

**Press Release: FY22 Sagebrush Ecosystem projects with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law**



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**The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District and Partners Receive Funding from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**, Gunnison, CO– The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD), in partnership with Gunnison County, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Sisk-a-dee, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Field Ornithologists, Gunnison County Stockgrowers, and Bird Conservation of the Rockies were recently awarded \$400,000 by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to support multiple treatments, including wet meadow restoration, cheatgrass treatments and other sagebrush restoration outcomes within the Upper Gunnison River Basin. The UGRWCD received \$103,950 for LiDAR mapping, site planning and design and cultural compliance. These actions will benefit the federally-listed Gunnison sage-grouse and other sagebrush-obligate species.

“This is an incredible collaborative project that brings the community together to improve sagebrush habitat through wet meadow and riparian restoration. It will directly preserve and restore critical brood-rearing habitat for the federally threatened Gunnison sage-grouse.” Cheryl Cwelich, UGRWCD Watershed Program Coordinator. “We greatly appreciate our close partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the wet meadows project and for their funding support to expand our conservation efforts.”

This project will elevate the long-term efforts of the conservation community of the Gunnison Basin of Colorado to ensure that the western stronghold of North America’s sagebrush biome is protected with strategic and collaborative conservation action. Project funding will support strategic efforts to deliver tangible outcomes of wet meadow restoration and sagebrush restoration within the Gunnison Basin. This project seeks to significantly bolster the on-going efforts of the local conservation community by supporting the existing wet meadow restoration efforts to enhance habitat for critical life stages of the Gunnison Sage-grouse. The project is highly collaborative, engaging federal, state, county, academic, and non-profit partners to take deliberate action to protect, maintain, and restore Gunnison Basin’s sagebrush habitat through wet meadow restoration. Collectively, these partner-driven efforts will protect, enhance, and restore critical habitat for sagebrush-obligate wildlife while supporting compatible land use like livestock grazing, recreation, and ecotourism.

“At the UGRWCD, we are seeing firsthand the urgent need to expand wet meadow and riparian restoration efforts in the Upper Gunnison Basin to increase habitat connectivity for the federally-listed Gunnison sage-grouse through preservation and restoration efforts that are also important habitat for other migratory birds, big game, pollinators and improving forage for livestock,” said Cwelich. “The wet meadows and riparian restoration project has a significant impact on the sagebrush ecosystem that is essential to wildlife and the livelihoods of the Gunnison Valley community.”

## **About the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District**

The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) was established in 1959 by a vote of area taxpayers. The UGRWCD's mission has evolved over the years to "being an active leader in all issues affecting the water resources of the Upper Gunnison River Basin." The UGRWCD is located in south-central Colorado in the headwaters of the Gunnison River Basin.

