

AREA 351 RESTORATION PROJECT



Credit: Trout Unlimited

WHAT THIS PROJECT DOES

This project encompasses eight work areas along a 6.5-mile stretch of the New Fork River near Highway 351. The lower New Fork River is a vital fishery in western Wyoming, but historic channel alterations have impaired the river, leading to poor water quality and degraded habitat. Additionally, severely eroded riverbanks and bank instability deposited more than 1,000 tons of sediment annually into the river in some areas, resulting in the loss of agricultural land and harming local ecosystems. Through this multi-phase project, partners are installing structures made from natural materials and planting native trees and grasses to stabilize riverbanks, reduce sediment, restore the river's natural channel, enhance fish habitat, and promote healthier riverside vegetation and floodplain connectivity. The project will also replace an existing gravel pushup dam and reroute short sections of the stream, thereby narrowing the channel to improve sediment transport. The project will be implemented in collaboration with multiple private landowners and public land managers, including Sublette County, the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, and the BLM. Phase I was completed in 2023, and work is ongoing as more project areas are identified.

PROJECT BENEFITS

The New Fork River is a very popular fishery, and many local businesses and agricultural operations rely on the health of this watershed. By stabilizing riverbanks and restoring the river's natural channel, this project is expected to reduce bank erosion and extensive sediment loading by approximately 90% across the project reach. Additionally, reconnecting the river to its floodplain will revitalize the riparian corridor, stabilize the stream bank, and enhance stream function. This project will improve and protect participating landowners' property and boost the productivity of their lands. It will also support healthier fish and wildlife habitat, benefitting the local businesses and outdoor recreation economies in the area while ensuring Wyoming residents and visitors alike can enjoy this fishery for decades to come.

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Location: WY

Project Cost: \$550,000

Funding Award: \$474,000

Funding Programs:
Wyoming Wildlife and
Natural Resource Trust, BLM,
Wyoming Department of
Environmental Quality

Partners: Sublette County,
private landowners,
Wyoming Office of State
Lands and Investments,
Wyoming Department of
Environmental Quality ,
Wyoming Wildlife and
Natural Resource Trust, BLM,
and Trout Unlimited

PROTECTING THE COLORADO RIVER AND THE COMMUNITIES THAT DEPEND ON IT

The Colorado River is a resource for 40 million people. It provides drinking water, as well as critical food and energy production. It's an engine for local economies, an irreplaceable habitat for native birds, fish, and wildlife, and an essential part of the Western way of life. But it's on the brink of collapse.

The river is over-allocated, and its two largest reservoirs have fallen to roughly one-third capacity. Decades of drought and rising temperatures threaten the reliability of future water supplies in Colorado River Basin states, putting crucial infrastructure in jeopardy and increasing risks to communities from natural disasters like wildfires and floods.

INVESTING IN THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN'S FUTURE

In order to ensure that the Colorado River can continue to be a reliable source of clean water for communities and agriculture throughout the Basin, we need long-term, sustainable state and federal funding for strategies that make the river more resilient, conserve water, and protect communities from increasingly severe fires, floods, and drought.

HOW TO CREATE A MORE RESILIENT COLORADO RIVER BASIN



Improve forest health using management and restoration strategies designed to protect the forested areas in the Colorado River Basin, such as thinning overgrown areas, removing invasive plant species, and conducting prescribed burns.



Restore wetlands, high-elevation mountain meadows, and riverside habitat to help improve the health of rivers and streams across the Basin, reduce sediment in downstream reservoirs and water infrastructure, improve water security, and enhance forage. Strategies include implementing wood and rock structures to slow river flows, reestablishing native plants, and replenishing groundwater to help protect clean water supplies and restore degraded rivers and streams.



Increase agricultural efficiency and enable farmers to develop strategies that work for them, like supporting on-farm water conservation methods, alternative crops that use less water, and investing in infrastructure upgrades like lining canals.



Boost municipal water conservation by expanding what is already working, like water-efficient plumbing and appliances, leak detection systems, water reuse, replacing thirsty lawns with drought-tolerant landscaping, and incorporating water planning into urban development and growth decisions.

Contact: Sara Porterfield
sara.porterfield@tu.org



Scan the QR code to learn more about resilience projects in the Colorado River Basin