



Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund

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PARTNERS

- Trinchera Blanca Foundation
- Walton Family Foundation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,800 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of more than \$10 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Rio Grande

OVERVIEW

The Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund was launched in 2019 to support projects that produce measurable outcomes for species of conservation concern in the riparian corridors of the headwaters region of the Rio Grande and Colorado River watersheds. In five years, the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund has invested a total of \$4.3 million in 26 projects leveraging \$5.6 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of more than \$9.9 million.

Selected projects will produce measurable outcomes for species such as Rio Grande cutthroat trout and North American beaver. The Rio Grande Headwaters focal area includes the mainstem and headwater tributaries of the Rio Grande in Colorado and northern New Mexico, as well as the headwaters of the Rio Chama, Jemez River and Rio Puerco. Beginning in 2025, the Colorado River Focal Area includes selected tributaries and headwaters of the Colorado River including the Escalante, Gila, Salt, San Juan, Verde and Virgin rivers.

Projects within this funding opportunity address the leading factors in aquatic and riparian species decline such as habitat alteration, environmental change and invasive species. Maintaining healthy headwater streams can help store water upstream and provide security for water users, fish and wildlife downstream.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Trinchera Blanca Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service announced a fifth year of funding for Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund projects. Six new or continuing wetlands and riparian habitat conservation grants totaling \$1.5 million were awarded. The six awards leveraged \$1.8 million in matching contributions from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$3.3 million. These projects will address a key strategy for species and habitat restoration in headwaters streams of the Colorado River and Rio Grande: restoring and enhancing riparian and in-stream habitat.

(continued)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund include:

- Implement process-based wetland, riparian and instream habitat restoration and enhancement through restoration of natural fluvial process that increase floodplain connectivity, dynamic channel processes and recruitment of native riparian vegetation
- Increase water availability for species and their habitats and/or remove barriers to flow
- Reintroduce and translocate priority aquatic species to stream reaches with improved habitat and protection from invasive species

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Collectively the six projects receiving grants will:

- Restore more than 940 acres of riparian habitat
- Restore over 22 miles of in-stream habitat
- Recruit 160 volunteers for various habitat restoration activities

2024 GRANTS

Collaborating to Restore Beaver and Riparian Habitat along the Lower Babocomari River (AZ)

Grantee: Watershed Management Group

Grant Amount: \$132,500

Matching Funds: \$132,900

Total Project Amount: \$265,400

Collaborate with partners to coordinate riparian restoration efforts, expand bi-national community science beaver-monitoring surveys and host a semi-annual practitioners workshop focused on growing local knowledge. Project will advance beaver-related restoration strategies with landowners and agencies, accelerate riparian health protections through fencing and monitoring, and implement priority riparian restoration projects to facilitate habitat connectivity and resilience to floods and droughts.

Creating Refugia for Apache Trout through Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration in the Upper Black River (AZ)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount: \$305,800

Matching Funds: \$322,900

Total Project Amount: \$628,700

Install and maintain process-based restoration structures and remove two passage barriers and sediment point sources along 3.53 miles of West Fork Black River and Burro Creek headwaters of the Salt River on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. Project will address physical and thermal habitat limitations for Apache trout and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse by expanding shade and cover, increasing deep channel habitat, improving riparian vegetation and increasing the hydraulic diversity of channels.

Installing a Fish Screen in the Medano Ditch for Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (CO)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount: \$176,400

Matching Funds: \$177,200

Total Project Amount: \$353,600

Install a drum screen in the Medano Ditch in Great Sand Dunes National Park to prevent fish passage into the ditch and reduce fatalities in Rio Grande cutthroat trout populations. Project will also secure 4 miles of Rio Grande cutthroat trout stream access during irrigation operations to protect future populations.

Restoring Beaver Habitat in the Valles Caldera National Preserve (NM)

Grantee: Rio Grande Return

Grant Amount: \$287,700

Matching Funds: \$452,600

Total Project Amount: \$740,300

Restore beaver habitat and increase watershed resilience by re-establishing woody riparian and wetland vegetation through process-based restoration techniques on several creeks within the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Project will maintain existing cattle and elk exclosures, build additional exclosures, build beaver dam analogs and large woody debris structures, and encourage beavers to reinhabit 8.91 miles of degraded stream that will benefit approximately 279 acres of riparian wetland.

Restoring Watersheds and Riparian Habitat in the Rio Grande Headwaters through Beaver Coexistence (NM)

Grantee: Defenders of Wildlife

Grant Amount: \$224,600

Matching Funds: \$294,800

Total Project Amount: \$519,400

Restore and increase water availability and connectivity using a range of process-based restoration activities and by promoting beaver coexistence. Project will reconnect 30 miles of aquatic and riparian habitat, restore hydrologic processes and floodplain connectivity, and create refugia for Rio Grande cutthroat trout and habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher in tributaries in the Rio Quemado and Santa Cruz River in Santa Fe County, New Mexico.

Scaling Up Riparian Habitat Connectivity in the Upper Rio Grande for Native Species (CO, NM)

Grantee: National Wildlife Federation

Grant Amount: \$392,700

Matching Funds: \$392,700

Total Project Amount: \$785,400

Increase coordination and magnitude of conservation and restoration efforts in the Upper Rio Grande Basin through on-the-ground restoration and capacity building among partner organizations and pueblos. Project will improve watershed health for the benefit of North American beaver, southwestern willow flycatcher and Rio Grande cutthroat trout.