landscapes.

We recognize that stakeholders can have opposing interests and in some cases are on opposite sides of legal disputes over natural resources such as water. Our watershed collaborative will apply consensus-based decision making in its approach to creating a vision and developing a plan for action. Everyone has a seat at the table; all voices are equal; discussions are predicated upon mutual respect. Over time our respectful, constructive approach will create an atmosphere of open communication, recognizing that we hold different values but are working towards common goals.

The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will contract with a skilled consensus facilitator experienced with contentious natural resources issues. A general outline of steps to analyze and prioritize issues includes: 1) identify and clarify the issues to be decided; 2) explore issues and generate ideas, including recognizing concerns and identifying advantages and disadvantages; 3) look for emerging proposals that address key concerns; 4) discuss, clarify and amend proposals; 5) test for agreement while addressing concerns and seeking consensus; and 6) implement the decision by developing detailed steps leading to action (adapted from A Consensus Handbook, Seeds for Change Lancaster Co-operative Ltd, 2013).

C. Evaluation Criterion C. Implementation and Results

Sub-Criterion No. C1. Understanding of and Ability to Meet Program Requirements: San Isabel Land Protection Trust, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 1995, is the applicant for the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance. Our mission is to preserve land, water and ecosystem values in perpetuity (www.SanIsabel.org). We are widely active in community education and outreach regarding conservation and long-term sustainability of water resources. San Isabel Land Protection Trust has sponsored multiple successful riparian restoration projects on our conservation easements, and our staff includes an experienced, certified practitioner in consensus-based collaboration. Our proposed approach to this project is outlined in the Technical Proposal. The following table shows the major tasks, milestones, anticipated costs for each task, and schedule for completion.

Project Schedule and Costs by Task and Source				Projected Dates	
Task	FOA	In-Kind	Task Cost	Start Date	End Date
Pre-Award Activities				4/1/2020	6/15/2020
Grant Notification & Contracting				4/1/2020	6/15/2020
Notice to Proceed				6/16/2020	6/30/2020
Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance				7/1/2020	6/30/2022
Task 1. Science	\$40,214	\$25,403	\$65,617	7/1/2020	10/31/2020
Hire Watershed Scientist				7/1/2020	7/15/2020
BOR NEPA & ESA Compliance				7/16/2020	7/31/2020
Data Gathering & Assimilation				7/16/2020	9/30/2020
Contract B3Insight Software				7/1/2020	7/31/2020
Outreach Materials & Watershed Data Compilation				9/1/2020	10/31/2020
Task 2. Consensus-Based Collaboration	\$34,100	\$0	\$34,100	7/1/2020	5/31/2022
Convene Core Planning Group				7/1/2020	10/31/2020
Hire Consensus Facilitator				10/1/2020	11/30/2020
Identify Legal, Policy Advisors				11/1/2020	12/31/2020
Convene Science Planning Group				8/1/2020	10/31/2020
Investigate Strategies for Watershed Health, Sustainability				9/1/2020	4/30/2022
Hold 1 st Four Stakeholder Meetings				12/1/2020	8/31/2021
Organizational Documents Subgroup: Mission Statement, By-Laws				3/1/2021	10/31/2021
Hold 2 nd Four Stakeholder Meetings				11/1/2021	5/31/2022
Task3. Information & Outreach	\$ 11,000	\$0	\$11,000	11/1/2020	4/30/2022
Plan, Advertise, Prepare for 1 st Four Stakeholder Meetings				11/1/2020	7/31/2021
ID & Outreach – Missing Voices				12/1/2020	8/31/2021
Plan, Advertise, Prepare for 2 nd Four Stakeholder Meetings				10/1/2021	4/30/2022

Task	FOA	In-Kind	Task Cost	Start Date	End Date
Task 4. Planning for Sustainability	\$14,609	\$7,677	\$22,286	12/1/2020	6/30/2022
Interim Meeting Reports and Consensus Actions				12/1/2020	3/31/2022
Review Applicability of Existing Watershed Plans				1/1/2021	3/31/2022
Identify Data Gaps & Future Funding Opportunities				9/1/2021	5/31/2022
Compile Final Report				9/1/2021	5/31/2022
Close Out Finances				5/15/2022	6/30/2022
FINAL REPORT TO RECLAMATION				6/1/2022	6/30/2022
TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING	\$99,923	\$33,080	\$133,003	7/1/2020	6/30/2022

Sub-Criterion No. C2. Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts:

The State of Colorado finalized the Colorado Water Plan in 2015, a bottom-up planning effort that relied upon Basin Implementation Plans submitted by each of the nine Basin roundtables. The Arkansas Basin Roundtable’s Basin Implementation Plan was finalized in April 2015. Our work supports the goals of both the state and local roundtable efforts as follows.

The Executive Summary of the Colorado Water Plan states that “Over the past decade, historically adversarial views have shifted toward: [1] the benefits of collaborating on win-win projects that benefit all parties; [2] putting money to work solving problems instead of escalating litigation; and [3] capitalizing on the regional connections that tie Colorado together economically and hydrologically—instead of ignoring those connections. The State will continue to strengthen water outreach, education, and public engagement to equip Coloradans with the necessary information to make informed water choices.” Specific to watersheds, Colorado’s Water Plan sets a measurable objective to cover 80 percent of critical watersheds with watershed protection plans by 2030. These plans will address a variety of concerns, including pre- and post-fire mitigation, forest mortality, water quality impairments, potential impacts of legacy mines, flood mitigation and recovery, aquatic and riparian habitat enhancement, and land use change.” Our project supports these essential and ambitious goals by convening diverse stakeholders in the watersheds of Texas and Grape Creeks with the task of developing a consensus and science-based 100-year vision for watershed health and the organizational framework to develop and take action.

The Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan (2015) states that the Colorado Water Plan must incorporate:

- A productive economy that supports vibrant and sustainable cities, viable and productive agriculture, and a robust skiing, recreation, and tourism industry;
- Efficient and effective water infrastructure promoting smart land use; and,
- A strong

environment that includes healthy watersheds, rivers and streams, and wildlife. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will seek to implement these values as interpreted by our local stakeholders and their vision for a productive, robust economy, and sustainable water supported by smart land use and resilient watershed ecosystems.

In developing a future watershed plan, the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will adhere to the six steps of watershed planning and the 319 elements relating to impaired waters as described in the EPA Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect our Waters (2008). Specific concerns to be addressed in the watershed plan include the following. The Arkansas River from the Highway 115 crossing (near Florence, Colorado) to the inlet of Pueblo Reservoir (COARUA04b_A) has water supply use impairments identified on the monitoring and evaluation list by the state of Colorado for arsenic (total) and manganese (dissolved). Impairments listed for Grape Creek from Antelope Creek to DeWeese Reservoir and to the Arkansas River (COARUA15 segments B and C) include impairments for water supply use for arsenic (total); E. coli (a high priority issue tied to recreational use); and aquatic life (macroinvertebrates and temperature). DeWeese Reservoir (COARUA35_A) is on the 303(d)-impairment list with high priority actions for water supply uses (arsenic, total), and aquatic uses (dissolved oxygen and total phosphorus). The stream segment of Grape Creek downstream from the outlet of DeWeese Reservoir is the subject of a stream management planning effort being led by the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, an organization established by the Arkansas Basin Roundtable. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance watershed health plan will incorporate measures to improve water quality along Grape and Texas Creeks (tributaries to the Arkansas River) with specific actions to address listed water quality impairments upstream of DeWeese Reservoir.

D. Evaluation Criterion D. Department of the Interior Priorities

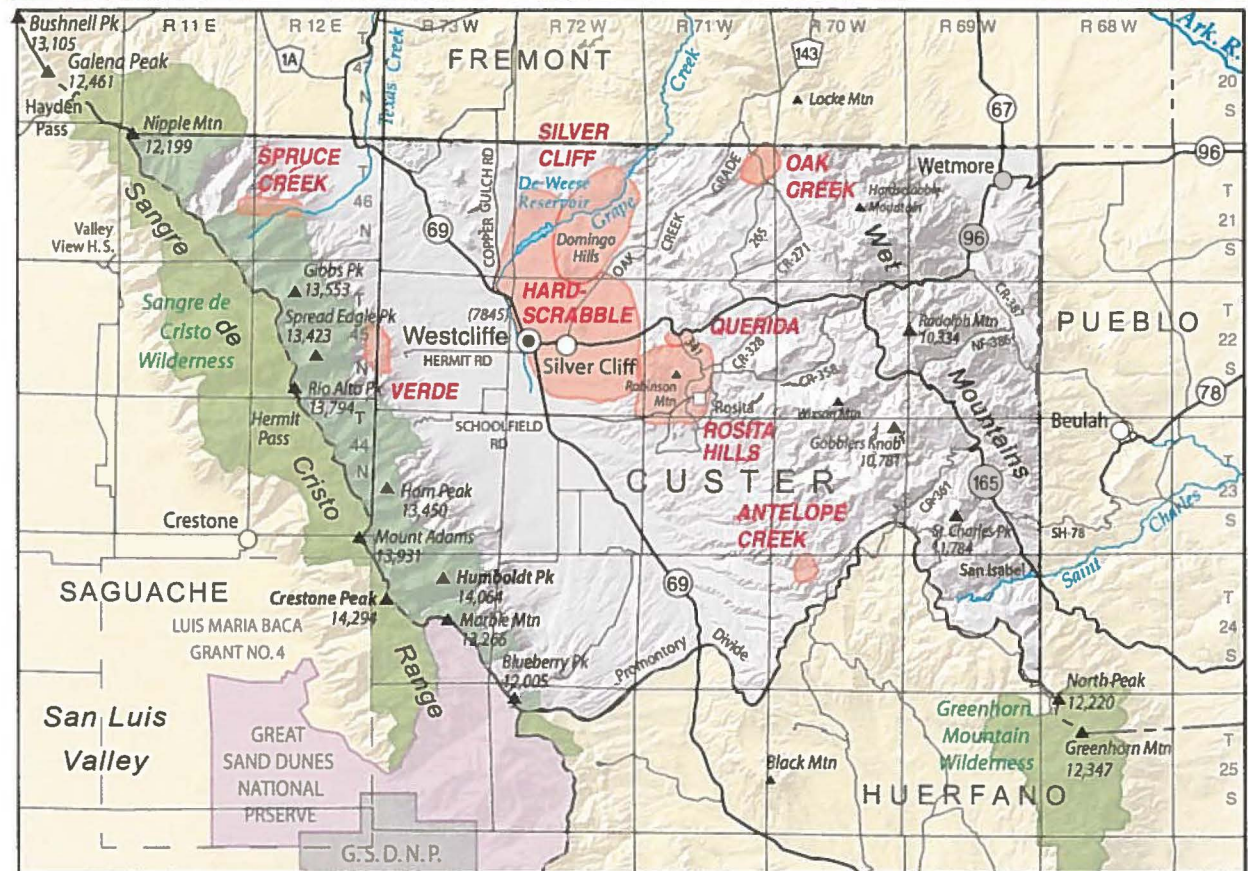
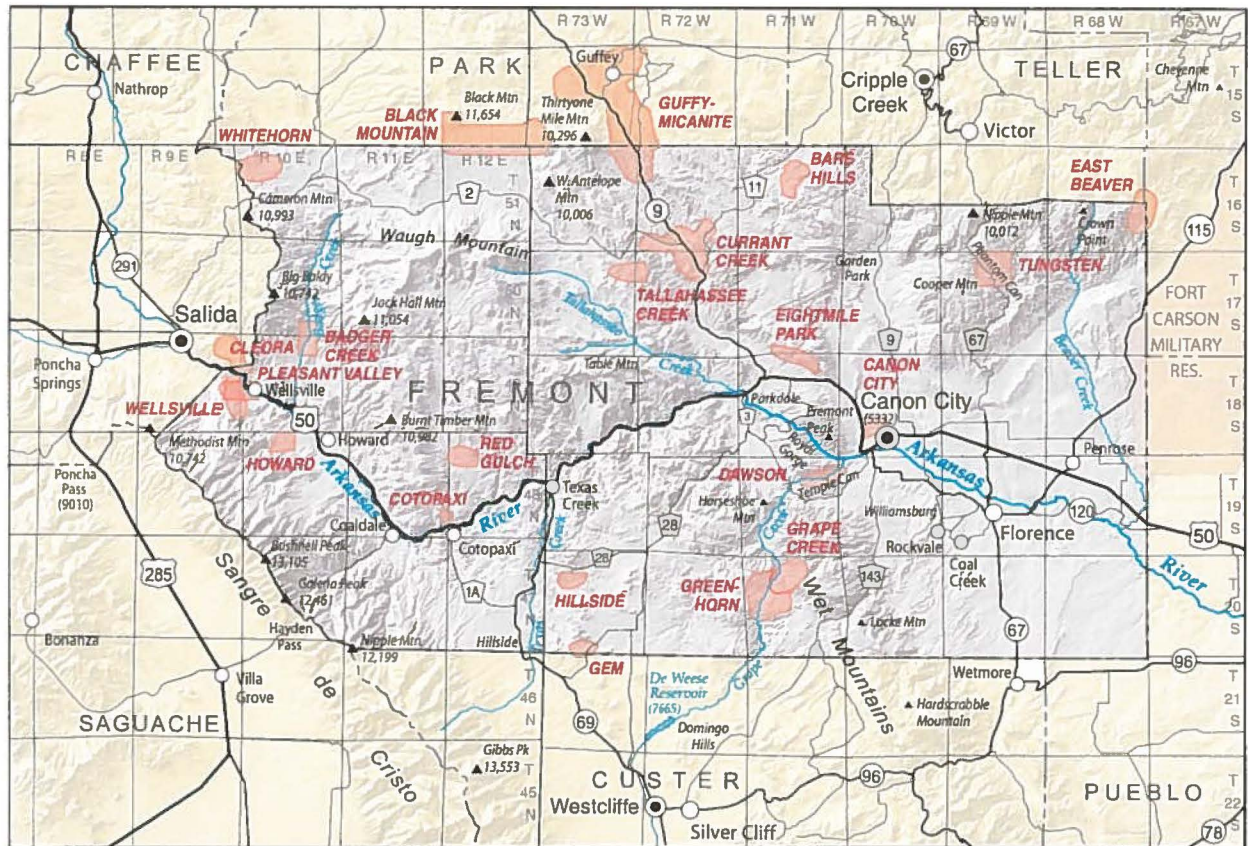
1. Creating a conservation stewardship legacy second only to Teddy Roosevelt: A scientific underpinning to watershed collaborative actions is essential to developing best land and water management practices. San Isabel Land Protection Trust has been actively working with the Custer County Planning and Zoning Commission to evaluate current zoning policies and to identify policies harmful to sustainable water use. As a result, changes were made to restrict future planned use developments and implement a five-year moratorium on new subdivisions. There are two undeveloped lots for every developed lot available in Custer County. We are also beginning to explore the use of state land use planning authorities conventionally known as 1041 planning powers to address agricultural buy and dry and other changes in water use with community-wide impacts.

San Isabel Land Protection Trust works actively with landowners and other land trusts (Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Central Colorado Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands) to advocate for the sustainability of landscapes, riparian environments, regenerative agriculture and long-range

planning. Only by developing integrated plans and processes for triple-bottomline sustainability – of environment, economics and social systems – can we achieve a conservation stewardship legacy for future generations.

Between 1999 and 2004, we partnered with the Sonoran Institute to in the Keep Custer County Special effort, which convened over 200 landowners and stakeholders in long-range land use planning. Documents produced include A Pilgrimage to Community (Wilkinson, 1995), a 5-year progress summary, and a CSU cost of growth study. The Five-Year Summary Agreement stated “There was general concern about future water quantity and quality. Folks didn’t want to lose more water out of the valley, and they didn’t want development to outstrip underground water supplies. They wanted to ensure water quality against non-point source and septic pollution.”

2. Utilizing our natural resources: Restoring healthy watersheds is founded on active management of upland forests, grasslands and riparian areas. The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will work with Federal, state, and local partners to develop pre-fire mitigation projects that promote forest health and help to avoid catastrophic consequences of wildfire. As shown by the following figures Custer and Fremont Counties are also steeped in mining and extractive mineral traditions – there are 214 listed mines in Custer County alone. The various mining districts produced galena, silver, thorium, gold, lead and zinc. Other valuable strategic minerals mined in this area include thorium, niobium and rare earth minerals (Lanthanide elements) (Colorado Geological Survey – historic mining districts). Mine tailings and waste have contributed to contamination in local watersheds. For example, the Terrible Mine cleanup in Fremont County conducted in 2010 addressed lead contamination from 100,000 cubic yards of tailings that had the potential to affect groundwater and surface water (Oak Creek). Water quality impacts from historic mining activity has not been addressed in our watershed. We will seek to include mining stakeholders in the water quality conversation as they maintain access to these critical mineral resources.



3. Restoring trust with local communities: Developing our Alliance around a common vision and goals will inevitably establish respect and trust in our abilities to set aside specific differences and work towards the lasting good of people and nature. We have laid the groundwork for developing a strong, diverse alliance through our position as the local land trust working with neighbors to address shared concerns. We will expand the scope and success of collaborative conservation through this project which features a constructive, non-threatening environment convened and managed by expert facilitators. With their recent purchases of the Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranches, the Navajo Nation now owns a large portion of the upper watershed and recharge area for our alluvial aquifer. We will especially invite their unique values and voices to the discussion concerning long-term resilience and watershed health.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, BLM and the USFS manage much of the watershed, and their staff expertise will be invaluable in watershed planning. We anticipate that the Alliance will support their restoration efforts and elevate the importance of secure funding and partnerships to accomplish watershed health initiatives.

We will also invite downstream neighbors to partner in actions that affect watershed health, water yield and water quality. Potential downstream partners include the Bureau of Reclamation's Pueblo Field Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District (which operates the new Broderick Hydropower Plant at Pueblo Dam) and local leaders in the downstream communities of Canon City, Florence, Penrose and Pueblo.

4. Striking a regulatory balance: There are four ESA-listed species and/or designated critical habitat identified in our watershed planning area (Custer and Fremont counties): Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Threatened; greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*), Threatened; Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), Threatened with designated critical habitat in Custer and Fremont counties; and wolverine (*Gulo luscus*), Proposed. We will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any on-the-ground actions proposed by the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance conforms with species and habitat conservation plans. We will incorporate findings of the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan (Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2015) to identify potential species and habitats at risk. According to this Plan, potential threats to species and habitat include highly valued public services and land uses such as "(W)ater development, residential development, recreation, mining, and agriculture." The Plan states that "Overall, lack of knowledge and natural systems modifications (including alteration of natural hydrological and fire regimes) are issues for the greatest number of Colorado's 159 vertebrate animal and mollusk" species of greatest conservation need. The Plan calls out the threats of altered hydrology and fire regimes, which are the primary focal concerns in our watershed. The Plan supports ongoing actions including "Land and resource

protection (conservation easements, water rights), control of invasive species, and application of policy and regulation. . . . Accomplishing the actions identified in this plan will require developing many new Alliances, as well as continuing to capitalize on existing Alliances.” The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance is designed to be one of those new Alliances that identifies and integrates watershed health actions with those needed to help protect and preserve functional ecosystems and prevent future species listings.

5. Modernizing our infrastructure: The Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance will endeavor to support the maintenance, modernization and development of infrastructure serving the needs of our local and regional community. By involving a variety of stakeholders in the watershed planning process, we will incorporate an understanding of watershed health impacts. Deliberate design, avoidance and mitigation measures will be considered as future infrastructure projects are conceived and developed.

Project Budget

Budget Proposal

San Isabel Land Protection Trust is requesting \$99,923 under this FOA to initiate the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance. To further advance this project we are providing a 45% salary and fringe benefit match to support the Watershed Scientist and Project Administrator for a total of \$33,080. This brings the total costs to support creation of the new Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance over a two-year period to \$133,003.

Total Project Cost Table

Source	Amount
Costs to be reimbursed with the requested Federal funding	\$ 99,923
Costs to be paid by the applicant	\$ 33,080
Value of third-party contributions	\$ <u>0</u>
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$133,003

The budgetary breakdown follows.

Budget Item Description	Computation			Total Cost
	\$/Unit	Quantity	Quantity Type	
Salaries and Wages				
Watershed Scientist	42	1,248	hours	\$52,416.00
Project Administrator	36	440	hours	\$15,840.00
Fringe Benefits				
Full-time Employees	7.70%	15,840	salary	\$1,220.00
Part-Time Employees	7.70%	52,416	salary	\$4,036.00
Travel				
Travel cost defrayal for watershed partners	50	160	travel days	\$8,000.00
Supplies and Materials				
Room rental, light refreshments, meeting supplies	2000		total	\$2,000.00
Contractors				
Consensus facilitator	2500	8	per meeting	\$20,000.00
Invited speakers	2000	4	expert speaker:	\$8,000.00
B3Insight	6400	1	data platform	\$6,400.00
BOR Compliance Review for NEPA and EPA	125	24	hours	\$3,000.00
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS				\$120,912.00
Indirect Costs				
	10%			\$12,091.00
Type of rate	Percentage	10%		
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS				\$133,003.00

Budget Narrative

The total cost of this two-year project is expected to be \$133,003 of which \$99,923 is requested under this FOA. A breakdown of costs by task is as follows:

Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance			
Task	FOA- Funding	SILPT In-Kind Contribution	Total Task
1. Science	\$40,214	\$25,403	\$65,617
2. Consensus-Based Collaboration	\$34,100	\$0	\$34,100
3. Information and Outreach	\$11,000	\$0	\$11,000
4. Planning for Sustainability	\$14,609	\$7,677	\$22,286
Subtotals:	\$99,923	\$33,080	\$133,003
		PROJECT TOTAL COST	\$133,003

Key budgetary elements of this project are as follows.

- San Isabel Land Protection Trust Project Manager will handle overseeing project planning, administration, logistics, communication, compliance and reporting requirements including the final financial and performance reports. \$17,060 total, 45% (\$7,677 of which is in-kind by San Isabel Land Protection Trust.
- Hiring a watershed scientist to gather, evaluate, present and, if needed, help generate data regarding concerns on issues such as water availability, water demand and usage, aquifer recharge, stream-aquifer connections, water quality, restoring forest and hydrologic function, and other watershed health issues. This is budgeted as a 0.3 FTE position at San Isabel Land Protection Trust. This position will be solely dedicated to work on the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance project. \$56,452 total, of which 45% (\$25,403) is in-kind from San Isabel.
- Compliance Costs: NEPA Categorical Exclusion and ESA documentation: this item assumes that Reclamation staff will review the project tasks and prepare the required documents supporting any NEPA and/or ESA compliance issues. We have budgeted 3 days (24 hours) of BOR staff time for processing and review at an average rate of \$125/hour for a total of \$3,000.
- Contracting with a skilled consensus facilitator with experience in resolving contentious natural resources issues. The success of this collaborative effort hinges on constructive, respectful communication between 20 to 30 public and private entities, many of whom have been at loggerheads for many years. Professional fees, travel and materials at \$2,500 per meeting, for 8 meetings, total of \$20,000.
- Invited speaker expenses will cover speakers from various organizations leading successful landscape-level change in areas of holistic water, forestry, grazing, mining, and agricultural management. Tremendous change becomes possible when worried communities like ours

interact with people who have surmounted similarly entrenched and complex problems. Groups such as Wallowa Resources (Oregon – forestry, grazing, mining and economic issues) and the Four Forests Alliance (Arizona – forest health and hydrologic function; wildfire recovery and resilience, conservation-minded economic development) may be invited, as well as experts on topics such as forest health and water-efficient agriculture. \$8,000.

- We will contract with B3Insight for access to their data platform for integrating water rights, land use, land ownership, wildfire burn area, infrastructure, geologic data and other GIS-based is expected to form the basis of our data gathering and assimilation efforts. Two-year subscription, \$6,400. First year costs are reflected in Task 1, Science; second-year costs are reflected in Task 4, Planning for Sustainability.
- Cost defrayal for meeting participants, \$50 per stakeholder group, 20 groups, 8 meetings, for a total of \$8,000.
- Meeting costs, including room rental, \$200 per meeting, 8 meetings, for a total of \$1,600.
- Materials and supplies: Other materials and supplies will include meeting support clipboards, markers, and recording devices. A total of \$400.

Funding Plan

The funding plan is described in Section A of our 424B form submittal to show the relative timing of federal and in-kind contribution amounts.

Cost Share and In-Kind Contributions

The Board of Directors of the San Isabel Land Protection Trust has committed to provide 45% of salary and fringe for a total of \$33,080 as in-kind support for this project. At this time, we have not requested cash contributions or in-kind support from other entities. San Isabel Land Protection Trust’s funding commitment letter is provided as an appendix to this funding request.

Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

As a planning project, we do not anticipate significant environmental or cultural resources compliance actions. A description of the proposed activities follows.

The proposed Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance is a collaborative and consensus-based planning effort designed to convene diverse stakeholders in the planning area to develop a shared 100-year vision for our community watershed. We propose to accomplish this through the following activities: 1) gather information about issues and needs related to water quality and quantity and forest health and fire threats within the watershed – this involves outreach to government agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations and includes inviting recognized experts to speak at our meetings; 2) disseminate informational materials in advance of scheduled meetings with targeted invitations to ensure the diverse voices of our stakeholders are represented; 3) conduct 8 stakeholder meetings to identify issues, concerns, possible solutions and to develop a shared 100-year vision for a healthy and resilient watershed; 4) develop the organizational structure to implement a watershed planning effort to include the development of a mission statement, by-laws, and goals; and 5) develop an outline for a watershed restoration plan that includes water, forest, and ecosystem components building upon the Colorado State Water Plan, the Arkansas Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan, the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan, the EPA Handbook for Developing Watershed Restoration Plans to Restore and Protect our Waters, and the Fremont and Custer County Wildfire Mitigation Plans. We will also review watershed restoration plans prepared with Reclamation funding in adjacent basins, such as the Purgatoire River Watershed Plan prepared by the Purgatoire Watershed Alliance in 2014.

1. *Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (earth-disturbing work, work affecting air/water/animal habitat) impacts on surrounding environment and mitigation of impact?* The project will not impact the surrounding environment by any earth-disturbing activities, nor will it affect air/water/animal habitat. It is a community-driven planning project.
2. *Are you aware of any species listed or proposed as 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?* Federally-listed species identified for Custer and Fremont counties are Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Threatened; greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*), Threatened; Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), Threatened with designated critical habitat in Custer and Fremont counties; and wolverine (*Gulo luscus*), Proposed. This is a planning project and will not impact any of the listed species or habitat.
3. *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 impact the proposed project may have.* There are very few jurisdictional wetlands in

Fremont County and only one was identified as having biodiversity that is unique within the county. A wetland survey conducted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (2006, Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in Fremont County) identified 24 Potential Conservation Areas including both wetlands and riparian areas. Of the 24 wetland and riparian area PCAs presented in this report, ten are of very high significance (B2), twelve are of high significance (B3), one is of moderate significance (B4), and one is of general biodiversity significance (B5). In Custer County, approximately 6% of the area is classified as wetlands (96% of the wetlands are classified as freshwater herbaceous (89%), shrub (4%), and forested (3%) communities) This planning project will not impact any wetlands under CWA jurisdiction.

4. *When was the water delivery system constructed?* This project does not involve the construction of a water delivery system.
5. *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.* This project will not modify any features of an irrigation system.
6. *Are any buildings, structures or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?* This project is not part of an irrigation district; therefore, no buildings, structures, or features are involved.
7. *Are there any known archaeological sites in the proposed project area?* The Draper Cave archaeological site (Archaic Period) occurs in the foothills of the Wet Mountains. Otherwise, there were not listed sites on the Colorado This is a watershed planning project that does not involve ground disturbance. We have not performed an inventory of archaeological sites in the project area.
8. *Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?* This planning project seeks to positively involve all stakeholders regardless of income, race, or other classification. This project will not disproportionately or adversely affect low income or minority populations.
9. *Will the proposed project limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands?* This planning project will not affect any access or use of Indian sacred sites or impact tribal lands. We will invite the Navajo Nation, one of the newest landowners in our planning area, to be an active participant in the Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance.
10. *Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continue existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-invasive species known to occur in the area?* This planning project will

not introduce, perpetuate, or spread noxious weeds or non-invasive species in the planning area.

Required permits or approvals: We do not anticipate requiring any Federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local permits or approvals to execute this watershed planning program. If permits or approvals are needed for meeting and/or other planning events, San Isabel Land Protection Trust shall secure the required approvals from site owners and operators.

National Environmental Policy Act: This project is a watershed planning project and is expected to fit within a recognized Categorical Exclusion. According to the DOI list of categorical exclusions for the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau of Reclamation Part 516 Chapter 14: Managing the NEPA Process 14.5 Categorical Exclusions), this planning activity would best be described by the following “B. Planning Activities. (1) Routine planning investigation activities where the impacts are expected to be localized, such as land classification surveys, topographic surveys, archeological surveys, wildlife studies, economic studies, social studies, and other study activity during any planning, preconstruction, construction, or operation and maintenance phases.” We have included a budget item for Reclamation staff to prepare and review Categorical Exclusion Checklist to document their NEPA compliance.

National Historic Preservation Act: This planning project will not affect any structures addressed by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Endangered Species Act: This is a planning project. Planning activities will not affect any listed species or identified habitat. Federally-listed species identified for Custer and Fremont counties are Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Threatened; greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*), Threatened; Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), Threatened with designated critical habitat in Custer and Fremont counties; and wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), Proposed.

Letters of Project Support

In the coming month, we will provide this proposal to prospective stakeholders and invite them to discuss the project and participate in the first planning meeting in 2020. We will solicit letters of support as part of our efforts in 2019, allowing groups adequate time for full Board/Commission decision processes. In a previous collaborative proposal, all invited entities (including the Custer County Board of County Commissioners, Custer County School District and eight other groups) provided letters of support.

Official Resolution

Our official resolution from the Board of Directors and Executive Director will be submitted following the next scheduled meeting (November 22, 2019) and no later than December 12, 2019. This resolution identifies the official with legal authority to enter into an agreement; identifies the appropriate official who has reviewed and supports the application submitted; confirms the capability of the applicant to provide in-kind contribution specified in the funding plan; and commits that the applicant, if successful, will work with Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

The San Isabel Land Protection Trust is registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) with a unique identifier number of 79C82. We will maintain an active SAM registration during the active period of this funding award or during the period of application or plans under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

Appendix:

LETTER OF COMMITMENT from

SAN ISABEL LAND PROTECTION TRUST



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

November 7, 2019

RE: Letter of Commitment for Matching Funds, Grant Opportunity BOR-DO-19-F010, for Project Titled: Sustainable Sangres Watershed Alliance

Dear Sir or Madam,

This letter confirms that San Isabel Land Protection Trust (FEIN 84-1311010) commits to providing \$33,080 as in-kind match for the \$133,003 project proposed in our 2019 grant proposal for the BOR WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grants.

These funds are currently available to us as the Applicant, and are earmarked specifically for this project. Upon notification of funding by BOR, the earmarked funds will be moved to a restricted account established exclusively for the purpose of this project. If the grant is not funded, the in-kind funds will immediately be resorbed back into general operational funds of San Isabel Land Protection Trust.

Sincerely,

Linda Poole, by this, my digital signature

Linda Poole
Executive Director