



MEMORANDUM

January 3, 2019

TO: CRWCD Board of Directors

FROM: Hunter Causey, P.E., Senior Water Resources Engineer
Andy Mueller, General Manager

SUBJECT: **Support for Pre-permitting Phase of White River Storage Project**

***ACTION:** Staff requests that the Board authorize a financial contribution of up to \$50,000 and staff time toward the pre-permitting evaluation of the White River Storage Project as more fully described below.*

***STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:** 2. Outreach in All Basins
3. Climate and Hydrologic Uncertainty
7. Water Needs/Project Development*

Summary

At the River District Board's 2018 fourth quarterly meeting, the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District (RBWCD) presented its proposed White River Storage Project (Project) and requested financial and staff support for their "pre-permitting" phase of the project which is expected to last one year. As directed by the Board, staff ran this request through the River District's internal rubric utilized for evaluating new requests for assistance. River District staff recommends that the Board authorize financial and limited staff resources to the pre-permitting evaluation stage of the proposed project.

Financial and Staff Commitment

RBWCD applied for and received funding from the CWCB for a \$350,000 Water Plan Grant. In combination with \$300,000 from RBWCD, a River District contribution of \$50,000 from the General Fund would constitute the 50% match required for the CWCB grant. Staff recommends issuing funds upon receipt of invoices for the technical analysis portion of the pre-permitting effort.

RBWCD has requested that River District staff support the pre-permitting phase of the project in a variety of ways including legal and technical consultation as well as through public outreach. River District staff recommends limiting involvement to an informal advisory role, which would entail providing insight and feedback to the project steering committee primarily through participation in steering committee meetings. This may include providing feedback on technical,

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legal, or public affairs efforts but would not include providing specific engineering analysis, legal services, or directly providing public outreach. Based on conversation with RBWCD, the steering committee meetings are anticipated to last approximately two hours and include both teleconference and in-person meetings. Staff support is expected to take place throughout 2019 and require approximately 265 hours of staff time which is equivalent to an approximately \$30,000 in-kind contribution from the River District as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Approximate staff time and cost commitment

	annual hours	loaded rate	total
Engineering	60	\$70	\$4,200
External Affairs	60	\$120	\$7,154
Legal	60	\$120	\$7,200
Accounting	10	\$70	\$700
General Counsel	25	\$160	\$4,000
Senior Management	50	\$125	\$6,250
	265		\$29,504

Discussion

The River District has historically been involved in the evaluation and development of Western Slope water storage projects. This effort offers an opportunity for the River District to support RBWCD as a technical advisor in their effort to evaluate the need and feasibility of a project which is intended to utilize storage to maximize the beneficial use of water in the White River Basin. This project is in the pre-permitting phase which will involve preparation of significant technical analysis which will be required by state and federal authorities in the permitting phase of the project.

River District experience and staff observations of similar projects have shown that the time needed to take a water development project from permitting through construction is difficult to determine and easily underestimated. If RBWCD requests continued River District involvement beyond the 2019 pre-permitting phase, staff recommends that the Board revisit its staff commitment to this project after the completion of the pre-permitting phase or at the 2020 first quarterly meeting (whichever comes first).