



LOWER GILA RIVER COLLABORATIVE

Lower Gila River Collaborative Strategic Action Plan Implementation - Tools for Project Planning & Community Engagement

Technical Proposal: Cooperative Watershed Management Planning, Phase I Grant

Applicant:

National Audubon Society dba Audubon Southwest
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Project Abstract Summary

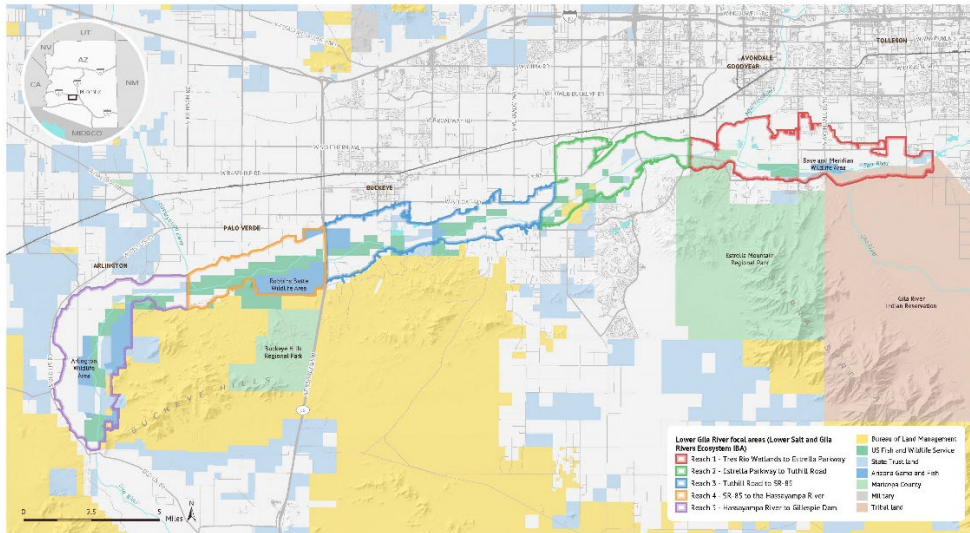
The National Audubon Society seeks \$298,014 over three years (approximately January 2025-December 2027) to implement the 2024-2029 Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC) Strategic Action Plan. We aim to advance restoration of the lower Gila River sub-watersheds by removing invasive tamarisk (salt cedar), planting native vegetation, creating public access points and trails, encouraging nature based economic development, and engaging underserved communities. The project area, located in Maricopa County, Arizona, spans the lower Salt River from the City of Phoenix Tres Rios Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Wetlands downstream through the confluence with the Gila River to Gillespie Dam and spans 40 miles of river corridor and adjacent uplands. The river corridor, within several sub-watersheds, is dominated by invasive tamarisk, sand and gravel mining, and adjacent industrial and agricultural land uses. Watershed restoration and protection efforts, including targeted areas for supplemental water to restore habitat, have the potential to mitigate or prevent many of the negative effects associated with fire and flood risks. This project will: 1) expand outreach to include under/un-represented voices, 2) synthesize existing plans, studies, and data to evaluate and prioritize potential projects, 3) engage landowners through outreach and workshops to catalyze projects, 4) develop monitoring protocols and document best practices, and 5) consolidate hydrologic, ecologic, and social data into an interactive online ARC-GIS HUB platform. These efforts will align partners to more strategically identify and implement critical projects across the sub-watersheds.

LGRC Partners include: the cities of Phoenix, Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AzGFD), Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (ADFFM), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Maricopa County Parks and Recreation (MCPRD), Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), Buckeye Water Conservation & Drainage District (BWCDD), Buckeye Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Arizona State University (ASU), Rio Reimagined Initiative, Audubon Southwest, and private landowners. Federal lands include BLM and USFWS Public Land Order (PLO) 1015 lands (Gila River Waterfowl Management Area). State-owned AzGFD Wildlife Areas are also within the area of interest. The success of watershed restoration and protection efforts depends on the involvement of a comprehensive, diverse array of landowners, and, in the program planning and implementation phase, water rights users. LGRC serves as a consensus-based watershed group representing the diverse range of affected stakeholders whose goal is to promote the sustainable use of water resources in the lower Gila River subwatersheds.



Areas Affected by Project

Maricopa County, AZ including but not limited to the following cities Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Phoenix. Maps below.



Lower Gila River

MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA

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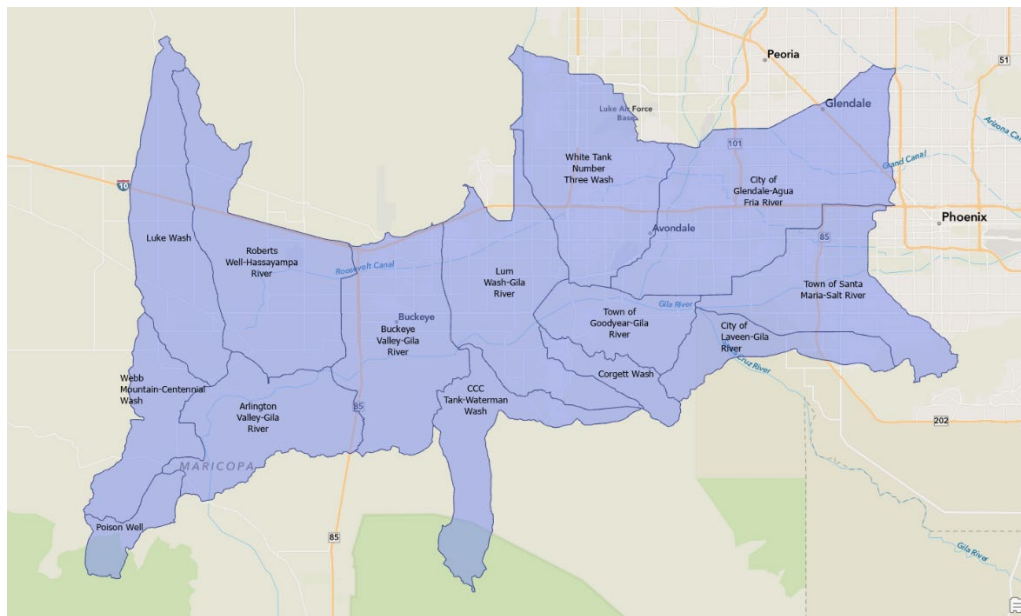


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1. Technical Proposal:

1.1 Executive Summary

December 4, 2023

Audubon Southwest (a regional office of National Audubon Society)

Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona

The National Audubon Society seeks \$298,014 over three years (approximately January 2025-December 2027) to implement the 2024-2029 Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC) Strategic Action Plan. We aim to advance restoration of the lower Gila River sub-watersheds by removing invasive tamarisk (salt cedar), planting native vegetation, creating public access points and trails, encouraging nature based economic development, and engaging underserved communities. The project area, located in Maricopa County, Arizona, spans the lower Salt River from the City of Phoenix Tres Rios Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Wetlands downstream through the confluence with the Gila River to Gillespie Dam and spans 40 miles of river corridor and adjacent uplands. The river corridor, within several sub-watersheds, is dominated by invasive tamarisk, sand and gravel mining, and adjacent industrial and agricultural land uses. Watershed restoration and protection efforts, including targeted areas for supplemental water to restore habitat, have the potential to mitigate or prevent many of the negative effects associated with fire and flood risks. This project will: 1) expand outreach to include under/unrepresented voices, 2) synthesize existing plans, studies, and data to evaluate and prioritize potential projects, 3) engage landowners through outreach and workshops to catalyze projects, 4) develop monitoring protocols and document best practices, and 5) consolidate hydrologic, ecologic, and social data into an interactive online ARC-GIS HUB platform. These efforts will align partners to more strategically identify and implement critical projects across the sub-watersheds. LGRC Partners include: the cities of Phoenix, Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AzGFD), Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (ADFFM), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Maricopa County Parks and Recreation (MCPRD), Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), Buckeye

Water Conservation & Drainage District (BWCDD), Buckeye Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCD), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Arizona State University (ASU), Rio Reimagined Initiative, Audubon Southwest, and private landowners. Federal lands include BLM and USFWS Public Land Order (PLO) 1015 lands (Gila River Waterfowl Management Area). State-owned AzGFD Wildlife Areas are also within the area of interest. The success of watershed restoration and protection efforts depends on the involvement of a comprehensive, diverse array of landowners, and, in the program planning and implementation phase, water rights users. LGRC serves as a consensus-based watershed group representing the diverse range of affected stakeholders whose goal is to promote the sustainable use of water resources in the lower Gila River subwatersheds.

1.2 Project Location

The project is located in Maricopa County, Arizona and includes the cities of Phoenix, Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye as well as opportunities within approximately 428,000 acres of private farmland and managed public land. The project is in several subwatersheds of the Salt and lower Gila Rivers (Figure 1). The primary planning area is within the river corridors. These corridors are also identified as an Audubon globally Important Bird Area for the federally endangered Yuma Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus yumanensis*). Habitat restoration projects are also providing suitable habitat for the federally threatened Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) and endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*). The project area is primarily the river corridor but also includes projects in the greater HUC12 subwatersheds. It includes the western segment of the EPA designated Rio Reimagined - Rio Salado Urban Waters Federal Partnership. Flows in the lower Gila River are primarily from reclaimed water, groundwater, and agricultural run-off. Water treated at the Tres Rios Wastewater Treatment Plant and Wetlands provides environmental water in the upper reach of the project area which is diverted downstream into irrigation canals for agricultural uses.

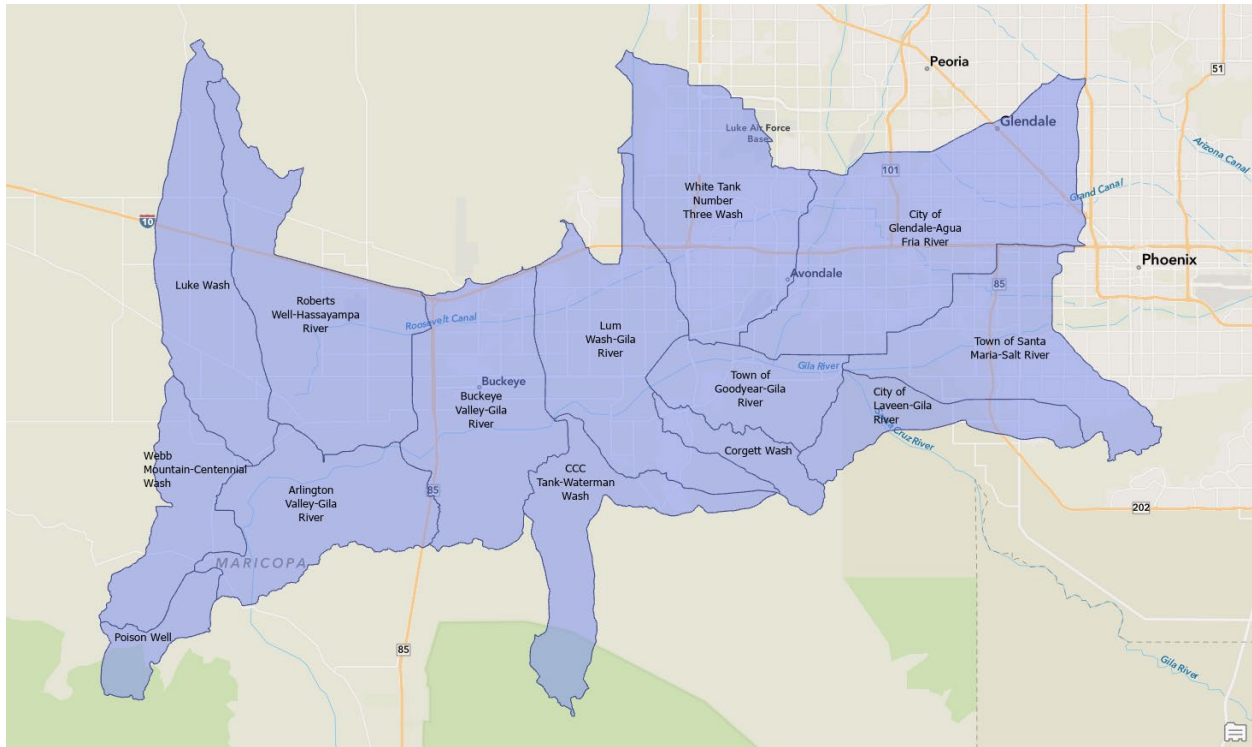


Figure 1. Watershed Area for the Lower Gila River Collaborative: HUC 12: Town of Santa Maria-Salt River (150601060307); City of Glendale-Salt and Agua Fria River (150701020908); Roberts Wash- Hassayampa River (150701030507); City of Laveen (150501001108), Town of Goodyear (150701010202), Corgett Wash (150701010201), Lum Wash (150701010205), CCC Tank-Waterman Wash (150701010109), Buckeye Valley (150701010206), White Tank Number 3 Wash (150701020907), Luke Wash (150701010207), Webb Mountain-Centennial Wash (150701040708), Poison Well (150701010208), Arlington Valley-Gila River (150701010209).

1.3 Applicant Category

The LGRC meets the definition of an Existing Watershed Group as a grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues and promotes sustainable water use. LGRC makes decisions on a consensus basis and represents diverse stakeholders, which are described in Section 1.6.A. Audubon Southwest, the non-profit applicant, is a member of the LGRC’s Coordinating Team.

LGRC has been convening since 2018 in support of partners’ vision for a healthy lower Gila River system with sufficient water resources to support functioning habitat, engaged and resilient communities, a vibrant local economy and quality of life for present and future generations. The mission of LGRC is to serve as an ongoing forum for collaboration, coordination and outreach that improves and conserves the natural and cultural resources of the lower Gila River corridor. LGRC focuses on habitat enhancement, rather than ecosystem restoration, in recognition of the irreversible changes that have shaped the river, from altered hydrology to conversion from native vegetation to a tamarisk dominated system. LGRC partners focus on improving habitat for native species, improving ecosystem services and providing beautiful areas for community recreation.

In 1999, Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Maricopa County created the [El Rio Vision](#) to address flood risk, incorporate multi-use opportunities, and restore and maintain riparian habitat through public-private partnerships in a 17.5-mile reach of the Gila River that passes through the cities of Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye. After a decade of implementing pilot projects, conducting foundational studies, and documenting vegetation management guidance, the El Rio partnership transformed into a more diverse group of entities invested in the lower Gila River known as LGRC. The LGRC extends beyond the geographic area that El Rio identified and is unique in convening a broad spectrum of community members beyond the primary partners to achieve ecological benefits that also meet the needs of communities and residents. In 2018, core partners hired facilitators from Southwest Decision Resources to design a collaborative structure and process. The group regularly convenes in committees and working groups, supported by a charter adopted by regional leaders in 2020.

LGRC represents the western reach of the Rio Reimagined (RIO), a visionary revitalization initiative spanning 58-miles of the Salt and Gila River corridor in Maricopa County. Since that time, with ASU as the convener and facilitator, the multi-decade Rio Reimagined initiative has made significant progress in developing a robust, diverse partnership of public, non-profit, industry, and community stakeholders along the river corridor. It received designation as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership location in 2020, which connects the initiative to a federal and national non-profit support network. The individual partners that comprise the LGRC are also partners of the Rio Reimagined initiative. LGRC is the primary forum for the Rio Reimagined's West Valley partners to collaborate on place-based strategic planning and peer-to-peer learning that informs decision-making and improves effectiveness of projects on the ground.

From 2021-2023, the LGRC developed the [2024-2029 Strategic Action Plan](#) (StrAP), which is under final review by local decision makers. The plan lays out 10 strategies and associated actions to guide LGRC's work over the next five years. It also identifies over 75 [projects](#) in various stages of development from proposed to completed. This work was financed in part from the Catalyst Grant, provided by the Network for Landscape Conservation. Funding from this grant is needed to implement the StrAP.

This grant also comes at a time of significant opportunity in the lower Gila River. The ADFFM has received \$5 million in funding for the Gila River Non-native Vegetation Species Eradication Fund and \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act Funds – both are for the removal of tamarisk, secondary weed control, and revegetation with native species on all land ownerships specifically within the boundaries of the Lower Gila River. The LGRC has been designated by ADFFM as the key venue for prioritizing and designing projects with landowners.

1.4 Eligibility of Applicant

Audubon Southwest is an eligible applicant because it is a non-profit located in Arizona, and LGRC meets the definition of an existing watershed group (Section 1.3). Audubon Southwest is the Arizona and New Mexico's regional office of the National Audubon Society, a non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems for birds and other wildlife and the habitats they depend on for the benefit of humans and the earth's biodiversity.

Their Arizona staff are engaged on many fronts with LGRC conservation efforts, including: 1) member of the LGRC Coordinating Team, 2) co-lead of the Habitat Enhancement Working Group, 3) project manager for the Catalyst Fund grant, 4) member of the NRCS State Technical Committee, and 5) GIS modeling analyst for Yuma Ridgway's rail habitat and other avian information in the project area. Audubon has over 6,600 chapters nationally and over 44,000 members in Arizona and New Mexico, a large percentage of whom live in the Phoenix metro area, which includes Maricopa County. Development of and participation in the LGRC and associated watershed restoration planning efforts are compatible with the National Audubon Society and Audubon Southwest's conservation goals and will contribute to achievement of conservation outcomes consistent with our mission. National Audubon Society has identified water as a core priority, and focuses its work in landscapes where water scarcity and water quality are primary limiting factors for survival of threatened and iconic birds in the Western Hemisphere. National Audubon Society's water strategy engages their conservation, policy and science teams and its more-than-one-million network of members nationwide to advance balanced solutions to water use in the West to ensure that birds, ecosystems, people and economies thrive. Audubon believes that people are at the heart of solutions to water scarcity and sustainable water management. Audubon's work to change attitudes about how people use, manage and value water is centered on building trusted relationships and collaborative partnerships to achieve conservation victories at scale.

1.5 Project Description

This grant would provide three years of funding for LGRC to begin implementation of key strategies from the 2024-2029 StrAP. The project goals include enhanced capacity for community outreach, facilitation, analysis, project prioritization, tool development, landowner outreach, and adaptive management. The StrAP identified 33 actions to implement its 10 strategies and further LGRC's mission. The project description below includes the most pressing strategic actions from the StrAP. In Section 1.6.C, we provide a detailed timeline of tasks, activities, and milestones.

Task A - Watershed Group Development

Southwest Decision Resources, the Facilitation Contractor, convenes and coordinates the LGRC's Coordinating Team, working groups, Leadership Council, and full partnership (Figure 2). With this funding, the Facilitation Contractor will increase its capacity to engage new partners and communities while providing critical funding to continue facilitation of the collaborative, enabling implementation of projects identified through strategic action planning. Activities under Task A will implement the following [actions](#) from [LGRC Strategic Action Plan](#): 4.2 Foster Broader Leadership, 7.1 Engage Native Nations, 7.2 Co-create Messaging, 7.3 Protect Cultural Resources, 9.1 Provide Stewardship Events.

A.1 Facilitation of Collaborative and Outreach

The Facilitation Contractor will incorporate outputs of the StrAP into new communications materials, update the LGRC website regularly with events and announcements, and implement new online communications and collaboration systems such as email marketing, contact management, and file sharing. In addition, the Facilitation Contractor will begin to utilize analytics in order to track online engagement. Improved online communications will increase

the reach and quality of LGRC's outreach and educational activities to grow the community of lower Gila River stewards and partner organizations.

The Facilitation Contractor will engage local residents and businesses by organizing partner attendance at community events, attending events as needed, providing outreach materials, and ensuring follow up and ongoing engagement with new members. Outreach at local events will develop new relationships with diverse community members, gather input on potential projects, and increase community awareness of LGRC goals and efforts, and result in increased volunteers in LGRC partner stewardship opportunities.

The Facilitation Contractor will assist with developing and strengthening relationships among LGRC partners, including with the Native Nations and Indigenous communities who live in and/or have cultural connection to the lower Gila River. The contractor will develop an outreach list of potential working group participants and document interests of potential new collaborative members in order to encourage involvement in the work of the collaborative and upcoming watershed planning activities.

The Facilitation Contractor will work closely with the broader network in the Salt/Gila River corridor, Rio Reimagined, to align efforts, share information and resources, and collaborate on communications. The Facilitation Contractor will meet quarterly with Rio Reimagined staff and attend bimonthly Rio Reimagined partner meetings. This will help connect LGRC partners to funding opportunities, grant writing, and additional support via Rio Reimagined Staff and the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

Facilitation Contractor will facilitate monthly Coordinating Team meetings, four working groups (each meeting 2-6x per year), action committees, Leadership Council, and full partnership meetings (Figure 2). This funding will supplement partner contributions in order to fund the full cost of facilitation for LGRC's facilitation and coordination needs.

Task B Watershed Restoration Planning:

Working together with all LGRC partners, the Applicant, Environmental Consultant (Geosystems Analysis), and Facilitation Contractor will continue watershed restoration planning by synthesizing information to prioritize projects and identify next steps to support implementation. Top priority projects will address the needs and key goals of the LGRC including addressing flood and fire risk, providing quality habitat for threatened and endangered bird species, providing river amenities for residents and visitors, and securing sufficient water quality and quantity to support project success. Projects may be related to invasive species management, establishment of native vegetation, green infrastructure projects to slow and spread flood waters, recreation amenities, or others. Other watershed restoration planning tasks described further below include developing GIS tools, a project monitoring protocol, and documenting best practices. Activities under Task A will implement the following [actions](#) from [LGRC Strategic Action Plan](#): 1.1 Synthesize data and plans to inform strategic project implementation, 1.2 Continue to build project pipeline, 1.3 Document Best Practices, 3.1 Track Progress and Evaluate Effectiveness, 3.2 Develop Standard Monitoring Protocols, 3.3

Adapt the Monitoring Plan, 5.1 Understand Water Quality and Implications, 8.1 Enhance River Access and Trail Connections, 8.2 Integrate Recreation in Habitat Projects.

B.1 Synthesis and Project Characterization

The Environmental Consultant will synthesize a list of existing plans, studies and data collected during the strategic action planning process, along with information from project leads and new hydrologic data, to characterize projects for the purpose of prioritization. Current information collected for each of the 75+ projects currently identified includes: project title, status (proposed, ongoing, completed), project type (habitat enhancement, recreation, outreach, water resources, economic development), location, land owner, project lead, and description. The goal of this task is to synthesize the following additional information for each project to prioritize restoration opportunities:

- Project size, current land use, current vegetation and site conditions (depth to groundwater, groundwater salinity, soil salinity, soil texture, flood potential, site access), restoration goal(s) and management objectives, qualitative/quantitative success criteria developed for the project.
- Data gaps (e.g., unknown project information per above, permits needed; estimated costs, success criteria or adaptive management plans for completed projects)
- For proposed and ongoing projects: Restoration potential (e.g., wetland, cottonwood/willow, mesquite, upland) and constraints
- For completed projects: lessons learned, adaptive management plans and needs

Through this work, the Environmental Consultant will produce the following outputs:

- A technical memo summarizing the projects and data gaps, project prioritization, and recommendations for next steps, evaluated in the context of collected plans, studies, and data.
- A workbook that compiles the additional project information gathered from this task
- A summary table that prioritizes projects based on feasibility and restoration potential
- Key project information developed from this task will be organized and added to the existing LGRC geodatabase/webmap

This will result in a consolidated and comprehensive environmental data repository, habitat project design support tool, and a pipeline of habitat projects ready for implementation.

B2. Facilitated Discussions on Synthesis and Project Evaluation

Facilitation Contractor will facilitate discussions on the implications of B1 deliverables in an in-person workshop involving current and expanded partners. LGRC partners will identify next steps such as outreach priorities, how to fill needed data gaps, funding opportunities, and priorities for additional technical support that Environmental Consultant can provide to project managers (B4).

B3. Outreach to Catalyze and Improve Projects

Audubon Southwest will support partners by conducting targeted outreach to partners and landowners of properties that ranked high in feasibility and restoration potential (B1). This will include outreach to additional stakeholders identified in the strategic action plan including

ADOT, MAG, farmers/NRCDs/irrigation districts, Native Nations, mining companies, and real estate developers. Audubon Southwest will assist the ADFFM in landowner outreach to gain permissions and cooperation for invasive species management and native plant restoration.

B4. Workshops for Potential New Project Partners

The Facilitator Contractor will convene in-person workshops in priority areas to bring together project funders, project managers, and interested landowners in order to scope new projects, connect existing project sites, and build the network of implementing partners. Workshops will support ADFFM in administering the \$15 million in vegetation management contracts toward projects with greatest potential for long term success.

B5. Technical Assistance for Project Planning

After the initial synthesis and project characterization work, the Environmental Consultant will provide on-going support to LGRC partners and working groups. This may include interpretation and application of synthesis and project evaluation findings to partners' efforts, technical assistance with project designs, including integrating USGS water quality and quantity data, and offer refinements to site-specific post-project monitoring to evaluate effectiveness.

B6. Coordination of Adaptive Management and Documentation of Best Practices

LGRC partners developed a simple and low cost monitoring plan as part of the StrAP. The Facilitation Contractor will convene the Monitoring Committee and topical working groups as partners continue to pilot specific monitoring protocols. The Facilitation Contractor will also convene annual all partners' meetings to present results from project implementation and monitoring. The Environmental Consultant will attend these meetings and provide technical support (B4). The Facilitation Contractor will work together with partners and the Environmental Consultant to document lessons learned and support improved project methods and priorities. Lessons learned will improve invasive vegetation treatments, establishment of native vegetation, and protection of floodplain degradations with multiple benefits for wildlife and communities including recreation and economic development.

B7. Tools to Support Project Prioritization and Design

Audubon Southwest will develop the web-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS) portal called ArcGIS Hub to house current GIS data viewers and collaborative geospatial database. Hubs are online platforms that engage viewers with interactive maps, data, and web applications tools. LGRC's GIS tools have been developed in partnership with Maricopa County GIS over the past 3 years and Maricopa County will continue to provide in-kind GIS services and host the database. Audubon Southwest will develop an outline for the Hub to include public-facing information to educate the general public about LGRC's activities and a portal focused on decision support and progress tracking for LGRC partners. Audubon Southwest will integrate the results of the watershed planning activities (B1-B6), including a prioritized and sequenced list of projects and post-project monitoring data (analyzed drone imagery, photo points, revegetation survivorship, and biotic monitoring (flora and fauna)). By hosting data, maps, and resources, the Hub will allow project members to work together. Public-facing information such as StoryMaps will inform and engage community members, including historically underserved

communities (see 1.6.B), in LGRC plans and projects. All geospatial data collected for or produced through this grant will meet all relevant standards established by the Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC) as authorized by Geospatial Data Act of 2018, P.L.115-254, Subtitle F – Geospatial Data, §751-759C, codified at 43 U.S.C. §2801–2811 and fully compliant metadata on all Geographic Information Systems (GIS) files. The ArcGIS Hub will be developed in industry standard formats that are compatible with geographic information system platforms.

1.6 Evaluation Criteria

1.6.A. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)

Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

LGRC engages diverse groups who are affected by water quantity and quality and flood and fire risk through collaborative planning activities, outreach at events, and peer-sharing at working group meetings. The partners recognize the importance of diverse participation of many different groups to support the broad goals of the partnership. Agricultural stakeholders, such as the Buckeye NRC and served by the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District and Arlington Canal Company, are impacted by flooding. These stakeholders can affect the quantity and quality of water in the river in multiple ways, including contributing flows from irrigation runoff and utilizing pumps that remove shallow saline water from the agricultural fields and direct water into the river. The cities of Phoenix, Avondale, Buckeye, and Goodyear are affected by the quality and quantity of the water, including opportunities arising from proximity to the river and the potential for recreation and other economic development. Adjacent cities use of and management of groundwater resources affects the quantity and quality of flows in the river. The City of Phoenix - through agreements with Palo Verde Generating Station, USFWS, and USACE - contributes flows to the river from the 91st Avenue regional wastewater treatment plant. Recreation users, particularly hikers, birdwatchers, hunters, equestrians, and kayakers utilize this area and are affected by water quality and quantity in their activities, and while interacting with the lands managed by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, AzGFD, BLM, and others. Environmental organizations including Audubon Southwest and Sonoran Audubon Society conduct activities such as bird counts. The lower Gila River continues to be of significant cultural importance for Native Nations including the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), Ak-Chin Indian Community, Hopi Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Tohono O’odham Nation, and others. The GRIC contributes to improved water quality through wetland restoration. Their water resource management, including managed aquifer recharge sites, contributes to flows of the Gila River upstream. The USFWS owns a series of parcels (PLO 1015 lands) for the purpose of conservation, managed by the AzGFD within the project area.

LGRC includes a diverse and representative set of stakeholders and partners who have demonstrated their commitment over many years through agreements, funding, and in-kind support of staff time. The LGRC Charter was approved by Leadership Council consensus on July 29, 2020 by Pat Barber (AzGFD), Mayor Kenn Weisse (City of Avondale), Mayor Jackie Meck (City of Buckeye), Mayor Georgia Lord (City of Goodyear), Mayor Kate Gallego (City of Phoenix), Director Mike Fulton (Flood Control District of Maricopa County), Sunshine Whitehair on behalf

of Governor Stephen Lewis (GRIC), and Ken Vonderscher on behalf of Director RJ Cardin (Maricopa County Parks and Recreation). Since it was approved, two new members of the Leadership Council have been nominated and approved: USFWS and ADFFM. Leadership Council members contribute annually to a shared funding budget for facilitation and coordination:

FY2024 Shared Funding Contributions

Maricopa County (Flood Control, Parks & Recreation)	\$10,000
City of Buckeye	\$10,000
City of Avondale	\$5,000
City of Goodyear	\$5,000
City of Phoenix	\$5,000
AZ Game and Fish Department	\$2,500
Arizona State University	\$2,500

In previous years (2021-2023), Audubon Southwest provided financial support of \$25,000 through the Catalyst Grant from the Network for Landscape Conservation. In-kind support is provided by the Coordinating Team, Co-Leads of LGRC working groups, and Maricopa County GIS Department. Coordinating Team meetings are the main strategic and coordination venue for LGRC. A tally of attendance for 2023 is shown below as an example of the commitment of diverse partners to LGRC. In addition, partners collaborate on efforts between, co-lead working groups, and form action committees.

Coordinating Team (CT) Member	CT Meetings Attended, 11/22-11/23
AZ Game and Fish Dept.	7
AZ State University	8
Audubon	8
City of Avondale	7
City of Buckeye	7
City of Goodyear	7
City of Phoenix	8
AZ Dept of Forestry and Fire Management	3
Flood Control District of Maricopa County	10
Gila River Indian Community	1
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Dept.	8
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	12

Letters of support provided for this application include AzGFD, ASU, the City of Avondale, the City of Buckeye, the City of Goodyear, the City of Phoenix, and Flood Control District of Maricopa County.

While the group is diverse, more can be done to broaden the partnership in the subwatersheds. LGRC's Strategic Action Plan (2023), under/un-represented stakeholders were identified including: industry (mining, real estate developers), state transportation planners, city water managers, Native Nations, recreation users, local residents and local businesses. This grant will support LGRC facilitators and partners in conducting one-on-one outreach, hosting workshops, attending events and meetings of other organizations, and increasing the quantity and quality of external communications to engage with these essential stakeholders and partners (see A1, B2, B3, B4, B7).

In terms of governance, the LGRC Leadership Council coordinates on issues and initiatives of regional relevance. At times when decisions or agreement are needed, members of the Leadership Council will consult internally with the entity they represent, as necessary, before participating in decision-making. For decisions or agreements, in order to ensure broad support, the Council will strive for consensus when possible with the understanding that further approvals may be required from the various respective agencies. Examples of potential decisions and agreements to be made by the Council include: approval of the Charter document and revisions, approval of new working groups, agreement on shared funding expectations and overall collaborative mission and priorities, and accepting new organizations onto the Leadership Council. Leadership Council members are based on the land ownership and jurisdiction of the entities in the lower Gila River, with two seats reserved for at-large members.

The Coordinating Team meets monthly and determines the month-to-month and year-to-year strategies and activities of the collaborative, with input from their leadership. Decisions in the Coordinating Team are also made by consensus, including the addition of new members. Coordinating Team members are selected because of their Leadership Council status or potential. Working Groups and all-partner meetings are open to any stakeholder or member of the public who wishes to participate and there is no formal process to join these meetings.

LGRC defines consensus as follows: Consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can accept whatever is proposed after every effort has been made to meet the interests of the LGRC. Members of the Collaborative will not be expected to undermine their own interests. Members have a responsibility to propose solutions that will meet everyone else's interests as well as their own. If consensus cannot be reached, areas of divergence, along with the reasons for divergence, are documented. If a decision is needed, a fallback decision method (e.g., voting) can be used when consensus cannot be reached.

LGRC structure diagram (Figure 2) describes roles and relationships among forums. The green bubbles are priority working groups, open to all interested parties. Blue triangles represent small committees, supporting the strategic Coordinating Team. Leadership Council provides funding, capacity, and overall direction for LGRC.

Lower Gila River
Collaborative

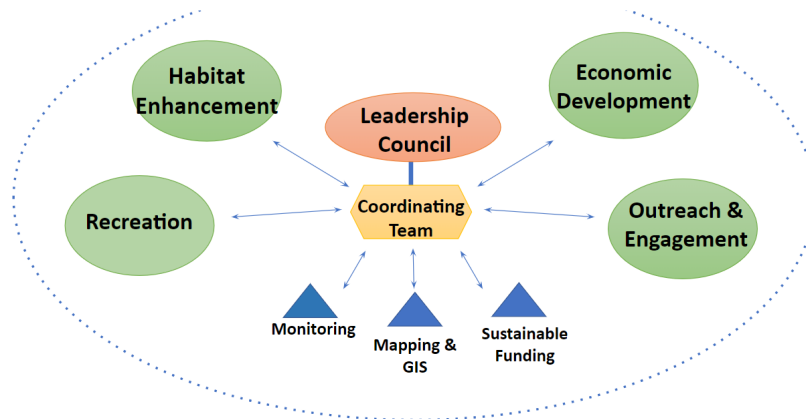
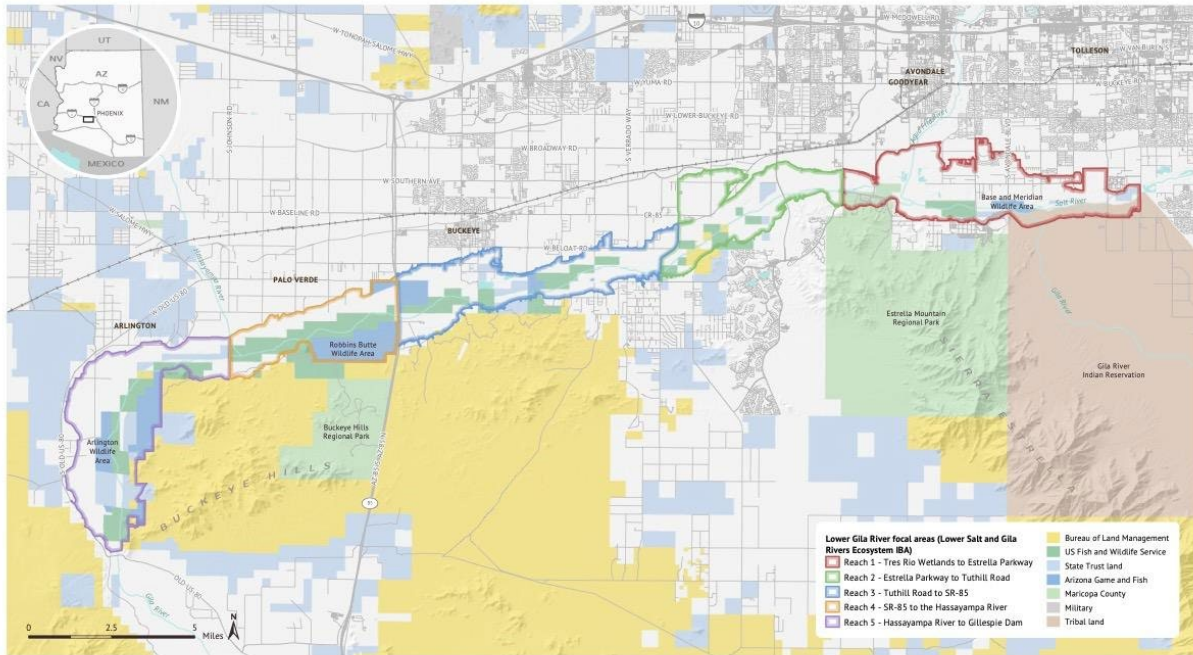


Figure 2. LGRC Collaborative Structure

Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope

Figure 3 identifies the five planning reaches defined by the LGRC and the locations and boundaries of LGRC’s major land jurisdiction stakeholders including the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Phoenix and Maricopa County including the Flood Control District (with floodplain outlined in each of the 5 reaches), and the Parks and Recreation Department (including Estrella Mountain Regional Park, Buckeye Hills Regional Park, and the Maricopa Trail (not pictured). The lands owned by the USFWS, managed by the AzGFD are indicated in green and Arizona Game and Fish Commission owned and/or managed are labeled and marked in blue. The GRIC land is shown in pink. All of these groups regularly participate in LGRC’s meetings. Irrigation Districts are also represented in this geography, with the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District included in Reaches 2 & 3 and the Arlington Canal Company included in reaches 4 & 5. Representatives of these irrigation districts occasionally participate in LGRC meetings and are pursuing potential project ideas. These districts provide water to farmers who are also represented by the Buckeye NRCD, a key stakeholder for developing restoration projects on private lands and establishing conservation easements.



Lower Gila River

MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA

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Figure 3. Reaches of the Lower Gila River Collaborative ([link to view](#))

LGRC partners are active in each reach of the lower Gila River and their broader subwatersheds. As described in the previous section, efforts will be made to target those groups who are not yet involved or sufficiently engaged. For example, not pictured in this map are Ak-Chin Indian Community, Hopi Tribe, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Tohono O’odham Nation, and others who have cultural associations with this landscape. LGRC partners have been working to develop relationships with these communities and identify collaboration opportunities, such as through the writing of the history of the lower Gila River and review of the StrAP. In addition, members of the public, including those who live, work, or attend school near the lower Gila River are important outreach targets. Engaging community members in stewardship activities such as tree plantings, trash clean up, or citizen science and providing recreation opportunities through access to the river is a priority for LGRC in order to grow community support and investment in the watershed. Outreach will focus on Reaches 2, 3, 4, and 5 (see Figure 3), areas that are less developed in terms of collaboration and projects and will be completed through activities described in the project description.

LGRC focuses on the 100-year floodplain along a river corridor, but recognizes that a watershed approach is needed in order to meet its goals. Therefore, partners concentrate on the subwatersheds outside of this corridor. Projects that partners have identified should benefit the LGRC focus area but have been identified in adjacent areas in the broader HUC 12 boundaries (Figure 1).

1.6.B Evaluation Criterion B— Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Through a two-year process, the LGRC convened the cities of Buckeye, Goodyear, Avondale, and Phoenix, Maricopa County, key land management agencies, and academic and conservation organizations to develop a strategic plan for the LGRC. This included engagement with Indigenous communities, elected officials, private landowners, and businesses to develop a cohesive vision for the river corridor, map and describe opportunity areas, define current and future river conditions, and create specific strategies and actions to achieve the LGRC's goals in the 2024-2029 LGRC StrAP. The critical watershed needs for the lower Gila River are defined in the StrAP and were developed by federal, state, and local agencies, including USFWS; AzGFD; ADFFM, the cities of Buckeye, Avondale, Goodyear, and Phoenix, Maricopa County Department of Parks and Recreation, Flood Control District of Maricopa County, and GRIC.

As described in the 2024-2029 LGRC Strategic Action Plan (StrAP), the challenges faced by the lower Gila River corridor can be primarily attributed to invasive plant species conversions – the causes of which are many, and the implications far-reaching. The natural flows of the Gila River have been altered by dams, water diversions, groundwater pumping, bridge crossings, agricultural levees, sand and gravel operations, as well as by climate change, which is trending hotter and drier. In general, the 'bust' periods following flooding have become longer in duration and more intense. As a result, many native species that were once widespread can only be found along parts of the river containing sufficient water during the dry, hot summer months before the monsoon season.

These changes have resulted in profound impacts across the ecosystem, transforming the native habitats along the river. Native vegetation is now rare and, in most places, has been replaced by invasive species including saltcedar, also known as tamarisk spp., ludwigia, stinknet, and giant reed, which is well adapted to the river's altered hydrologic regime and has prospered. By 1970, over 50% of the lower Gila River was dominated by saltcedar. Today, saltcedar occupies approximately 23,000 acres within the 36-mile lower reach of the Gila River. As described in the StrAP, the implications of this non-native invasion include increased wildfire risk, increased flood risk, increased soil salinity, decreased water quality, reduced access for recreation, and an overall decline in riparian ecological health and resilience as well as diminished ecosystem services.

Increased Flood Risk

Saltcedar grows in dense thickets, primarily monotypic, that limit light, create excess salts (impacting the soil nutrients through secreting at a high rate and depositing onto the soil), and use high amounts of water (making water less available to native vegetation). All of these effects decrease the potential for native species to survive, let alone thrive. Once saltcedar

invades an area, it becomes dense and alters the landscape by intensifying flooding. Saltcedar could also impact the structure and dynamics of watersheds by trapping and stabilizing sediments that in turn, increase the potential for overbank flooding and creations of sand bars. Natural flooding resulting from large storms is exacerbated by dense saltcedar growth that congests the river system and creates potential for high flows to back-up and increase the flood impact, effectively increasing the size of the floodplain. Major floods, such as the Gila River flood in 1993 that caused two deaths and the evacuation of over 200 families, scour the channel and wash vegetation downstream. In the years since the 1993 flood, saltcedar has grown back in many areas along the lower Gila River and increased the width of the FEMA 100-year floodplain (FCDMC, 2019).

The increased flood risk created by saltcedar invasion is of particular concern as it relates to the changing land uses along the Gila River corridor. Once rural farming communities, the western cities of the Phoenix metro region (commonly referred to as the “West Valley”) have been increasingly urbanized. Since the early 2000s, the area has seen explosive population growth; the City of Buckeye was the 7th fastest growing city in the U.S in 2016. The trend of agricultural land conversion to residential suburbs will continue in the future as the West Valley cities accommodate a growing population. With the expansion of both the urban built environment and the floodplain comes increasing conflict, where floodwaters can cause costly damage to critical infrastructure, such as roads and transmission lines, private property, create hazards for public safety, and water quality issues from stormwater runoff.

Increased Wildfire Risk

In addition to intensifying flooding, dense thickets of saltcedar in the lower Gila River bottom also provide increased fuel loads for fire. Saltcedar dominates and contains high levels of dead leaves and branches, providing fuel for fire as compared to native species like cottonwood and willow. Saltcedar increases fire intensity as it burns hotter and increases the frequency of fire within a system. Wildfires are increasing in the saltcedar-dominated river corridor, such that much of the lower Gila River has been identified by the ADFFM as “very high risk,” threatening communities and infrastructure, like power lines and bridges, with wildfires that would be difficult for suppression resources to contain (AZ Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, ADFFM). After fires, saltcedar sprouts rigorously and outcompetes the native vegetation.

Several large fires have occurred in the Gila River corridor in recent years. In 2005, the 500-acre Buck Fire along the Gila Riverbed within the saltcedar groves burned businesses and threatened the populated areas closer to the city center. In 2008, the Ethan Fire burned over 6,600 acres near the Phoenix International Raceway south to the GRIC. That fire, also fueled by saltcedar growth in the riverbed, ended up displacing residents from the area and affected flights arriving at Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix.

Habitat Degradation, Fragmentation, Threatened and Endangered Species Concerns

The lower Gila River is made up of several habitats supporting over 200 species of wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. These habitats include desert uplands, marsh, open water, and agriculture, and support a diverse array of resident and migratory species ranging from common urban species like coyote, beavers, doves, songbirds, waterfowl, skunks,

javelina, mule deer, red tail hawks, and turkey vultures to migratory sandhill crane, Canada geese, pelicans, waterfowl, and songbirds. Federally listed bird species like the Yuma Ridgway's rail, southwestern willow flycatcher and western yellow-billed cuckoo can also be found in the lower Gila River corridor. A variety of herpetological species have been documented as well, including the desert spiny lizard, ornate tree lizard, tiger whiptail, common side-blotched lizard, zebra tailed lizard, bullfrog, red eared slider, rattlesnakes, and garter snakes. This area is also designated critical habitat for several listed birds, and the National Audubon Society has designated the lower Salt and Gila riparian ecosystems as Globally Important Bird Areas. From upland habitat to riparian corridors, the river offers a diversity of structure and plant species on which birds depend for nesting, breeding, cover, foraging, and shelter.

With the hydrological and vegetation changes to the river corridor and accompanying risks related to flood, fire, water quality, invasive species, and increased urbanization, wildlife habitat in the lower Gila River corridor is degraded and fragmented, lacking functional ecosystem services. Along the river channel, saltcedar is the prevalent vegetation type as it outcompetes most native vegetation, including cottonwoods, willows, mesquite, and native desert shrubs. Saltcedar does not provide the high-quality diverse habitat required to support the needs of small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds that depend on insect-based diets to thrive and breed, as well as the aquatic vegetation to support the needs of fish and other aquatic species. Although some animals have adapted to live in saltcedar, the leaves of the saltcedar lack protein and do not provide the necessary nutrition for native wildlife species that depend on nutrient-rich native plants. Saltcedar can grow in very thick stands, blocking access to the river for wildlife and doesn't offer wildlife the high quality riparian habitat that native species like cottonwoods and willows provide (Lovich, Jeff & de Gouvenain, Roland, 1998).

Water Quantity and Quality Impairments

The lower Gila River corridor also faces water quality challenges. The transition from agricultural to urban land uses to accommodate population growth brings uncertain challenges and opportunities regarding water quantity and quality. The perennial reaches of the lower Gila River receive water from multiple sources, the most significant of which are irrigated agriculture return flows, shallow saline groundwater pumped away from agricultural fields, and treated effluent discharges from the 91st Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant (Stillwater Sciences, 2016). Upstream dams and diversions on the Salt River, Gila River, and Agua Fria River, as well as groundwater pumping, have reduced peak flood flows, which have negatively impacted water quality in the area (Stillwater Sciences, 2016). Degraded water quality has implications for maintaining native vegetation, wildlife habitat, public health and safety, recreation and overall riparian ecological health and resiliency.

Reduced Access and Safety for Recreation

From a recreational standpoint, saltcedar takes over trails, access points, and open areas that are important for hikers, runners, equestrians, and cyclists. In addition, illegal dumping, camping, illegal target shooting, and other activities along the Gila River make many areas unsafe to the general public.

Decline in Riparian Ecological Health and Resiliency

Taken together, the implications of monotypic saltcedar stands on water quality, flood risk, and fire risk in the lower Gila River as described herein has created numerous risks and challenges that threaten the long-term health and resiliency of the ecology of the river corridor. Saltcedar can impact ecosystem structure and function by forming a monoculture, outcompeting native species, and altering wildlife habitat. Once saltcedar has established in an area, it exudes salts from its leaves and onto the soil raising the salinity to intolerable levels for many native riparian plants (GSA, 2019).

In addition to saltcedar, there are numerous secondary weeds and invasive plant species present in the lower Gila River corridor. Giant reed (*Arundo donax*) is a large bamboo-like grass that can grow up to 30 feet tall. Like saltcedar, giant reed can form dense stands that limit access and increase fire risk and flood potential. Stinknet (*Oncosiphon pilulifer*) has rapidly spread across much of Maricopa County, and in the lower Gila River corridor in recent years as well. Stinknet is now a common understory plant that requires monitoring and short windows for control when and where feasible. It can increase fine fuel loading when it is allowed to dominate open spaces or recently disturbed areas. In 2020, stinknet was added to the state noxious weed list by the Arizona Department of Agriculture (The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension 2020). Ludwigia is an aquatic invasive plant that forms dense mats, creates mosquito habitat, and impedes navigation. The introduced tamarisk leaf beetle (*Diorhabda* spp.) in the lower Gila provides new opportunities and challenges (GSA, 2019). The beetles feed on the saltcedar's leaves, leaving them dry and brown with desiccated leaves still attached to the plant. The beetles do not necessarily cause mortality to the plants and can have several life cycles within the same area before moving on to the next area. Sites that are defoliated by the beetle can be good opportunities for treatment and revegetation because the saltcedar is in a vulnerable state; however, it is important to monitor closely because defoliated tamarisk can continue to pose risks for flooding and fire.

Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits

The challenges posed by invasive species, including increased flood and fire risk, degraded habitat and concerns for endangered species, reduced access for recreation, and an overall decline in riparian ecological health and resilience are overwhelming and complex. The strategies identified in the LGRC StrAP aim to advance restoration of the lower Gila River sub-watersheds by removing invasive saltcedar, planting native vegetation, creating public access points and trails, encouraging nature based economic development, and engaging underserved communities. Watershed restoration and protection efforts, including targeted areas for supplemental water to restore habitat, have the potential to mitigate or prevent many of the negative effects associated with fire and flood risks as described in Criterion B1.

The proposed project will begin implementation of key strategies from the 2024-2029 StrAP, including:

- Strategy 1: Collaboratively plan, implement, and maintain projects that manage tamarisk, establish native vegetation, and mitigate flood and fire risk
- Strategy 3: Develop affordable monitoring protocols to document project outcomes

- Strategy 4: Strengthen key partnerships with private landowners and agencies to advance habitat enhancement projects
- Strategy 5: Continue to study water quantity and quality to inform potential and existing projects
- Strategy 7: Strengthen relationships with GRIC and build relationships with other Native Nations and Indigenous communities connected to the lower Gila River
- Strategy 8: Develop and enhance regional park anchors and local trail connections
- Strategy 9: Promote public awareness of LGRC through stewardship opportunities and events

The proposed project will 1) expand outreach to include under/un-represented voices, 2) synthesize existing plans, studies, and data to evaluate and prioritize potential projects, 3) engage landowners through outreach and workshops to catalyze projects, 4) develop monitoring protocols and document best practices, and 5) consolidate hydrologic, ecological, and social data into an interactive online ARC-GIS HUB platform. These efforts will align partners to more strategically implement the most crucial projects across the sub-watersheds and holistically address the critical watershed issues identified in Criterion B1, collectively addressing flood and wildfire risk; habitat degradation, fragmentation, and threatened and endangered species concerns; water quantity and quality impairments; reduced access and safety for recreation; and, the decline in riparian ecological health and resiliency. Partners include, but are not limited to: the cities of Phoenix, Avondale, Goodyear, and Buckeye, AzGFD, ADFFM, BLM, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, Flood Control District of Maricopa County, GRIC, Buckeye Water Conservation & Drainage District, Buckeye NRCO, USGS, USACE, USFWS, ASU, the Rio Reimagined initiative, Audubon Southwest, and private landowners.

The LGRC is currently tracking over 70 projects that address these challenges in different ways; however, restoration activities are being carried out by a variety of entities based on different sets of criteria. There is a need to develop a more holistic strategy towards identifying, prioritizing, and implementing restoration projects along the lower Gila River corridor that can guide this work toward centralized goals and position the LGRC partners to compete for future funding. As described in the LGRC's StrAP, the diversity in land ownership and interests along the river corridor further necessitates a coordinated, inclusive and landscape scale approach to project development. Many scientific studies and management plans have been developed over the years to guide restoration work in specific geographies or to address specific challenges. To develop a holistic strategy for restoration work along the lower Gila River corridor this project proposes to synthesize all the existing studies and plans and identify data gaps, which will inform a framework to guide restoration project development, prioritization, and sequencing for greatest watershed benefit, including multi-criteria decision analysis that considers hydrological, ecological, social, and economic factors. This holistic strategy, or framework, will be incorporated into an online ArcGIS-based web portal for interactive use by project implementation partners to enhance their planning, implementation, and monitoring, and will also be accessible by the general public.

This framework for project development and prioritization will address the needs and key goals of the LGRC, including addressing flood and fire risk, providing quality habitat for threatened

and endangered animal species, providing river amenities for residents and visitors, and securing sufficient water quality and quantity to support project success. Projects may be related to invasive species management, establishment of native vegetation, green infrastructure projects to slow and spread flood waters, recreation amenities, or others. Outreach to stakeholders identified in the LGRC Strategic Action Plan will be another important action; input from which will inform the project prioritization framework. Continuing to deepen and diversify engagement of stakeholders through project development, adaptive management, and educational outreach activities is key to supporting project success. Stakeholders for focused outreach for increased engagement include the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Maricopa Association of Governments, agricultural landowners and farmers, irrigation districts, Native Nations, and mining companies with operations within the river corridor.

Stakeholders that will benefit from this work include the LGRC partners, diverse landowners along the river corridor, agriculture and mining operations, the residents and visitors that wish to engage with a healthy and safe river corridor, and all of the plant and animal life of the lower Gila River.

1.6.C Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed (20 points)

Below we have provided an overview of the project by year. This information aligns with the Budget Narrative and Project Description (Section 1.5). There are no new policies required to implement the project. Audubon Southwest will implement new administrative actions related to grant reporting and contract management.

Task: A. Watershed Group Development

Task	Activities and Milestones		
	YEAR 1 Jan 2025-Dec 2025	YEAR 2 Jan 2026-Dec 2026	YEAR 3 Jan 2027-Dec 2027
A.1 Facilitation of Collaborative & Outreach Lead: SDR Seek input from Outreach & Engagement working group (quarterly) and involve Coordinating Team in final approval of materials	Publish new website content	Develop tabling materials	Update materials with outputs of grant
	Represent LGRC at 1+ event	Represent LGRC at 1+ event	Represent LGRC at 1+ event
	Outreach letters and meetings with Tribes and stakeholders	Meetings and coordination with Tribes and stakeholders	Meetings and coordination with Tribes and stakeholders
	Rio Reimagined bi-monthly meetings and quarterly staff-to-staff meetings		

	- 4 Outreach and Engagement Working Group meetings - 6 Habitat Enhancement Working Group meetings	- 4 Outreach and Engagement Working Group meetings - 6 Habitat Enhancement Working Group meetings - 2 Sustainable Funding Committee meetings	- 4 Outreach and Engagement Working Group meetings - 6 Habitat Enhancement Working Group meetings - 2 Sustainable Funding Committee meetings
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Task: B. Watershed Restoration Planning

Task	Activities and Milestones		
	YEAR 1 Jan 2025-Dec 2025	YEAR 2 Jan 2026-Dec 2026	YEAR 3 Jan 2027-Dec 2027
B1. Synthesis and Project Characterization Lead: GSA	- Technical memo & workbook		
B2. Facilitated Discussions on Synthesis Lead: SDR		- 3-5 meetings with Environmental Consultant and core partners to design agenda, schedule, plan workshop, invite participants - Workshop facilitation and documentation, identifying follow up tasks	
B3. Outreach to Catalyze and Improve Projects Lead: Audubon Southwest		- Create outreach contact list, presentation and maps - Meet with property owners	- Invite property owners to workshops - Complete project descriptions

B4. Workshops for Potential New Project Partners Lead: SDR Work with Audubon Southwest and ADFFM as major funding partner		- Design and facilitate 1-2 workshops involving current and potential project proponents	- Design and facilitate 1-2 workshops involving current and potential project proponents
B5. Technical Assistance for Project Planning Lead: GSA		- Present findings - Provide technical assistance (project concepts, refine site monitoring)	- Technical assistance (integrating water data into project design, refine site monitoring)
B6. Coordination of Adaptive Management and Documentation of Best Practices Lead: SDR		- Begin collecting and organizing lessons learned - Convene Monitoring Committee - Convene all-partners meeting to review data and determine next steps	- Facilitate Coordinating Team follow up from all-partners meeting - Produce lessons learned document
B7. Develop Tools to Support Project Prioritization and Design Lead: Audubon Southwest	- Initial scoping for ArcGIS Hub - Attending periodic working group meetings	- ArcGIS Hub design - Develop initial Storymap	- Launch ArcGIS Hub - Additional content development from B1, B6 - Data & project updates

Project Management Actions

	YEAR 1 Jan 2025-Dec 2025	YEAR 2 Jan 2026-Dec 2026	YEAR 3 Jan 2027-Dec 2027
Grant Management and Reporting Lead: Audubon Southwest	- Management of contracts and timelines - Grant reporting	- Management of contracts and timelines - Grant reporting	- Management of contracts and timelines - Grant reporting

1.6.D Evaluation Criterion D—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities (15 points)

Climate Change

The proposed project demonstrates support for E.O. 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad as it embodies the administration’s approach to reducing climate pollution in every sector of the economy, increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change, protecting public health, conserving our lands, waters, and biodiversity. Over the past five years, climate change impacts in the Southwest have become increasingly apparent and widespread, and Arizona has warmed about two degrees (F) in the last century (EPA 2016, USGCRP 2023). Across the Southwest, extreme heat events are increasing and summertime heat stress and heat-related mortality is on the rise (USGCRP 2023). Climate change is exacerbating periods of drought and the aridification of the Southwest, which impacts long-term water supply in both surface and groundwater and increases the severity, frequency, and extent of wildfires (USGCRP 2023). At the same time, flooding from extreme precipitation events threatens life, property, and freshwater ecosystems like the Salt and Gila River corridor (USGCRP 2023).

The natural flows of the Gila River have been altered by upstream dams. Climate change exacerbates the effect by increasing air temperatures and drought conditions, placing pressure on and leading to the conversion of the riparian landscape away from native species. As a result, many native species that were once widespread can only be found along parts of the river with perennial flows. Projected urbanization and population growth and sand and gravel operations in the West Valley are expected to further impact the water sources and quantity in the lower Gila River, including an anticipated decrease in agricultural water use as land is converted to urban development. Periodic stormwater discharge may also increase with urbanization and the expansion of impervious surfaces, while at the same time, increased potable water conservation measures such as advanced water purification could impact effluent discharge quantities, which may have implications for water quantity in the river corridor necessary to support restoration work. These anticipated changes bring uncertainty to the long-term water outlook in the river corridor and present both challenges and opportunities for the LGRC. The proposed project would result in a strategic framework for restoration project development and prioritization that takes these trends into account.

The proposed project will facilitate strategic implementation of restoration projects in the lower Gila River corridor that will effectively address flood and fire risk, provide quality habitat for threatened and endangered animal species, provide river amenities for residents and visitors, and secure sufficient water quality and quantity to support project success. The LGRC is currently tracking over 70 projects that address these challenges in different ways; however, this project would provide for a holistic strategy to identify and implement restoration projects along the lower Gila River corridor to successfully address the impacts of climate change and ensure the long-term resilience of the river corridor.

Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities

Several communities along the lower Gila River corridor are high priorities for social and health programs and meet the socioeconomic and environmental burden thresholds described in the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice

Screening Tool. Five tracts along the river corridor in particular (map below) are neighborhoods of focus for the LGRC, as they exceed different threshold values for factors like climate change and health, making them subject to the heat island effect, at increased risk for asthma and diabetes, building loss, poverty, and proximity to toxic wastewater discharge. People living in these areas may stand to benefit most from the results of targeted river restoration projects, increased river amenities, and tree cover and shade, and are important partners in LGRC's work.

The projects resulting from work through this grant have the potential to directly impact these disadvantaged and underserved communities through the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities and a connection to nature, which has both physical and mental health benefits. A 2022 scientific study found that spending time near canals and rivers specifically, not just green spaces, is associated with better mental wellbeing (Bergou et al. 2022).

In addition to providing recreational opportunities, the projects that result from the work of this grant have the potential to provide for the health and safety of all communities surrounding the river corridor, which include the disadvantaged and underserved communities identified here, through riparian habitat restoration that reduces flood and fire risk and increases water quality.

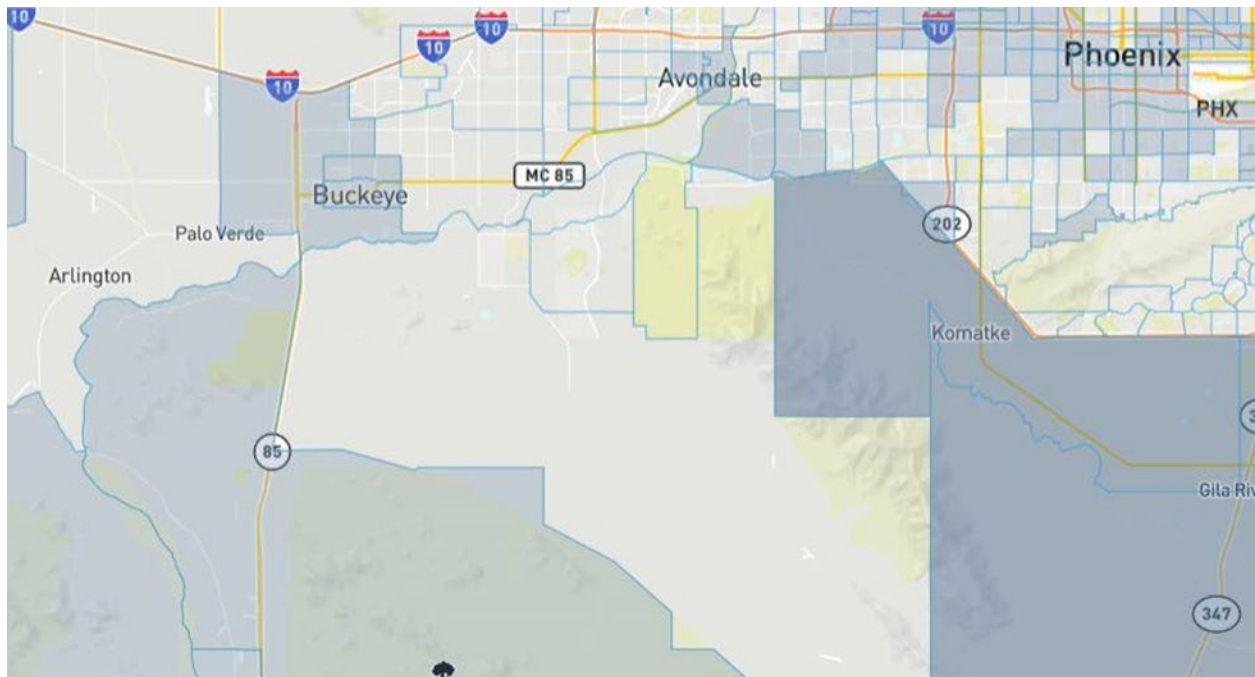


Figure 3. Gray shading indicates these areas are considered disadvantaged due to one or more of the EJ screening categories in this list. In the lower Gila, some of the more common factors include climate change, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

Tribal Nations and Indigenous Communities

The proposed project directly serves and benefits the Gila River Indian Community, which is a key partner of the LGRC. Indigenous peoples have lived along the river for at least 2,000 years, establishing complex agricultural societies before European exploration of the region began in

the 16th century (LGRC Storymap). Historical upstream diversion has created water quantity concerns in the lower Gila River corridor, which impacts not only native vegetation and wildlife habitat, but agricultural needs as well. The impacts of climate change described herein are also experienced disproportionately by certain communities in the region, including Indigenous communities (USGCRP 2023). Today, the people who live within the reservation of the Gila River Indian Community are working to reconnect their community to the Gila River and re-establish a robust irrigation system. As a partner of the LGRC, the Gila River Indian Community will be included in the creation of the project prioritization framework as a part of this proposal, and the resulting projects will enhance the river corridor along the community's banks, from increasing public health and safety related to access and water quality to restoring native habitat to help native vegetation and wildlife thrive.

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Official Resolution

Submission of this application is approved by the National Audubon Society. If we are awarded this application, the National Audubon Society will provide the appropriate documentation.



November 29, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, Colorado 80225

RE: WaterSMART Proposal for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I - LGRC

To Whom it May Concern,

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide a letter of support of Audubon Southwest's application, on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), for WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program - Phase I (CWMP) funding through the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). This critical funding would allow LGRC to initiate local strategic and sustainable actions to continue to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and strengthen the greater Colorado River Basin community.

LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders that share a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem and encourages effective stewardship, outdoor recreation, and compatible development. LGRC has consistently demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and local communities.

Thank you for considering Audubon Southwest's application for funding on behalf of the LGRC through the WaterSMART Grant program. The Department is pleased to support the partnership's funding request and looks forward to our continued collaborative efforts with the LGRC to continue to improve the health of the Lower Gila River, boost the local cities' economic and development priorities, and support the broader West Valley in Maricopa County.

Sincerely,
Joshua W. Hurst

Joshua Hurst
Regional Supervisor, Region VI

Cc: Luke Thompson - Habitat Branch Chief

azgfd.gov | 480.981.9400

MESA OFFICE: 7200 E. UNIVERSITY DRIVE, MESA AZ 85207

GOVERNOR: KATIE HOBBS **COMMISSIONERS:** CHAIRMAN TODD G. GEILER, PRESCOTT | CLAY HERNANDEZ, TUCSON | MARSHA PETRIE SUE, SCOTTSDALE
JEFF BUCHANAN, PATAGONIA | JAMES E. GOUGHNOUR, PAYSON **DIRECTOR:** TY E. GRAY **DEPUTY DIRECTOR:** TOM P. FINLEY



November 21, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Audubon Southwest/Lower Gila River Collaborative – Application for Collaborative Watershed Management Planning Grant

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of Audubon Southwest's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), to conduct collaborative water management and planning under the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase I (CWMP). LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders who share a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem while encouraging stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

LGRC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and the community. LGRC has recently finalized its 2024-2029 Strategic Action Plan (StrAP), which outlines strategic actions, geographic priorities, and potential projects for the next five years. The StrAP is based on sound science, stakeholder input, and adaptive management principles. Successful implementation of the strategies in this plan requires capacity and technical assistance that the CWMP grant funding offers.

The LGRC also represents the western reach of the regional Rio Reimagined initiative, a long-term river revitalization effort centered on the urban communities of six municipalities and two native nations along the Salt and Gila Rivers in the metro Phoenix region. Since 2017 the University City Exchange office at Arizona State University has served as the convener and facilitator of the Rio Reimagined initiative, which was designated the 20th location of the U.S. EPA's Urban Waters Federal Partnership, highlighting the initiative's focus on revitalizing an urban waterway and the surrounding communities within the watershed. The challenges of riparian ecosystem restoration, habitat conservation, and access to outdoor recreation in a rapidly urbanizing environment are critical priorities for the public, private, non-profit, and community-based organizations active in the Rio Reimagined partnership.

This grant will catalyze strategic and sustainable local actions to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and benefit the greater Rio Reimagined partnership. We strongly support the Bureau of Reclamation granting this award to Audubon Southwest. Thank you for your consideration.

University City Exchange
Office of the President
777 Novus Place, Suite 105, Tempe, AZ 85281
P.O. Box 874508, Tempe, AZ 85287-4508
(480) 727-7484



Respectfully,

Maggie Soffel

Maggie Soffel
Senior Director, University City Exchange
Rio Reimagined

University City Exchange
Office of the President
777 Novus Place, Suite 105, Tempe, AZ 85281
P.O. Box 874508, Tempe, AZ 85287-4508
(480) 727-7484



November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

The City of Avondale is writing to express strong support of Audubon Southwest's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), to conduct collaborative water management and planning under the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase I (CWMP). LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders with a shared vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem while encouraging stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

LGRC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and the community. LGRC has recently finalized its 2024-2029 Strategic Action Plan (StrAP), which outlines strategic actions, geographic priorities, and potential projects for the next five years. The StrAP is based on sound science, stakeholder input, and adaptive management principles. Successful implementation of the strategies in this plan requires the capacity and technical assistance that the CWMP grant funding offers.

This funding to LGRC supports specific priorities for the City of Avondale, including the synthesis of water resources studies and land use plans to inform the strategic implementation of projects and continuing to deepen and diversify engagement of landowners, stakeholders, and Tribes through project development, adaptive management, and educational outreach activities.

This grant will catalyze strategic and sustainable local actions to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and benefit the greater Colorado River Basin community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bryan C. Hughes', is written over a circular blue stamp or watermark.

Bryan C. Hughes, MPA, CPM, CPRE
Parks and Recreation Director

Parks and Recreation
11465 W Civic Center Drive | Avondale, AZ 85323
Phone (623) 333-2400 | www.avondale.org





November 16, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Reviewing Committee:

The City of Buckeye is writing to express strong support of Audubon Southwest's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), to conduct collaborative water management and planning under the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase I (CWMP). LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders who share a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem while encouraging stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

LGRC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and the community. LGRC has recently finalized its 2024-2029 Strategic Action Plan (StrAP), which outlines strategic actions, geographic priorities, and potential projects for the next five years. The StrAP is based on sound science, stakeholder input, and adaptive management principles. Successful implementation of the strategies in this plan requires capacity and technical assistance that the CWMP grant funding offers.

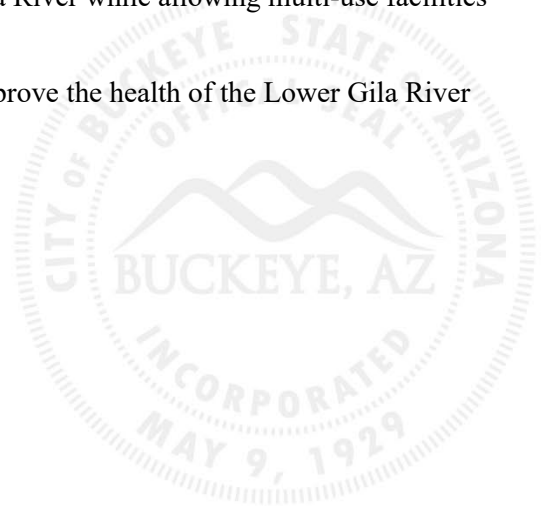
This funding to LGRC supports specific priorities for the City of Buckeye including many of the goals and policies of the General Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, The El Rio Area Plan, and The El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards. The Rio Area Plan recognizes the Gila River Corridor and provides to preserve and revitalize the irreplaceable natural resources of the Gila River while allowing multi-use facilities and functions along the north bank of the Gila River in Buckeye.

This grant will catalyze strategic and sustainable local actions to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and benefit the greater Colorado River Basin community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric W. Orsborn".

Eric W. Orsborn, Mayor
City of Buckeye





November 22, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom it May Concern,

The City of Goodyear (City) writes in support of Audubon Southwest's application, on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), for WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase 1 (CWMP) funding with the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). This critical funding will allow LGRC to initiate local strategic and sustainable actions to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and strengthen the greater Colorado River Basin community.

LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders that share a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem and encourages effective stewardship, recreation, and compatible development. LGRC has consistently demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and local communities.

The City is pleased to support the partnership's funding request and looks forward to collaborating with LGRC to continue to improve the health of the Lower Gila River, boost the City's economic and development priorities, and support the broader West Valley in Maricopa County.

Sincerely,

Joe Pizzillo
Mayor of Goodyear, AZ



2801 W. Durango St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85009

P: 602.506.1501
F: 602.506.4601

Maricopa.gov/floodcontrol

11/28/2023
Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

The Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC) is writing to express strong support of Audubon Southwest's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), to conduct collaborative water management and planning under the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase I (CWMP). LGRC is a voluntary partnership of diverse stakeholders who share a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem while encouraging stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

LGRC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the environment, the economy, and the community. LGRC has recently finalized its 2024-2029 Strategic Action Plan (StrAP), which outlines strategic actions, geographic priorities, and potential projects for the next five years. The StrAP is based on sound science, stakeholder input, and adaptive management principles. Successful implementation of the strategies in this plan requires capacity and technical assistance that the CWMP grant funding offers.

This funding to LGRC supports the interests of the FCDMC including management and mitigation of flooding and fires in the Lower Gila River.

This grant will catalyze strategic and collaborative actions to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and benefit the greater Colorado River Basin community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Vogel". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Scott Vogel, P.E.

Chief Engineer & General Manager



City of Phoenix
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

November 21, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
Financial Assistance Operations Section
Attn: Robin Graber and NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

The City of Phoenix Office of Environmental Programs is writing in support of Audubon Southwest's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC), to conduct collaborative water management and planning under the Bureau of Reclamation's Cooperative Watershed Management Program – Phase I (CWMP). The LGRC is a partnership of diverse stakeholders with a common vision of restoring the lower Gila River ecosystem while encouraging stewardship, recreation, and compatible development.

The LGRC has demonstrated its commitment and capacity to implement effective watershed management actions that benefit the community. LGRC has recently finalized its Strategic Action Plan (Plan), which outlines actions, geographic priorities, and potential projects for the next five years. The Plan is based on science, stakeholder input, and adaptive management principles. Successful implementation of the strategies in the Plan requires capacity and technical assistance that the CWMP grant funding offers.

This funding to LGRC will support specific priorities, including a synthesis of water resources studies and land use plans and developing and enhancing tools for planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects. The City of Phoenix works with LGRC to advance priorities at our Tres Rios Ecosystem Restoration Project and to work collaboratively with surrounding jurisdictions and landowners on connecting efforts.

This grant will provide an important step forward for the strategic local actions needed to improve the health of the Lower Gila River and benefit the greater Colorado River Basin community.

Sincerely,

Nancy Allen
Environmental Programs Administrator

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Science tells us that where birds thrive, people thrive. Audubon believes that people are at the heart of solutions to water scarcity and sustainable water management. Our project, Lower Gila River Collaborative Strategic Action Plan Implementation – Tools for Project Planning & Community Engagement, would provide three years of funding for LGRC to begin implementation of key strategies from the 2024-2029 StrAP. The project goals include enhanced capacity for community outreach, facilitation, analysis, project prioritization, tool development, landowner outreach, and adaptive management. Audubon’s work to change attitudes about how people use, manage and value water is centered on building trusted relationships and collaborative partnerships to achieve conservation victories at scale.

Proposal Budget

Table 1. Summary of Non-Federal and Federal Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-Federal Entities	\$ 0
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	\$298,014

Table 2. Budget Summary

Summary			
6. Budget Object Category	Total Cost	Federal Estimated Amount	Non-Federal Estimated Amount
a. Personnel	\$81,207		
b. Fringe Benefits	\$23,550		
c. Travel	\$0		
d. Equipment	\$0		
e. Supplies	\$0		
f. Contractual	\$153,810		
g. Construction	\$0		
h. Other Direct Costs	\$0		
i. Total Direct Costs	\$0		
j. Indirect Charges	\$39,447		
Total Costs	\$298,014	\$298,014	\$0

a. Personnel

Vashti (Tice) Supplee, Audubon Southwest Director of Bird Conservation, will be the project manager and responsible for the day to day direction of the project, participate in identification of and coordination with project site land owners and managers (**Tasks B3 and B4**), and coordinate development of the ARCGIS HUB (**Task B7**). The salary is \$12,930 for budget year one at 12% FTE. Years two & three include an anticipated annual 3% increase with 19% FTE allocated to the project and will expense at approximately \$43,022. Total salary cost for project manager will be \$55,952.

GIS Analyst, will assist the project manager in the performance of all tasks related to **Task B7-ARCGIS-HUB** for the term of the project. The salary is \$2,697 for budget year one at 5% FTE. Years two & three include an anticipated annual 3% increase with 20% FTE allocated to the project and will expense at approximately \$22,557. Total salary cost for the GIS analyst will be \$25,254. Annual Salary Cost: \$15,627-Y1, \$32,305-Y2, \$33,274-Y3 / **Total Salary Cost: \$81,207**

b. Fringe Benefits

The National Audubon Society Fringe Rate is currently 29% broken out in the table below.

FY 24				
Fringe Expense:	FT	PT	Temp	
Health Insurance	13.77%	-	-	
Disability Insurance	0.22%	0.22%	0.00%	
Life Insurance	0.28%	0.29%	0.00%	
Unemployment	0.42%	0.43%	0.00%	
FICA and Metro Tax	7.38%	7.57%	7.57%	
Pension	0.52%	0.00%	0.00%	
403b	6.01%	3.08%	0.00%	
Workers Comp	0.41%	0.42%	0.00%	
Total Fringe Expense	29.00%	12.00%	8.00%	

Fringe for year one will be \$4,532, year two will be \$9,368 and year three \$9,650. **Total: \$23,550**

c. Travel / \$0.00

d. Equipment / \$0.00

e. Supplies / \$0.00

f. Contractual

Consultants will be hired to assist with facilitation, information gap analysis, technical guidance memo, technical assessments of data sets, and project design and on the ground project(s) preplanning activities as needed.

Southwest Decision Resources (SDR) is the contracted facilitator for the Lower Gila River Collaborative. The funding from this grant would provide 492 hours of facilitation work focused on the delivery of the strategic action plan. The cost estimates from SDR are consistent with market prices for the deliverable work in Tasks A1, B2, B4, B6. **Total \$85,000**

Southwest Decision Resources staff rates:

Title	2025 Rate/hour	2026 Rate/hour	2027 Rate/hour
Facilitator	\$115.00	\$115.00	\$115.00
Support/Coordination	\$80.00	\$80.00	\$80.00

Southwest Decision Resources Task Work:

Task	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
A1. Facilitation of Collaborative and Outreach	Facilitator 97 hours \$10,005 Support/Coordination 60 hours \$4,800	Facilitator 129 hours \$14,835 Support/Coordination 60 hours \$4,800	Facilitator 147 hours \$16,905 Support/Coordination 60 hours \$4,800
B2. Facilitated Discussions on Synthesis and Project Evaluation	Y1 Total: \$0	Facilitator 15 hours \$1,725 Support/Coordination 15 hours \$1200	Y3 Total: \$0
B4. Workshops for Potential New Project Partners	Y1 Total: \$0	Facilitator 15 hours \$1,725 Support/Coordination 21 hours \$1,680	Facilitator 15 hours \$1,725 Support/Coordination 21 hours \$1,680
B6. Coordination of Adaptive Management and Documentation of Best Practices	Y1 Total: \$0	Facilitator 37 hours \$4,255 Support/Coordination 50 hours \$4,000	Facilitator 37 hours \$4,255 Support/Coordination 50 hours \$4,000
Expenses:	\$180 - Subscription for email marketing/contact management	\$377 – 2 x travel for 2 people living in Phoenix \$200 – 2 workshops expenses, materials \$180 - Subscription for email marketing/contact management	\$377 – 2 x travel for 2 people living in Phoenix \$100 – 1 workshop expenses, materials \$180 - Subscription for email marketing/contact management
Annual Total	\$14,985	\$34,957	\$35,058
PROJECT TOTAL	\$85,000		

GeoSystems Analysis (GSA) is the engineering design consultants who have previously completed contractual work in 2018 for the LGRC resulting in a detailed synthesized technical report with supporting data. Task B1 will provide an updated data synthesis in support of habitat restoration projects. The cost estimates from GSA are consistent with market prices for the deliverable work in Task B1 and B5. **Total \$68,810**

GeoSystems Analysis staff rates:

Title	2025 Rate/hour	2026 Rate/hour	2027 Rate/hour
Program Director	\$215.00	\$221.45	\$228.09
Project Manager	165.00	\$169.95	\$75.05
Restoration Director	165.00	\$169.95	\$175.05
GIS Specialist	135.00	139.95	\$143.22
Staff Scientist	120.00	123.30	\$127.31
Soil Scientist II	100.00	103.00	\$106.09
GIS Analyst	90.00	92.70	\$95.48
Soil Scientist I	85.00	87.55	\$90.18
Clerical Staff	80.00	82.40	\$84.87

GeoSystems Analysis Task Work:

Year	Task Description	Subtasks	Cost Not to Exceed
1/01/2025	A synthesis of plans and studies to inform successful strategy and projects (B1)	Project Management and Meetings. Review Report and Data Information Gaps Analysis. Review Report and Data	\$48,810
01/2026 12/2027	On-call technical support (B5)	Monitoring Protocols Review and Implementation Support	\$10,000
01/2026 12/2027	On-call technical support (B5)	Support in use of the technical memo inputs for project prioritization and design	\$10,000
TOTAL			\$68,810

g. Construction / \$0.00

h. Other / \$0.00

i. Indirect Costs

The National Audubon Society has a current predetermined NICRA of 25.49%. Indirect Cost for the term of the project will be \$39,447. The direct cost base of \$154,756 is determined by Audubon's \$104,756 in direct expenses and \$50,000 on contractual which factors in the cap on ICR on the first \$25,000 per each contract. **Total ICR: \$39,447**

Full Budget

BUDGET ITEM DESCRIPTION	COMPUTATION			%	TOTAL COST	
	Cost Rate*	Unit	Quantity			
SALARIES AND WAGES						
<i>Year 1 (01/01/25-12/31/2025)</i>						
Audubon Southwest Director of Bird Conservation	\$53.26	Hours	242.77	12%	\$ 12,930	
Audubon Southwest GIS Technician	\$25.55	Hours	105.56	5%	\$ 2,697	
<i>Year 2 (01/01/26-12/31/2026)</i>						
Audubon Southwest Director of Bird Conservation	\$54.86	Hours	386.33	19%	\$ 21,193	
Audubon Southwest GIS Technician	\$26.32	Hours	422.24	20%	\$ 11,112	
<i>Year 3 (01/01/27-12/31/2027)</i>						
Audubon Southwest Director of Bird Conservation	\$56.50	Hours	386.33	19%	\$ 21,829	
Audubon Southwest GIS Technician	\$27.11	Hours	422.24	20%	\$ 11,445	
*Hourly wage is increased annually by 3%					Subtotal	\$ 81,207
FRINGE BENEFITS						
All full time salaries	29%		\$81,206		\$ 23,550	
Subtotal					\$ 23,550	
CONTRACTUAL/ CONSTRUCTION						
Southwest Decision Resources		LS	1.00		\$ 85,000	
TBD - Engineering		LS	1.00		\$ 68,810	
Subtotal					\$ 153,810	
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS:					\$ 258,566	
INDIRECT COSTS						
Federal NICRA Rate	25.49%				\$ 39,447	
Subtotal					\$ 39,447	
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST:					\$298,014	



Congressional Districts

Applicant

NY - 010

Project

AZ – 002

AZ – 007

AZ – 009



Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

Neither Audubon staff or board members, nor any individuals or organizations associated with the proposed project, has an actual or potential conflict of interest with respect to “Funder”, the Scope of Work, or the subject matter of this funding opportunity. Audubon has an agency conflict of interest policy that will be observed during the term of this grant.



Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

No environmental and cultural resources compliance is anticipated under this proposal for Phase I planning:

- Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? **No**
- Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? **Yes**
- If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project? **No**
- Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as “Waters of the United States”? **Yes**
- If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have. None
- When was the water delivery system constructed? **N/A**
- Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? **No**
- 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. **N/A**
- Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? **No**
- Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area? **Yes, but not applicable to this proposal.**



Required Permits or Approvals

No permits or approvals are anticipated under this proposal for Phase I planning.



Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

The funding for this project, Lower Gila River Collaborative Strategic Action Plan Implementation – Tools for Project Planning & Community Engagement, presents a unique and distinctive scope of work does not overlap or duplicate with any other funding source.

If any changes of circumstances of overlap/duplication happen in the future Audubon will notify the BOR and/or other involved parties.



Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

The National Audubon Society, EIN 13-1624102, receives more than the prescribed \$750,000 USD in Federal award funds annually. Audubon completes and submits a Single Audit report annually which is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.