



RiversEdge West

Annual Conference

March 4, 2026

Presented By:

- Stacy Beaugh, Strategic By Nature
- Emile Elias, Strategic By Nature
- Lisa Clark, Southwest Decision Resources
- Carrie Padgett, Harris Water Engineering

The image contains three logos arranged horizontally. On the left is the 'STRATEGIC BY NATURE' logo, featuring three stylized trees with green and yellow leaves. In the center is the 'HARRIS Water Engineering, Inc.' logo, with 'HARRIS' in a bold, black, sans-serif font and 'Water Engineering, Inc.' in a smaller, italicized font below it. On the right is the 'Southwest Decision Resources' logo, which includes the text 'Southwest Decision Resources' and a circular emblem containing a stylized plant with yellow flowers and green leaves.

# Community Navigators

# Goals for Today

- **Learn** what a “Community Navigator” is, their scale, and how they can add value to your watershed work.
  - **Engage** with various resources, models and tools employed by Community Navigators and others that can advance watershed projects and planning.
  - **Share** ideas on gaps and other existing tools to support projects in your region.
- Agenda
  - Presentation
  - Panel
  - Crowdsourcing
  - Audience Questions

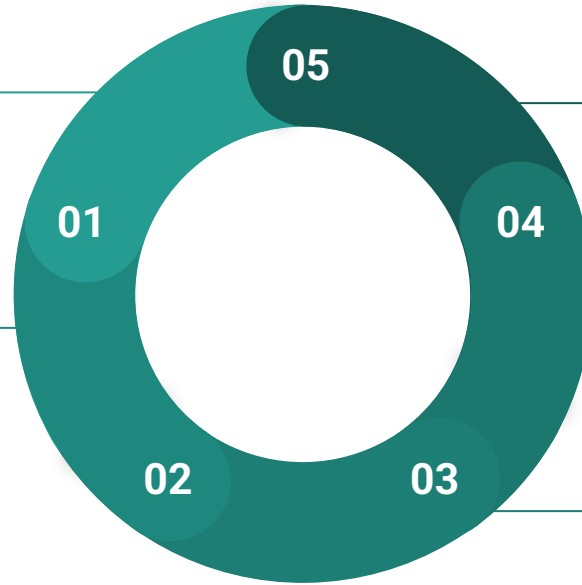
Once upon a time...



# Project Life Cycle

Conceptualizing &  
Pre-Planning

Planning & Design



Monitoring

Permitting & Implementing

Procuring Funding

## Key Barriers

Interest  
Resources  
Knowledge  
Logistics/Systems

Capacity  
Experience  
External Factors  
Relationships

# How do we increase the pace and scale of conservation?

- **Expand or duplicate** successful programs
- **Scale up** operational capacity and/or geography to serve/implement more
- **Broaden** the audience or group the program serves
- **Collaborate**, build relationships to amplify impact
- **Leverage** projects to achieve multiple goals/benefits

# Community Navigators Created to...

Foster collaboration

Peer-to-peer sharing

Information exchange

Coordinate & leverage programs

Connect to federal policy and funding

Provide capacity assistance /  
resources

Solve cross-cutting challenges

Increase funding to a region

Remove barriers

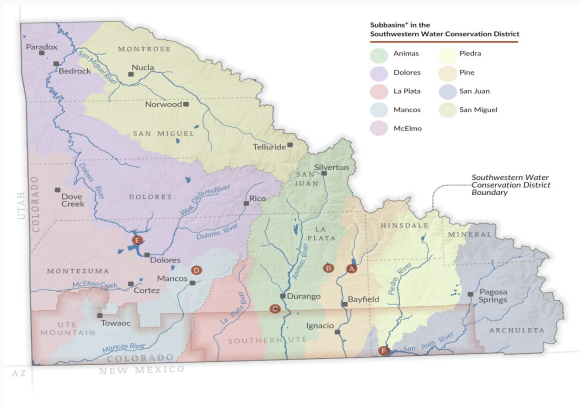
Align projects and funding

Identify bundling opportunities

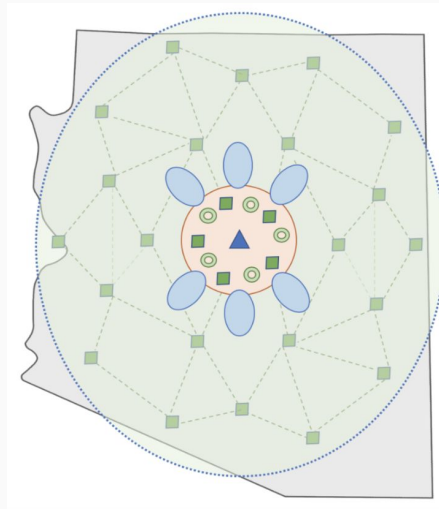
“We’re not just  
providing grant  
support.”

# At what Scale? How are they Funded?

## Regional



## Statewide

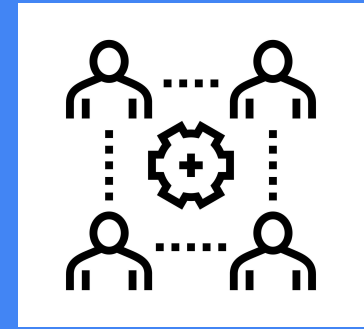


## Multi-State & National



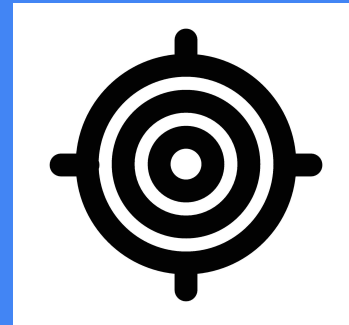
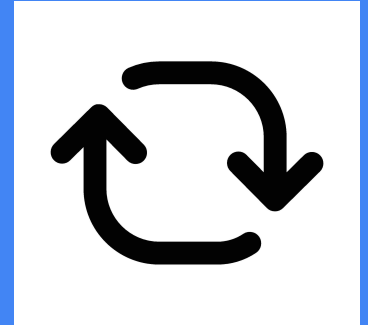
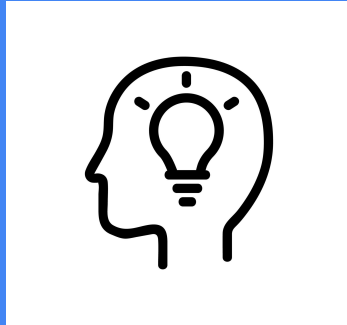
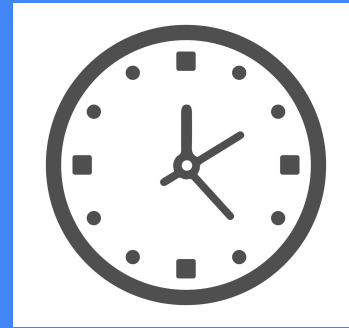
# Strengths & Successes

- Project pipelines now exist, more projects are ready to advance
- Successful funding applications, proof of concept for bundling
- Resources being used
- Relationships are growing
- Reaching underserved communities



# Challenges

- Relationships and trust take time
- Rapidly changing external environment, takes work to stay relevant
- Learning local nuances & knowing how to best target work
- Understanding complexities of funding programs and policies



# Crowdsourcing

Share

Engage

Learn

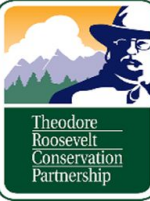
At which stage of the project life cycle do you struggle the most?

What barriers are you facing as you advance watershed restoration projects?



Scan QR code for  
Mentimeter poll

Southwest  
Decision  
Resources



**Rio Grande  
Aquatic  
Navigator  
Network**



SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S  
**WATER CONSERVATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIP**



## Rio Grande Aquatic Navigator Network

# Why Start the Rio Grande Aquatic Navigator Network?

In recent years, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) has focused on **securing federal investments** and **building local capacity** to accelerate and scale aquatic habitat and conservation efforts in the Rio Grande. These efforts were buoyed by a generational federal investment through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. In 2022, in response to a TRCP-led study, they began efforts to help local and state governments, Tribes and Pueblos, water users, and community-based organizations **access and deploy federal funds for watershed resilience efforts**, leading to the launch of the RGANN.



Rio de los Pinos  
Photo credit: Sarah Smith, TRCP

# What is the Rio Grande Aquatic Navigator Network?

## Purpose/Goals:

Strengthen aquatic habitat restoration and conservation efforts through:

- Providing timely information on funding opportunities
- Offering technical assistance services
- Supporting connection and collaboration between organizations/partners

## Offerings:

- Monthly newsletter with policy, funding, and opportunity updates
- Monthly briefing featuring policy news and funding and technical experts
- Public funding database
- Professional support directory
- Technical assistance
- Project pipeline

The Rio Grande Aquatic Navigator Network, an initiative by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, delivers timely funding updates and resources to advance aquatic restoration in the Upper Rio Grande Basin.



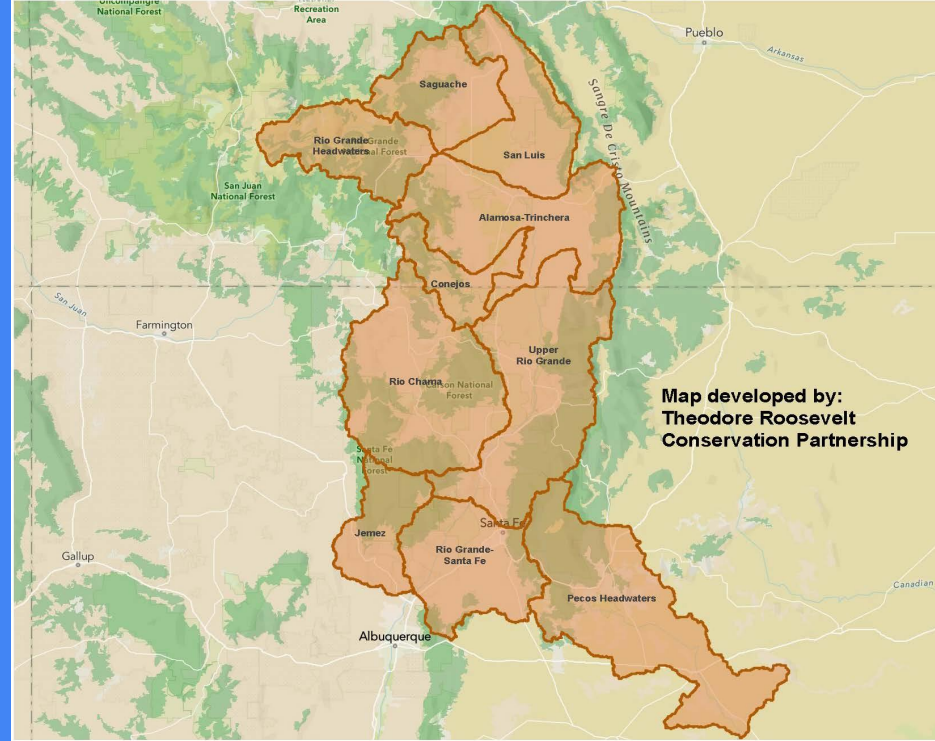
# Upper Rio Grande Project Pipeline

## Purpose/Goals:

- Align projects with funding
- Identify bundling opportunities
- Foster collaboration
- Respond to current and future legislation/policy opportunities
- Participants enter projects and if they are seeking technical and/or funding assistance
- Project pipeline form:



## Upper Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Project Pipeline Geographic Scope



# Accomplishments

- Active community engaged in monthly briefings and newsletters
- Online resource hub including:
  - Funding database
  - Expert directory
  - Project pipeline
- Federal funding to support aquatic restoration projects in the Upper Rio Grande (IRA \$25M).
- Funding and project technical support



Rio Grande River Trail  
Photo credit: Sarah Smith, TRCP

# How to Get Involved

- Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter
- Join a monthly briefing call
- Access our online resources hub
- Share projects in the project pipeline
- Request technical assistance

Contact information:

Website: <https://riograndenavigator.com/>

Email: [emile@beststrategicbynature.com](mailto:emile@beststrategicbynature.com)



Rio Grande, White Rock Canyon  
Photo credit: Sarah Smith, TRCP



SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S  
**WATER CONSERVATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIP**

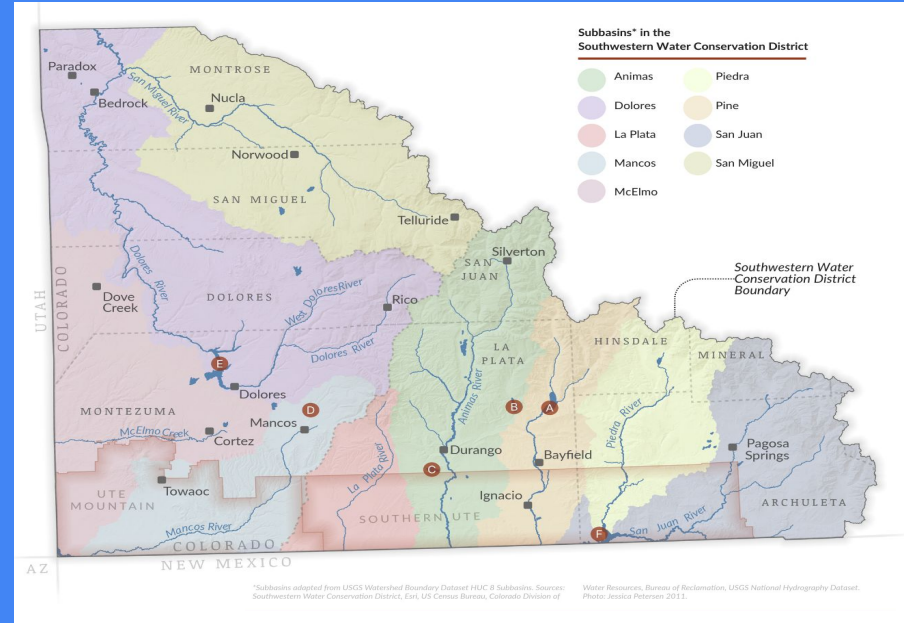
## **SWCD Partnership's Objective**

*This partnership hopes to identify, fund, and coordinate watershed-scale, multi-benefit, infrastructure, and water conservation projects across Southwest Colorado that require complex regional partner collaboration and larger monetary investment to be achieved.*

# Why SWCD?

SWCD is uniquely positioned, in collaboration with local partners, to help leverage federal funding to implement local water projects:

- Mission alignment.
- Access and leverage federal funds.
- Organizational structure.
- Supported numerous projects.
- Strong working relationships with the project proponents, partners, and stakeholders.

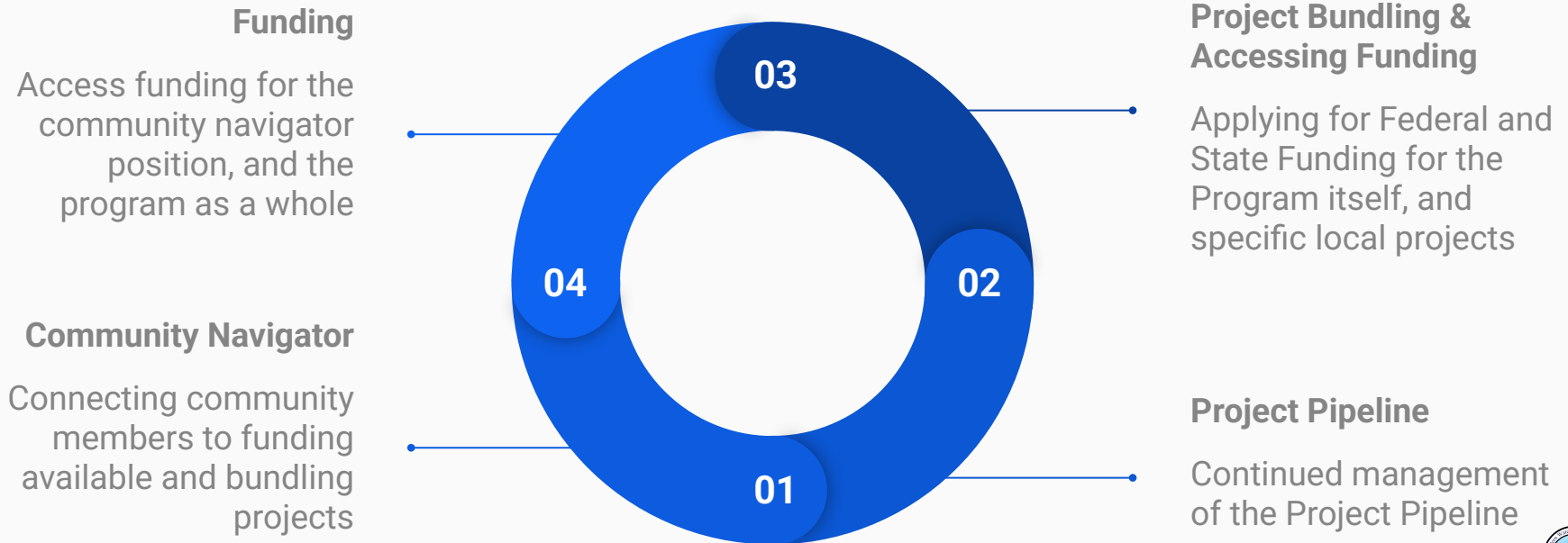


## Bureau of Reclamation Constructed Projects within the Southwestern Water Conservation District

- A** Vallecito Reservoir and Dam
- B** Lemon Reservoir and Dam
- C** Lake Nighthorse and Ridges Basin Dam
- D** Jackson Gulch Reservoir and Dam
- E** McPhee Reservoir and Dam
- F** Navajo Dam and Reservoir



# SWCD Partnership Program Framework



# SWCD Partnership Accomplishments

- Partnership provides grant capacity in project development, grant writing, mapping, and communication support
- Team effort when developing regional grant applications allows for progress on multiple fronts during the grant's development
- Utilizing and updating the Project Pipeline to match funding opportunities with projects
- Bundling projects allows for diverse projects to be included together in a single grant

Upper Basin Environmental Drought Mitigation (B2E) - Upper Colorado Region



USBR WaterSMART: Planning and Project Design Grants  
Funding Opportunity No: R23AS00109

Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Water Strategy Grant

Southwestern Water Conservation District  
Southwest Colorado:  
Partnership

WaterSMART: Planning and Project Design Grants FY 2024



Project Title: Southwestern Water Conservation & Infrastructure Program

**Applicant Name:** Southwestern Water Conservation District  
841 East Second Ave.  
Durango, CO 81301  
<https://swgcd.org/>



# How to get involved?

- Visit our website at [swwcd.org](http://swwcd.org)
- Tell me about your project!
- Need technical assistance when applying for federal funding, reach out to learn more about our small capacity grants.

## Contact Information

- Carrie Padgett
- [carrie@durangowater.com](mailto:carrie@durangowater.com)
- 970-259-5322





# Arizona Cross-Watershed Network



# Arizona Cross-Watershed Network

Our network strives to build a more resilient, adaptive, and interconnected community of watershed practitioners across Arizona



## Coordination

Align and leverage partners and resources



## Peer Learning

Foster peer-to-peer learning and problem solving



## Collaborative Action

Address common needs and opportunities

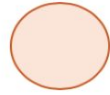
# How We Work

Partners have an equal seat at the table, shared leadership

Multiple scales engaged

Peer-to-peer exchange, coordination and collaboration

Collaborative and sustainable statewide structure



## Advisory Committee

*Purpose:* guides the network  
*Members:* agencies, statewide organizations, universities, watershed partnerships, tribes, foundations, others



## Coordinating and Facilitation Teams

*Purpose:* network development and backbone support  
*Members:* Steering Committee representatives and facilitators



## Action Teams

*Purpose:* develop and implement priority initiatives for the network  
*Members:* interested partners



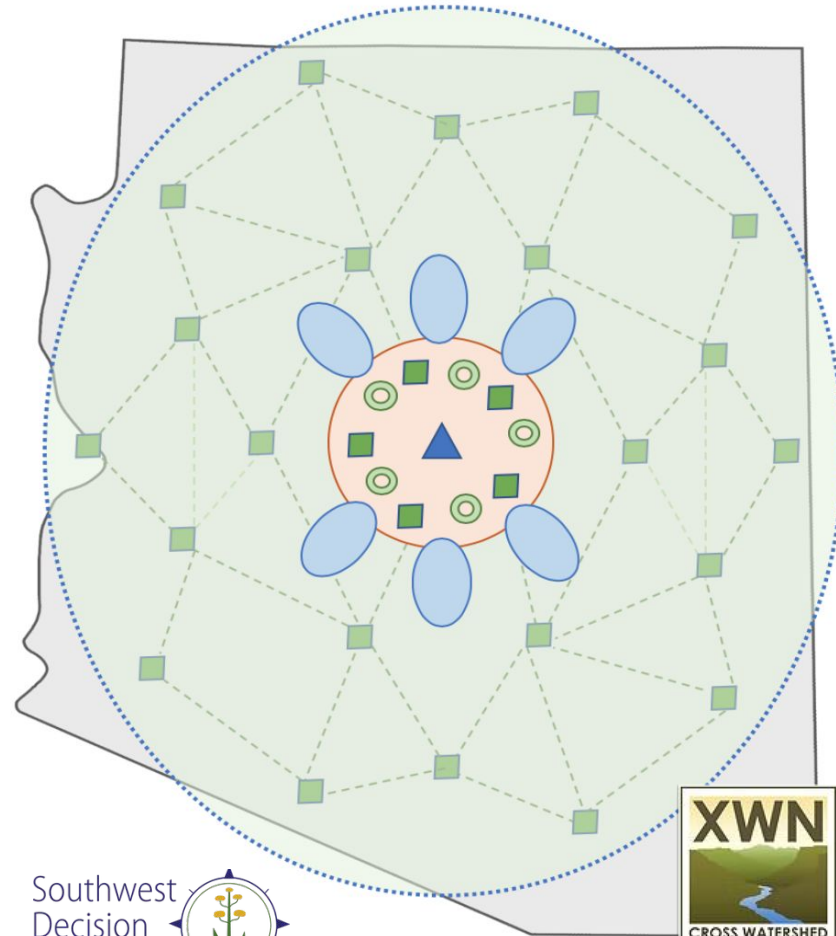
## Watershed-based efforts

Partnerships, collaboratives, organizations



## State level / multi-watershed partners

Organizations, agencies, universities, foundations, associations





# Network History

- 2012-2020: XWN Regional Network
- 2017: Arizona Cross-Watershed Network formed (*Assessment & later other watershed / river based networks within the Colorado River Basin*)
- 2023: AZ XWN needs assessment and increased investment to support watershed groups in AZ



# Shared Funding to Sustain the AZ XWN



- “Shared funding” supports AZ XWN’s budget for facilitation and coordination:
  - Design and coordination of the overall network and its processes
  - Design and facilitation of meetings
  - Website, newsletter, fact sheets, and other tools
- Partners contribute to a shared funding budget – cost share and increasing trust, buy in
- Contributions begin at \$2,500 per year
- Current and former contributors include:





# Arizona Cross-Watershed Network Initiatives & Accomplishments

## Sustainable Funding Navigation:

- Project pipeline, matching projects to funding (e.g. 15 orgs and \$12M in projects for BOR grant)
- Piloted funder-practitioner feedback session on process-based restoration metrics

## Convening:

- Biennial AZ XWN Summit - over 100 participants in 2024
- Lunch and Learn - February 2026: Corporate Funding and Volumetric Water Benefits featured Apple, The Nature Conservancy, and Bonneville Environmental Foundation

## Communications:

- Newsletter (funding, events, jobs, resources) - 80% open rate, 480 subscribers
- AZ XWN website



# Arizona Cross-Watershed Network Initiatives & Accomplishments

- **Compliance and Permitting:**
  - Geodatabase of programmatic NEPA documents - in progress
- **Process-Based Restoration:**
  - New Fact sheet: Peer-reviewed benefits of PBR in Arizona, education on project cycle and more
- **Workforce Development:**
  - Directory of watershed practitioners in AZ
- **Rural Groundwater Resilience Exchange:**
  - Launching peer exchange for rural, place-based groundwater efforts in AZ

# Thank You!

Contact us:

Rio Grande Aquatic Navigator  
Program -

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Strategic By Nature

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AZ Cross-Watershed Network -

Lisa Clark

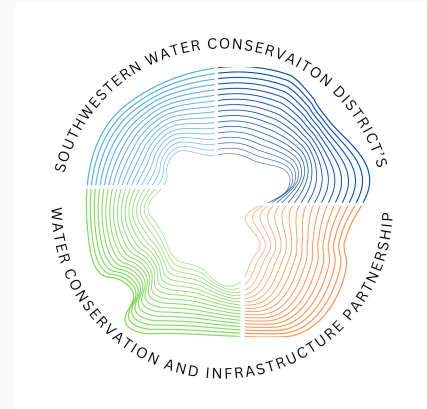
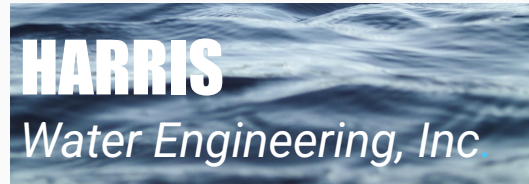
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[www.azcrosswatershed.net](http://www.azcrosswatershed.net)



Southwest  
Decision  
Resources





Happy Hour  
Discussion Ideas:

1. What challenges do you face as a project implementer?
  2. What do you think community navigators/networks could help with?
- 