



RIO GRANDE BASIN ROUNDTABLE



Photo Credit: Connor Born

WELCOME! The RGBRT fosters cooperation in Colorado's Rio Grande basin through support of multi-purpose projects that help us manage, protect, and sustain water use for today and into the future. The Roundtable exists to make stuff happen!

Dear Roundtable Members and Partners,

As we reflect on the progress we've made this year, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing commitment and dedication to the incredible work of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable. Together, we have made meaningful strides in representing and supporting the diverse water interests in the Rio Grande Basin.

Each of you has brought valuable perspectives and expertise, working collaboratively to support important water projects that continue to address the challenges we all face in the Rio Grande Basin. These projects are not just about water—they are about safeguarding the well-being of our families, friends, neighbors, and communities. These efforts ensure that the Rio Grande Basin remains a place where we can all thrive now and for future generations to come. Thanks to your efforts, we are building a sustainable and resilient water future. It is truly an honor to work alongside such an inspiring, passionate group of individuals.

- Amber Pacheco

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UPCOMING EVENTS

January RGBRT Meeting

The January RGBRT meeting will be held on **Jan 14th** at the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Office, located at 8805 Independence Way in Alamosa, from **2- 4 PM**, with an Executive Committee Meeting starting at **1 PM**.

2025 Education Committee Retreat

The Roundtable Education Committee will be meeting from 12pm-3:00pm on **Jan 15th** at the Windsor Hotel to coordinate outreach and education efforts for 2025. Lunch will be included. If you're interested in attending, contact cassandra@riograndeheadwaters.org by 5pm on Tuesday, Jan 7th.



2024 Year in Review – PEPO By Cassandra McCuen

The Roundtable offers a range of educational opportunities, including tours, presentations, factsheets, videos, and more, all designed to help people learn about water issues in the San Luis Valley and beyond. Here are some highlights.

We have so much to learn from each other. Throughout 2024 the Roundtable Education Subcommittee organized 4 tours through 2 basins, with 37 participants overall. Tours included the Baca National Wildlife Refuge in May, Colorado River Basin Tour in June, an Upper Rio Grande Projects Tour in September, and a Conejos River System Tour in October. Additionally, experts from the basin and across Colorado attended Roundtable meetings to speak on topics like climate change, water quality, ranching, revegetation, and more.



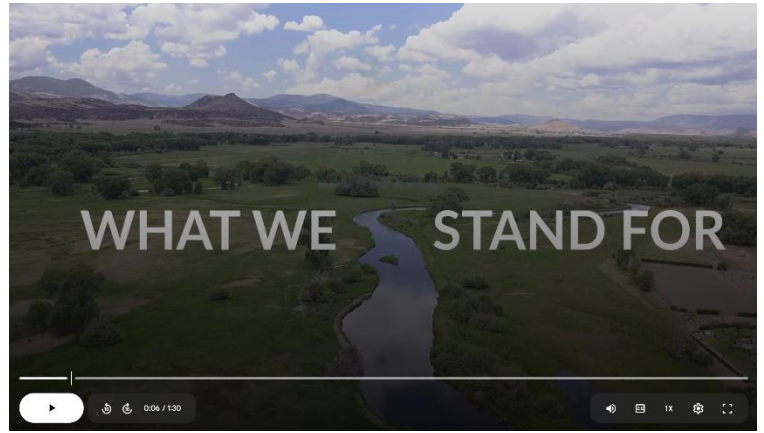
The Upper Rio Grande Communications and Outreach Plan was drafted in December of 2023 and finalized in early 2024. This plan outlines clear goals and priorities for Roundtable outreach efforts, providing a strong direction and focus for the Education Subcommittee's work moving forward. The plan also establishes a unified messaging strategy, or "brand," to enhance the effectiveness of outreach efforts. As with any well-crafted plan, it will remain a living document, reviewed periodically to ensure its relevance and updated with fresh ideas as needed.



Meet Marielle Cowdin, our Social Media and Marketing Consultant. In June of this year, Marielle Cowdin was brought on to expand the Roundtable's reach and meet the goals of our communications and outreach plan. Marielle is a creative communications professional with a passion for breaking down barriers to entry in the field of western water issues. She grew up in Colorado, and spent 10 years in Oregon working on wildlands and forest watershed issues with a statewide nonprofit, where she established and grew the landmark Oregon Brewshed® Alliance. After earning her masters in Environmental Law & Policy, she returned to Colorado to work as the Director of Public Relations at the Colorado River District for several years, helping to build and launch the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Campaign. In addition to supporting the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable, she currently works in strategic branding and communications for the San Luis Valley-based Rye Resurgence Project and serves as the Program Manager for the Colorado Water Center at Colorado State University. In her free time, you can find her roaming the mountains with her dog pack of three. Be sure to follow the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable on Facebook and Instagram to see some of her amazing work in action!



“What We Stand For,” is a new short video series produced by the Roundtable and American Rivers. This 4-part series highlights just some of the core values that unite us in the Rio Grande Basin, and emphasizes the importance of protecting our shared water resources. Titles include “Vibrant Communities,” “Agricultural Heritage,” “Healthy Rivers,” and “Open Spaces.” We will be wrapping up these videos soon, along with a compilation video, and look forward to sharing them with you all!



K-12 Education, “I am the solution.” Each year Rio Grande Watershed Conservation Education Initiative (RGWCEI) hosts youth programming to increase education opportunities for K-12 students and increase participation in school-based activities related to water and watershed health, nurturing the future stewards of the Rio Grande Basin. These programs are specifically facilitated to create increased awareness of local watershed issues like aquifer sustainability, ground & surface water relationships, agricultural uses, conservation practices, forest management, water quality, restoration, water rights, and more. This year’s efforts included Youth Conservation Camp, Water Fest on the Rio, Natural Resource Workshops and individualized school trips and lessons, inspiring 374 youth across the San Luis Valley!



2023 Year in Review – Project Showcase By Cassandra McCuen

This Year, 11 projects were given funding through the Roundtable designated Water Supply Reserve Fund totaling nearly \$634,000. We're always looking for compelling water projects to fund that help support water challenges in the Rio Grande Basin.



Roundtable Funding:
\$60,505
Total Project Cost:
\$605,044

Sanchez Ditch & Reservoir CO. Dam Study The project includes a study to repair the Sanchez dam and improve storage, conveyance, and distribution infrastructure. This will protect the viability of agriculture, address water scarcity challenges, and support wildlife, fisheries, outdoor recreation, and economic resilience.

Ventero Creek Restoration Project

This project consists of a repair to diversion infrastructure to ensure that senior water rights holder may receive full allocation at low flows. Improved irrigation efficiency will benefit flood-irrigated pasture grounds that also serve as valuable wetland and wet meadow habitat for wildlife.

Roundtable Funding:
\$42,997
Total Project Cost:
\$85,997



Roundtable Funding:
\$45,677
Total Project Cost:
\$76,854

Colorado Master Irrigator Moisture Probe Project This project will work with growers to cost share soil moisture probes and similar technology, providing growers with technical assistance and training to confidently use soil moisture probes, reducing pumping and improving profitability.

Lobatos Bridge Outdoor Classroom

A diverse group of stakeholders have partnered with BLM to construct a new boat ramp and install educational displays at Lobatos Bridge. These improvements are part of a larger project to improve recreation, water education, and watershed health at this important heritage area.

Roundtable Funding:
\$101,928
Total Project Cost:
\$344,856



Roundtable Funding:
\$111,500
Total Project Cost:
\$1,115,000

Colorado Malting Company Expansion The company will expand its malting infrastructure to increase the processing volume of SLV rye. The purpose is to create new, more, and better markets for SLV farmers in support of ongoing efforts to reduce groundwater pumping and improve long-term sustainability of agriculture.



2024 Year in Review – Project Showcase Cont.

Rio Grande 'Teacup' Planning & Design This collaborative project will result in 60% designs for infrastructure improvements on three ditch diversions, upgrades on six ditch systems, streambank stabilization, aquatic and riparian habitat enhancement, and wetland restoration.

Roundtable Funding:
\$48,500
Total Project Cost:
\$481,866



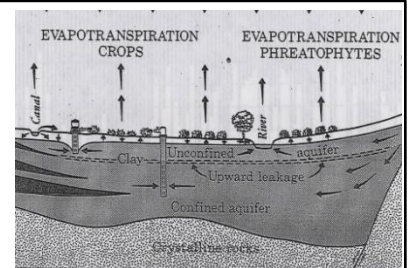
Roundtable Funding:
\$9,514
Total Project Cost:
\$95,140

SLV Canal Project: Phase II

Phase I was completed in 2018 and included headgate replacement, streambank stabilization and riparian restoration. Phase II of the project will include replacement of their measurement structure to enable the integration of headgate automation.

Confined Aquifer Recharge and Recovery Study In response to vulnerable aquifer levels, the Conejos Water Conservancy District (CWCD) is pursuing a study to evaluate the potential for implementing a groundwater recharge and recovery program.

Roundtable Funding:
\$23,695
Total Project Cost:
\$215,294



Roundtable Funding:
\$34,977
Total Project Cost:
\$349,770

Farmer's Union Canal 1-D Bay Bridge Replacement This bridge is an important structure where the Rio Grande Canal crosses over the Farmer's Union Canal and needs replacement. This project will include finalizing the design for a new structure and construction to ensure deliveries will be maintained into the future.

Waterwise Landscaping Partnership The Partnership will create two waterwise demonstration projects in the San Luis Valley in La Jara and Del Norte. These projects will improve water efficiency while educating the public about water conservation, localized drought tolerant species, and climate resilience.

Roundtable Funding:
\$37,900
Total Project Cost:
\$379,000

