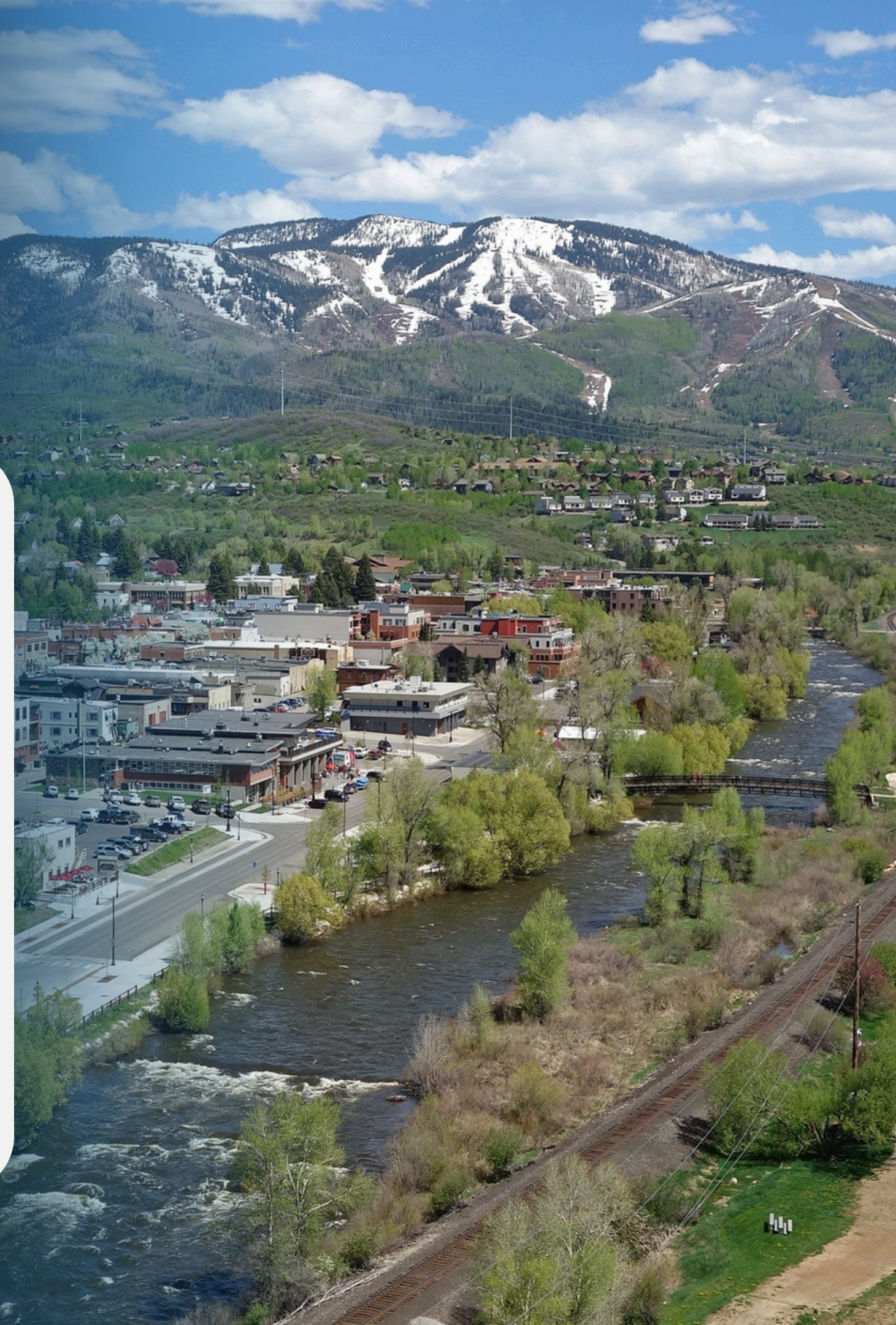




 Steamboat Springs, CO

# **STRATEGIC ROADMAP POSITIONS STEAMBOAT SPRINGS TO MAXIMIZE FEDERAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING**





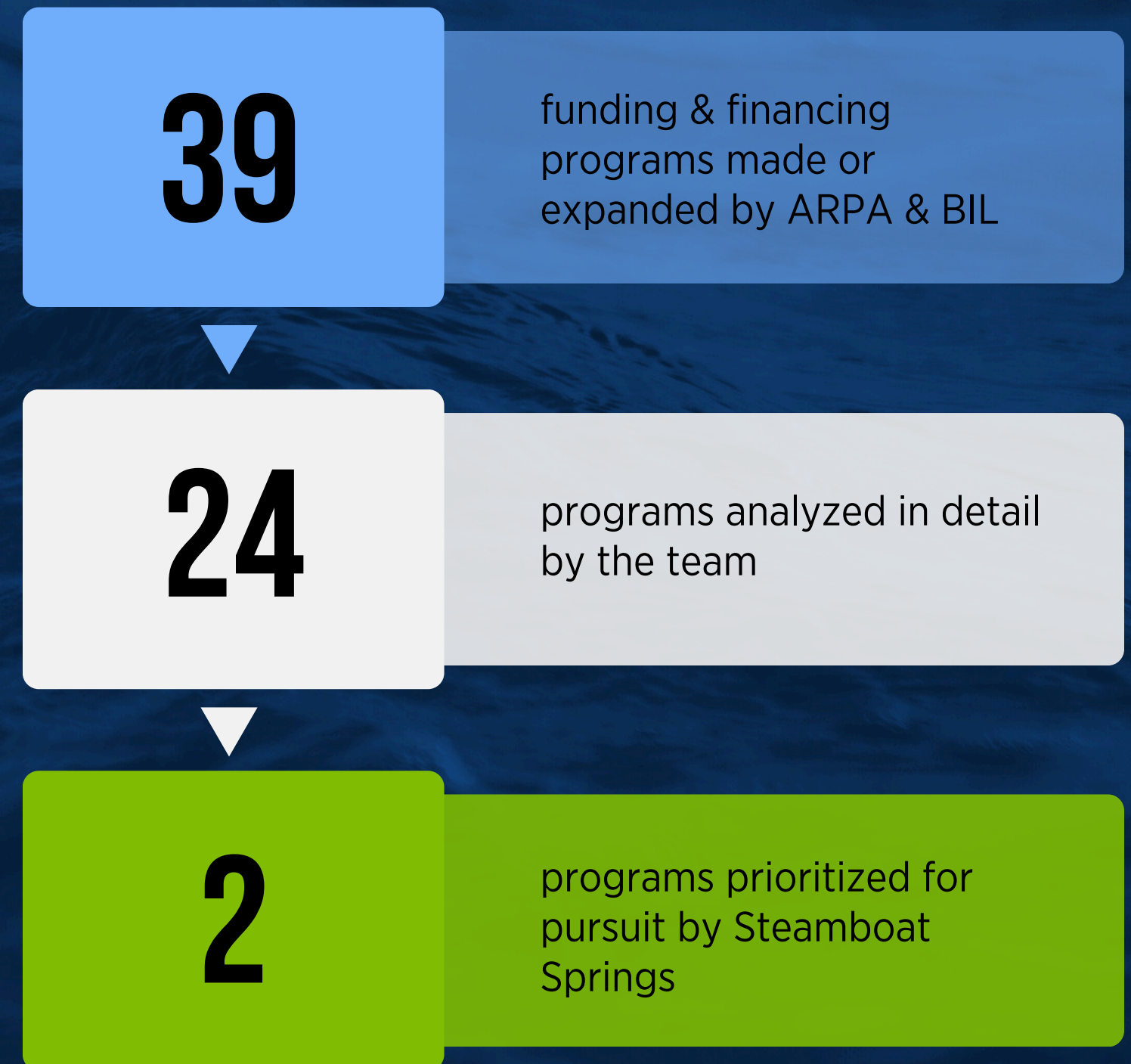
# OUR APPROACH

WaterNow Alliance partnered with the City of Steamboat Springs to develop a strategy for securing funding and financing available under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to support the City's water infrastructure and resiliency projects. To achieve this, WaterNow identified the City's priority projects and researched funding and financing opportunities that aligned with them. WaterNow then created a roadmap for pursuing funding opportunities, which offers step-by-step guidance on how to pursue the most suitable opportunities for these high-priority projects.



# IMPACT

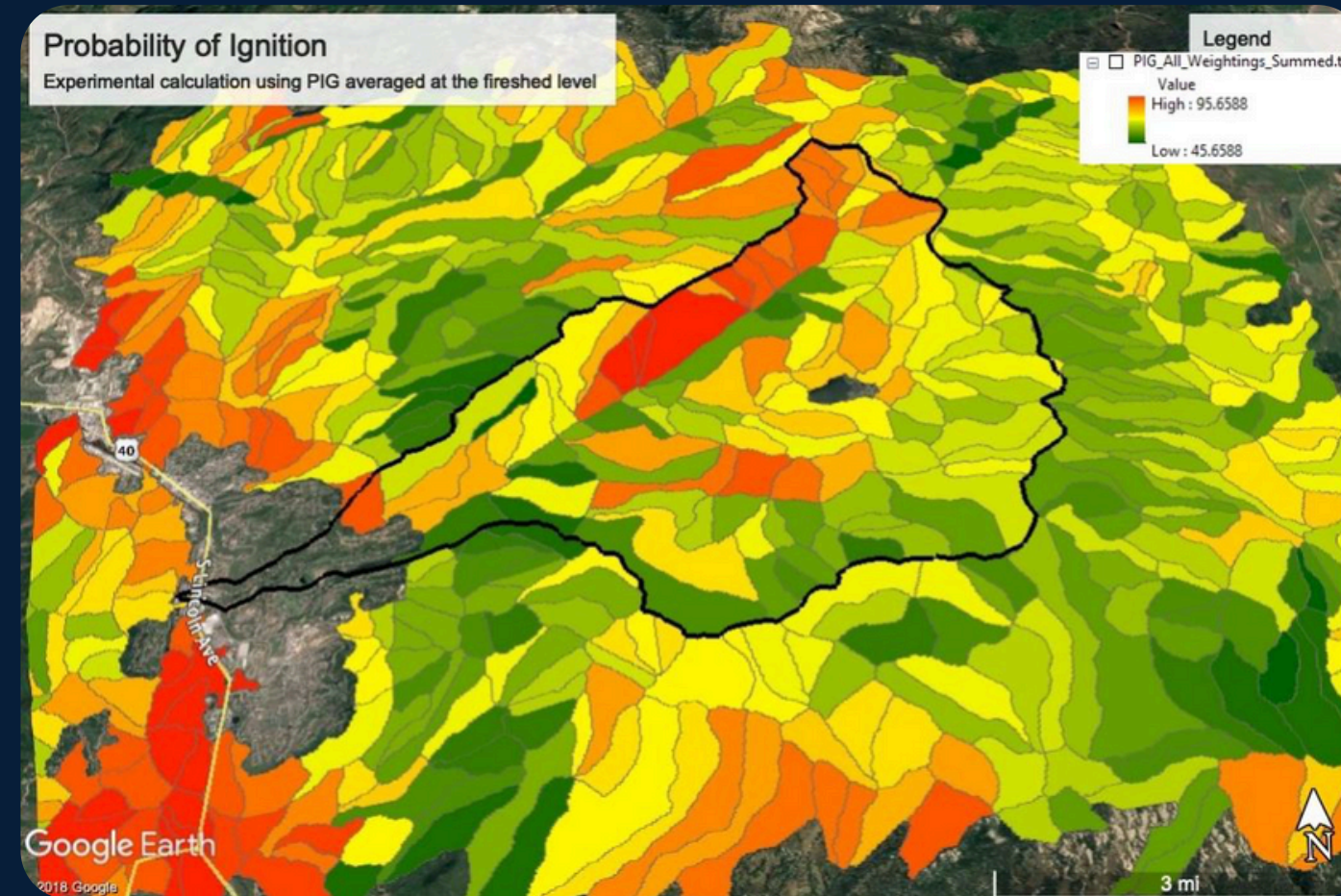
By identifying priority projects, building a knowledge base of available options under ARPA and BIL, and creating a roadmap for how to secure funding, Steamboat Springs can better focus on the most suitable funding opportunities for their water infrastructure needs. The roadmap will help the City achieve its water management goals by enabling it to focus on securing funding that aligns with its priorities, budget, administrative capacity, experience, overhead, matching funds, regulatory context, program competitiveness, relevant capital improvement plans, and debt issuances, rather than simply searching for funding opportunities.



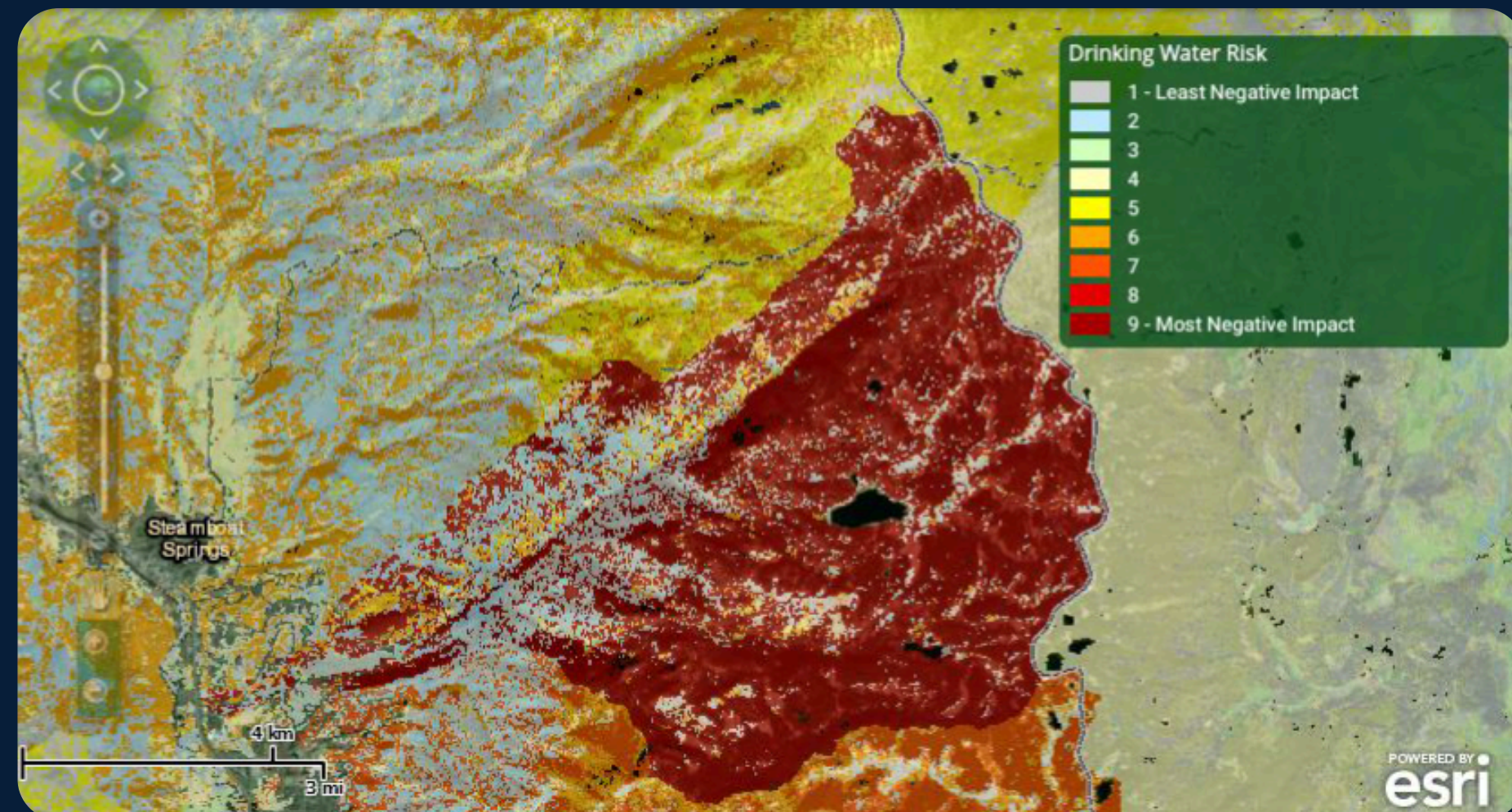


# KEY DRIVERS

Steamboat Springs is a growing city with a multifaceted approach to sustainable water management by supporting watershed health, investing in infrastructure improvements, and building its water conservation programming to address drought, wildfires, and other challenges. However, securing funding for these projects can be daunting due to the vast array of available funding opportunities, complex application requirements, and the fast-approaching deadlines for using funds from both ARPA and BIL. Local governments must obligate ARPA grant funding by the end of December 2024, or risk returning any unobligated amounts to the U.S. Department of Treasury. Additionally, BIL funding is available only through September 2026.



Map of Burn Probability Modeling Results



Map of Drinking Water Risk in Steamboat Springs



# HOW IT WORKS

Steamboat Springs first identified three projects as especially urgent and timely:

**(1) Long-term improvements at its Fish Creek Water Treatment Plant:** Over 90% of Steamboat's water is sourced from the Fish Creek basin, a watershed vulnerable to wildfire. Steamboat Springs's Fish Creek Critical Community Watershed Wildfire Protection Plan identified measures to enhance the Plant's resiliency to source water quality changes associated with watershed fires. By prioritizing these measures, the City aims to safeguard its water supply against wildfires.





# HOW IT WORKS

Steamboat Springs first identified three projects as especially urgent and timely:

**(2) Ecological restoration at the Williams Preserve and/or the adjacent River Creek Park/Rotary Park Complex:** Williams Preserve and the River Creek and Rotary Park parcels represent the most expansive riparian restoration opportunity in the City. A revitalized Preserve could be a nature park and a draw for eco-tourism, a habitat oasis, and/or a demonstration of the ways agricultural and natural habitat management practices can work together. Its restoration would sustainably improve access to nature.





# HOW IT WORKS

Steamboat Springs first identified three projects as especially urgent and timely:

**(3) Improving water efficiency at City parks:** The City aims to perform irrigation audits at and upgrade irrigation systems in its parks to improve water efficiency. This process could also provide opportunities to replace high water use plants and turf grass with lower water use landscaping alternatives.





# HOW IT WORKS



After identifying the priority projects and considering Steamboat's preferences, experience, capacity, and regulatory landscape, WaterNow researched and detailed several suitable federal assistance opportunities. Recognizing WaterSMART and FEMA grants as the most promising, WaterNow developed a roadmap for pursuing funding opportunities, which featured a five-year timeline for pursuing these opportunities that:

## HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

- (1)** Long-term improvements at its Fish Creek Water Treatment Plant
- (2)** Ecological restoration at the Williams Preserve and/or the adjacent River Creek
- (3)** Park/Rotary Park Complex Improving water efficiency at City parks

- (1)** identified key stakeholders to engage in planning for application processes that can require large lifts and advance planning;
- (2)** flagged considerations around administrative and implementation bandwidth (to both apply for and implement projects) among a small team; and
- (3)** Calculated the total potential revenue and potential match requirements for these grants in any given year, alongside:
  - o the City's ability to meet any cost matching requirements; and
  - o the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) requirement that Steamboat Springs cannot, in any given year, accept more than 10% of revenues in grants from all Colorado state and local governments combined to their Utility Fund.





**WATER CONSERVATION HELPS TO IMPROVE THE RELIABILITY OF  
THOSE WATER SUPPLIES DURING DISASTERS, EMERGENCIES ...  
LIKE PROLONGED DROUGHTS, WILDFIRES IN THE WATERSHED ...  
. [AND] HELPS US TO SAVE MONEY. IT HELPS US TO ALLOW THOSE  
WATER SUPPLIES TO GO FURTHER AND DELAY EXPENSIVE  
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.**

Julie Baxter, City Water Resources Manager



# THE PATH FORWARD

Steamboat Springs will use the roadmap to pursue funding opportunities, like the WaterSMART and FEMA grants, to implement its highest-priority water projects. The roadmap can also be used to match these projects with other funding opportunities, to accelerate the City's work to mitigate the effects of population growth and climate change in the community by protecting water supplies, water quality, and watershed health.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- (1)** When identifying funding opportunities, start by reviewing resources like WaterNow's [Project Accelerator Library](#) and Tap into Resilience [Resource Library](#) and [Toolkit](#), so you don't have to start from scratch. The roadmap for [Aligning New Federal Funding with Local Priority Projects](#) walks users through this process.
- (2)** When developing a roadmap to pursue funding and financing opportunities, useful considerations may include: staff capacity, staff experience in applying for funding, administrative overhead, administrative processes, matching funds, regulatory context, program competitiveness, relevant capital improvement plans, and debt issuances.
- (3)** To create a more comprehensive strategy for navigating funding opportunities, incorporate internal and external stakeholder input at every stage of the process (e.g., grant application, project implementation, grant reporting, and post-construction maintenance). The strategy should also consider staff bandwidth for program administration and implementation, as well as collaboration across departments.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS (CONTINUED)

- (4)** Scoping and ranking priority projects is a great opportunity to identify those that can benefit communities disproportionately affected by environmental and health impacts.
- (5)** Holding regular meetings between key stakeholders, such as the water utility, public works department, city attorney, city manager, and City Council, to maintain an updated list of projects aligned with water project priorities, can ensure that projects remain relevant and accessible as new or upcoming funding and financing opportunities emerge.



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Steamboat Pilot & Today, *Water Plan Upgrades Will Close Fish Creek Facility for Two Months* (Aug. 22, 2024), <https://www.steamboatpilot.com/news/water-plant-upgrades-will-close-fish-creek-facility-for-two-months/>.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## ROADMAP FOR ALIGNING NEW FEDERAL FUNDING WITH LOCAL PRIORITY PROJECTS

outlining a process for identifying and prioritizing projects, developing a matrix of funding and financing options, and pairing priority projects with available federal dollars

## DATABASES OF FUNDING SOURCES FOR WATER PROJECTS

featuring a handful of national level databases listing funding and financing resources

## WATERNOW ALLIANCE'S PROJECT ACCELERATOR

## SUMMARY OF FUNDING AND FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLORADO COMMUNITIES

## TAP INTO RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

Practical, actionable information on decentralized water infrastructure

## TEMPLATE: COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND FEDERAL FUNDING AND FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES

A template for organizing and tracking federal funding and financing opportunities

## TAPPING INTO FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY WATER PROJECTS

WaterNow Alliance's seminar recording introducing federal funding opportunities

## WATERSMART GRANT APPLICATION SUPPORT & HELP DESK FOR COLORADO WATER PROVIDERS

No-cost, hands-on assistance for Colorado water providers to understand and apply for WaterSMART grants

## COLORADO SRF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DASHBOARD

Resources to help Colorado communities secure State Revolving Fund (SRF) financing for sustainable water projects



# RELATED PROJECTS



## DESERT WATER AGENCY, CA

WaterSMART Grant application assistance



## SUMMIT COUNTY, CO

Development of a regional outdoor water efficiency program



## GREELEY, CO

Optimizing water efficiency through program analyses



# CONTACT

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