

# Restoration Funding Aggregation Programs



**Prepared for:**

**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation**

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## Introduction

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation asked the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to gather information on restoration funding aggregation models used in other states across the West. This information will help inform efforts to implement the Montana Forest Action Plan and commitment toward Shared Stewardship's vision of large, cross-boundary and collaborative project implementation.

Landscape scale restoration often requires aggregated funding models because of large funding needs and a diverse array of partners who are interested in supporting the work and enjoying the benefits of a restored landscape.

In the spring and summer of 2020, the NFF researched and contacted six programs including:

- The Watershed Restoration Initiative (Utah)
- Forests to Faucets (Colorado)
- Northern Arizona Forest Fund (Arizona)
- Rio Grande Water Fund (New Mexico)
- Blue Forest Conservation's Forest Resiliency Bond model (California)
- Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (Colorado)

We focused our research and interviews on:

- the catalysts or needs for funding aggregation,
- fund aggregation and distribution practices,
- matching and leveraging of discretionary and non-discretionary funds,
- project selection process and who is involved, and
- keys and challenges to success.

We report on five of these six programs, omitting the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative because it is still being developed. Each example of funding aggregation provides insights on the mechanics and illustrates the opportunities and challenges of different program approaches.



# Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative

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## Resource Focus

Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) aims to improve high priority watersheds throughout the state through a program coordinated by Utah Division of Wildlife (UDWR).

The goal of WRI is to restore the health of watersheds over large landscapes to benefit wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, grazing, and reduce the risk of catastrophic fires.

The origins of this program date back to 1993 under the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development which helped bring together 13 agencies to identify the most pressing restoration needs and pool resources to support implementation. In 2002, sagebrush mortality refocused the groups effort on restoration of sagebrush ecosystems. State funding was made available to support program administration and provide some funding for projects.

UDWR is divided into 5 regions that WRI also uses to ensure that projects and funding for projects are distributed across the state. UDWR is well positioned to work with multiple agencies and partners because they have scientific expertise and established relationships. UDWR brings technical capacity to support projects using their own restoration resources (tools, equipment, seeds, etc.), regional field staff, regional connections to agencies, and local relationships.

## Program Administration

The WRI program is administered by three full-time staff and supported by the UDWR field staff offices. The funding for administration is provided by the state as a portion of the UDWR budget. Administration includes proposal solicitation, proposal review, organizing regional reviews, coordinating funding allocation meetings, project contracting, project tracking and reporting, and updating statewide project map.

## Project Selection

WRI issues an annual call for restoration projects in December with proposals due in January. WRI screens proposals to make sure they are technically sound, check necessary clearances, review operational viability, and then posts proposals using an online ArcGIS map showing the project location and links to project details. The WRI mapping interface allows the public to comment and ask questions about proposed projects. Proponents are expected to respond to any public questions.

Once proposals are screened and publicly reviewed, they are provided to regional teams for review and ranking. Each regional team is represented by UDWR staff, local stakeholders, and federal agencies. These regional teams are open to the public, but require attending in-person meetings and engagement throughout the year.

The goal of having regional teams is to provide a voice to local constituents and provide a baseline level of resources to projects that local members deem as priorities. Once a year,



usually in February, regional teams meet for project presentations and rank projects in their region in the order that they would like to see them funded.

## **Project Funding and Aggregation**

After all regions have ranked their projects, WRI then begins working with funding partners to allocate funds to the highest ranked proposals in each region. Funding partner entities include the United States Forest Service (Forest Service), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and non-profit wildlife groups. WRI starts by meeting with federal entities first to see which projects they want to support. Since the federal funds are the least flexible it is easiest to allocate these funds first to the projects (or portions of projects within their jurisdiction) that they want to support.

After the Forest Service and BLM have allocated their funds, projects are sent to the wildlife groups to distribute their funds among remaining projects or portions of projects. This process was described as a “lively auction” with lots of negotiations. Private funding groups are motivated to close the funding gaps on projects and work both competitively and cooperatively to support as many high quality projects as they can.

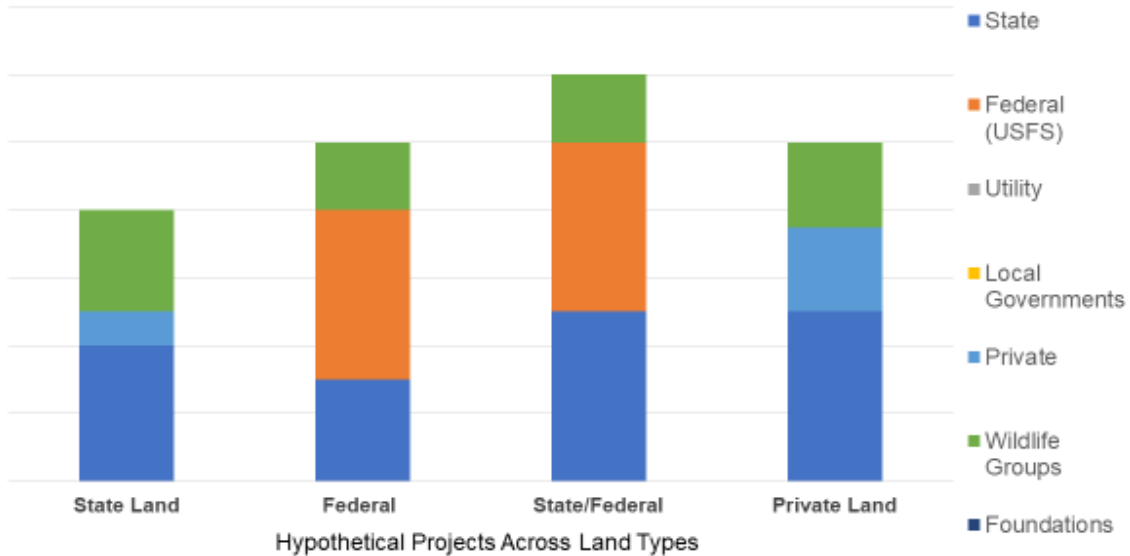
Last, the state allocates funding from the state’s UDWR budget to WRI projects that need additional funds to meet the budget. These funds are the most flexible and can be spent across state, federal, and private lands. The funds are intended to compliment and leverage federal and private funding and make projects whole if only partial funding has been allocated.

Over the last 18 years, more than 200 different donors have helped support projects through the WRI program, the majority of which are private funders. WRI has facilitated agreements between the state and federal agencies (BLM and Forest Service) that allow federal dollars to be allocated through the state-administered process to support local stakeholders priority projects. It also maximizes funding leverage, bringing together private, state, and federal dollars.

While federal funds remain restricted to being spent on federal lands, federal funds may still support cross-boundary projects by allocating funds to the portion of the work that aligns with their respective jurisdiction.



# WRI: Funding Allocation



The chart above provides a hypothetical distribution of different sources of funds across different types of projects. Note that federal funds are only going to projects with federal lands, while state and private funds are spend across all project types.

## Project Implementation

By late March or early April, funding typically has been allocated and WRI begins working with project proponents to set up contracts for work and connect proponents with UDWR staff experts who can provide technical assistance. Developing contracts, tracking project progress, and reviewing project completion make up a substantial amount of work that the WRI program manager oversees with support from UDWR field staff.

Completed projects are updated in the ArcGIS map, which is used as a real time account of completed projects and shared successes across the landscape. This visual and interactive tool was described as one of reasons this program has thrived. It provides accountability, allows a real-time public interface to review projects, and provides a platform to celebrate success and take a high-level view of how projects in each region fit together.

## Key to Success

In addition to the ArcGIS map, another aspect of success has been the program's sustained efforts to welcome different groups from across a range of resources and parts of the state to participate. By allowing groups to work as partners toward a shared goal provided motivation to them to work together. This includes land management agencies that could get behind project needs that were built on research. Having the state UDWR experts involved in the review



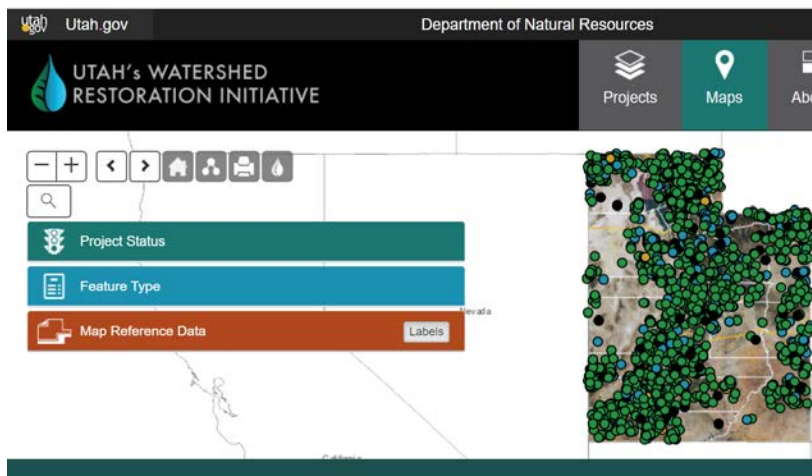
helped lend credibility to projects. The project selection process allows for input from the general public and regional support for local projects.

## Key Challenges

Monitoring projects and developing reliable, cross-cutting metrics remain challenges. There is also a recognition that separating projects regionally may ignore some of the natural boundaries (watersheds, firesheds, airsheds). WRI is working with The Nature Conservancy to consider new metrics and boundaries that may help reshape how regions are divided, regional project priorities, and desired outcomes.

## Additional Information

<https://wri.utah.gov/wri/map/map.html>



<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1417&context=hwi>

<https://watershed.utah.gov/>



# Northern Arizona Forest Fund

## Salt and Verde Watersheds

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### Resource Focus

The Northern Arizona Forest Fund (NAFF) was established by the National Forest Foundation to accelerate forest and watershed restoration in the Salt and Verde watersheds across five National Forests. These two watersheds supply water to more than 5 million people in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Recent high-severity fires, like the Sunflower, Wallow, and Slide fires, highlighted the need for forest and watershed restoration. In Arizona, the vast majority of forestlands that comprise the headwaters of the Salt and Verde are managed by the Forest Service. The NAFF program is designed to work with the Forest Service and partners to identify shovel-ready projects that are of strategic importance to watershed health. Forest health projects make up about half of the program expenditures, while meadow and wetland restoration, trail maintenance, and tree planting projects account for the other half.

### Program Administration

The NAFF program is administered by the National Forest Foundation, with two full time staff and one part-time field staff. Program administration duties include proposal solicitation, proposal review, coordinating proposal selection, managing agreements with the Forest Service and funding partners, fundraising, grant writing, project management, project tracking and reporting, program specific marketing and communication, and donor stewardship and engagement. These activities are paid for by indirect expenses raised from a 15% rate applied to the receipt of new funds and through direct requests for program support in grants.

### Project Selection Mechanism

The NAFF program solicits projects from the Forest Service resource staff once a year, in January, for implementation the following year. NAFF program staff review the proposals for project readiness, watershed benefits, implementation strategy, and funding appeal. After initial reviews, project proposals are presented to an advisory group. The advisory group membership consists of state agencies, local non-profit partners, funders, and Forest Service staff. The advisory panel helps prioritize the projects that NAFF will fundraise for and fund. Typically, five to eight projects are selected with at least one project on each of the five National Forests.

### Project Funding and Aggregation

NAFF uses a water fund model, raising funds from state and local governments, private grants, and local businesses, all of whom have an interest in maintaining the health of National Forests and protecting water quality and quantity.

NAFF has more than 25 funding partners throughout Arizona. Larger donors, like the City of Phoenix, allow their funding contribution to be applied across multiple projects. These funds are





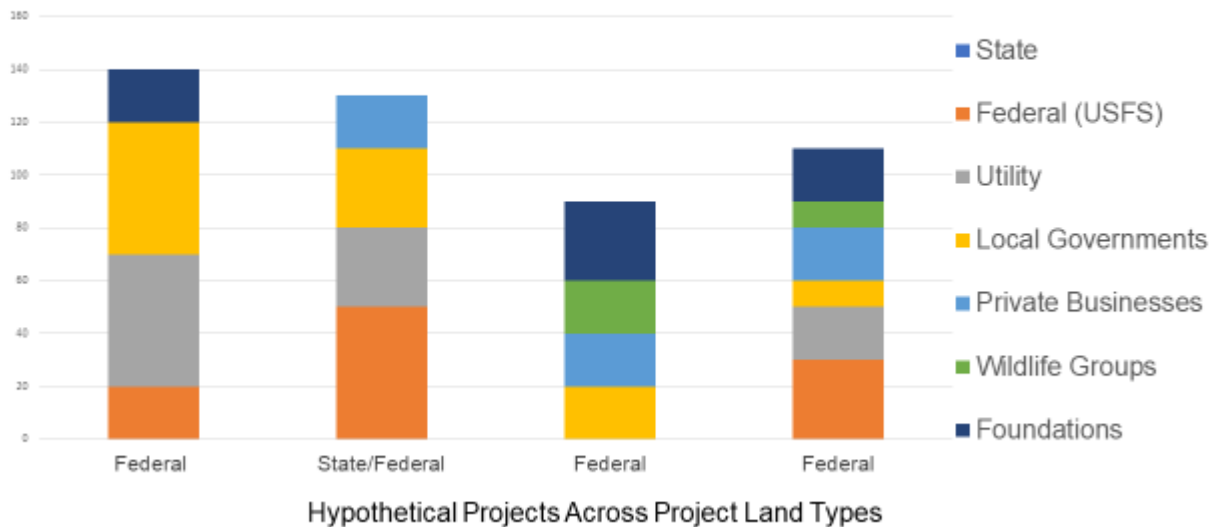
important because they provide long-term support and allow NFF staff to seek funding opportunities from state and local grants, philanthropic donors, and new donors whose interests may intersect with project objectives. Multiple funding sources are often used to fund a single project.

While NAFF does not require project match from the Forest Service, all projects benefit from in-kind technical and implementation support from the agency. In the past two years NAFF has established Master Challenge Cost Share agreements and Master Stewardship Agreements to increase the scale of projects by allowing end of year funds to be allocated to some of the larger, multi-year projects.

As the program has evolved, a greater percentage of overall funds are dedicated to specific projects. This shift in funding has made the flexible funding even more critical to program operations, particularly when funds can be used to pay for administration because project-specific funding often comes with strict limits on overhead and administrative spending. However, in order to apply to major grants some level of administrative funding is required.

The chart below provides an illustration of hypothetical funds across project types. Utility funding and local governments play a significant role in funding projects and staff time.

## NAFF: Funding Allocation



## Project Implementation

The NAFF program implements projects with the help of restoration contractors, local non-profits, university partners, and volunteers. Contractors are selected through competitive bids, while local non-profits and universities can be funded through strategic grants. For all projects, the NFF develops agreements with the Forest Service (Challenge Cost Share, Non-funded Challenge Cost Share, Stewardship Agreement, or Participating Agreement) that allow the NFF and its selected contractor to perform work on National Forest System lands.

NAFF staff oversee contracts and work closely with the Forest Service resource staff to inspect and approval all project work.

The NFF also monitors project outcomes and works with Forest Service specialists and other scientists to develop meaningful metrics and methods for assessing restoration outcomes. One example is the development of a fire risk reduction web application that helps quantify and illustrate how forest thinning reduces high-severity fire risk.

## Keys to success

The NAFF has increased in the number and scale of its project year after year. However, each successive year is built upon the success of the previous year. Every project that was done on-time and within budget demonstrated to the Forest Service and funding partners that the NAFF and the NFF can deliver on promises. This progression has gone from projects that were just a few thousand dollars, to projects that are several million dollars. Developing a shared goal and demonstrating the ability to make progress toward that builds trust among partners.

## Challenges

Funding for new staffing to meet programmatic growth has been a major challenge. Often funds are intermittent which makes it difficult to hire full time staff and sustain program growth. Setting aside funding for program administration should lead to a more stable program that brings in multiple funding partners.

## Additional Information

<https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/southernrockies/azforestfund>



# Forests to Faucets Colorado Front Range

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## Resource Focus

Forests to Faucets is a partnership between Denver Water, the Forest Service, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of the partnership is to improve watershed health by maintaining healthy forests. Specifically, the “goal is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and restore forests impacted by wildfires surrounding reservoirs, as well as minimize erosion and sedimentation in reservoirs” (CSFS, 2017).

Forests to Faucets began in 2010 after two large wildfires (Buffalo Creek in 1996 and Hayman in 2002) occurred in Denver Water’s watersheds. The wildfires negatively affected water quality, but even more costly were the post-fire impacts on Strontia Springs Reservoir, which was severely impaired by increased sedimentation from the basin. Restoration efforts cost approximately \$28 million and largely failed, prompting a more proactive approach by Denver Water and the Forest Service, the original partners in Forests to Faucets, to treat forested landscapes to prevent catastrophic wildfire and maintain watershed health.

## Project Administration

In 2010, Denver Water and the Forest Service signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which included an agreement for each partner to contribute dollar for dollar funding for forest treatments over a five year period. Although the first MOU expired in 2015, collection agreements remained in place while the partners negotiated a second agreement, which was finalized in 2017.

In 2017, Denver Water, the Forest Service, the CSFS, and the NRCS signed an MOU to continue and expand the Forests to Faucets partnership for another five years. Denver Water has bilateral agreements with each partner. Denver Water contributes dollar for dollar funding with the Forest Service and the CSFS to implement projects on federal and non-federal land respectively. The NRCS contributes funding separately through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) directly to landowners forest treatments in Denver Water watersheds.

The Forests to Faucets program is administered by Denver Water’s watershed scientist, along with three full-time support staff. Christina Burri, the watershed scientist, is essentially the program coordinator and spends most of her time managing relationships with partners and advocating for the program to the Denver Water Board. Support staff work predominantly in the Forests to Faucets program, but also have other roles and responsibilities. Denver Water staff do not spend time raising additional funds. Each partner provides administration support via project selection and implementation – the Forest Service tracks staff time for planning and the CSFS charges 14% overhead.



Funding is tracked according to each bilateral agreement. The Forest Service has strict matching requirements and submits quarterly reports to Denver Water. They invoice Denver Water on an annual basis. The CSFS has more flexible matching requirements and submits invoices quarterly. Although the NRCS and Denver Water do not have a matching agreement, they coordinate with one another as needed.

Each agency administers their funding separately. Although there is no pooling mechanism, cross-boundary projects are being implemented due to the different partners involved.

### Project Selection

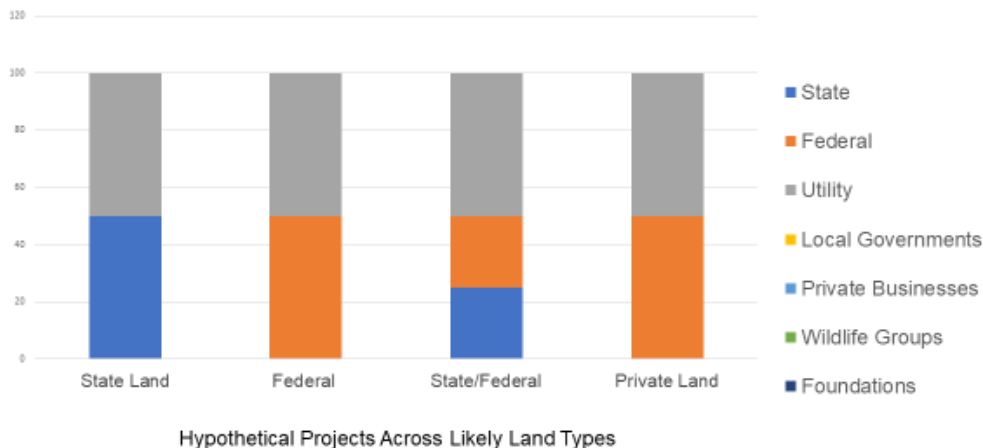
Each agency has their own process for selecting projects. The Forest Service Regional Office and each of the three National Forests coordinate to decide where to prioritize investment. The CSFS has a competitive process within their office for projects to compete with one another for Forests to Faucets funding.

### Project Funding and Aggregation

The 2017 MOU includes different agreements for each partner to implement projects within Denver Water watersheds. The Forest Service receives \$11.5 million from Denver Water and matches it with their own funding to implement projects on Forest Service land. Money from Denver Water gets spent in pre-identified “zones of concern,” whereas Forest Service funding can be spent anywhere within Denver Water watersheds. The CSFS receives \$4 million and matches it with their own funding to implement projects on non-federal land (state and private land) within Denver Water watersheds. Similarly, money from Denver Water is spent in “zones of concern” but CSFS funding can be spent anywhere within Denver Water watersheds. The NRCS contributes \$400,000/year of EQIP money through the Farm Bill, which is paid directly to landowners for forest treatments.

The chart below displays hypothetical funding allocations across different types of projects. This chart helps illustrate Denver Water’s significant funding commitment to match state, federal and private spending for forest restoration and source water protection.

## Forests to Faucets: Funding Allocation



## Project Implementation

Each partner decides on their funding and implementation plans. Denver Water reviews these plans and approves them.

Under the 2017 MOU, the Forests to Faucets program aims to spend \$33 million on forest treatment projects across 40,000 acres of watersheds in Denver Water's collection system (CSFS, 2017).

## Keys to Success

Identifying “zones of concern” early on was a major reason for success because it enabled Denver Water to spend their money more strategically. This prioritization was particularly appealing to the Forest Service when they were first discussing a partnership and strategic forest treatments.

Another key to success was being able to showcase success stories. For example, a fuel break put in by the program saved an estimated \$1 billion of infrastructure and homes that were extremely close to a fire. This story helped sell the value of the work to the Denver Water Board and their partners.

Finally, engaging with county commissioners and state legislators has been extremely important in spreading the message of the importance of forest treatments and gaining public support for this endeavor.

## Key Challenges

One major challenge for the program is tracking accomplishments. The program partners are not consistent with one another in terms of how they define acres treated and acres impacted. Denver Water doesn't have that capacity to create a consistent system or track implementation in great detail.

Similarly, another challenge is to quantify the program's return on investments. It's hard to justify spending money on this program to Denver Water's Board when budgets are already tight. They have partnered with Colorado State University to do a return on investments study based on water quality but the report is not finalized yet.

A third challenge is the cost of implementing forest treatments in Colorado due to the terrain. The program has already completed easier projects, and now treatments are more expensive because of terrain (one example given was \$6,000/acre for treatments due to the need for helicopter access).

A final challenge is maintaining open lines of communication, facilitating dialogue, and managing conflict between each of the partners. Maintaining open and honest relationships with each of the partners is extremely important – a significant portion of the program manager's time is spent on mediating these relationships and managing “turf battles.”



## Advice for a Program in Montana

Christina Burri recommends considering partnerships with wildlife and big game groups, water utilities, counties, the NRCS (likely looking to spend EQUIP money, talk to the state conservationist), and the American Water Works Association.

## References

CSFS. (2017). From Forests to Faucets Partnership Renewed and Expanded. Available at: <https://csfs.colostate.edu/2017/02/28/forests-faucets-partnership-renewed-expanded/>

FOREST SERVICE. (2020). Forests to Faucets. Available at: [https://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/FS\\_Efforts/forests2faucets.shtml](https://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/FS_Efforts/forests2faucets.shtml)

Denver Water. (2020). Watershed Protection and Management. Available at: <https://www.denverwater.org/your-water/water-supply-and-planning/watershed-protection-and-management>



# Rio Grande Water Fund New Mexico

## Resource Focus

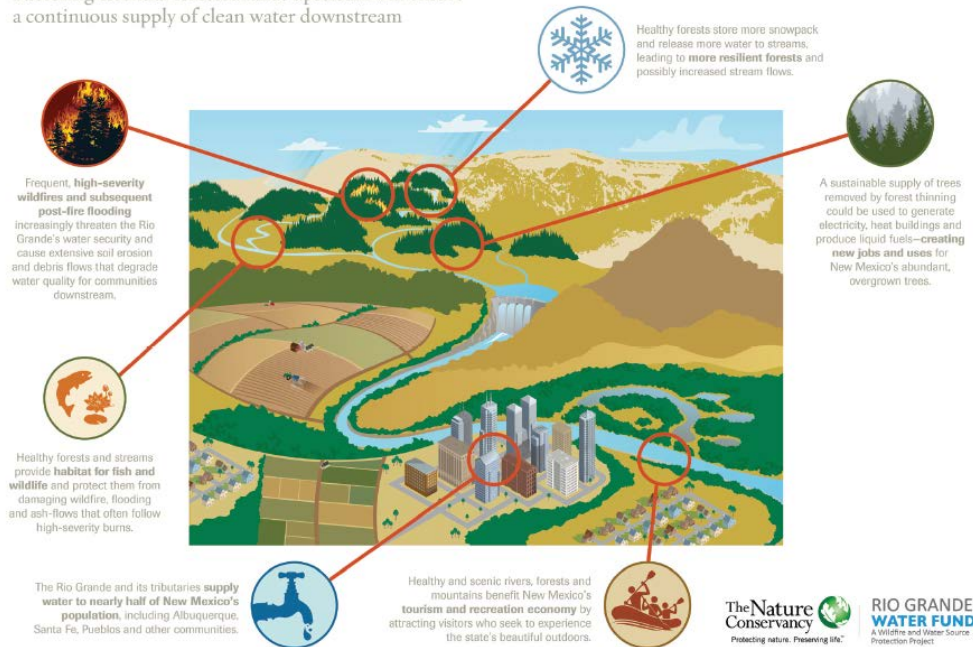
The Rio Grande Water Fund (RGWF) invests in the restoration of headwater forests and seeks to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration, including the most high-risk areas in the Rio Grande watershed. The path to developing the RGWF began with the Cerro Grande fire and a \$7M Congressional appropriation to thin the watershed that provides Santa Fe with its drinking water.

The Santa Fe Municipal Watershed Project, led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), added a fee onto municipal water bills in Santa Fe to fund continued forest maintenance (thinning and prescribed fire). In the same year (2011), the Las Conchas Fire burned more than 150,000 acres on the Santa Fe National Forest. The scale of the fire and speed at which the fire burned (44,000 acres in its first 13 hours) captured the public’s attention and catalyzed that attention into action.

Colin Haffey, the RGWF program manager stated, “The Los Conchas Fire really connected the dots between fire, forests, water, and the economy.” The RGWF brought together state agencies, municipalities, counties, businesses and non-profits. Many of these supporters are several hundred miles away from the watershed and forest health restoration projects they support, but the impacts of high-severity, high impact fires in their watershed have made these connections clear.

## New Mexico | Rio Grande Water Fund

Restoring essential forested lands upstream will ensure a continuous supply of clean water downstream





## Program Administration

The RGWF is managed by TNC's New Mexico chapter, a 501c3 non-profit. Laura McCarthy helped develop the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed Project and led the effort to expand the program within the state to develop the RGWF. Laura is now New Mexico's state forester and the program is managed by Colin Haffey and three other part-time staff members. Program administration includes fundraising, grant writing, donor relationship management, proposal solicitation, proposal vetting, managing RGWF governance, project contracting, project tracking and reporting, and project monitoring.

## Project Selection Mechanism

The RGWF developed a Comprehensive Plan (see link in Additional Resources below) that is a governing document with guidance and support of an advisory committee members. Priorities focus on source water protection projects, which include forest thinning and prescribed fire work, and stream and wetland restoration projects.

The document also identifies focal areas for regions of the watershed where the risk to water supplies is greatest and where forest thinning, controlled burning, stream restoration, and flood mitigation projects have the highest potential for immediate and successful implementation. These selection criteria help focus the request for proposals. Proposals are solicited once a year through an RFP process.

Review of proposals starts with a TNC internal review that screens proposals to ensure they meet all requirements. Proposals are then routed through RGWF governance structure, which is conceptualized as three concentric circles representing the RGWF technical committees, RGWF executive committee, and finally TNC's internal staff who manage and oversee the program.

The technical committees are comprised of resource experts from academia, industry, and land management agencies that review proposal for technical details and feasibility. The executive committee consists of elected RGWF advisory board members, and makes recommendations on project prioritization. TNC staff ultimately select the projects to fund to ensuring that TNC knowingly accepts the liability and responsibilities associated with each project.

Collin Haffey noted that the RGWF governance structure is an important part of creating a transparent process that ensures that project aligns with the shared goals of the RGWF program. This level of input and rigor adds time and significant work but ensures that members are engaged in the process and aware of the projects that are being completed.

## Fund Aggregation

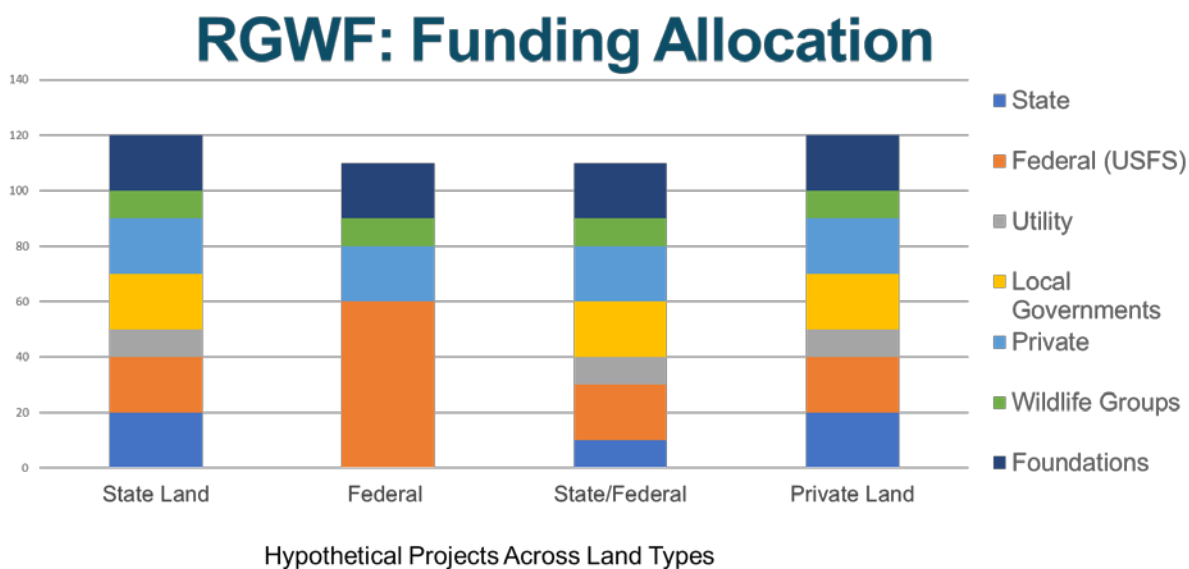
RGWF uses a water fund model that pools funding from a variety of private, local, state and federal entities. Importantly, RGWF holds a Participating Agreement with the Southwestern Region of the FOREST SERVICE that provides long-term, stable funding support. Notably, these federal funds can be spent on any type of project regardless of landownership type. TNC has also developed long-term agreements with municipalities, water providers, and business. RGWF also pursues grants and project specific dollars from land management agencies. The





“All Lands” approach requires greater flexibility for funding projects but also ensures that the highest priority watershed restoration projects can be addressed regardless of landownership type. It is also worth noting that projects cross landownership boundaries as well as state boundaries, with a portion of the project work focus in southwestern Colorado. Over the past 5 years the RGWF has invested around \$1M in projects annually.

The chart below illustrates the hypothetical spending on projects of different land ownerships. Note the variety of funding types that are pooled and then redistributed across projects. Also, federal funding is spent across projects, which is facilitated by the RGWF Participating Agreement with the FOREST SERVICE Region 3 office.



## Project Implementation

After projects are selected and funded, TNC establishes contracts with project proponents. TNC also provides in-kind support to projects to help track progress and monitor outcomes. Many of the project proponents have become familiar partners because they have had multiple projects funded over the last five years. This familiarity with processes helps reduce the amount of implementation support and creates opportunities to expand the sophistication and size of projects. For implementation partners, having a reliable program with clear expectations and processes can help grow local capacity, training opportunities and expertise in the field of restoration.

RGWF noted that the Forest Stewardship Guild has created an all lands fire crew that works with multiple agencies to perform prescribed burns during the ideal burning seasons. Without this private crew, prescribed burns may not be possible because state, Forest Service and BLM fire crews are deployed to other states across the West fighting fires. Many of the prescribed fire projects that the Forest Stewardship Guild performs are funded by the RGWF.

## Keys to success



One of the keys to success has been celebrating accomplishments and dedicating resources to story-telling about the projects, funding, and implementation partners. Working collaboratively to write these stories and share them in local papers or media outlets helps ensure that the story is representative of all partners.

### **Key Challenges**

Setting a realistic indirect rate for funding partners has been a challenge. Initially this rate was set too low (at around 5%) to show that most of the money passes through to projects. However, given the large role that needs to be played to coordinate, review, report, and manage relationships, more indirect funding is needed. Renegotiating these rates is difficult and partners are often resistant but adequate administrative support is necessary to operate a program like this effectively.

### **Additional Information:**

[https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NM\\_NatureConservancy\\_RGWF\\_AnnualReport2019.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NM_NatureConservancy_RGWF_AnnualReport2019.pdf)

[https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-mexico/stories-in-new-mexico/new-mexico-rio-grande-water-fund/?vu=r.v\\_riogrande.local.na.nm](https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-mexico/stories-in-new-mexico/new-mexico-rio-grande-water-fund/?vu=r.v_riogrande.local.na.nm)

<http://riograndewaterfund.org/>



# Blue Forest Conservation and the National Forest Foundation - Forest Resiliency Bond Yuba River, California

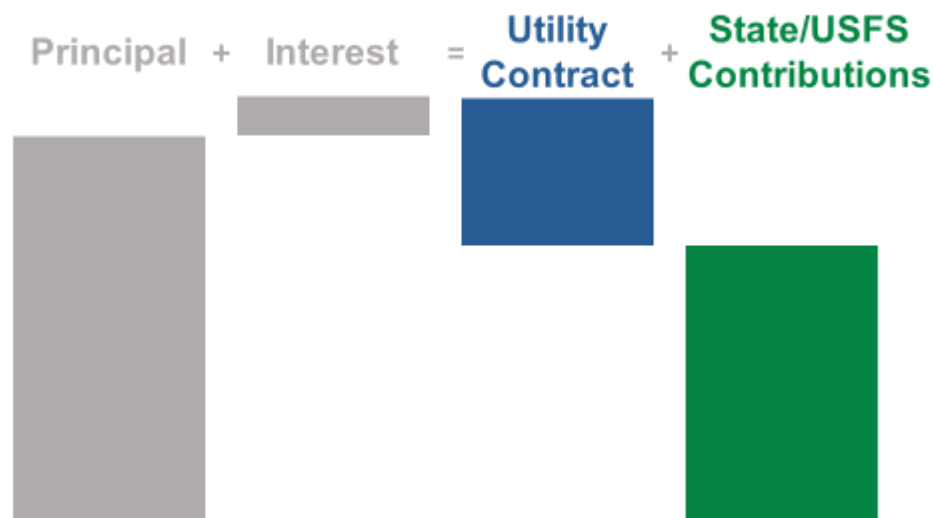
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## Resource Focus

A Forest Resiliency Bond (FRB) is a finance mechanism typically used to unlock private investment (loans) to provide upfront financing for forest restoration projects. FRBs can be used in locations where completing restoration can produce significant cost savings by avoiding the losses from high-severity wildfire. To be successful, a FRB must have a collection of beneficiaries willing to pay back the bond over a longer repayment period.

The chart below illustrates that a bond issued to pay for restoration must be paid back over time, with interest by project beneficiaries.

## Sources of Repayment



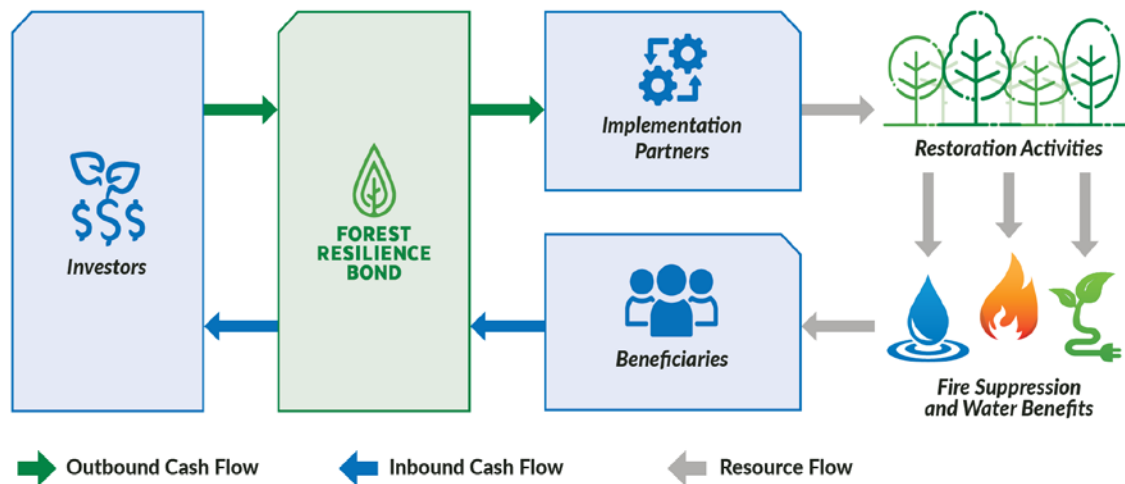
## Project Selection Mechanism

Projects must provide benefits from implementing the project in the very near term, enough to outweigh the costs of paying back a low-interest loan in five to ten years. Projects must be large enough to justify a multi-million dollar bond. Water source protection, timber supply, and/or community protection must be directly attributed and quantifiable benefits from forest restoration activities.



## Funding Aggregation

Financing received through a FRB is not a funding source, it is a loan that must be repaid. However, FRB can bring together beneficiaries to agree to long-term repayment plans. This ensures sustained funding from multiple partners to leverage high-impact investment in collective, accelerated restoration efforts. A FRB may also be stacked with other funding sources, such as Forest Service funds. The Forest Service funds may not pay back the principle and interest of the loan but they can be used to directly support other costs associated with the project.



## Program Implementation

FRBs typically require non-profit partners to hold agreements and implement projects. The NFF has served as the implementation partner on the Yuba project in California. Blue Forest Conservation can act as a broker for projects, bringing together interested parties and low interest financing.



# Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative Colorado

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The information provided here is limited in scope as it was collected from public meeting notes. The Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI) is fairly new. It will be worth watching to see how it develops and what we can learn to inform other efforts.

## Resource Focus

The RMRI is a partnership project aimed at increasing forest restoration across private and public lands in places where comprehensive management could make a significant difference in restoring forests. This program is a pilot of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Shared Stewardship Strategy.

## Project Selection

No projects have been completed under RMRI. Three landscapes have been identified (SW Colorado, Upper Arkansas, and Upper South Platte). SW Colorado appears to be receiving dedicated funding for planning and project implementation from the Forest Service.

## Funding Aggregation

RMRI hopes to bring resources to Southwest Colorado. They have a primary focus on funding from state agencies, and opportunities to tie into existing programs with BLM and NRCS. It's still too early to tell if this approach will bring new beneficiaries, though it has focused resources and increased Forest Service spending.

## Program Management

The Forest Service has supported the National Wild Turkey Foundation to host collaborative meetings to select focus areas and develop plans for implementation.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff from the Watershed Restoration Initiative, Forests to Faucets, Rio Grande Water Fund, and Blue Forest Conservation who took the time to share their knowledge and insights of their programs. We appreciate the opportunity to learn from these successful programs and hope to build on the cross-boundary approaches these organizations have developed.

We thank Holly Nesbitt, NFF Conservation Connect Fellow, for her excellent contributions to this report.

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## About the National Forest Foundation

The National Forest Foundation works on behalf of the American public to inspire personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests. By directly engaging Americans and leveraging private and public funding, the NFF leads forest conservation efforts and promotes responsible recreation. Each year the NFF restores fish and wildlife habitat, facilitates common ground, plants trees in areas affected by fires, insects and disease, and improves recreational opportunities. The NFF believes our National Forests and all they offer are an American treasure and are vital to the health of our communities. Learn more at [nationalforests.org](https://nationalforests.org).

