

RIVEREDGE WEST GRAND VALLEY RIVER CORRIDOR INITIATIVE



Request for Qualifications

Foundation for River Corridor Planning and Management in the Grand Valley

Introduction

RiversEdge West seeks a qualified consultant to conduct a riparian and floodplain health assessment, mapping, and report (remotely and field based). The goal of this assessment is to identify restoration and conservation priority areas and projects in support of a dynamic and healthy riverine ecosystem comprised of native riparian vegetation that supports native and endangered fish, birds, and other wildlife. This work is in support of a river corridor planning project funded by a Colorado Water Conservation Board, Water Plan grant and the Colorado River District.

Applicants should have experience in field and remote evaluation of riparian habitat quality and riparian and floodplain restoration projects. Experience working in Colorado or Western US rivers systems is ideal.

This project would begin in April 2024 and run for approximately six to eight months. Deliverables include digital mapping products (GIS and PDFs) and a short technical report. Travel to the Grand Valley (Grand Junction, CO) is necessary for field-based refinement of GIS analysis and conceptual project development.

Background

The Grand Valley's River Corridor extends from De Beque, Colorado to the Utah state line; it also encompasses the Gunnison River from Bridgeport to the confluence with the Colorado River. The River Corridor is the lifeblood of the community and is a vital economic, cultural, and ecological resource that supports the Grand Valley's wellbeing and prosperity. Essential industries to the region such as agriculture, tourism, recreation, and re-development within the River Corridor are dependent on the long-term health and vitality of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers.

Decision-making about River Corridor land-use, native and endangered species habitat, and flow management are largely siloed, not always considering the cumulative and long-term impacts they might have on this valuable resource. Given the diverse values supported by the river, the forecasts for growth in the region, and chronic and potentially worsening environmental stressors such as drought and fire, the Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative (RCI) was formed in 2020 to address the acute need for enhanced coordination, planning, and collaboration on River Corridor related activities.

From 2020-2021 the RCI conducted stakeholder outreach and workshops to identify and prioritize community priorities for the River Corridor. In 2022 the [Fluvial Hazard Zone was mapped for the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers in Mesa County](#). This work has set the foundation for the current 2023-2025 RCI River Planning Project. This project will evaluate riparian and floodplain health metrics, identify conservation and restoration projects, quantify water user flow preferences linked to flow metrics and trends, and support the development of a framework among local governments for inter-jurisdictional River Corridor management. It also supports stakeholder facilitation and outreach activities. This scope is tailored to fill gaps within ongoing partner efforts and meet the needs of the Grand Valley.

Description of Need

The RCI, initiated in 2020 has worked to develop a stakeholder-driven understanding of community values and priorities for the River Corridor, an advisory committee of local government and user group. The watersheds and river corridors of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers within the Grand Valley have been the subjects of extensive and ongoing studies related to water quality (TMDLs for selenium, total recoverable iron, and E. coli and the Grand Valley Watershed Plan, 2022) as well as in-stream flow and habitat for endangered fish (Pitlick et al.'s Geomorphology and Hydrology for Endangered Fish Habitat study, 1999; Final Programmatic Biological Opinion for the Upper Colorado River, 1999; and Final Gunnison River Basin Programmatic Biological Opinion, 2009). Additionally, the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program is planning an updated hydrologic, geomorphic, and in-stream habitat assessment for the Colorado River within the Grand Valley to be conducted from 2023 through 2028.

With these ongoing efforts to study, plan, and implement projects related to water quality and in-stream flow and habitat, along with the renewed interest in development within the River Corridor, a gap exists in evaluating riparian and floodplain habitat quality and connectivity. As such, the RCI proposes to conduct a riparian and floodplain health assessment. The goal of this assessment will be to evaluate and score the condition of riparian and floodplain habitat within the Grand Valley River Corridor, which serve as critical habitat for the yellow-billed cuckoo and federally endangered fish. Based on this assessment, the RCI will identify multi-benefit opportunities for floodplain and riparian conservation and restoration.



RiversEdge West

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE

Photo by Lee Gelatt Photography

Tasks and Deliverables

(April to December 2024)

The study *may* be based off the Colorado River Health Assessment Framework within the Riverscape scale with a health assessment metrics focusing on the following variables:

- Riparian Quality
- Floodplain Connectivity
- Geomorphology

Conduct a Level 1 (remote sensing) and Level 2 (rapid field) assessment with the following approaches:

Refine geomorphic reaches established by the 2022 Grand Valley FHZ study.

Level 1 coarse scale health assessment of riparian quality, floodplain connectivity, and of land use, valley / channel type, floodplain type and connectivity across entire study area (remote sensing) using available data including LiDAR and a previously developed relative elevation model (REM) for the river corridor.

Level 2 fine scale classification and scoring of land use and riparian quality of priority reaches (Remote Sensing + Rapid Field Verification on approximately 1/3 of study area)

Site scale riparian and floodplain action plan development for multi-benefit project identification and prioritization. Projects may include:

- Conservation
- Habitat restoration / vegetation management
- Riprap removal
- Floodplain reconnection / restoration

Field work to be conducted in the spring and summer of 2024.

Deliverables: Digital mapping products (GIS and PDFs) and a short technical report and conservation and restoration action plan which will include a prioritized project list. Deliverables will be due no later than December 15th, 2024.

Spatial Domain: *Note that the analysis domain can be tailored to align with available funding and timeline.* Colorado River: 46.4 miles from within De Beque Canyon upstream of the confluence with Plateau Creek to the entrance of Ruby-Horsethief Canyon downstream of Fruita. Gunnison River: 15.2 miles spanning just upstream of Whitewater, CO at the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area boundary to the confluence with the Colorado River (61.6 miles total).

Submittal Requirements

Please submit a single PDF document limited to eight (8) pages containing the following:

- Qualifications of professional personnel proposed for the project and firm location
- Description of past experience, projects, and background in river and riparian science and management including:
 - Geospatial analysis and field of habitat quality
 - Riparian and floodplain restoration project development and related experience
 - Colorado or Western US river systems, stressors, and processes
- Recent, current and projected workloads of the firm
- Hourly rates of pertinent personnel
- Two client references
- Cost estimate: This task is not to exceed \$50,625. Please submit a detailed budget outlining associated costs for meeting project deliverables as outlined above.
- Creativity and insight related to the project

Submission Directions and Timeline

Please submit your qualifications document of no more than eight (8) pages (excluding resumes and work product examples) on or before COB (5pm MST) on February 16, 2024 to Shannon Wadas via email (swadas@riversedgewest.org) with “Grand Valley Riparian and Floodplain Health Assessment RFQ” in the subject line.

Qualifications will be reviewed by February 23rd with follow-up interviews to be scheduled for the week of February 26th. Final decisions will be made by March 1st. We expect contracting to occur over March and work to commence by April 1, 2024 and run through December 15, 2024.

About RiversEdge West

RiversEdge West is a nonprofit organization with a mission to restore riparian ecosystems through education, collaboration and technical assistance. Founded in 1999, RiversEdge West focuses on riparian forest and floodplain health in the Western U.S. by addressing the impacts associated with invasive plants such as tamarisk and Russian olive, climate change and habitat fragmentation. RiversEdge West plays an integral role in improving fish and wildlife habitat and enhancing the agricultural, economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities for the communities where we work.