

**Project Title:** St. Vrain & Left Hand Stream Management Plan  
**Project Location:** St. Vrain Watershed  
**Grant Type:** Water Supply Reserve Fund, South Platte Basin Roundtable  
**Grant Request:** \$50,000  
**Cash Match Funding:** \$57,500  
**In-kind Match Funding:** \$42,500  
**Other (Grant) Funding:** \$150,000  
**Project Sponsor:** St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District  
**Contact:** Sean Cronin, Executive Director, 303-772-4060, sean.cronin@svlhwcd.org

## 1. PURPOSE

Colorado's Water Plan ("CWP") sets a measurable objective to cover 80 percent of the locally prioritized lists of rivers with stream management plans. CWP used the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan ("BIP") to help inform this measurable objective. The South Platte BIP studied a reach of St. Vrain Creek for environmental and recreational opportunities and concluded streamflows may be present to achieve environmental and recreational outcomes. However, the BIP further concluded "studies that relate the channel form and function to the streamflows can make assessment of flows in the area more robust". Moreover the BIP further states, in recognition of the significant post-flood stream restoration activities "assessments should be made regarding the requirements of aquatic and riparian ecosystems in the area...".

The St. Vrain Creek Watershed has unique aquatic ecosystems which provide distinct challenges and opportunities. As an example, a 2010 Colorado Parks and Wildlife inventory found that St. Vrain Creek outranks all other South Platte tributaries in the number of native fish species at 17, with 3 listed as Colorado species of concern. Though the St. Vrain hosts the largest diversity, the number of species has declined and many believe altered habitat, flow regime, and stream fragmentation are possible reasons.

The BIP also concluded for the St. Vrain that "streamflows necessary for recreational needs should be assessed". Opportunities for flow improvements may be available. For example, the BIP referenced the St. Vrain as one of two tributaries to the South Platte River that have the largest annual potential for water availability, furthermore the St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District ("District") owns a relatively senior water right, not currently in use, decreed for environmental and recreation purposes.

The September 2013 flood brought about a reenergized and expansive era of collaboration along with hundreds of millions of dollars for stream restoration. The collaborative flood recovery created a greater level of trust and partnership amongst water users, and many now want to transition to discussions of water management activities that can maximize post-flood projects to further benefit environmental, recreational, agricultural and domestic uses. A SMP appears to many stakeholders as a means to facilitate this transition.

The District will lead the development of a SMP for both St. Vrain Creek and Left Hand Creek. The SMP is to take place in two phases over approximately five years.

## 2. BASIN BACKGROUND

The SMP will encompass South St. Vrain Creek, Middle St. Vrain Creek, North St. Vrain Creek, and the main stem of St. Vrain Creek to the confluence of the South Platte River, also including the tributary of Left Hand Creek upstream and including its tributaries James Creek and Little James Creek.

The St. Vrain Creek watershed is critical to maintaining the health, biodiversity, character, and economy of communities within the region, including Lyons and Longmont. The creek is home to a diverse population of native fish, receives Colorado River transmountain water, hosts one of the country's largest outdoor games, has its headwaters in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Indian Peaks Wilderness, and its confluence in a county that is the largest agricultural economic producing county in Colorado. With such a wide range of uses and an intense focus of study, the St. Vrain poses an excellent opportunity to balance river health with water users' needs through completion of a stream management plan.

### **3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1. Project Goal**

The overall goal of the Project is to collaboratively identify projects and management strategies in both St. Vrain and Left Hand Creeks from the headwaters to the confluence of the South Platte River that transition stakeholders from flood recovery to stream health projects that improve environmental conditions in the river while also meeting water users' current and future needs and are aligned with private property rights and the prior appropriation system.

This goal is consistent with and supports both the BIP and CWP.

#### **3.2. Objectives**

The District proposes to develop the Project in two phases over approximately five years. The overall objectives and schedule for each phase is described below.

##### **Phase 1 – 2018-2019**

- Objective 1: Develop support from stakeholders and the community at large for projects and management options that improve stream health and water availability for agricultural, municipal and recreational users
- Objective 2: Compile existing databases, reports, studies, and analyses of environmental, recreational, municipal, and agricultural water uses within the Study Area
- Objective 3 - Characterize the future water needs of agricultural, environmental, recreational, municipal and industrial users in the Study Area, including shortages and infrastructure needs
- Objective 4 – Assess river functional health within the Study Area and inventory stressors that are challenging or degrading it
- Objective 5 – Compile results from Objectives 1 – 4 and develop an on-line interactive report that communicates those results and makes recommendations for proceeding to Phase 2

##### **Phase 2 – 2019 – 2022 (NOT PART OF THIS GRANT REQUEST)**

- Objective 1 – Collect additional data on priority reaches as identified in Phase 1
- Objective 2 – Work with stakeholders to select specific management objectives for the priority reaches and describe measureable goals.
- Objective 3 - Quantify projects or management options such as ranges of numeric flow recommendations to support environmental and recreational values that meet water users' needs as identified in Phase 1
- Objective 4 – Identify constraints and opportunities that may limit or assist meeting project goals
- Objective 5 - Revise the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plans to reflect the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders for project implementation.

#### 4. Budget and Match

As shown below Phase 1 of the SMP is expected to cost \$300,000.

Task	Task Description	Estimated Labor Dollars	Estimated Other Direct Costs Dollars	Total Project Costs Dollars
1	Stakeholder Engagement and Community Outreach	\$ 26,400	\$ 600	\$ 27,000
2	Existing Data Collection and Information Review	\$ 36,000	\$ -	\$ 36,000
3	Demand Shortage and Infrastructure Assessment	\$ 75,000	\$ -	\$ 75,000
4	River Health Assessment	\$ 69,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 70,000
5	Phase 1 Final Report and Phase 2 Recommendations	\$ 44,400	\$ 500	\$ 44,900
6	Project Management and Coordination	\$ 46,800	\$ 300	\$ 47,100
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 297,600</b>	<b>\$ 2,400</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

The table below shows half of the funding will be provided through a Colorado Water Conservation Board (“CWCB”) Colorado Watershed Restoration Grant (“CWRG”) and this \$50,000 WSRF request is match for the CWRG. Note, Boulder County is considering a request to provide cash match and the City of Longmont has verbally committed to providing cash funds in 2019 (specific amount TBD by application submittal).

Task	Task Description	CWCB Funds	MATCH							
			American Whitewater (In-Kind)	TU - St. Vrain Anglers	SPBRT - WSRF	SVLHWCD	JLB	Boulder County	City of Longmont	In-Kind
1	Stakeholder Engagement and Community Outreach	\$ 13,500			\$13,500					
2	Existing Data Collection and Information Review	\$ 18,000		\$5,000	\$13,000					
3	Demand Shortage and Infrastructure Assessment	\$ 37,500	\$ 7,000		\$23,500	\$ 7,000				
4	River Health Assessment	\$ 35,000				\$ 35,000				
5	Phase 1 Final Report and Phase 2 Recommendations	\$ 22,450				\$ 8,000	\$2,500			\$11,950
6	Project Management and Coordination	\$ 23,550								\$23,550
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,000</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$35,500</b>

The CWRG grant application will be submitted November 3, with notice of award provided on January 23. If the South Platte Basin Roundtable (“SPBRT”) Needs Committee recommends this grant request be considered by the SPBRT at its January 9 meeting, the District will know from the CWCB if the CWRG will have a staff recommendation to fund. If the CWRG grant is not likely to be funded, the District will withdraw this WSRF grant request by the January 9 meeting.