

San Miguel Needs Assessment, Strategies, and Initiatives

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: Adrian Bergere, San Miguel Watershed Coalition
info@sanmiguelwatershed.org

Planning Phase: Implement Priority Actions

Status: Phase II complete. Project implementation ongoing.



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 voluntary 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 San Miguel basin.

Overview:

The San Miguel has more than 6,000 residents in the entire basin, with land ownership consisting of 62% federal lands (BLM and USFS) and 35% private ownership. The upper (Telluride) and the lower ends (Norwood, Nucla, Naturita) of the basin have differing water users and challenges spanning legacy mining and tourism to agriculture and economic challenges with the decommissioning of the Nucla power plant. This planning effort aimed to bring upper and lower stakeholders together to look at the entirety of the San Miguel basin and articulate environmental and recreational needs so that they can be considered alongside consumptive needs in future development projects.

Approach:

The San Miguel Stream Management Plan Pilot project was conceived by a subcommittee of the Southwest Basin Roundtable to identify gaps in information about environmental and recreational water supply needs and the desire for cooperative projects to address identified water supply gaps. The first phase of the San Miguel process was to draft a needs assessment for environmental and recreational water supply needs (which was finalized in March 2021). The second phase focused on stakeholder engagement to identify community water values, finalize the Phase I report, and recommend multi-benefit projects. In June 2022, the process was completed with stakeholders approving a document, “Strategies and Initiatives to Meet San Miguel Water Use Needs”. The San Miguel Watershed Coalition will assume coordination of the stakeholder group and work to support stakeholders as they move toward implementation of projects.

Budget: \$178,672

