

FOREST & WATER RENEWAL

Revolving Loan Fund

Coalitions & Collaboratives' (COCO) new revolving loan fund provides communities with below-market-rate bridge loans to accelerate watershed and forest health and wildfire mitigation.

Wildfire resilience can't wait.

The Forest & Water Renewal Fund is financing a more resilient Colorado.

There is a pressing need to increase the pace and scale of wildfire mitigation and climate resilience. We need innovative market-based solutions to transform how we manage our forests. The renewal fund provides flexible and timely financing, as well as sustained and expert technical assistance, to nonprofits, community-based collaboratives, and tribal organizations.

“

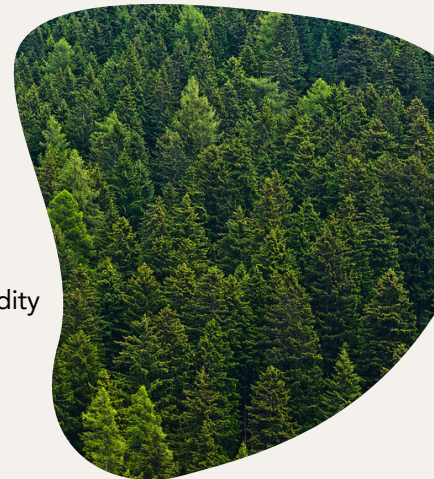
Our cash flow hinders us from engaging in larger projects because we don't want to be in the position of not being able to pay contractors...

-Prospective Borrower

”

Bridge Loans for Big Results

Current federal and state wildfire mitigation and resilience funding programs provide reimbursement-style grants. While this funding is substantial, local organizations must pay for equipment, staff time, and contractors upfront and then wait anywhere from one to several months to receive grant reimbursement. This creates a perpetual cycle of cash or liquidity challenges for these small organizations, and a significant challenge to achieving desired resilience and fire mitigation outcomes.



A New Loan Program for Wildfire Resilience Projects in Colorado...and Beyond

With guidance from a survey of prospective borrowers, Coalitions & Collaboratives (COCO) is preparing to launch the renewal fund – a program designed to provide bridge loans and lines of credit to local community groups to address the cash flow issues associated with their reimbursement grants so that they can achieve their goals and accelerate conservation and community protection outcomes. When the reimbursement grant payments are received, borrowed funds are repaid, and the dollars revolve into the next project.

“

We are being asked to do more and more reimbursable projects which we would like to do and are qualified to do, but the cash flow demands are tough...you have identified a very needed solution here.

-Prospective Borrower

”

COCO is a conservation leader, not just a lender, and we invest in our borrowers' success. As a regional and national hub for collaborative conservation and restoration, we act as partners, mentors, trusted advisors, and funders. In addition to financing, our team can provide technical assistance to borrowers of the Renewal Fund. This assistance can include:

- *Providing ongoing support as projects move through reimbursements from State and Federal grants*
- *Coaching for potential borrowers on funding structure, conservation strategy, the loan application process, community partnership building, communications, and fundraising.*
- *Technical assistance on grant and compliance management*

Help Us Launch the Renewal Fund!

We are deeply grateful to the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities for their generous support in providing grants that have funded the design and initial launch of the Renewal Fund.

We are now actively working to raise \$1 million to capitalize the pilot revolving fund in Colorado. Over the next several years, we aim to secure additional funding to expand the Fund's impact and ensure its long-term sustainability. Capital for the revolving fund is being raised through a combination of private foundation program-related investments (PRIs), philanthropic grants, and corporate contributions.

Together, we can build resilience.

You can get involved through:

- Foundation Program-Related Investments (PRIs): low-interest, mission-driven loans.
- Grants and recoverable grants: catalytic capital to launch and grow the loan fund.
- Corporate Contributions: support from companies committed to wildfire resilience and healthy forests.
- Individual Donations: gifts from individuals and major donors to help expand the program's reach.

“

Having to wait months for reimbursements makes managing projects very difficult and creates instability.

-Prospective Borrower

”

Wildfire threats are increasing. Local organizations are being asked to increase the pace and scale of their forest and watershed health and fire resilience work, but they are constrained by their ability to utilize the reimbursement grants available. They need our help—and we need yours. With the Renewal Fund, together we can address our community's needs and take action when it's needed most. The US Forest Service and US Endowment, and other partners who support the Renewal Fund believe in the strength of this solution.

Will you join them?

From the Frontlines

The West Region Wildfire Council (WRWC), which serves 6 counties in Colorado, has treated more than 10,000 high-priority acres in the wildland-urban interface and protected more than 3,300 homes since 2007. Most of WRWC's funding comes through reimbursement-based grants, leaving the organization routinely out-of-pocket \$300,000–\$500,000 while awaiting repayment. To bridge this gap, WRWC uses nearly all of its unrestricted reserves as “internal bridge funding.” This approach sustains operations but prevents unrestricted dollars from being invested in growth, building reserves, or exploring revenue-generating opportunities. Also, because of cash-flow delays amid federal funding volatility, WRWC has faced disruption and cuts to its staff and programs. As a result, 17 projects in Gunnison County acres were unfunded, and 20 projects across Delta, San Miguel, Montrose, and Ouray Counties were scaled back or deferred. These parcels would have represented a 20% increase in acres treated. For organizations such as WRWC, accessing bridge financing would avoid disruptions and help them operate more efficiently at times when we need this work the most.

Have a project in need of bridge financing or would like to explore opportunities to get involved? We can help!

Contact us today: Esther Duke (Esther.Duke@co-co.org)

For more about Coalitions & Collaboratives, visit coco.org

