



Executive Summary: Reviving Colorado's Riverscapes

Introduction

Colorado's streams have endured over two centuries of degradation driven by development, hydrologic alteration, unsustainable agricultural practices, and the escalating impacts of climate change. Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration (LTPBR) offers a promising, cost-effective approach to reversing these trends by working with natural processes to help rebuild functional riverscapes and restore Colorado's riparian ecosystems.

This report highlights the current success of LTPBR efforts across Colorado, examines the perceived impacts of Senate Bill 23-270 (*Projects to Restore Natural Stream Systems*), and provides recommendations for Audubon Rockies and Water for Colorado Coalition for expanding education, outreach, and future restoration work.

Approach and Collaboration

CU Boulder MENV graduate students distributed a statewide survey over the span of four months through Audubon's networks and direct outreach to restoration practitioners. The survey captured:

Stakeholder Mapping:

Who's doing restoration work, with whom, and with what funding

Policy Assessment:

SB270's influence on implementation and remaining barriers

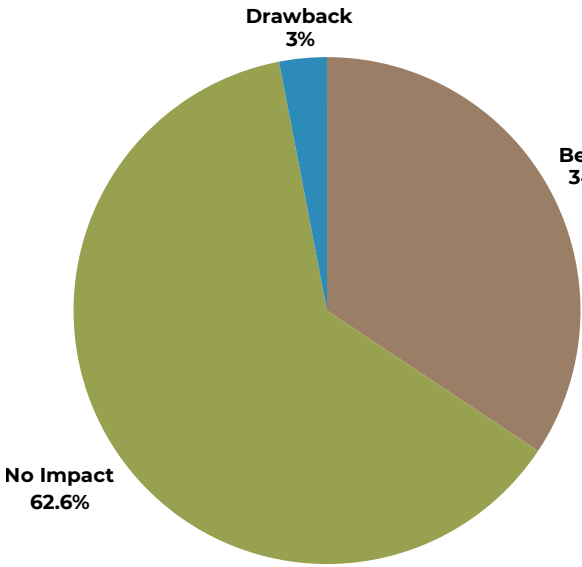
Project Cataloguing:

Understanding motivations, techniques and general basin area trends

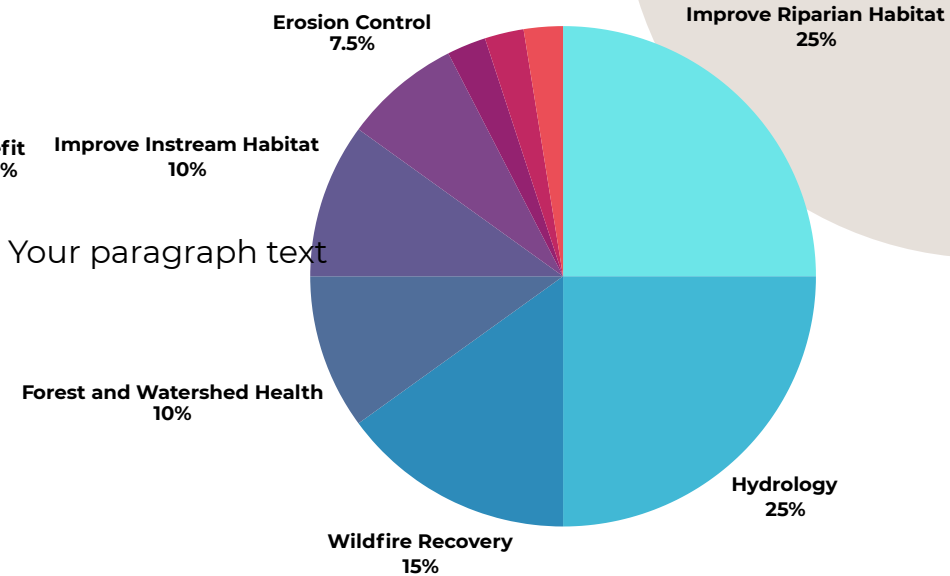
Preliminary findings reveal that while LTPBR is gaining momentum statewide, there are uneven patterns of awareness, funding, and participation. **To continue expanding its impact, Colorado will need stronger education efforts, improved funding access, and clearer policy guidance.** Enhancing coordination among agencies, landowners, and restoration practitioners will be essential to ensure that Colorado's riverscapes are resilient for generations to come.

A Broader Understanding

Perceived Impacts of SB23-270

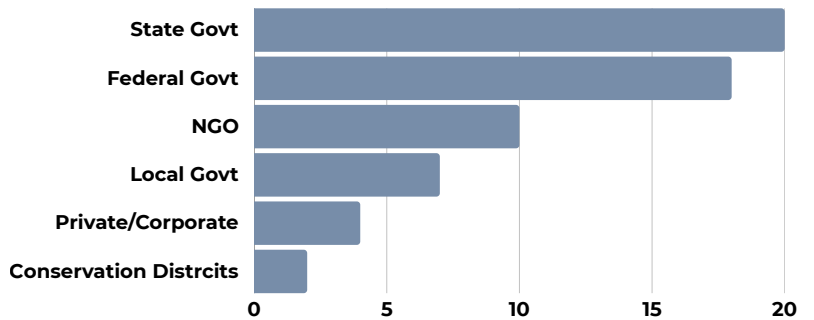


All Project Motivations



Across the state, we recorded 56 LTPBR projects, highlighting both strong engagement and significant room for growth. Many small-scale, community-led projects remain underreported, and lingering uncertainty around permitting and water rights continues to limit implementation. Even so, SB270 is beginning to shift the landscape by helping build confidence among practitioners and opening new opportunities for collaboration across public and private lands.

Identified Funding Sources



*Most projects reported multiple funding sources, all documented above

Opportunities Ahead

Frame LTPBR as Resilience Infrastructure: Recognize LTPBR as proactive climate adaptation and wildfire mitigation

Invest in Partnerships with Capacity: Strengthen collaboration and expand technical assistance to Tribal, ranching, and community-led organizations

Scale Education and Outreach: Expand SB270 awareness among landowners, consultants and local agencies to reduce uncertainty and build practitioner confidence

Diversify Funding Streams: Explore philanthropic and private-sector partnerships to complement federal and state funding programs

