



# conservation and recreation projects

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The [Montelores Coalition](#) has selected three projects for its first round of Strike Team work in Montezuma and Dolores counties.

The pilot initiative is designed to support targeted, on-the-ground conservation and recreation projects across the region. The first round of projects will focus on work including noxious weed treatment, derelict fence removal, recreation site maintenance and river restoration.

The selected projects are the County Road 39 Restoration Project southwest of Mancos, cleanup and noxious weed mitigation at [Hawkins Preserve](#) in Cortez, and derelict fence removal near Rico.

Cara Gildar, executive director of the Montelores Coalition, said the Strike Team

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“So the strike teams were actually a pilot project that we're trying right now to fill some gaps in work that needs to get done on the ground,” Gildar said.

The Montelores Coalition works on balancing sustainable outdoor recreation and conservation in Montezuma and Dolores counties. Gildar said the organization has been working since 2024 on an [Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan](#), which she described as community-written and community-driven.

The Coalition received five proposals for the first round of Strike Team work. Gildar said the selected projects were scored using a ranking matrix based on priorities identified through the planning process.

The County Road 39 project is located along the Mancos River southwest of Mancos. It will support wetland and riparian habitat restoration through pole-assisted log structures, sometimes called [PALS](#), along with possible native plantings. Gildar said the structures can function similarly to beaver dams by influencing water flow and helping restore the floodplain.

The project also partners with [Montezuma Land Conservancy's traditional harvest program](#), which invites Tribal members onto private land to harvest native plants that are culturally important.

At Hawkins Preserve in Cortez, the work will focus on cleanup, noxious weed mitigation and identifying future stewardship needs in partnership with the Cortez Cultural Center. Gildar said the scope is still being narrowed, but the project could include trail maintenance, litter cleanup, hand-pulling weeds if conditions are right, and assessments of some structures at the site.

Near Rico, crews will remove about one-and-a-half miles of abandoned barbed wire fencing in partnership with Rico Land Collaborative. The Montelores Coalition says the work is meant to improve wildlife movement, reduce hazards and support landscape connectivity in an important migration and calving area for elk and deer.

Gildar said the old fencing can also create issues for people using the landscape.

“Old fence can be a problem for wildlife, it can be a problem for folks on horseback, cattle permittees, recreationists,” she said. “It’s also not very nice to look at.”

The projects will be implemented from late August through late October in partnership

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Gildar said the youth crew component is part of the larger purpose of the work. She said the projects support local job training in outdoor recreation and conservation, while also giving young people experience with stewardship, cultural resources and wildlife habitat.

Because this is a pilot initiative, Gildar said success will include both visible on-the-ground work and lessons learned for future projects. She said the Coalition has already identified ways to improve its proposal process and ranking matrix.

The Coalition may also use lessons from the Strike Team projects to guide future applications for larger regional implementation funding through [Great Outdoors Colorado](#) and [Colorado Parks and Wildlife](#).

Gildar said the Coalition is still exploring what future projects could look like, and that the decision will be guided by the roundtable and broader community input.

The Coalition expects at least one volunteer opportunity to be connected with this year’s Strike Team projects. Additional updates will be shared as implementation moves forward.

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*Added project partnerships for specificity*

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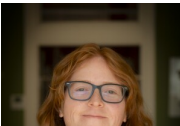
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