Mountain Studies Institute Receives Grant to Monitor Post-Fire Effects on the Hermosa & Animas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Denver, Colorado, April 20, 2020 – Colorado Watershed Assembly (CWA) announces the Mountain Studies Institute as one of eight Colorado organizations to receive a Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund (CHRF) grant for the 2019 grant cycle. Colorado Watershed Assembly Executive Director Casey Davenhill expressed, “Congratulations to the Mountain Studies Institute. Since 2002 the Institute has been active in empowering communities to utilize science and innovate solutions to address water quality issues. With post-fire monitoring on Hermosa Creek, the Durango community traumatized by the ‘416 Fire’ in 2018 can learn how watersheds recover from fire, flood, and human disturbance. Our hearts went out to the residents of southwestern Colorado during the 2018 fire season. Land use agencies, water providers, ditch companies, and recreation interests are working together to understand the impacts of forest fires and to build resiliency in the community. This project demonstrates the values promoted by the Healthy Rivers Fund: to work collaboratively with diverse interests in communities throughout Colorado, so we can all share the benefits of healthy streams, landscapes, and people.”

Mountain Studies Institute will receive $19,802 from the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund for their Post-416 Fire Aquatic Monitoring. During the summer of 2018, the 416 Fire burned 54,000 acres, primarily in the Hermosa Creek drainage north of Durango, CO. The fire and smoke negatively impacted livelihoods, homeowners, and tourism in Southwest Colorado communities. Runoff events from the 416-burn scar elevate nutrient levels and metal concentrations in Hermosa Creek and the Animas River, especially during monsoon season. Mountain Studies Institute, Colorado School of Mines, and USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station will continue monitoring and collecting data downstream from the 416-burn area to discover how impacts may persist into 2020 and how long full post-fire recovery will take. Decision makers including La Plata County Emergency Management, Animas Consolidated Ditch, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, San Juan National Forest, and drinking water suppliers, will be updated and informed for resiliency planning efforts.

The Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund grant program awards annual grants through a competitive application and review process. These funds support on-the-ground projects that contribute to cleaner water, healthier wildlife habitat, improved recreation and vibrant local economies throughout the State of Colorado. The program was established jointly by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, in cooperation with the Colorado Watershed Assembly. The Colorado Water Conservation Board is the state executive branch agency responsible for state water policy and planning. The Colorado Water Quality Control Commission is the administrative agency responsible for developing specific state water quality policies in a manner that implements the broader policies set forth by the General Assembly in the Colorado Water Quality Control Act. The Colorado Watershed Assembly is a 501(c)(3) Colorado organization that supports collaborative efforts to protect and improve land, water, and other natural resources by providing the network to connect a diversity of interests with Colorado’s watershed groups and other decision makers. To learn more about the Colorado Watershed Assembly, visit coloradowater.org.

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