



# Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund

## NFWF CONTACTS

**Kirstin Neff**  
Program Director,  
Southwest Rivers  
kirstin.neff@nfwf.org  
303-222-6485

**Ramsey Raslan**  
Manager,  
Rocky Mountain Regional  
Programs  
ramsey.raslan@nfwf.org  
771-208-2102

**Emma Wigger**  
Coordinator,  
Regional Programs  
emma.wigger@nfwf.org  
202-888-1680

## PARTNERS

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

## ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,300 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$11.3 billion. NFWF is an equal opportunity provider.

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



Conejos River in Colorado

## 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 six years, the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund has invested a total of \$5.3 million in 31 projects leveraging \$7.1 million in matching contributions for a total on-the-ground conservation impact of more than \$12.4 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 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 Trinchera Blanca Foundation, an affiliate of the Moore Charitable Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced a sixth year of funding for Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund projects. The fund awarded \$991,700 to five new wetlands and riparian habitat conservation grants. The five awards leveraged \$1.6 million in matching contributions from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of nearly \$2.6 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 processes 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

## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Collectively the five projects receiving grants will:

- Restore more than 1,140 acres of riparian habitat
- Restore nearly 5.5 miles of instream habitat
- Recruit over 110 volunteers for various habitat restoration activities

## 2025 GRANTS

### Beaver and Bison Habitat Restoration and Beaver Reintroduction on Taos Pueblo (NM)

Grantee: The New Mexico Bison Restoration Network

Grant Amount:..... \$364,700

Matching Funds:..... \$569,400

Total Project Amount:..... \$934,100

Provide technical assistance in developing a watershed management plan, help landowners participate in federal conservation programs, and design and implement low-tech process-based restoration practices on the Taos Pueblo to benefit beaver and bison. Project will restore 30 riparian acres, install 8 miles of fencing, engage 100 volunteers and reach 50 people, restore hydrology of 10 sites, translocate 14 beavers, and result in 10 miles of beaver-occupied habitat and 10 sites monitored.



Southwest willow flycatcher

### Improving Irrigation Infrastructure and Reconnecting Floodplain Habitat on the Conejos River (CO)

Grantee: Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation

Grant Amount:..... \$319,700

Matching Funds:..... \$674,800

Total Project Amount:..... \$994,500

Restore a section of the Conejos River by addressing streambank instability, riparian degradation, unsustainable channel morphology, disconnected off-channel aquatic systems and irrigation infrastructure to benefit southwestern willow flycatcher and North American beaver habitat, agricultural producers, and watershed health and resilience. Project will restore hydrology of 12 sites, 0.9 instream miles, and 122 riparian acres, engage 12 landowners and monitor 10 sites.

### Increasing Capacity to Assist Producers in the Salado Soil and Water Conservation District (NM)

Grantee: Salado Soil and Water Conservation District

Grant Amount:..... \$51,500

Matching Funds:..... \$46,800

Total Project Amount:..... \$98,300

Convert a part-time position to a full-time job at the Salado Soil and Water Conservation District to coordinate with the local NRCS office to provide assistance for producers in implementing conservation. Project will engage 10 producers.

### Providing Technical Assistance to Ranchers in Rio Grande Headwaters (NM)

Grantee: Trout Unlimited

Grant Amount:..... \$106,000

Matching Funds:..... \$110,000

Total Project Amount:..... \$216,000

Deliver technical assistance to ranchers in the Rio Grande headwaters region of northern New Mexico. Outreach efforts will improve watershed conditions and benefit native species such as the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, North American beaver, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and Jemez Mountains salamander. Project will engage 50 ranchers.

### Working with Land Owners and Managers to Restore the Tularosa Watershed (NM)

Grantee: San Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District

Grant Amount:..... \$149,900

Matching Funds:..... \$170,000

Total Project Amount:..... \$319,900

Increase the capacity of the district's administrator to deliver technical assistance for federal and private land owners. Additionally, restore a section of the Tularosa River in Catron County, New Mexico, by constructing erosion-control structures, restoring riparian function and enhancing native vegetation to benefit endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and a local population of beavers. Project will reach 492 people and restore 1,000 riparian acres and 5 instream miles.