



# Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund

## NFWF CONTACTS

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## PARTNERS

- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Trinchera Blanca Foundation
- Walton Family Foundation

## 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 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$8.1 billion.

Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Colorado River cutthroat trout

## 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 four years, the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund has invested a total of \$2.7 million in 20 projects leveraging \$3.6 million in matching contributions to generate a total on-the-ground conservation impact of more than \$6.3 million.

Selected projects will produce measurable outcomes for species of conservation concern in these riparian corridors, such as Rio Grande cutthroat trout and North American beaver. The Rio Grande focal area includes the main stem 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. Priority watersheds of the Colorado River will include all tributaries and headwaters of the Colorado River in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

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 Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Walton Family Foundation and the Trinchera Blanca Foundation announced a fourth year of funding for Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund projects. Five new or continuing wetlands and riparian habitat conservation grants totaling \$663,000 were awarded. The five awards generated more than \$1 million in match from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$1.7 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 in-stream 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

**2023 HIGHLIGHTS**

Collectively the five projects receiving grants will:

- Restore more than 430 acres of riparian habitat
- Restore over 20 miles of in-stream habitat
- Recruit 90 volunteers for various habitat restoration activities

**2023 GRANTS**

**Establishing Riparian Area for Apache Trout in Flash Creek (AZ)**

Grantee: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Arizona Fisheries Resources Office

Grant Amount: ..... \$100,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$110,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$210,000

Improve 8 acres of riparian area along Flash Creek, an Apache trout recovery stream, by protecting the area with livestock exclusion fencing, planting native riparian vegetation and increasing groundwater levels through additional in-stream habitat restoration. Project will help to maintain flows in an area where intermittent stream flows preclude suitable perennial habitat for Apache trout.



North American beaver

**Beaver Reintroduction and Process-Based Restoration in the Rio Grande National Forest (CO)**

Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$99,400  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$180,300  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$279,700

Improve 18 miles of stream channel by building process-based restoration structures and reintroducing 24 beavers to selected locations within the Rio Grande National Forest. Project will protect native fish and restore habitat conditions at key locations by enhancing aquatic habitat, improving channel function, reconnecting streams to their floodplains, and reestablishing riparian vegetation to benefit Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Rio Grande sucker, and North American beaver.

**Invasive Fish Removal and Reintroduction of Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Conservation Populations (CO)**

Grantee: Trout Unlimited  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$131,600  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$134,600  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$266,200

Open 18 miles of in-stream habitat across five streams in Colorado’s Rio Grande Basin and in Rito Hondo Reservoir to reintroduce genetically pure Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Project will remove invasive fish species, create three new conservation populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and support a Rio Grande cutthroat trout reintroduction field team.

**Process-based Riverscape Restoration on Dugout Ranch (UT)**

Grantee: Utah State University  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$107,100  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$164,800  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$271,900

Restore 18 acres of riparian and in-stream habitat along Indian and North Cottonwood Creeks to benefit North American beaver, southwestern willow flycatcher and Colorado River cutthroat trout. Project will promote natural in-stream habitat-forming processes and increase floodplain connectivity through installation of beaver dam analogs and removal of invasive vegetation.

**Rio Grande Cutthroat and Gila Trout Habitat Restoration in Rito Peñas Negras and Chase Creek (AZ, NM)**

Grantee: National Forest Foundation  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$225,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$462,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$687,000

Install and maintain in-stream structures including beaver dam analogs and construct cattle and elk exclosures in the Rito Peñas Negras for Rio Grande cutthroat trout and chub and develop a comprehensive plan to manage invasive species and improve stream function to expand habitat for Gila trout in Chase Creek. Project will reduce channel erosion, improve aquatic habitat conditions including re-wetting of wetlands as well as promote vegetation establishment and improve streambank stabilization.