WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Planning Grant Proposal

Collaborative Restoration Planning, Community Engagement, and Project Development for the Salt River Watershed in NW Wyoming and SE Idaho

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D.2.2.2. Technical Proposal

Executive Summary

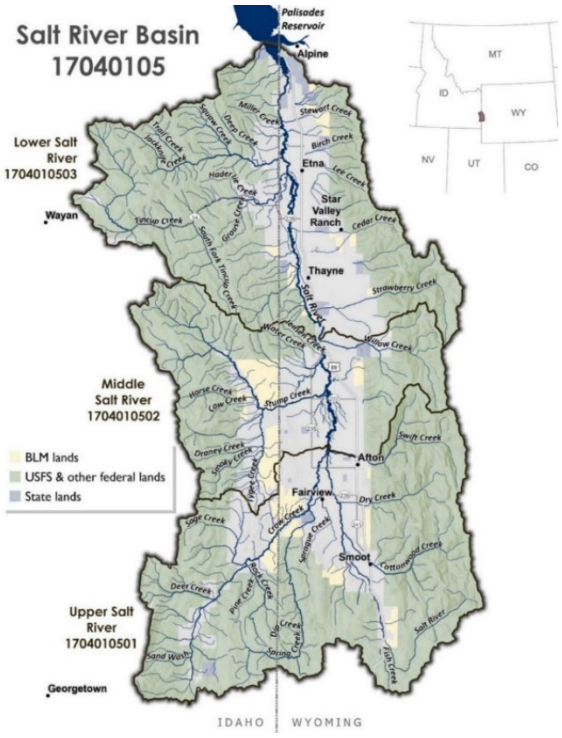
Date: 05 December 2023
Applicant Name: Trout Unlimited
City, County, and State: Afton, Lincoln County, Wyoming
Length of Time: Three years beginning January 1, 2025
Estimated Completion Date: December 31, 2027

The Salt River watershed in western Wyoming and eastern Idaho encompasses a blue-ribbon trout fishery and its tributaries and the community of Star Valley. Numerous issues including widespread habitat degradation, altered stream function, and water quality concerns necessitated the formation of the Salt River Watershed Group (SRWG) in 2022. Funding for the initial development of SRWG by Trout Unlimited was provided by a BOR WaterSMART CWMP grant. SRWG members include agencies relevant to water quality, aquatic habitat, and fisheries in the watershed (local, state, and federal), and stakeholders in the community with ties to agriculture, recreation, and development. The Salt River watershed includes a significant amount of federal lands – primarily National Forest lands (Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee National Forests) with a small amount of Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation lands, as well as Palisades Reservoir, a major storage reservoir of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Snake River Basin. Whereas most of the tributaries and high elevation land in the watershed lie within the two national forests, the valley bottom, referred to as Star Valley, and the majority of the Salt River mainstem, are on private lands. Although agriculture dominates private land and water use, development pressure is rapidly changing this make up, as Star Valley has become one of the fastest growing areas in Wyoming. Thus, the combined challenges of 1) years of degradation of the watershed due to past land management practices, and 2) more recent and future challenges to the watershed from rapid development, make this a critical juncture for SRWG to bring diverse interests together to conserve and restore habitat and stream function while protecting water quality in the watershed. Through this funding opportunity, Trout Unlimited (TU) will coordinate the development of the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) through SRWG. Developing the WRP will build on SRWG activities conducted to date and will include meeting with landowners, visiting prospective project locations, conducting habitat surveys, water quality monitoring, developing a project list, and writing the WRP document. The WRP will allow SRWG partners to prioritize and develop large-scale projects that will have a watershed-scale impact on habitat, stream function, water quality, and fisheries. SRWG will also use this funding to conduct targeted outreach to landowners, agricultural operators, outfitters and guides, anglers, residents, developers, and realtors to not only expand our understanding of the needs of these different stakeholders but also to expand engagement and support from these stakeholder groups. These are the primary groups making private land management decisions in riparian areas, and the groups that use the streams for recreation. This funding opportunity will ensure that SRWG is able to have a positive, watershed-scale impact on habitat, water quality, and other watershed issues.

Project Location

The watershed drains the Salt River Range to the east and the Caribou Range to the west, with its headwaters in the Bridger-Teton National Forest south of Smoot, Wyoming, and its terminus at

the confluence of the Salt, Snake, and Greys Rivers at the Palisades Reservoir outside of Alpine, Wyoming. Palisades is a major storage reservoir of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Snake River Basin in the Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region.



Applicant Category

Trout Unlimited is seeking funding for SRWG as an Existing Watershed Group. SRWG was initiated by TU with financial support from CWMP in 2022. The Steering Committee of SRWG was formed in August 2022, and quarterly meetings have been held beginning in September 2022. Four working groups were established to address watershed issues identified in these meetings: Aquatic and Riparian Habitat, Water Quality, Ponds, and Community Engagement and Outreach. The structure of SRWG, the function of quarterly meetings, and the purpose of working groups is described in detail in Sections E.1.1.1. and E.1.2.2.

Quarterly meetings have included informative presentations on watershed topics, working group updates, and open discussion of watershed issues. The working groups have also met outside of quarterly SRWG meetings to discuss and take action on watershed issues. SRWG and working group actions to date include the SRWG Stakeholder Survey, drafting the WRP framework (i.e. outline), discussing the project prioritization matrix, drafting Land Development Regulations for ponds in Lincoln County, evaluating opportunities and strategies for expanding water quality monitoring, and community engagement actions including tabling a booth at the Lincoln County Fair, willow planting volunteer events, and trash cleanups.

Eligibility of Applicant

TU is the nation's largest grassroots coldwater conservation organization with a mission to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. TU works to achieve this mission on a local, state, and national level through an extensive volunteer network and dedicated staff. Headquartered outside of Washington, D.C., TU is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1959 that currently has approximately 350 staff working in offices from Alaska to North Carolina.

TU has an annual budget of $85.9 million and currently manages over 300 different federal grants. During the past five-year period, TU has received $55,409,665 of federal direct and pass-through funding. TU is subject to annual audits every year under the OMB's Uniform Guidance for federal grants. TU is a low-risk auditee and has received a clean federal grant audit the past two years with no reportable conditions. The fiscal aspects of the TU and BOR partnership are overseen by TU's Chief Financial Officer, who oversees 11 staff members who handle a variety of fiscal and administrative tasks for federal grants.

TU's ability to further the objectives of SRWG is supported by its mission and experience managing several other watershed groups supported by CWMP grant funding, including the Black River Landscape Restoration Planning for Apache Trout Climate Resilience in New Mexico, Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership in Colorado, South Fork Boise River Watershed Collaborative in Southwest Idaho, Priest River Watershed Group in Idaho, and the Willwood Working Group #3 in Wyoming. Additionally, TU works on the ground in communities throughout the West, such as the Yakima River Basin and Upper Colorado Basin, finding collaborative solutions to the twenty-first-century challenges of drought, development, habitat loss, and aging infrastructure by convening diverse stakeholders in pursuit of shared goals.

TU is prepared to administer the CWMP grant and use the funding to maintain critical TU staff capacity in the Salt River watershed. TU participates in and is the nonprofit fiscal sponsor of SRWG, an Existing Watershed Group coordinated by TU's Salt River Watershed Manager. This coordination has included meeting facilitation, co-leading the working groups, engaging existing and potential members, drafting communications, attending community events, and landowner and stakeholder outreach. Continuation of this position is critical to ensure the long-term growth and efficacy of SRWG. SRWG partners are supportive of TU leading the writing of the WRP and development of the project list.

Project Description

Trout Unlimited will undertake activities under Tasks A and B with this funding. The goals of the activities under Task A are to expand engagement in and increase the efficacy of SRWG. The primary watershed group development tasks have already been completed under the previous CWMP funding. SRWG currently has ongoing quarterly meetings, an engaged Steering Committee, four working groups, and a mission statement, vision statement, and goals. However, targeted community outreach is needed and this funding opportunity would allow SRWG to build on previously-completed watershed development activities and become an even more effective watershed group. Greater awareness, support, and participation from developers, farmers and ranchers, irrigators, other landowners, and the community is necessary to maximize the impact of SRWG. Ensuring developers and realtors understand the impacts of development in riparian and floodplain areas, and the risk this development faces from flooding and channel instability, is essential as Star Valley continues to grow. Greater landowner involvement will bolster support for restoring rivers and streams on private land and result in a more comprehensive project list. Increased community involvement and awareness of SRWG actions will promote the longevity and influence of the watershed group. Outreach to landowners and the Star Valley community will include stakeholder interviews, landowner meetings, attending community events, advertisements, press releases, website maintenance and development, tours of completed projects, and attendance at meetings of other groups including Star Valley Conservation District and the Greys River Forest Collaborative. Outreach to developers, realtors, and new riparian landowners will include in-person meetings and sharing informational materials. SRWG members have expressed interest in developing a brochure similar to the Teton Conservation District's Mountain Neighbor Handbook as an outreach tool for these stakeholders. These activities will be undertaken by TU's Salt River Watershed Manager with assistance from SRWG members.

With much of the watershed group development phase for SRWG completed Trout Unlimited will focus on restoration planning activities under Task B. The goals of these activities include: 1) gaining more detailed information on habitat, water quality, fish passage, and geomorphologic conditions throughout the watershed, 2) writing a Watershed Restoration Plan, and 3) developing a prioritized project list. Meeting these goals will require field work including site visits, surveying, and habitat assessments. TU will work with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) to repeat (and thus update) the habitat assessments performed on unique segments of the Salt River in the late 1990s. Comparison of new assessments with the previous ones will help to better understand ongoing changes in the river and the best approaches to address them. Additional site visits to river and tributary locations throughout the watershed with WGFD, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF), Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF), Star Valley Conservation District (SVCD), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and other partners will be used to identify areas of degraded habitat or water quality to focus future work. These site visits will include habitat surveys, fish passage evaluations, obtaining drone imagery and video, and other work necessary to establish and evaluate prospective projects. Field work for the WRP will also include water quality monitoring with Wyoming DEQ, Idaho DEQ and SVCD. TU will also revisit locations identified in the Trout Unlimited Salt River Fish Barrier Assessment (2012) to evaluate project potential. Site visits to previous restoration projects on tributaries, spring creeks, and the mainstem Salt River will be used to evaluate efficacy of previously implemented restoration techniques to address common issues. Together, this robust field work plan will allow the SRWG to identify new projects and project types for inclusion in the WRP.

Drafting the Salt River WRP is a major component of the work that will be accomplished under Task B. SRWG partners have expressed their support for TU leading the writing of the WRP and will contribute their expertise through revisions and input on specific components of the WRP relevant to their entities' work. The framework for the WRP has already been drafted with the help of the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group. The WRP will be written within this framework and will be informed by the field work described above, along with the information already gathered through SRWG to date. TU's Salt River Watershed Manager will coordinate revisions and contributions from SRWG partners as the WRP develops. TU is also requesting funding for the Watershed Manager to attend the Wildland Hydrology Level III and Level IV Hydrology Short Courses to further develop stream assessment and restoration planning skills useful for guiding, writing, and implementing the WRP. One component of the WRP will be a project list and project prioritization tool. The Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group has discussed the project prioritization tool and will begin developing it in 2024. The WRP will include a prioritized and robust project list encompassing numerous tributaries and Salt River segments that address key watershed issues. The SRWG regular meetings, working group meetings, and email list, which are open to and distributed to the public, will also include opportunities for the public to provide input on the WRP.

Evaluation Criteria

E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity & Geographic Scope

E.1.1.1. Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

Major water uses in the Salt River watershed include agricultural irrigation, water storage at Palisades Reservoir, municipal and domestic water, stock water, recreation, fish and wildlife

habitat, and hydropower. Prior to Anglo American settlement, the Shoshone people hunted, fished, and gathered native plants and roots in the region from time immemorial and 26 Tribes have a connection to the lands in the southern portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Since settlement by homesteaders in the late 1800s, Star Valley has been characterized by agricultural activity and irrigated land, with approximately 65,000 acres of land in the watershed irrigated primarily by surface water sources to support hay and grain production and livestock. In recent years, the valley has experienced rapid growth, rapidly increasing development pressure, and changing land use as a desirable location for retirees and a bedroom community for workers commuting to nearby Jackson, Wyoming.

As development increases in Star Valley, municipal and domestic water use, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat have become increasingly important to a larger segment of the population. Recreational floating and angling is steadily increasing as the population increases, and these stakeholders are concerned with water quality and riparian health. With that said, agricultural use still is the dominant driver of water quality and availability in the valley. SRWG membership currently includes the agencies responsible for water quality, water availability, fisheries, riparian habitat, and development in the watershed, while also including some of the residential, recreational, and agricultural stakeholders that care about and impact these issues. Through this grant, SRWG seeks to further diversify its membership from these sectors.

Stakeholders in SRWG membership:

Bridger-Teton National Forest: Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) has been an active member of SRWG, with multiple fisheries and hydrology employees attending each meeting. Patrick Barry, Aquatics Program Manager for BTNF, is on the SRWG Steering Committee and has been a vocal contributor in meetings and provided input for the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan. BTNF and CTNF manage 68.4% of the land in the watershed, so their participation is critical to SRWG success. A letter of support from BTNF is attached.

Caribou-Targhee National Forest: Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF) has been active in SRWG, with multiple fisheries and hydrology employees attending meetings. Corey Lyman, Fisheries Biologist for CTNF, is on the Steering Committee for SRWG and is an active contributor to meetings, SRWG development, and SRWG actions. BTNF and CTNF manage 68.4% of the land in the watershed, so their participation is critical to SRWG success. A letter of support from CTNF is attached.

Greys River Forest Collaborative: The director of the Greys River Forest Collaborative (GRFC), Chuck Butterfield, and other GRFC members have attended most SRWG meetings and contributed to discussions pertaining to grazing, USFS, wildfire, and the Watershed Restoration Plan. GRFC focuses their work on the BTNF. A letter of support from GRFC is attached.

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality: Jennifer Cornell, Surface Water Quality Manager for Idaho DEQ out of the Pocatello office, has attended all SRWG meetings and contributes greatly to all discussions of water quality in the watershed. She has presented on the work Idaho DEQ has done in the watershed. They have an expansive data set and TMDLs for the Idaho portion of the watershed (primarily the west side Salt River tributaries) that are useful for project identification and evaluation. A letter of support from Idaho DEQ is attached.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game: Patrick Kennedy, Regional Fisheries Manager for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), is on the SRWG Steering Committee and regularly attends SRWG meetings and Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group meetings. IDFG is

responsible for managing the fishery on the Idaho side and is a major stakeholder for water quality, habitat quality, and ecosystem health. A letter of support from IDFG is attached.

Jackson Hole Land Trust: The Jackson Hole Land Trust (JHLT) is a non-profit geared towards conserving important habitats in Northwest Wyoming through land protection via conservation easements. Their interest in the Salt River watershed is largely in conservation easements and stewardship on properties with critical riparian habitat. Representatives from JHLT have attended most SRWG meetings.

J.R. Simplot Mine: J.R. Simplot is a phosphate mine within the watershed with an interest in improving water quality and contributing to habitat restoration efforts. They have previously donated trees and rock to stream restoration projects. Selenium contamination from phosphate mines is a concern for many watershed stakeholders. Their Technical Services Manager, Ron Quinn, has attended every SRWG meeting and some working group meetings.

Lincoln County Planning Office: The Lincoln County Planning Office (LCPO) manages the permitting of private land development within the watershed. They have attended SRWG meetings with an interest in learning about the impacts of floodplain development, and to get a better understanding of riparian and floodplain processes. They have been actively engaged in the Ponds Working Group and in drafting Land Development Regulations for recreational ponds to minimize water quality and habitat impacts. A letter of support from LCPO is attached.

NRCS: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been active in SRWG. Their former District Conservationist, Adam Clark, was on the Steering Committee and the new District Conservationist will fill that role once hired. They have been and will continue to be a major funding source for private land restoration, riparian fencing, and other work in the watershed.

Star Valley Conservation District: The Star Valley Conservation District (SVCD) has been active in attending SRWG meetings and leading discussions. Kay Lynn Nield, District Manager, is on the SRWG Steering Committee. She has presented on water quality monitoring and is invested in continuing to build SRWG and develop the WRP. SVCD is engaged in water quality monitoring, restoration projects, and implementing agricultural best management practices in Star Valley. A letter of support from SVCD is attached.

Star Valley Trout Unlimited: Multiple board and general members from the Star Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited (SVTU) have attended SRWG meetings. SVTU is a representative stakeholder of the angling community and has a strong interest in improving fisheries habitat. They are vocal in their concerns regarding water quality and habitat management and are eager to attend volunteer events and bolster community engagement. A letter of support from SVTU is attached.

Sunrise Engineering: Sunrise Engineering is an engineering firm based in Star Valley. Among other specialties, they work on projects related to drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, irrigation, environmental, and land development. This work motivates their participation and interest in SRWG. They frequently contribute expertise to discussions in SRWG and working group meetings. A letter of support from Sunrise Engineering is attached.

Trout Unlimited: SRWG is coordinated by TU's Salt River Watershed Manager, Tanner Belknap. TU's Wyoming State Director, Leslie Steen, is on the Steering Committee and participates in most meetings. TU currently facilitates most of the meetings, conversations, and drafting of documents within SRWG.

United States Bureau of Reclamation: Multiple BOR personnel have attended SRWG meetings. Dmitri Vidergar, Fish Biologist, and Brian Stevens, Supervisory Civil Engineer, have been the primary personnel engaged. Dmitri Vidergar has participated in the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group meetings and contributed valuable input for the Watershed Restoration Plan. David Child, Natural Resources Manager in the Upper Snake Field Office, just reached out and will be involved in SRWG going forward. BOR is an important stakeholder due to the Salt River terminating in Palisades Reservoir, a major storage reservoir of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Snake River Basin in the Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service: USFWS has been active in SRWG. Dave Kimble with the USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program is on the Steering Committee and attends SRWG meetings. USFWS is a key stakeholder because of their focus in eliminating fish passage barriers and restoring aquatic and riparian habitat on private land.

Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality: Wyoming DEQ has been an active member in SRWG, contributing to and presenting in many meetings on water quality topics. They are an important stakeholder due to the lack of, and need for, water quality data on the Wyoming side of the watershed. A letter of support from Wyoming DEQ is attached.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department: Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) is one of the primary agencies involved in SRWG. Holden Reinert, Jackson Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist, is on the Steering Committee and provides invaluable input on the WRP and riparian habitat. WGFD is interested in riparian habitat, water quality, fish passage, and all other issues related to fishery health. A letter of support from WGFD is attached.

Wyoming State Engineer's Office: The Wyoming State Engineer's Office (SEO) attends meetings and provides input when requested. Their staff role for the Star Valley area was recently filled after being empty for years, so their involvement is expected to increase. The SEO regulates water rights in the state of Wyoming and they are an important resource for information related to water use.

Wyoming Water Development Office: The Wyoming Water Development Office (WWDO) has been engaged in SRWG from the beginning. WWDO works to support water users in the state through water development and infrastructure projects. Mabel Jones, WWDO Project Manager, has attended every meeting and contributed to conversations related to watershed studies and irrigation practices in the watershed.

Y2 Consultants: Y2 Consultants, a Wyoming based engineering, planning, survey, and natural resource service company, has attended most SRWG meetings.

<u>Stakeholders with whom to increase engagement:</u>

Anglers/residents: Watershed residents and anglers attend SRWG meetings, often with concerns related to specific locations experiencing habitat degradation, floodplain development, pond development, or potential pollution sources. Although they are present, their engagement is not representative of their size as a stakeholder group. We plan to target this group through attending community events, advertisements in the paper, press releases for completed projects, and hosting more volunteer events such as willow plantings and trash cleanups. Their voice is important for understanding what areas of the watershed are most valued by the public.

Developers and Realtors: SRWG has identified outreach to this stakeholder group as essential. There has been no participation from this group in meetings. Their interest as a stakeholder is likely primarily related to the risk of damage to homes and properties from flooding and channel

instability. Educational materials and outreach to this group will be developed to engage them and inform them of best practices related to development in or near the floodplain.

Farmers, Ranchers, and Riparian Landowners: There has been some representation from the farming, ranching, and riparian landowner communities at every SRWG meeting. Many more are generally aware of SRWG and TU's work from meeting with TU's Salt River Watershed manager outside of SRWG meetings. However, their presence in SRWG is not enough to represent their size and importance as a stakeholder group. This group is critical as they own much of the land SRWG hopes to work on, and their land use practices dictate water and habitat quality in the valley bottom. TU's Salt River Watershed Manager will be conducting site visits and landowner meetings under this funding opportunity to inform the WRP and build out a project list. These meetings will include discussions of SRWG with aims to build support and involvement. The Watershed Manager will also attend agricultural meetings and present on riparian health issues SRWG is working to address.

Irrigation Districts: TU's Salt River Watershed Manager has reached out to some irrigation district members outside of SRWG meetings, but there has been limited engagement in the meetings. Irrigation districts' interest in SRWG actions includes potential support of irrigation infrastructure improvements, as well as projects that might increase water availability. We plan to conduct outreach to irrigation districts as topics of interest to them arise in SRWG. This will likely include adding diversion and pipeline upgrades and canal retrofits or lining projects that have concurrent ecological benefits to the WRP project list, as well as soliciting involvement in an aquifer recharge program. TU's discussions with irrigators have shown strong interest in aquifer recharge.

Outfitters and Guides: SRWG currently has a few outfitters and guides on its email list, but they rarely attend meetings. This is an important stakeholder group with a direct economic connection to the water and habitat quality of the Salt River. Outreach to this group will include continuing to make connections, adding more outfitters and guides to the email list, and direct invitations to meetings and community events. Adding more outfitters to the email list ensures that they are aware of SRWG actions even when unable to attend meetings. Through continued outreach, we hope to add the voice of outfitters to meetings and add an engaged representative from this stakeholder group to the Steering Committee.

SRWG's organizational structure includes general membership, a Steering Committee, and four working groups. General membership is informal and open to the public. The Steering Committee was organized in initial meetings and its responsibilities include coordinating and providing input on meetings, voting on SRWG actions, voting to approve SRWG documents, and meeting to discuss important issues as they arise. General SRWG membership does not attend Steering Committee meetings. The current Steering Committee includes representatives from BTNF, CTNF, IDFG, NRCS, SVCD, TU, USFWS, and WGFD. The Steering Committee plans to expand as engaged representatives from other stakeholder groups are identified. Addition of Steering Committee members requires approval from the entire Steering Committee. SRWG hosts general meetings on a quarterly schedule. These meetings include informative presentations on watershed topics, working group updates, and open discussion of watershed issues. Initial meeting discussions led to the formation of the four current working groups by the Steering Committee, and additional working groups may be added as additional issues arise. These working groups meet outside of regular SRWG meetings for more in-depth discussion of specific issues, and projects and actions to address them. The current four working groups are

Aquatic and Riparian Habitat, Water Quality, Ponds, and Community Engagement and Outreach. Working groups are led by Steering Committee members relevant to each group's focus. Descriptions of the objectives and actions of the first three working groups mentioned above can be found in the Project Benefits Section.

The Community Engagement and Outreach Working Group is focused on communicating SRWG accomplishments to the public, identifying groups and events for outreach, organizing project tours, developing brochures and other printed materials, drafting articles, coordinating events, youth education opportunities, and other public outreach tools. This Working Group will guide the outreach strategy for the stakeholder groups described above and is an essential component of building the community support needed for SRWG to succeed.

E.1.1.2 Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope

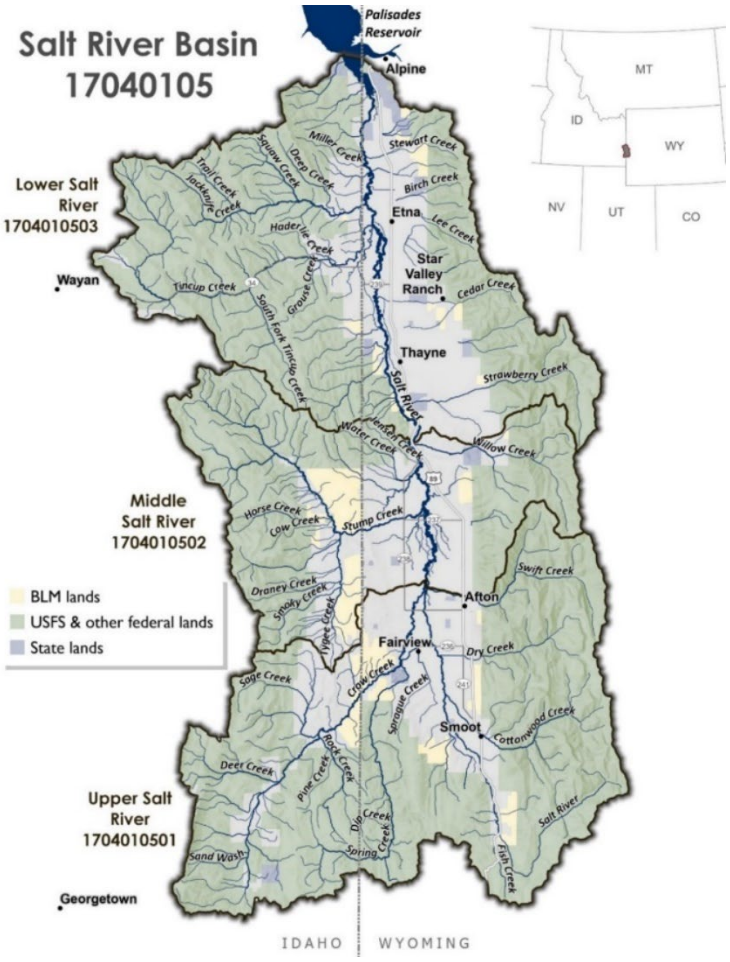
The Salt River watershed, located in northwest Wyoming and southeast Idaho, is a headwaters tributary of the Snake River with Hydrologic Unit Code 17040105. The mainstem river flows from south to north for 84 miles through Star Valley in Wyoming. The watershed drains an area of 592,538 acres (890 square miles), with approximately 55% in Wyoming (Lincoln County) and 45% in Idaho (Caribou and Bonneville Counties), and is located about 70 miles southeast of Idaho Falls, ID.[1]

The watershed drains the Salt River Range to the east and the Caribou Range to the west, with its headwaters initiating on the Bridger-Teton National Forest south of Smoot, Wyoming, and its terminus at the confluence of the Salt, Snake, and Greys Rivers at the Palisades Reservoir outside of Alpine, Wyoming. Palisades is a major storage reservoir of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Snake River Basin in the Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region. This watershed does not overlap with the proposed geographic scope of the new Snake River Headwaters Watershed Group that is currently applying for funding as a New Watershed Group.

Land ownership in the valley bottom of the watershed is primarily private, composing 29% of the total land area, while land ownership in the more mountainous, upper-elevation portions of the watershed is primarily federal U.S. Forest Service lands (Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee National Forests), composing 68.4% of the total land area. The remainder of the land ownership is composed of federal U.S. Bureau of Land Management (1.4%), federal U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (0.1%), and state of Wyoming (1.0%) lands. Elevations range from 10,709 feet at its highest to 5,630 feet at its lowest (at Palisades Reservoir). A natural constriction in the valley known as the "Narrows," located between the towns of Afton and Thayne, divides the watershed into the "Upper Valley" to the south and "Lower Valley" to the north.

[1] Sources for this section: Tetra Tech, Inc., "Salt River Watershed, Wyoming Water Quality Assessment and *E. coli* TMDLs" (Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, 30 June 2015); "The Bank of Star Valley Star Valley Economic and Demographic Review" (Bank of Star Valley, August 2020); "Salt River Watershed Plan," (Afton, WY: Star Valley Conservation District, 2005).

The main tributaries draining the eastern side of the watershed from the Salt River Range are Cottonwood Creek, Dry Creek, Swift Creek, Willow Creek, Strawberry Creek, and Cedar Creek. These streams are high gradient streams with alluvial fans extending into the valley and cold water temperatures. The main tributaries draining the western side of the watershed from the Caribou Range are Spring Creek, Crow Creek, Stump Creek, Tincup Creek, and Jackknife Creek. These are typically longer and lower gradient than the eastside tributaries. In the valley bottom, there are numerous springs and sloughs, some of which are influenced by irrigation water dynamics.



Located in the northern part of Lincoln County, in 2020 Star Valley was recognized as the fastest growing part of Wyoming, with an estimated growth rate of 4.5% (versus 2.9% for Lincoln County and 0.2% for the state of Wyoming) and population base of 13,776 (19,830 total in Lincoln County). Growth has increased since 2020 with high demand from retirees and remote workers (data on more recent growth rates is not available). Incorporated towns include Afton, Alpine, Star Valley Ranch, and Thayne. Unincorporated towns include the communities of Auburn, Bedford, Etna, Fairview, Freedom, Grover, and Smoot.

Major water uses in the watershed include agricultural irrigation, water storage at Palisades Reservoir, municipal and domestic water, stock water, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and hydropower. Prior to Anglo American settlement, the Shoshone people hunted, fished, and gathered native plants and roots in the region from time immemorial. Since settlement by homesteaders in the late 1800s, Star Valley has been characterized by agricultural activity and irrigated land for nearly the past century and a half, with approximately 65,000 acres of land in the watershed irrigated primarily by surface water sources to support hay and grain production and livestock. In recent years, the valley has experienced rapid growth, rapidly increasing development pressure, and changing land use as a desirable location for retirees and a bedroom community for workers commuting to nearby Jackson, Wyoming.

In addition to Palisades Reservoir, which is a Bureau of Reclamation water storage and hydropower reservoir, Lower Valley Energy produces green power from two “low-impact” hydropower facilities on Strawberry Creek in Bedford, Wyoming and Swift Creek in Afton,

Wyoming. The 48-mile section of the Salt River downstream of Afton is a celebrated recreational resource with multiple public access points. It is considered a blue ribbon trout stream by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and is a stronghold for native Snake River cutthroat trout, bluehead suckers, and other native fish, as well as brown trout. Above Afton, the Salt River is chronically dewatered during the irrigation season due to a combination of underlying geology and human alterations including water withdrawals for irrigation, channelization, and other stream manipulations.

The existing membership of SRWG represents the full geographic scope of the watershed. SRWG must encompass the full watershed because issues of water availability, water quality, habitat degradation, fish passage, and loss of riparian function persist throughout the entire watershed. Due to the inherent connectivity of a river and its tributaries, work on tributaries is essential for and complementary to the success of work on the Salt River. SRWG's agency members, landowners, and other members speak for all areas of the watershed from the private valley bottom to the high elevation National Forest. BTNF and CTNF are well represented by USFS fisheries and hydrology staff, along with IDFG, WGFD, Idaho DEQ, Wyoming DEQ, TU, and residents who work on and use these lands. Residents, farmers, ranchers, landowners, and anglers advocate for private land conservation in the valley bottom along with NRCS, USFWS, IDFG, WGFD, Idaho DEQ, Wyoming DEQ, SVCD, TU, JHLT, LCPO, WWDO, and other agencies and groups that address private land concerns. As described above, TU will work to engage more farmers, ranchers, riparian-adjacent landowners, residents, and anglers under this round of funding. Farmers, ranchers, and riparian landowners are crucial to SRWG success because they own and manage the land upon which restoration and best management practices supported by SRWG would be implemented. Anglers and residents represent the largest portion of the watershed's population, so their support and awareness of SRWG activities is essential.

E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B—Addressing Critical Watershed Needs

E.1.2.1. Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Critical watershed needs have been identified through compiling past research efforts and plans, conversations with federal, state, and local agency leads, site visits, field work, discussions in SRWG and working group meetings, and the SRWG Stakeholder Survey distributed in 2023. This background research has identified the following issues:

a. Aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitat degradation and loss of stream function

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department's (WGFD) Statewide Habitat Plan considers the Salt River corridor to be a "restoration habitat area," meaning it is an "important aquatic and/or terrestrial wildlife habitat that can and should be actively restored to achieve greater wildlife value." It considers the Salt River to be a blue-ribbon trout stream fishery and a stronghold for native Snake River cutthroat trout in the 48-mile stretch downstream from the town of Afton to Palisades Reservoir. Snake River cutthroat trout, which the WGFD manages as a distinct subspecies of Yellowstone cutthroat trout, is the only subspecies of cutthroat trout that still dominates in its native range and is therefore of high conservation priority for watershed group members that manage and conserve native aquatic species. The Salt River is also important habitat for bluehead suckers, a Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The WGFD recognizes the Salt River as an important resource as the cultural, economic, and recreation hub

for the Star Valley community. It manages numerous public access sites for fishing and boating along the Salt River.

The mainstem Salt River is degraded from historic channel modifications and land use practices, along with ongoing development and agricultural activities. Throughout the watershed, willows and riparian vegetation were removed from the Salt River and tributaries with the intention of making way for hay production, increasing pasture area, and reducing willow water consumption. Landowners have recounted being paid by the Soil Conservation Service (NRCS's predecessor) to remove willows in the 1950s. This removal of riparian vegetation, combined with hay harvest and grazing up to the river's edge, has contributed to much of the habitat degradation seen in the Salt River. Throughout the watershed, this has resulted in erosive banks and an over-widened, shallow channel with high sediment loads and little vertical cover from overhanging willows and woody debris. High sediment loads reduce macroinvertebrate productivity and spawning habitat availability and success. Lack of depth and vegetative cover dramatically reduces availability of trout habitat. 74% of respondents to the SRWG Stakeholder Survey identified stream restoration as the SRWG action that would have the greatest benefit to the watershed, higher than any other action in the survey.

Photo 1: Over-widened, shallow channel lacking riparian vegetation in a public fishing easement on the Salt River. This is indicative of habitat and grazing issues throughout the watershed.

Discussions with residents, landowners, and agency partners, as well as analysis of aerial imagery have revealed many locations where stream length has been lost through meander avulsions resulting from land use practices and/or upstream channel straightening. A Wyoming Stream Quantification Tool habitat survey was completed by WGFD and TU in one such area in the Narrows. This survey revealed over-steepened pools and riffles providing degraded habitat for trout and other fish species. Historical imagery analyses revealed that stream length in this reach had been reduced by one-third to one-half from its historical length. This decreased length results in the steep grade and bank and channel erosion seen in the reach.

Some sections of the Salt River and lower elevation reaches of tributaries have been straightened and diked with the intention of reducing flood risk, conveying high flows, and increasing area available for agriculture. These reaches have impaired trout habitat and greatly reduced floodplain connectivity, which are in turn related to the loss of riparian function and water availability issues described below.

These issues of bank erosion, meander cutoffs, sedimentation, lack of willows, and over-widened channels are present in some higher elevation tributaries on National Forest lands as well. The primary causes of degradation on National Forest appear to be historic beaver trapping, willow spraying, and overgrazing. The Tincup Creek Restoration Project addressed one example of this on the upper reaches of Tincup Creek. Willow spraying, beaver removal, and cattle and sheep grazing had created an unstable system. Meander cut-offs, high eroding banks, and wide, sediment filled channels were abundant before restoration. Similarly degraded stream reaches exist on many Salt River tributaries and would benefit from restoration.

Photo 2: Tincup Creek during 2023 runoff. The floodplain was reconnected by raising and narrowing the stream channel and stream length was restored. Low water velocities and valley-wide inundation was visible during runoff throughout the entire project reach. Idaho DEQ sampling revealed water leaving the project was cleaner than that entering.

Photo 3: Google aerial imagery of a spring creek in Star Valley. Excavated pools, short riffles, and an over-widened channel is representative of common issues on spring creeks in the watershed.

Numerous spring creeks arise in the valley bottom of the Salt River watershed. Many of these have been heavily manipulated for agricultural or recreational purposes. Willow removal, hay production, and grazing has resulted in bank erosion, over-widened streams, high width-to-depth ratios, and sediment deposition. In turn, macroinvertebrate productivity, spawning habitat, and water quality have declined. Outdated stream enhancement practices from 20 to 30 years ago, in which large, deep pools were excavated and riffles were greatly reduced, also resulted in impairments to spring creek function, productivity and habitat. Most of the trout spawning in the Salt River watershed occurs in spring creeks and tributaries, so conserving quality spawning habitat and ensuring fish can access it is critical to population resilience.

Throughout the watershed, there are instream diversion structures for irrigation and culverts where roads cross streams. These structures can act as full or partial barriers to aquatic organism passage as fish try to access upstream habitat and can also negatively impact sediment transport and stream function. Channel-spanning structures can prevent fish from moving upstream by being too high to jump, or by constricting flow and creating high velocities that fish are unable to swim through. Maintaining access for trout to a diversity of spawning, rearing, cover, and thermal refuge habitat for their various life stages is important in the face of a changing climate.

Stream function has deteriorated throughout much of the valley bottom. The Salt River suffers from abundant bank and channel instability due to the causes described above. This bank erosion increases sediment loads, resulting in downstream aggradation and further exacerbating instability. Reduced stream length is a major concern in many areas. Loss in length increases stream slope, thereby increasing stream power resulting in greater erosion rates. These high

gradient reaches transport bedload, gain more sediment from erosion, and cause issues of high sediment deposition downstream. Lost channel length, combined with diking and channel straightening described above, reduces floodplain connectivity. Flooding is an important component of stream processes as it spreads water, decreases flood power, recharges groundwater, settles out fine sediments, and builds the healthy riparian plant community essential for a functioning system.

Photo 4: Channel instability in the Rico Diversion project reach. The channel migrated by at least a full channel width during 2023 runoff before NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection funds were used to place riprap to protect infrastructure. Freshly aggraded sediment is indicative of high bank erosion and channel migration.

b. Water quality

E. coli: A 7.5-mile section of the Salt River and the section of Stump Creek from the Idaho border to the Salt River confluence has a current Wyoming DEQ impaired listing for *E. coli*. This common bacterium is found in the digestive tract of mammals and is often present, along with other pathogens, in waterways in rural and agricultural areas due to the higher prevalence of septic systems and livestock manure. *E. coli,* ingested through recreational activities like swimming and fishing, can cause gastrointestinal distress as well as fever in humans and its presence is a useful indicator of overall water quality, including the presence of other harmful bacteria.[2] The Wyoming DEQ Total Maximum Daily Loads and implementation plan for the Salt River outlines tools and best management practices (BMPs) for restoring water quality, including addressing human, recreation, livestock, and pet sources to reduce overall pollution loads. Many pastures along the Salt River and its tributaries allow unrestricted access for cattle to the stream. This unfettered access results in greater fecal contamination and grazing and trampling of banks, contributing to E. coli levels and sediment erosion.

Photo 5: Grazing is one of the several known contributors of E. coli *into the Salt River watershed.*

Sediment, temperature, and nutrients: Sediment is a common pollutant in waterways, where it can harm fish and their habitat, alter stream hydrology, impair recreation, and be difficult to manage at water treatment plants.[3] TU and partners believe, based on observed sediment transport issues

[2] Channah Rock & Berenise Rivera, "Water Quality, *E. coli*, and Your Health," College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona, March 2014, accessed 15 January 2021, https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1624.pdf; "Major Types of Nonpoint Source Pollutants," Indiana Department of Environmental Management, accessed 15 January 2021, https://www.in.gov/idem/nps/2479.htm

[3] Channah Rock & Berenise Rivera, "Water Quality, *E. coli*, and Your Health," College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona, March 2014, accessed 15 January 2021,

and associated bank and channel instability in the Salt River, that sediment levels in the watershed likely do not meet water quality standards. In addition, several major Salt River tributaries originating in Idaho and flowing into the Salt River in Wyoming have been identified as impaired for sediment by Idaho DEQ. Wyoming DEQ has no data available for sediment.

Anecdotally, local anglers indicate that stream temperatures in the late summer and early fall in certain areas of the watershed may be too high for coldwater-dependent fish species like trout. Increased water temperatures stress fish and other aquatic species by decreasing the amount of available oxygen in the water. Trout prefer cold water, often less than 65°F, and stream temperature has a strong influence on their well-being.[4] Such temperature changes in the Salt River may have been caused by past land use conversion to agriculture, which reduced riparian shading and cover, and other more recent human alterations to stream function and hydrology that produced wider, shallower streams. Wider, shallower streams with less shade receive greater solar radiation inputs and heat inputs from hot summer air, increasing peak temperatures.

High levels of nutrients fuel aquatic plant and algal growth in waterbodies; when this vegetation dies and decays it decreases the available oxygen in the water thus harming fish and other aquatic organisms.[5] Nutrient pollution in the form of elevated nitrogen and phosphorus levels are known to be a growing cause of concern in the upper Snake River watershed in Wyoming, in the Jackson Hole area. As recently as summer 2023, a potentially toxic bloom of cyanobacteria or blue-green algae in the Palisades Reservoir was investigated by the Wyoming DEQ. Septic systems and agricultural and grazing runoff are known contributors of nutrient pollution to watersheds and may be an issue in the Salt River watershed as well. Fertilizer contamination may also be a contributing factor from Star Valley's many hay and alfalfa fields. Wyoming currently has no data on nutrient contamination in the Salt River watershed.

Selenium presence from mining: Elevated selenium levels in waterways cause deformities in fish and other animals and excess selenium in drinking water can lead to adverse physiological effects in humans.[6] Treated water from the Simplot Smoky Canyon phosphate mine in southeast Idaho discharges into Sage Creek and Crow Creek in the upper Salt River watershed. Selenium concentrations in these streams and in tissue samples of trout are being monitored by local private landowners and other groups to observe and document levels and identify if an ongoing issue exists.

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https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1624.pdf; "Major Types of Nonpoint Source Pollutants," Indiana Department of Environmental Management, accessed 15 January 2021, https://www.in.gov/idem/nps/2479.htm

[4] "Stream Temperature Monitoring," Trout Unlimited, accessed 15 January 2021, https://www.tu.org/science/science-engagement/community-science/stream-temperature-monitoring-resources/#:~:text=Trout%20prefer%20cold%20water%2C%20often,influence%20on%20their%20well%2Dbeing.

[5] Channah Rock & Berenise Rivera, "Water Quality, *E. coli*, and Your Health," College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona, March 2014, accessed 15 January 2021, https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1624.pdf; "Major Types of Nonpoint Source Pollutants," Indiana Department of Environmental Management, accessed 15 January 2021, https://www.in.gov/idem/nps/2479.htm

[6] Chole Williams, "From Canadian Coal Mines, Toxic Pollution that Knows No Borders," Yale Environment 360, 1 April 2019, accessed 15 January 2021, https://e360.yale.edu/features/from-canadian-coal-mines-toxic-pollution-that-knows-no-borders

c. Development

Star Valley is the one of the fastest growing areas in Wyoming. Growth has been attributed to being an attractive area for retirees and those relocating from other parts of the country, as well as a booming bedroom community of workers that commute to the resort community of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The Salt River is a recreational amenity that has seen increased development within the floodplain and riparian corridor and will continue to see this development pressure. As new subdivisions and homes are built within the floodplain, particularly if they are built close to the river's banks and involve clearing of riparian vegetation, they are likely to necessitate future flood protection and bank stabilization measures like diking and riprap that impair stream function and watershed resiliency.

Photo 6: A property that recently changed ownership in 2020 used to have mature willows and riparian vegetation protecting and stabilizing banks. The new owners cleared all vegetation. This bank has experienced instability and erosion since the willows were removed.

In addition, past land use activities converted the Salt River floodplain and riparian corridor from a cottonwood and willow-lined system to irrigated pasture lands. Grassland and herbaceous species, hay, and other cultivated crops commonly found along the Salt River corridor do not provide as robust protection from bank erosion, or fish and aquatic habitat benefits, as would have been found historically.

d. Water availability and dewatering

Below the town of Smoot and above the Town of Afton, the mainstem of the Salt River is seasonally dewatered following spring runoff (Photo 7). This is likely a result of a combination of natural hydrologic factors, such as underlying geology that influences ground and surface water dynamics and the existence of "losing reaches," and human impacts such as water withdrawals for irrigation, channelization and diking, and a lowered groundwater aquifer and associated water tables. The major tributaries of the Salt River in this area – Cottonwood, Dry, and Swift Creeks – are completely allocated for irrigation water, which is delivered through relatively efficient (although aging) pipe infrastructure by the irrigation districts on these systems. They are therefore seasonally dewatered downstream of the respective pipelines' points of diversion. Prior to human settlement, these tributaries would have naturally flooded during spring runoff, recharging the groundwater table. As agriculture developed, these tributaries were channelized and diked in the valley floor to prevent uncontrolled flooding. However, flood irrigation was popular at this time, so flooding still occurred anthropogenically. In modern times, most irrigators converted to sprinklers to increase efficiency. This has led to a scenario with little natural or anthropogenic flooding, combined with dry streambeds through the entire irrigation season. As a result, the upper Salt River watershed below Smoot and above Afton likely has a lowered water table and aquifer and remains dry for most of the year, and there is no viable fisheries habitat in this more than 30-mile section. Ranchers around Afton have noted reduced spring creek flows and loss of wet areas on their land where "sub-water" would return to the surface from spring flooding or flood irrigation. In addition, the channelization and diking in this

section has led to extreme bank and channel instability and erosion, with effects including localized flooding and land loss, and further instability and sedimentation observed downstream within the blue-ribbon trout fishery downstream of Afton.

Photo 7: The Salt River upstream of Afton and downstream of Smoot is seasonally dewatered.

Photo 8: A channelized, riprapped reach of the seasonally dry section of mainstem Salt River does not allow for floodplain access and results in sediment deposition downstream.

Another water availability concern is the loss of floodplain connectivity in aggradation zones in tributaries. These aggradation zones are relatively wide, flat, and low gradient sections of valleys where tributaries historically flooded during runoff and had abundant beaver activity. This flooding slowed down and spread out water, depositing sediment and recharging groundwater. Through beaver removal, grazing, channel modifications, and other human activities, many of these sections of stream lost length, incised, and lost their annual flood cycles. Loss of this connectivity reduces sediment deposition and groundwater recharge on the floodplain, while increasing stream velocities and peak flows. Loss of groundwater recharge means reduced summer and fall flows, reducing water availability in the stream and for irrigators.

E.1.2.2. Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits

BOR CWMP funding will allow SRWG to build upon its previous watershed group development activities and begin taking collaborative actions needed to make an impact on the health of the watershed. These actions include field work, project development, project prioritization, drafting the Watershed Restoration Plan, stakeholder engagement, and other working group activities. Their benefits and how they relate to associated watershed issues are described below. Benefits also include information relayed to SRWG members and the public through outreach materials, articles, the SRWG website, and quarterly meetings. SRWG's first five quarterly meetings have included presentations on restoration projects, Salt River trout population trends, Salt River habitat studies, pond development regulations, aquifer recharge, climate research, and other topics of interest. Some of these presentations, including a Friends of the Teton River (a BOR CWMP-funded watershed group) presentation on aquifer recharge and a Teton Conservation District presentation on pond regulations and conservation outreach to landowners, have inspired SRWG actions described below.

a. Improved aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitat degradation and stream function

Privately funded stream projects on private land have historically consisted of projects to address localized habitat and erosion concerns and restoration of spring creeks. Addressing issues of aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitat degradation and land loss requires a focus on restoration of natural stream and floodplain function with incorporation of improvements to aquatic and

riparian habitat and water quality conditions. Most privately funded bank erosion projects used riprap, log, or concrete revetments to stabilize banks without restoring riparian vegetation, channel dimensions, channel function, or habitat value. Some landowners have funded work in spring creeks to restore channel dimensions and stream function to improve native trout size and numbers by improving cover, macroinvertebrate productivity, and spawning habitat. There are very few examples of natural channel design and toewood, bankfull benches, willow transplants, and other bioengineering solutions preferred by SRWG outside of two TU projects. Addressing the issues of habitat degradation and land loss requires considerations of restoring habitat value and stream function in every project.

Work done by Trout Unlimited and agency partners has primarily consisted of projects with strong landowner support and obvious localized aquatic and riparian habitat and water quality benefits. However, there is no overarching plan to guide projects and tie them together to maximize benefits to the entire system and community. Watershed restoration planning is necessary to pursue habitat restoration at a large scale and prioritize areas with the greatest value. The WRP will emphasize the best approaches to address issues particular to various Salt River segments and tributaries. It will also build out a project list with a project prioritization matrix to ensure projects tie into goals for the entire watershed. The WRP will ensure that projects emphasize restoring stream function over stabilizing eroding banks without addressing root causes including lost stream length, high sediment loads, channel incision, or other impairments.

With a WRP, SRWG partners will be able to access larger funding sources than before and pursue restoration at a larger scale. These restoration projects will improve aquatic and riparian habitat, fishery health, stream function, and water quality. Fisheries improvements will benefit residents, anglers, landowners, and the local economy by increasing recreational value. Restored stream function will reduce land loss and channel instability, conserving land of agricultural operators and landowners while reducing sediment inputs into Palisades Reservoir.

74% of respondents to the SRWG Stakeholder Survey identified stream restoration as a SRWG action that would have the greatest benefit to the watershed, higher than any other action in the survey. This, along with abundant habitat concerns discussed in SRWG meetings, led to forming the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group. This group is tasked with addressing habitat concerns in the watershed. The first few meetings focused on drafting and revising the framework (i.e. outline) for the future Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP). Future meetings will entail planning site visits and habitat assessments, drafting and revising the Watershed Restoration Plan, building a future project list, creating the project prioritization matrix, and addressing any other needs related to habitat in the watershed. SRWG will also develop a Story Map of completed and future projects and descriptions of project types and complete mapping needed for the WRP.

b. Improved Water Quality

Despite public concern and likely issues, there is little data in the Wyoming side of the watershed for water quality parameters other than *E. coli*. Idaho DEQ has an expansive data set for water quality parameters on the Idaho side of the watershed. In the SRWG Stakeholder survey, respondents were asked which issues will become increasingly important over the next 20 years. Water quality was identified above any other issue. Water quality concerns have also been

brought up by watershed residents in every SRWG meeting. The Water Quality Working Group was formed with the tasks of identifying water quality data and monitoring needs within the watershed, making a plan to obtain these data, and taking action to address water quality concerns identified. With this funding, the SRWG Water Quality Working Group will work to identify objectives for water quality data collection in the watershed, and work with Wyoming DEQ, Idaho DEQ, and SVCD to expand their data collection to meet these objectives. Identifying impaired stream reaches for *E. coli*, nutrients, sediment, temperature, and other water quality parameters will help to prioritize projects in the WRP that will address these concerns.

Completion of projects that stabilize banks, establish floodplain connectivity, control livestock access, and create buffers of healthy riparian vegetation between streams and developed land will also improve water quality for most parameters. A WRP informed by well-guided water quality data collection will result in greater water quality outcomes in the watershed. Improved water quality will benefit the recreational community, water users, fisheries, and economies both in the watershed and downstream.

Riparian fencing and off-channel water source development projects are among the BMPs that will be included in the Watershed Restoration Plan. These projects manage livestock access and can reduce inputs of *E. coli*, nutrients, sediment, and temperature by reducing manure input and improving riparian vegetation, shade, and bank stability. Stream restoration projects often have a goal of improving stream temperatures, and keeping a record of temperature variability and outcomes can be an important tool to help confirm the success of these efforts or identify where further work is needed. TU is requesting funds to purchase eight water temperature monitors and four level loggers for the Water Quality Working Group to use to gain more information on stream temperatures and flows. This information will help to not only identify projects, but also evaluate their effectiveness.

SRWG's Water Quality Working Group will be pursuing opportunities to fill identified data gaps for *E. coli*, temperature, sediment, and nutrients. This may be as simple as a community-led temperature monitoring, or as intensive as writing grants to fund nutrient monitoring. This funding will support TU in coordinating the efforts of this Working Group. SRWG is planning to have presentations from the Crow Creek Conservation Alliance on selenium data collection and ongoing work in the area around the mine. SRWG also plans to have a presentation from Simplot on the work they are doing to reduce selenium contamination and improve their treatment processes.

Photo 9: House built adjacent to the Salt River in the Rico Diversion project reach. Floodplain development adds additional risk to bank erosion and channel migration. It also constrains restoration actions by reducing the area available for floodplain activation and channel

c. Reduced development impacts

Under this funding opportunity, SRWG will expand targeted outreach to developers, realtors, and riparian-adjacent landowners, including the agricultural community. Engaging these stakeholders and informing them of best management practices for riparian areas will reap benefits for all river

users through improved aquatic habitat and water quality. This outreach will include offering to provide technical assistance for potential projects that may also benefit landowners by reducing land loss and improving habitat and recreational value. Through restoration work, realtors and developers may also benefit from reduced flood and erosion risks and greater recreational values for the properties they represent. Better informed landowners and developers will also practice better stewardship, resulting in fewer future instances of poor management (such as willow removal and riprapping of banks) causing degradation. SRWG is requesting funds for the Community Engagement and Outreach Working Group (with assistance from other working groups as needed) to develop an informational brochure for landowners, developers, and realtors on best practices in riparian areas.

Lincoln County Planning Office has been engaged in SRWG since its inception and is drafting its Land Development Regulations (LDR's) for ponds through the Ponds Working Group. Concern regarding the development of recreational ponds was expressed by watershed residents, irrigators, and LCPO in the initial SRWG meetings. The Wyoming state senate was considering legislation to address this issue as SRWG was being formed. The SRWG Stakeholder Survey revealed that this was not the primary concern of SRWG members, but was enough of a concern for residents, anglers, and irrigators to warrant attention. Concerns with recreational ponds include disrupting irrigation canal flow when built in-line with the canal, impacting groundwater and stream flows, being a source of contaminants into surface water, and increasing water temperatures. The Ponds Working Group was formed to assist LCPO with understanding how they could regulate rampant pond development in Star Valley. Working with examples from Teton County and input from SRWG members, LDR's are being drafted to minimize potential negative impacts of ponds on irrigation, water quality, and stream temperatures. Along with finalizing the recreational pond LDR's, SRWG will use this CWMP funding to assist LCPO with other development concerns, and provide technical expertise to LCPO as it works to understand issues related to development of riparian and floodplain areas. Providing information and guidance to LCPO and riparian landowners will help to reduce future negative impacts of development on the streams, rivers, and riparian areas in Star Valley.

d. Increasing water availability and reducing dewatering

SRWG hosted a presentation from Friends of the Teton River (FTR) on their aquifer recharge program. FTR is a nearby watershed group that received BOR WaterSMART funding. This presentation produced strong interest within SRWG to implement a similar program. Outside of SRWG meetings, irrigators have discussed their interest in this concept with TU's Watershed Manager. SRWG plans to pursue funding for a study and/or pilot project to assess the feasibility of a similar program in the Salt River watershed, and what areas will yield the greatest results. Aquifer recharge typically uses flood irrigation during spring runoff to store water in the ground during this period of abundance. Return flows from groundwater then increase water availability later in the year during periods of reduced stream flow.

Many completed and future projects on tributaries emphasize reconnecting floodplains in aggradation zones. These aggradation zones are relatively wide, flat, and low gradient sections of valleys where tributaries historically flooded during runoff and had abundant beaver activity. Spreading flood waters out in these areas deposited sediment and recharged groundwater. These annual flood cycles were deteriorated due to human activities described in the E.1.2.1. Restoring

these areas of floodplain connectivity will be emphasized in the WRP to encourage natural cycles of sediment deposition and groundwater recharge. These restoration practices have been shown to reduce peak flows during runoff and extend higher flows into the summer as water returns to the stream from the groundwater. The ecosystem and recreation community benefits from these floodplain connection and aquifer recharge projects by having more flow and colder water later into the year for trout and other aquatic species. All downstream water users benefit from increased flow permanence and reductions in erosive peak flows.

E.1.3 Evaluation Criterion C— Readiness to Proceed

The proposed scope of work is detailed in the Project Description. The table below describes key activities, milestones, estimated start and end dates for each activity/milestone, and estimated costs. Trout Unlimited is responsible for completing all milestones described below. No new policies or administrative actions are anticipated to be needed to implement this project.

Activity	Milestone	Start Date	End Date
Task A: Watershed Group Development			
Coordinate SRWG meetings	• Hold 12 quarterly meetings	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Hold at least 20 Working Group meetings as needed to accomplish SRWG goals	1/1/25	12/31/27
Ponds Working Group	• Draft Land Development Regulations for recreational ponds with LCPO	1/1/25	12/31/25
	• Create informational materials for landowners that have or are building recreational ponds	1/1/25	12/31/27
Community Engagement and Outreach Working Group	• Host willow plantings and/or trash cleanups – **2/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Attend the Lincoln County Fair each year as well as other community events	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Attend Greys River Collaborative meetings	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Host project tours – **1/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Develop informational brochure for landowners	1/1/25	12/31/26
	• Print and distribute informational brochure	1/1/26	12/31/27
Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning	•		
Salt River Habitat Assessments	• Repeat WGFD Habitat assessments on Salt River segments		
	○ Auburn-Grover	1/1/25	12/31/25
	○ Narrows	1/1/25	12/31/26
	○ Thayne Bridge	1/1/26	12/31/27
	○ Etna Lane	1/1/26	12/31/27

Aquifer Recharge	• Identify study needs for a pilot program	1/1/25	6/30/26
	• Identify irrigators interested in participating	6/30/25	12/31/26
Water Quality Working Group	• Draft temperature and flow monitoring plan	1/1/25	12/31/25
	• Place temperature/pressure monitors to implement plan	1/1/25	12/31/26
	• Identify water quality questions and objectives in the watershed	1/1/25	12/31/25
	• Assist with water quality monitoring plans for Idaho DEQ, Wyoming DEQ, and SVCD	1/1/25	12/31/26
	• Increase water quality monitoring for nutrients, temperature, and sediment in Wyoming	1/1/26	12/31/27
Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Working Group	• Conduct meetings – **at least 2/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Develop a Watershed Restoration Plan	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Develop a project prioritization matrix	1/1/25	12/31/26
	• Develop a future project list	1/1/25	12/31/27
Project List Development	• Site visits to prospective projects throughout watershed – **5/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Landowner meetings for prospective projects – **3/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
	• Surveys, imagery, and video of future projects – **3/year**	1/1/25	12/31/27
Draft Watershed Restoration Plan	• Draft review meetings with SRWG members relevant to sections of WRP – **1/quarter**	1/1/25	6/30/27
	• WRP updates and discussions in quarterly public meetings – **1/year**	1/1/25	6/30/27
	• Meetings to discuss sections with ARH Working Group – **2/year**	1/1/25	12/31/26
	• Complete full draft of WRP	1/1/25	12/31/26
Finalize Watershed Restoration Plan	• Review by full ARH Working Group	1/1/27	12/31/27
	• Steering Committee vote to adopt final WRP	1/1/27	12/31/27

E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D— Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities

E.1.4.1. Climate Change

Many components of the work done by SRWG through the WRP will improve ecosystem resilience to climate change, protect public health, and promote land and water conservation. Threats faced by coldwater fisheries due to climate change include reduced stream flows, increased stream temperatures, and increased wildfire. As described above, work done by SRWG to increase floodplain connectivity and promote an aquifer recharge program is expected to strengthen water supply sustainability by increasing stream flows through the summer and fall. As annual snowpack declines, this is essential for promoting healthy stream flows and temperatures. Most restoration techniques in the WRP will entail narrowing the channel and restoring riparian vegetation. This will reduce solar input through both reduced water surface area and increased shade, helping to reduce stream temperatures. Increased floodplain

connectivity will also create a greener, wider riparian corridor. These wet, green floodplains provide breaks that can slow or stop wildfire and reduce the negative impacts of fires on streams.

In the face of a changing climate, the ability for fish to move throughout the watershed is increasingly important. With increasing water temperatures, fish may seek thermal refuge in spring creeks and tributaries. Fish also need to move through the river and tributaries to access various life history needs, including spawning. As wildfire threats and water temperatures increase, it is important to ensure that fish in the Salt River can access spawning tributaries. Destructive wildfires or increased water temperatures could compromise spawning tributaries, so access to numerous spawning tributaries can help to ensure long-term population viability. With this funding, TU's Salt River Watershed Manager will be revisiting fish passage barriers identified in the Trout Unlimited Salt River Fish Barrier Assessment (2012) and other potential barriers with agency partners. For any culverts, diversions, or other structures identified as barriers, landowner outreach will be conducted to develop projects for the WRP.

Discussions with fishing guides, anglers, landowners, and residents have produced many claims that the Salt River is becoming overcrowded with fishing boats, float tubes, canoes, kayaks, and people swimming or relaxing in the cool water. This growth in recreational activity is expected to increase as the population grows and air temperatures increase with climate change. The Salt River provides a valuable respite from high summer temperatures for the Star Valley community. This increased use adds additional community value to improved habitat and water quality.

E.1.4.2. Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities

Lincoln County Census Tracts 56023978000 and 56023978100 are included in the watershed and have 6,767 and 7,015 residents, respectively. While the CESJT Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST Tool) does not classify the watershed as a disadvantaged or historically underserved community, all the residents in the watershed are at extreme risk from natural disaster, including flooding and wildfire. These tracts are in the in the 99th percentile for expected population loss due to fatalities and injuries from natural hazards; 76th and 69th percentiles for expected agriculture loss rate from natural hazards; 81st and 85th percentiles for flooding; and 74th for properties at risk from wildfires. Both tracts have one or more abandoned mines. The watershed will struggle to recover from natural disasters since its ranks as high as the 91st percentile for residents over the age of 64, 85th percentile for unemployment, and 95th percentile for lacking health insurance (US EPA EJ Screen). This project will use support collaboration through SRWG to improve watershed health, improve water quality, improve the recreation and restoration economy, ensure stable water supplies, and reduce damage to the community and aquatic ecosystems from flooding and wildfire.

There is no organized Tribal presence in the watershed. However, prior to Anglo American settlement, the Shoshone people hunted, fished, and gathered native plants in the region, and 26 Tribes have a connection to the southern portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The nearest Tribal Nations are the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes located on the Fort Hall Reservation in Southeastern Idaho (50 miles) and the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes located on the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming (100 miles). TU's new Snake River Headwaters Working Group based in Jackson, WY is continuing to develop relationships with these Tribes and will work to ensure they are represented in SRWG and WRP if they desire.

D.2.2.3. Project Budget

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

FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
Non-Federal Entities	
1.	$
Non-Federal Subtotal	$
REQUESTED RECLAMATION FUNDING	$ 199,045.75

Budget Proposal

Summary			
6. Budget Object Category	**Total Cost**	**Federal Estimated Amount**	**Non-Federal Estimated Amount**
a. Personnel	$91,061		
b. Fringe Benefits	$48,873		
c. Travel	$7,577		
d. Equipment	$0		
e. Supplies	$10,920		
f. Contractual	$8,980		
g. Construction	$0		
h. Other Direct Costs	$7,436		
i. Total Direct Costs	$174,847		
i. Indirect Charges	$24,199		
Total Costs	**$199,045.75**	**$199,046**	**$0**
Cost Share Percentage		**100%**	**0%**

Personnel

Funds from this grant will be used for 0.5FTE of the salary of TU's FTE Salt River Watershed Manager, Tanner Belknap. TU will provide the funding for the remaining salary. The current hourly rates for the Salt River Watershed Manager are shown in Attachment B with approximate 3-percent increases each year. We certify that the labor rates included in the budget proposal are the rates for the identified position and are consistently applied to Federal and non-Federal activities. Approximately 25 percent of this salary funding will go towards coordination of SRWG, attending community events, coordination of working groups, and outreach to essential stakeholder groups as described under Task A in the Project Description and Section E.1.3. The remaining 75 percent will be used for field work, project development, water quality monitoring, writing the Watershed Restoration Plan, and all other activities described under Task B in the Project Description and Section E.1.3.

The budget also includes funding for 40 hours of TU GIS staff time towards develop a Story Map and maps needed for the Watershed Restoration Plan.

Fringe Benefits
TU's current fringe benefit for full-time employees is 53.67% and is included in the budget in Attachment B. Fringe benefits are described below and in Attachment B.

PTO:	19.65%,
Health:	19.05%,
Taxes:	7.59%,
403b:	5.50%,
Workers Comp:	1.88%

Travel
Travel costs are associated with the Salt River Watershed Manager position. Most travel will occur throughout the Salt River watershed for visits with potential stakeholders and SRWG members, project site visits, field work for the Watershed Restoration Plan, multi-agency meetings, and other tasks described in the Project Description and Section E.1.3.

Travel costs were estimated at the IRS standard mileage rate of $0.655 per mile to complete work described under Tasks A and B. Travel was calculated for travel to 12 quarterly SRWG meetings. Other travel was estimated at 300 miles per month based on previous monthly travel by the Salt River Watershed Manager and the anticipated increase in travel for the field work and outreach activities described in this proposal.

Supplies and Materials
Funds from the grant will be used for general office supplies and printing of an outreach brochure for landowners, agricultural operators, and developers. Funds will also be used for food, drinks, and other supplies needed for SRWG meetings. Eight HOBO Water Temperature Pro v2 Data Loggers (or equivalent) and four HOBO Water Level Data Loggers (or equivalent) will be purchased to begin implementing temperature and flow monitoring objectives of the Water Quality Working Group.

Contractual/Construction
Funds will be used for advertising costs including advertisements in the Star Valley Independent and other local resources. Funds will also be used for the design of an outreach brochure for landowners, agricultural operators, and developers.

Other
Other costs include the cost to maintain the saltriverwyoming.org website domain and hosting fees, and tuition for continuing education for the Salt River Watershed Manager. The River Assessment and Monitoring Course is a two-week training on field data collection methods and analysis techniques critical to the channel assessment, streambank assessment, sediment analysis, and monitoring needs of the Watershed Restoration Plan. This course will be attended in April or August of 2025. The River Restoration and Natural Channel Design course is a two-week training on the natural channel design principles needed to evaluate stream restoration, stabilization, and aquatic habitat enhancement projects in the Watershed Restoration Plan. This course will be attended in August of 2026.

The basis of cost for website domain and hosting fees is the current prices for hosting the SRWG website through GoDaddy. The basis of cost for the two training courses is the current posted tuition on the Wildland Hydrology website.

Indirect Rate
TU has a federally approved indirect cost rate agreement or NICRA which is 13.84% for FY 24.

D.2.2.4. Environmental & Cultural Resources Compliance

As this project is designed to coordinate a watershed group and undertake watershed restoration planning activities, no environmental compliance (aside from the Bureau of Reclamation's Categorical Exclusion Checklist and associated environmental and cultural compliance review) will be necessary for project implementation.

D.2.2.5. Required Permits or Approvals

No known permits or approvals are necessary to implement the outreach and watershed restoration planning activities proposed in this application. All the tasks are expected to be office, field work, site visit, meeting, community event, or virtually based, and will not involve any earth-disturbing activities or associated impacts to habitat, species, wetlands, surface waters, cultural resources, or invasive species. If permits or approvals are needed for meetings, events, monitoring, or field work, TU will secure the required permits/approvals.

D.2.2.6. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Trout Unlimited affirms that no overlap exists between the proposed project and any other active or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel.

D.2.2.7. Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

Trout Unlimited affirms that there is no actual or potential conflict of interest with any employees of Trout Unlimited as it relates to this application.

D.2.2.8. Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

Trout Unlimited was required to submit a Single Audit report for the 2022 fiscal year. The EIN number for Trout Unlimited is 38-1612715 and the Uniform Guidance Audit Report is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.

D.2.2.9. Disclosure of Lobbying

Trout Unlimited has submitted a completed and signed SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form.

D.2.2.10. Letters of Support

Please see Appendix A on p. 28 for letters of support from the following partners:

Bridger-Teton National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Greys River Forest Collaborative
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Lincoln County Planning Office
Star Valley Conservation District
Star Valley Trout Unlimited
Sunrise Engineering
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Wyoming Game & Fish Department

D.2.2.11. Official Resolution

See Appendix B for Trout Unlimited's Official Resolution documents, which include TU's Contract Execution Authority signed by the Board of Trustees Secretary Patsy Ishiyama on July 24th, 2022 and the Ministerial Delegation of Authority for the "Collaborative Restoration Planning, Community Engagement, and Project Development for the Salt River Watershed in NW Wyoming and SE Idaho" proposal signed by CFO Jim Hughey on November 27th, 2023. These documents have been pre-approved by the BOR in lieu of a single Official Resolution document.

Appendix A: Letters of Support

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Bridger-Teton National Forest | 340 N. Cache
PO Box 1888
Jackson, WY 83001-1888

File Code: 2600 **Date:** November 13, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of USFS Bridger Teton National Forest to express our strong support for Trout Unlimited's (TU) application to the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP). This proposal holds great promise for furthering the efforts of the new Salt River Watershed Group (SRWG), of which our organization is a participating stakeholder.

The Salt River watershed in Lincoln County is a dynamic landscape that encompasses the entirety of Star Valley, WY and more than a half dozen drainages in Idaho flowing into Wyoming. The Forest has a long history of partnering with Trout Unlimited and sees this as another opportunity to support proactive and collaborative efforts in the management of natural resources that support our local economies, agriculture, and recreation.

Further, the Bridger Teton National Forest looks forward to being a part of the watershed group. The Forest sees tremendous value in increasing collaborative efforts and communication around water uses, fisheries protection and enhancement, recreation management, and better climate understanding, which seems timely as our 5-year history of snowpack, spring, and summer flows increases in variability.

The activities supported by this funding will include the continued coordination of SRWG and working groups, hosting SRWG events, community outreach, writing the Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP), surveying/assessing the Salt River and its tributaries for the WRP, developing a project list through landowner outreach and agency partners, development of a project prioritization tool, and all other office, interpersonal, and field work related to SRWG and WRP development.

In summary, we support TU's WaterSMART CWMP application because the complex challenges our watershed faces require innovative, collaborative solutions best accomplished by synergy among a diverse coalition of stakeholders and partners with the support of a professional facilitation team.

Sincerely,

Patrick Barry /S/
PATRICK BARRY

Forest Fisheries Biologist, Watershed Program Manager
Bridger-Teton National Forest

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Caribou-Targhee National Forest HQ | 1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, ID 83401
208-557-5900
Fax: 208-557-5827

File Code: 2600
Date: December 1, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
Mail Stop: 84-27133
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Letter of Support for Trout Unlimited' s Salt River Watershed Group WaterSMART CWMP Grant

NOFO Team,

I am writing in support of Trout Unlimited' s (TU) continued efforts to develop the Salt River Watershed Group and drafting of the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan. The Salt River watershed is centered along the Wyoming-Idaho state line with the lowlands privately owned and dominated by agricultural uses. The uplands are predominately federally managed lands. The watershed group is a critical component to fostering beneficial change in an extremely complex setting with diverse stakeholders.

The Caribou-Targhee National Forest contains the headwaters of the westside Salt River tributaries. Of the major Forest drainages to the Salt River the Forest has completed restoration in the following tributaries: Jackknife, Tincup, and Crow creeks. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest has identified priority watersheds within the Salt River as part of a Nationwide Forest Service effort following the National Watershed Condition Framework aimed at improving watershed condition[1]. The Jackknife Creek watershed has been one of those watersheds.

The reason for our focus in the Salt River watershed is due to the intact native fish populations that include Yellowstone cutthroat trout and northern leatherside chub. Currently, there is a need for coordinated management of non-native and native fish populations in the basin to protect this important resource.

Continuation of the working group and development of the restoration plan will be valuable for the Salt River watershed to guide restoration priorities and solicit coordination and funding in the bi-state area.

The Forest is an active participant in the watershed group, with staff serving on the Steering Committee and subcommittee for development of the Watershed Restoration Plan. The Forest actively participates in the watershed group as it further builds upon the significant work we

[1] https://www.fs.fed.us/naturalresources/watershed/condition_framework.shtml

have already completed. We have found these partnerships to be very beneficial and rewarding as we both strive to improve watershed conditions.

If you have any questions regarding our support I can be reached at (208)-557-5900 or you may contact Corey Lyman, Forest Fisheries Biologist at (208)557-5838 or email: corey.lyman@usda.gov .

Sincerely,

MELVIN BOLLING
Forest Supervisor

November 21, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

NOFO Team Members

The Greys River Forest Collaborative (GRFC) is in full support of Trout Unlimited's (TU) efforts to work with the local forest partners and collaborative landowners to conserve and restore portions of the Salt River. The Salt River begins on the Greys River Ranger District and flows through it to the valley. Many of the tributaries are municipal watersheds serving several communities. The GRFC is comprised of federal, state, local landowners and conservation groups like Trout Unlimited that are dedicated to working with the US Forest Service to identify, assist in implementation and support management and restoration projects both on and off the forest.

Both entities work with the US Forest Service using federal, state and county funds. Each group also collaborates to secure grants such as the WaterSMART Grant which the GRFC supporting TU on here. To keep these efforts going this funding source is critical to both TU and the GRFC efforts to keep work going. TU has been very collaborative with other local organizations such as the Alpine Area Wildfire Protection Coalition where they took the slash from fuels treatments and used them for a bank stabilization project.

On behalf of the Greys River Forest Collaborative please accept our support of TU's efforts here to secure this WaterSMART Grant funding. This will help each organization continue to improve the Salt River through mutual efforts.

Sincerely

Charles H. Butterfield PhD, CPRM
Coordinator, Greys River Forest Collaborative

444 Hospital Way #300
Pocatello, ID 83201 • (208) 236-6160

Brad Little, Governor
Jess Byrne, Director

November 29, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

To the NOFO Team:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) in support of Trout Unlimited's (TU) 2023 Cooperative Watershed Management Program grant proposal submission. The proposal is for continued support of the development of the Salt River Watershed Group (SRWG) and developing a draft of the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP).

Through the guidance and organization efforts of TU, the SRWG has grown and accomplished quite a lot over the past year. Since our first meeting in September 2022 the group as a whole has met quarterly, and a draft comprehensive plan has been developed. Several working groups have been formed and met several times to address specific issues in the watershed. The working groups include Ponds, Aquatic and Riparian Habitat, Water Quality, and Community Engagement and Outreach. Available data about the watershed has been shared and data gaps have been identified. There is also a great website now available that will be used to share information about the group and encourage involvement by anyone interested in contributing to protecting the watershed.

As this watershed is experiencing rapid growth and development, like many other areas of the west, continued involvement by stakeholders to protect and even enhance the natural resources is imperative. TU has done a great job getting this group together and involving many key partners and collaborators to do the work needed to make a difference. This funding would be used to continue the support for coordination of the group, hosting SRWG events, community outreach, development of the Watershed Restoration Plan, conducting studies to fill in data gaps, working with landowners to develop projects, and other necessary management to support this effort in the Salt River Watershed.

IDEQ will continue to be involved in this group and looks forward to being a part of the work being done in the watershed. If more information is needed or there are any questions, please contact me. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our support to Trout Unlimited and this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cornell
Surface Water Quality Manager
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
444 Hospital Way #300
Pocatello, ID 83201
208-239-5021 | jennifer.cornell@deq.idaho.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
SOUTHEAST REGION
1345 Barton Road
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

Brad Little / Governor
Jim Fredericks / Director

November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: Robin Graber
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Salt River Watershed Group funding – Trout Unlimited

Dear Ms. Graber,

Please consider this acknowledgment of Trout Unlimited's request for funding to the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to support the continued development of the Salt River Watershed Group (SRWG) and the drafting of the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP). The SRWG works to coordinate efforts between phosphate mining companies, NGOs, Federal agencies, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game. They have contributed significantly to public information reducing the development of private ponds and organization of local citizens to help protect natural resources.

The work that SRWG does is consistent with the Department's Mission as well as objectives and strategies outlined in the Fisheries Management Plan 2019 – 2024 (IDFG 2019). We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this project and look forward to working with Trout Unlimited, SRWG, and other partners on improving this natural and recreational resource.

Department staff are available to provide any additional technical input or assistance required. Please contact Becky Johnson, Technical Assistance Manager in the Southeast regional office at (208) 236-1258 or becky.johnson@idfg.idaho.gov if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Garren
Regional Supervisor, Southeast Region

DG/bj

Literature Cited

Idaho Department of Fish and Game [IDFG]. 2019. Fisheries Management Plan 2019 – 2024. Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, USA. Available from: https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/2019-2024-idaho-fisheries-management-plan-original.pdf?update10-2019.

Board of Lincoln County Commissioners

Jerry W. Hansen
Chairman
Afton, Wyoming

Kent Connelly
Vice-Chair
Kemmerer, Wyoming

Teri Bowers
Commissioner
Afton, Wyoming

925 Sage Avenue, Suite 302, Kemmerer, WY 83101 Phone: 307-877-2004
Email: commission@lcwy.org

November 21, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Re: WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant

Dear NOFO Team Members,

On behalf of the Lincoln County Commissioners, we would like to submit this letter of strong support for Trout Unlimited's (TU) WasterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant application. We are supportive of the project's goals to develop a watershed coordination group for the Salt River in Lincoln County, Wyoming. We commend the project's collaborative approach of working with multiple agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Star Valley Conservation District and local landowners to address persistent sediment, bank stability and fish habitat issues on the Salt River.

Sincerely,

Jerry W. Hansen
Chair

Kent Connelly
Vice Chair

Teri Bowers
Commissioner

December 5, 2023

Star Valley Conservation District
PO Box 216
61 E. 5th Ave.
Afton, WY 83110

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

To: Bureau of Reclamation
RE: WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant

On behalf of the Star Valley Conservation District (SVCD) I would like to submit this letter of support for Trout Unlimited' s (TU) WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Grant application. We would ask for the continued funding of the WaterSmart grant to continue the work in the Salt River Watershed. The project is aligned with Star Valley Conservation District's mission to pursue the conservation, wise use, and protection of Star Valley's natural resources. We look forward to participating as a project partner. Tanner Belknap with Trout Unlimited has done an excellent job getting the Salt River Watershed group up and going. The watershed group has helped Star Valley Conservation District to develop our Level 1 Watershed Study proposal. We have been approved for the watershed study through the Wyoming Water Development Commission. The watershed group has also been able to identify areas along the Salt River for restoration. We commend the project's collaborative approach of working with multiple agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, Lincoln County Planning Office, Trout Unlimited, Star Valley Conservation District and local landowners to address persistent sediment, bank stability, and fish habitat issues on Salt River.

Sincerely,

Kay Lynn Nield

Kay Lynn Nield
District Manager Star Valley Conservation District

December 5th, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Star Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited (SVTU) is providing this letter to express full support for the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART CWMP grant proposal to support the continued development of the Salt River Watershed Group (SRWG) and drafting the Salt River Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) beyond 2024. Multiple members of our local chapter also belong to the SRWG and represent a variety of stakeholders within the Salt River watershed. We are encouraged by the accelerated progress that has been achieved over the past two years as a direct result of the previous funding.

This funding is vital to furthering and sustaining the SRWG's progress by supporting the existing full-time position, SRWG events, community outreach, surveying/assessing the Salt River and its tributaries for the WRP, the writing of the WRP, the development a project list through landowner outreach and agency partners, and the development of a project prioritization tool.

We thank you for your consideration of the proposal and are excited for future of the SRWG. We look forward to many more years of improving and protecting our healthy fishery and community.

Sincerely,
Star Valley Trout Unlimited

SUNRISE ENGINEERING

Star Valley Office
770 S. Washington St., Ste. A, Afton, Wyoming 83110 | **Tel:** 307.885.8500 | **Fax:** 307.885.8501

November 17, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Mr. Weakland, CWMP Application Committee

Sunrise Engineering would like to express support and appreciation for the work Trout Unlimited has completed in organizing and leading the Salt River Watershed Group over the past year. Their work funded in part by the Bureau has brought together a group of diverse stakeholders to identify issues and possible solutions to the challenges facing this watershed and the sustainable management of the watershed.

As the work is not yet complete ,we would express support of the current Trout Unlimited application for a BOR WaterSMART CWMP to maintain momentum as they continue to conduct community outreach, survey of the Salt River and its tributaries, needs identification, and project prioritization.

Sincerely,

David Kennington, P.E.
SUNRISE ENGINEERING, INC.

December 4, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Attn: NOFO Team
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

Sent electronically via email to tanner.belknap@tu.org.

Dear NOFO Team,

I am writing to express the support of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) Nonpoint Source Program (NPS) for Trout Unlimited's (TU) 2024 Cooperative Watershed Management grant proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation. TU has a proven track record with the NPS program, successfully sponsoring and participating in several restoration projects funded in part through Clean Water Act Sections 319 and 205(j) funds administered through the NPS program. TU is a valuable and active stakeholder within Wyoming's watersheds, further demonstrated by their strong commitment to collaborative watershed planning and outreach in the Salt River watershed. TU has been successful in identifying water quality needs in the state and managing funds responsibly to address those needs. For instance, TU recently completed a restoration project on lower Swift Creek, a major tributary to the Salt River. The project was implemented using Section 319 grant funding and involved the use of best management practices to address sedimentation, bank stability, and agricultural impacts in the stream. This project was a critical step in addressing water quality and fisheries issues in the larger Salt River watershed.

The NPS Program has been impressed with TU's leadership in the establishment and development of the Salt River Watershed Group. The group has made significant progress in its first year and connected with stakeholders through topic-specific working groups and community outreach. These efforts have allowed for a comprehensive start to developing a watershed restoration plan and other tools to prioritize restoration efforts in the watershed. The WDEQ looks forward to continuing to serve as an active stakeholder in future efforts should this proposal to continue the watershed group's work be funded.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our support for Trout Unlimited in their proposal for this grant. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for additional information on their past and current projects with the NPS Program.

Regards,

Alex Jeffers
Nonpoint Source Program Coordinator
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Water Quality Division, Watershed Protection
200 W. 17th St. Garden Level
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-6733 | alexandria.jeffers@wyo.gov

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

5400 Bishop Blvd. Cheyenne, WY 82006
Phone: (307) 777-4600 Fax: (307) 777-4699
wgfd.wyo.gov

November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation
WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program
P.O. Box 25007, MS 84-27133
Denver, CO 80225

To Whom it May Concern:

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) supports Trout Unlimited's ongoing efforts to convene and coordinate a Salt River Watershed Group. The Salt River is an important sport fishery for native Snake River Cutthroat Trout and wild Brown Trout. The river's naturally reproducing fish populations depend on high quality and connected habitats to maintain resilient populations. The Salt River corridor is highlighted as an important restoration area in the Department's Statewide Habitat Plan for its high resource value, and great potential to see gains through restoration of in-stream and riparian habitats. Additionally, the Department maintains sixteen different public access easements along the Salt River corridor to provide public access to float, fish, and waterfowl hunt. Providing access to and maintenance of high quality wildlife and fisheries resources for future generations to experience and enjoy is a Department priority. Coordination among NGO's, county, state and federal government entities and landowners is critical to achieving this goal.

While the Salt River provides good public access and opportunity, the resource is not entirely intact. Decades of land use and manipulation – channelization, willow removal, water diversion, and flood plain development – have reduced the river's resource conditions. Coordinated watershed restoration, strategic irrigation planning and infrastructure modernization will help address ecological deficits. Since the inception of the Salt River Watershed Group in 2022, the group has identified and initiated Salt River restoration projects to improve resource conditions throughout the watershed.

Thank you for considering the Salt River Watershed Group's proposal. The Department looks forward to remaining an active participant, for the benefit of Wyoming's anglers and their resource.

Sincerely,

Paul Dey
Aquatic Habitat Program Manager

PD/hr
cc: Leslie Steen, Trout Unlimited
Darren Rhea, Jackson Regional Fisheries Supervisor

Appendix B: Official Resolution Documents

MINISTERIAL DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Dear Sir or Madam,

By means of this letter, I, James Hughey, CFO, delegate the authority herein described to Emily Olsen, on the following terms and conditions:

A. To sign, on my behalf, an agreement with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) committing Trout Unlimited (TU) to financial and legal obligations associated with the receipt of an award from Reclamation related to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects for the following project ("Proposal"):

   Collaborative Restoration Planning, Community Engagement, and Project Development for the Salt River Watershed in NW Wyoming and SE Idaho

B. To sign on my behalf, any such necessary documents as required may be required to execute the award of the Proposal.

C. If TU is awarded and accepts funding from Reclamation in connection with the Proposal, TU can provide the amount of funding and/or in-kind contribution specified in the Proposal and work with Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

The authority delegated is not subject to sub-delegation without my prior and express written consent.

DocuSigned by:
Jim Hughey
084B9FFEBC004DB...
Name: James Hughey
Title: CFO
Trout Unlimited
Date: Dec 1, 2023 | 4:21 PM PST

Acknowledged and Agreed:

DocuSigned by:
Emily Olsen
4E38105E1AC6466...
Name: Emily Olsen
Title: Vice President, Rocky Mountain Region
Date: Nov 28, 2023 | 3:30 PM PST

Trout Unlimited Contract Execution Authority

Purpose

This document sets forth the authorities of Trout Unlimited's chief financial officer (CFO), chief operations officer (COO), vice presidents, directors, and managers to sign grant agreements, contracts, and other written instruments, for approved purposes, on behalf of Trout Unlimited ("TU"), pursuant to the delegations of authority set forth below. All delegated authorities shall be exercised in accordance with TU policies and procedures.

Authority of the President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The TU bylaws provide for the CEO and by delegation the Chief Financial Officer to enter into grant agreements, contracts, and related instruments. The relevant section is as follows:

> Article VI, Section 12. Contracting Authority. The CEO and President or, if he or she shall so designate, the Chief Financial Officer, shall have the authority to sign and execute in the name of the Corporation all contracts, agreements, or other written instruments that are required to accept grants and/or donations to the Corporation or to authorize expenditures pursuant to donor and/or grant agreements with any government agency, commission, or entity. The Board of Trustees shall establish policies concerning the additional authority of the officers of the Corporation and senior staff to execute contracts on behalf of the Corporation.

The bylaws state that the Board shall establish policies for additional delegation. This memorandum sets forth that policy.

Authority of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Operations Officer (COO).

The full authority to execute grant agreements, contracts, and other written instruments, for approved purposes, under TU Bylaws Article VI, Section 12 is delegated to the CFO and COO.

Additional Authority to Sign Contracts, Grants and Other Agreements

The authority to execute grant agreements, contracts, and other written instruments under TU Bylaws Article VI, Section 12 is delegated to TU's vice presidents and senior directors, where "senior director" is defined as those directors who report to a vice president; provided that the relevant vice president and the CFO shall have an opportunity to review, before execution, agreements contracts, and other written instruments with a value above $250,000 per instrument or that contain unusual insurance, liability, or other terms and conditions that create risk to TU and have not previously been approved by the CFO.

The authority to execute contracts, agreements, or other written instruments that are required to authorize expenditures pursuant to donor and/or grant agreements is delegated to TU's project managers; provided that the person who signed the original funding agreement or the CFO shall have an opportunity to review prior to execution contracts, agreements, or other written instruments with a

value of$50,000 per procurement or greater and that the CFO shall have an opportunity to review before execution any contract, agreement, or other written instrument that contains unusual insurance, liability, or other terms and conditions that create risk to TU and have not been previously approved by the CFO.

Further Delegation: Upon request by the appropriate senior director or vice president, the CEO/President, COO, or CFO may further delegate TU Bylaws Article VI, Section 12 authority to sign particular contracts, agreements, or other written instruments beyond the thresholds stated above to the vice president, senior director or project manager who will be responsible for managing the grant or contract. Each delegation must be made in writing prior to the execution of the contract and copies must be maintained of all such delegation.

RESOLUTION OF TROUT UNLIMITED BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLVED, that pursuant to Article VI, section 12 of the Bylaws of the Corporation, the attached policy on the delegation of Contract Authority be adopted as the policy of the Corporation. Adopted July 24th, 2022.

Patsy Ishiyama

Patsy Ishiyama
Secretary