



Regional Conservation Partnership Program Lower Gunnison River Basin Project

There are 2,100 watershed projects in the nation established by local units of government with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Program (Public Law 78-534 (Flood Control Act of 1944) and (Public Law 83-566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act). These projects consist of over 11,000 flood control dams and thousands of conservation practices that provide over \$2 billion in annual benefits in flood prevention, water supplies, recreational areas, and other benefits.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. Funds from the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program can be utilized to partner with others to solve natural resources issues in watersheds. By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

Below is an example of how the RCPP Program has utilized the NRCS Watershed Program funding and technical assistance to partner with local sponsors to implement the development and implementation of an integrated program to improve off- and on-farm irrigation efficiency by modernizing and optimizing irrigation water conveyance and application systems in four focus areas within the Lower Gunnison Basin.

Modernizing Agricultural Water Management in the Lower Gunnison River Basin in Colorado

In 2015, the Colorado River District received notice that up to \$8 million of funding was available from the NRCS under RCPP for this project and an Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) was set up with directed funds allocated by the NRCS program area into Watershed Authority (PL-566) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The project time frame was July 2015 to July 2021.

The fund were divided into Technical Assistance (TA) and Financial Assistance (FA) budget 'buckets' for each program area. Now completed, the project supported seven off-farm projects and 15 on-farm construction projects.

These funds were distributed within the following four sub watersheds or "focus" areas within the Lower Gunnison River Basin.

- 1. North Fork Water Conservancy District (NFWCD)
- 2. Uncompahgre Project
- 3. Crawford Water Conservancy District (CWCD)
- 4. Bostwick Park Water Conservancy District (BPWCD).

A total of \$16,811,896.70 of combined federal NRCS and partnership funds were expended to bring this project to completion. Overall, the RCPP-funded efforts assisted water users and agricultural producers meet state and federal regulatory requirements.

The Watershed Program (PL-566) / Off-Farm Improvement Projects - Seven off-farm projects were designed and constructed, consistent with NRCS standards and practices. These projects were certified and documented as complete by NRCS State Engineer after careful review, inspections, and standard close-out processes.



Fire Mountain Canal Improvement Project – New siphon entrance and screen structure (left) with HDPE piping related to segment 47 pipeline (right) is one example of the seven off-farm projects funding through the RCPP.

To view a copy of the final report for the RCPP project click on the link below:

<https://gunnisonriverbasin.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-11-12-RCPP-Summary-Report-v2.pdf>

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