

Stream Management Plan Grantee Project Summary

San Miguel Non-consumptive Needs Assessment Report

Geographic Description:

Southwest Basin:
San Miguel River

Size:

1,550 square miles or
85 river miles

Project Homepage:

waterinfo.org/resources/southwest-basin-roundtable

Primary Contact:

Stacy Beaugh
Strategic By Nature, Inc.
stacy@beststrategicbynature.com

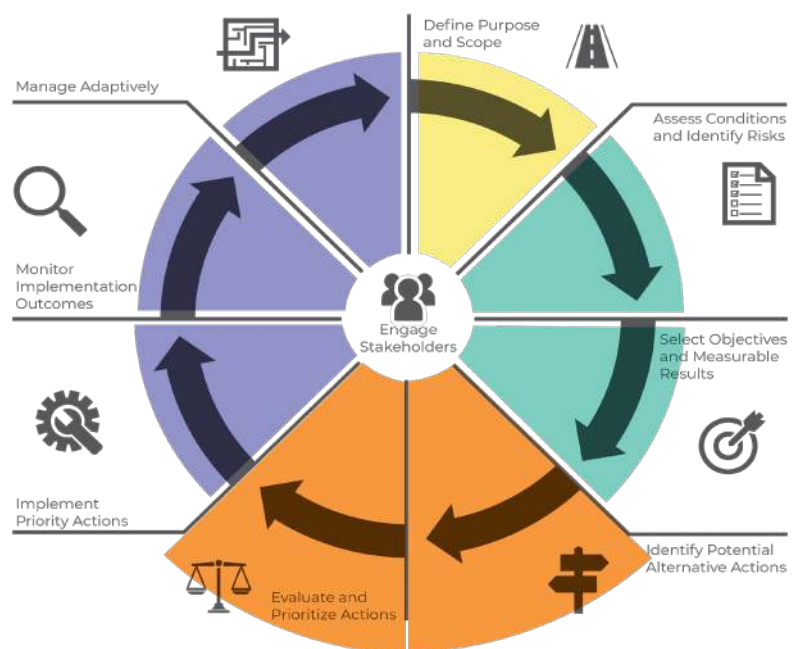
Project Timeline



Stakeholder Groups Involved in Planning Process

●	Agricultural producers (including conservation districts)
●	Riparian landowners
●	Aquatic and riparian science
●	Conservation
●	Utilities or other water management
●	Recreation & tourism
●	Local government & land use planners
●	Southwest Basin Roundtable
●	State and federal agencies
●	Local business owners

Current Planning Phase



Project Goals

- Organize a stakeholder group with active participation from diverse interests within the entire San Miguel River Basin.
- Create a trusted space where potential actions may be discussed as opportunities for multiple purpose projects.
- Better understand ecosystem variables (e.g., changes in hydrology, water gaps for fisheries, riparian zones, and channel maintenance) and recreational variables (e.g., use preferences and gaps) in the sub-basin.

Overview

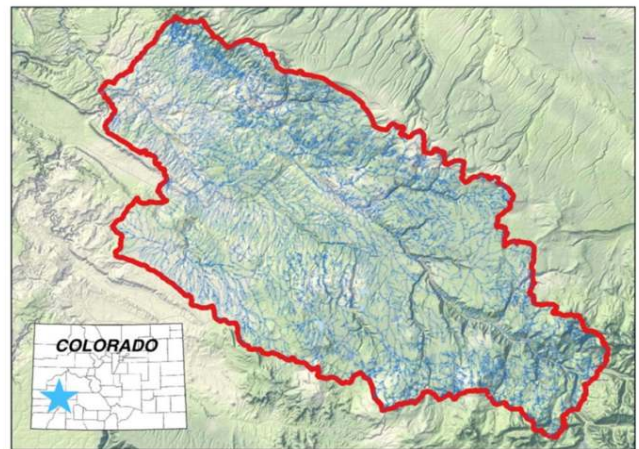
Geography:

Located in southwestern Colorado, the 1,550 square mile San Miguel watershed extends northwest from its headwaters above Telluride down to the Dolores River near Uravan and the Utah state line. The San Miguel River is one of the few larger rivers in the upper Colorado River basin without a mainstem dam.

Users:

Watershed land ownership varies with 62% of the land being held federally (BLM and USFS) and 35% private ownership. The San Miguel has fewer than 6,000 residents in the entire basin. Irrigation in the basin supports hay, alfalfa, small grain, and barley production. The upper end of the Basin around Telluride is experiencing a gradual transition from an economy dominated by agriculture, mining, and logging to an economy driven by tourism and recreation. Recreational opportunities across the watershed include skiing, fishing, camping, hiking, biking, hunting, and rafting.

San Miguel Pilot Project – Area Map

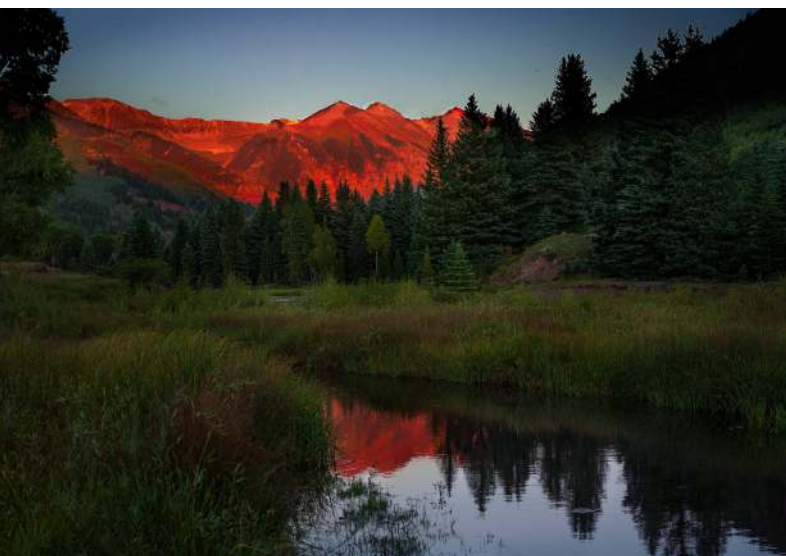


Need for planning:

This planning effort aims to articulate environmental and recreational needs so that they can be considered alongside consumptive needs in future development projects.

Approach

The San Miguel SMP Pilot project was conceived by a subcommittee of the Southwest Basin Roundtable (SWBRT) for the purpose of furthering the goals of the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) which identified gaps in information about environmental and recreational (E&R) water supply needs and the desire for cooperative projects to address identified water supply gaps.



The San Miguel Stream Management Plan is employing a two-phased approach:

- Phase 1 - Completion of Needs Assessment: This phase produced a draft environmental and recreational water supply needs assessment.
- Phase 2 – Stakeholder Engagement: This phase will bring together diverse stakeholders to identify community water values, review the Phase 1 report and recommend multi-benefit projects in the basin.

In Phase 1, Trout Unlimited led the effort to develop the E&R water supply needs assessment with the assistance of Lotic Hydrological and under the oversight of the SWBRT subcommittee. The San Miguel Watershed Coalition undertook public outreach within the San Miguel Basin.

In Phase 2, it quickly became apparent that a more focused stakeholder outreach effort was needed, particularly among agricultural stakeholders. Accordingly, the SWBRT approved the creation of a work group led by co-chairs representing agricultural and E&R interests. Funding to complete Phase 2 was awarded by the CWCB in 2019. The goal of Phase 2 is to assemble a stakeholder group made up of diverse water users who will work together to assess community water values, review and, if necessary, edit the draft water supply needs assessment, and identify multi-purpose projects. The final deliverable of this effort will be a report summarizing stakeholder discussions and any multiple purpose projects identified by the group.

Variables and Inventory Assessment Level

Depending on the purpose and scope determined by local stakeholders, assessments employ different methodologies to evaluate a suite of specific parameters related to stream health and ecosystem goods and services. The comprehensiveness of the data is will vary depending on what is needed to answer core questions addressed by the SMP, ranging from less precise (general, often anecdotal or third-party information) to more precise (data-driven, quantitative metrics). The San Miguel Stream Management Plan conducted the following assessments during Phase 1. Additional assessments may be added in Phase 2.

	Variable	Assessment Level
Ecological Integrity:		
●	Existing Flow Regime	Less Precise
●	Future Flow Regime	More Precise
●	Sediment Regime	More Precise
●	Water Quality	Less Precise
●	Network Connectivity	More Precise
●	Floodplain Hydrology	More Precise
●	Riparian Vegetation	Moderate
●	Stream Corridor Dynamics	More Precise
●	Structural Complexity	Moderate
●	Aquatic Biota	Less Precise
Regulating and Maintenance:		
●	Flood Regulation	Less Precise
●	Groundwater Recharge	Less Precise
●	Erosion Control	Less Precise
	Pest Regulation	
●	Regulatory Compliance	Less Precise
Provisioning:		
●	Agricultural Production	Less Precise
●	Drinking Water Supply	Less Precise
	Industrial Processing	
	Hydropower Production	
Cultural:		
	Aesthetics and Intrinsic Values	
●	Symbolic/Emblematic Species	Less Precise
●	Boating Recreation	More Precise
●	Angling Recreation	Moderate

Budget for Phases 1 and 2

Contributing Entity	Amount and Form of Match
CWCB Watershed Restoration Fund 2015	\$64,175 cash
CWCB Watershed Restoration Fund 2018	\$25,061 cash
Southwest Basin Roundtable Water Supply Reserve Fund (2 requests)	\$44,668 cash
Southwestern Water Conservation District (pending)	\$14,138 cash
The Nature Conservancy	\$6,625 cash
Southwestern Water Conservation District grant	\$6,625 cash
Local governments and foundation	\$3,000 cash
San Miguel Watershed Coalition, Trout Unlimited, American Whitewater	\$ 15,000 in-kind
Total	\$178,672

Photo credits: San Miguel Watershed Coalition



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