



Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund

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PARTNERS

- Trinchera Blanca Foundation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation 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 23,900 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$12 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org



River, Grasslands, Mountains at Valles Caldera Wilderness

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 seven years, the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund has invested more than \$5.6 million in 32 projects leveraging nearly \$7.3 million in matching contributions to generate a total on-the-ground conservation impact of more than \$12.9 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 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Trinchera Blanca Foundation, an affiliate of the Moore Charitable Foundation, announced a seventh year of funding for the Southwest Rivers Headwaters Fund. Two new wetland and riparian habitat conservation grants totaling over \$525,000 were awarded. The two awards generated over \$605,000 in grantee-provided matching contributions, for a total conservation impact of more than \$1.1 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 capacity for low-tech process-based restoration implementation in and among conservation organizations working in the southwest region.

2026 HIGHLIGHTS

Collectively the two projects receiving grants will:

- Restore 50 acres of riparian habitat
- Restore over 3 miles of instream habitat
- Recruit 25 volunteers for various habitat restoration activities



Rio Grande River in New Mexico



Southwestern willow flycatcher

2026 GRANTS

Building Capacity for Process-Based Riparian Restoration in the Rio Grande and Gila Headwaters (NM)

Grantee: Rio Grande Return
 Grant Amount:..... \$440,700
 Matching Funds:..... \$445,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$885,700
 Expand capacity for low-tech process-based restoration through demonstration projects in the Rio Grande and Gila River headwaters of New Mexico. Project will train practitioners, support staff toward NRCS Technical Service Provider certification, provide technical and administrative assistance to NRCS, and host workshops that build practitioner capacity to benefit Rio Grande cutthroat trout, North American beaver, and southwestern willow flycatcher.

Stream and Wetland Restoration of Lagunitas Creek in Northern New Mexico

Grantee: Trout Unlimited
 Grant Amount:..... \$84,900
 Matching Funds:..... \$160,100
 Total Project Amount:..... \$245,000
 Restore stream and wetland habitat along Lagunitas Creek in northern New Mexico using process-based methods such as log jams, constructed riffles, excavated pools, and high flow channels to improve hydrologic function and habitat for Rio Grande cutthroat trout and North American beaver. Project will enhance aquatic complexity, expand riparian habitat and improve water quality to support long-term species recovery.