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Youth Corps Awarded \$50,000 to Fight Invasive Plants, Protect Water Resources
*Colorado Water Conservation Board Partners with Colorado Youth Corps Association
on Five Projects for 2014*

March 25, 2014, Denver, Colo. – The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), a division of the Department of Natural Resources, announce they are funding invasive plant species mitigation projects throughout Colorado in an effort to preserve and protect the state’s water resources. Five projects in 2014, funded through a \$50,000 grant from the CWCB, will be conducted by CYCA-accredited youth conservation corps in conjunction with local project sponsors in four counties throughout the state.

The projects are designed to control a variety of invasive phreatophyte plants – deep-rooted plants that obtain water from permanent ground supplies or from the water table – including tamarisk, Russian olive and Siberian elm. These plants present a threat to Colorado’s water supply that is needed by the state’s native flora and fauna as well as by water recreation users on lakes and rivers.

“The CWCB is pleased to be renewing our partnership with the CYCA and its member corps in 2014. Last year’s tamarisk and Russian olive control projects were widely reported to have provided multiple enhancements of riparian areas. Just as important as those benefits was the engagement of Colorado youth in protecting their environment. We are confident that the five projects selected this year will be equally successful,” said CWCB Director, James Eklund.

CYCA had received eight proposals representing \$105,000 in requests for 14 weeks of work to mitigate these plants throughout the state. In all, 32 young people will serve on these projects in four counties on the Front Range and the Western Slope. CWCB has funded the following projects:

- **City of Fountain’s Fountain Open Space Phreatophyte Control Project - Mile High Youth Corps–Colorado Springs**
This project seeks to eradicate Russian olive populations and remove Siberian elm. The youth corps crew will cut and stump-treat the invasive plants along Fountain Creek’s bank and floodplain. The project is adjacent to a popular section of the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail, which runs through Colorado Springs. In order to maximize the impact of this project, the woody materials that are removed will be chipped into a truck, hauled off-location and utilized as bio-fuel by Colorado Springs Utilities.
- **La Plata Open Space Conservancy’s Animas River System Invasive Removal Project - Southwest Conservation Corps–Four Corners**

This project will implement restoration treatments along the Animas River in the City of Durango. The youth corps crew will remove and chemically treat invasive, non-native woody species (Russian olive and Siberian elm) from approximately 14 acres of riparian habitat located on private lands protected by conservation easements.

- **Weld County Weed Division's St. Vrain Invasive Phreatophyte Project** - *Weld County Youth Conservation Corps*
The youth corps will perform tamarisk and Russian olive eradication using cut-stump treatments along the St. Vrain River. The project will start at Weld County Road 1 and extend approximately three linear miles toward the confluence with the South Platte River at the intersection of Weld County Roads 40 and 21.
- **Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks Department's Lower Boulder Creek Restoration Project** - *Mile High Youth Corps*
The youth corps crew will remove invasive Russian olive and crack willow trees from a high-priority restoration area along lower Boulder Creek. The project will benefit habitat for Ute ladies'-tresses (a federally threatened orchid), prairie gentian (a rare plant in Colorado with declining habitat across the Great Plains), northern leopard frog (a state species of special concern), grassland nesting birds, and riparian and wetland plant communities.
- **Ducks Unlimited's South Platte Phreatophyte Control Project** - *Weld County Youth Conservation Corps*
The youth corps will assist Ducks Unlimited, Colorado Open Lands and conservation easement donors by removing invasive vegetation from riverbanks and sandbars. Crews will clear invasive vegetation, such as tamarisk and Russian olive, from three protected properties located along the South Platte River in Weld and Morgan Counties. This work will improve the river channel habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife and reduce consumptive water use.

The goals of the awarded funds are to provide job training and experience for Colorado's youth and young adults, and to support the invasive control efforts of land owners who have limited resources to accomplish the projects.

Projects chosen for this funding provide significant riparian ecosystem benefits through phreatophyte control activities, either on areas owned and used by the public, or on private properties where public values are protected through conservation easements or other arrangements.

"Water conservation, recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat are important for our state. Our corpsmembers offer a valuable asset in helping to conserve them," said Jennifer Freeman, CYCA's executive director. "Our state's young people not only gain training, education and AmeriCorps Education Awards for college or trade school, they are able to make meaningful contributions to our state's communities. We're thankful that the Colorado Water Conservation Board had the vision and foresight to not only foster these land improvements but to simultaneously give opportunities to young Coloradans."

About Colorado Youth Corps Association

The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) is a statewide coalition of ten accredited youth conservation corps that engage and train youth, young adults, and military veterans on land, water and

energy conservation projects. Youth corps is a proven strategy for engaging young people in service to their communities and stewardship of their environment while cultivating valuable skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Learn more at www.CYCA.org.

About Colorado Water Conservation Board

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) was established in 1937 to guide the development and protection of water resources for the benefit of present and future Coloradans. Through policy implementation, financial support for water projects, and participation in statewide as well as nationwide programming, the CWCB strives to most effectively utilize this valuable resource. This 15-member board and professional staff work with the federal government, neighboring states, and water users within Colorado to strike a balance between necessary development and environmental protection. The CWCB serves as Colorado's primary guide for water policy in all of the state's river basins, as well as administration of major compacts, decrees, and treaties.

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