



Colorado Conservator

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

CACD to Hold 69th Annual Meeting in November

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts will hold its 69th Annual Meeting from November 11-14 in Colorado Springs. All interested landowners, producers, Conservation District Board Supervisors, Conservation District Employees and Conservation Partner Agency representatives and staff are welcome to attend.

The meeting takes place at the DoubleTree by Hilton, located at 1775 E. Cheyenne Mountain Blvd., Colorado Springs, 80906. The special room rate for CACD Annual Meeting attendees is \$85.00 per night. Call 719-527-4661 and use Group Code "CAM" when making your reservations.

The meetings held at this annual event set the conservation policy for the coming year as determined by the local Conservation District membership across the state. The program committee has also managed to secure several informative and educational speakers so attendees can make the most of their time. The meeting venue is a great resource for networking with conservation partners and learning the latest about conservation practices and programs.

Contact CACD today if you need more information about attending or sponsoring the 2013 Annual Meeting!



Conservationist Hall of Fame, David Miller



Ranching Conservationist of the Year, Draper Ranch



Representative of the Year, Paul Brown



Farming Conservationist of the Year, Hip Shot Farms

CACD's mission is to serve as the unified voice for the Conservation Districts of Colorado, facilitating education and support of landowners in their stewardship of natural resources.



Message from the President

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts has been and will continue to be very active as we move into the fall of 2013. I

am pleased to report that the 50th anniversary of Camp Rocky was successful, and we are very appreciative of the large amount of time donated to this effort by all of CACD's partners.

CACD participated in, and was very active at the National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Legislative Conference in Washington DC this past July. CACD attendees Kristie Martin, Bob Warner, Brett Moore, and myself, represented Colorado at this event. We attended both National and Regional Board meetings as well as personal meetings with our elected representatives on Capitol Hill. This provided us with the great opportunity to promote the policies and positions to our legislators that were established by our members, the Conservation Districts of Colorado.

In the month of August the CACD Board met for a face-to-face meeting in La Junta, which also included a tour of the area. This tour provided CACD board members the opportunity to see firsthand examples of the devastation from the drought this part of the state has experienced. We also heard a great deal about the complexities of the water issues in this part of the state.

CACD is proud to be hosting the 2013 NACD Joint Regional meeting of the Southwest and Pacific Regions in Durango, CO October 1st - 3rd. This provides CACD the opportunity to showcase Colorado's natural resource issues to a large portion of the Nation as far West as the island of Guam. We have an exciting lineup of speakers, including representation from the Western Governors Association, the Governor's office, Native American tribes, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, NACD's Western Issues Specialist, NRCS, and Wyoming natural resource attorney Karen Budd Falen. This meeting allows each region to share natural resource concerns, and build a stronger coalition and a stronger voice on the issues of both regions.

The CACD Annual Meeting is also being planned, and will take place at the DoubleTree Hotel in Colorado Springs in November. The CACD board is excited about the restructuring of the natural resource committees. We hope this provides a fair and equitable system of statewide representation on these committees. We strongly encourage all Watersheds throughout the state to take advantage of this restructuring to ensure that they are represented. These natural resource committees will play an important role in the formation of policy that directs CACD's efforts.

Gary Moyer, CACD Board President

CONSERVATOR is Going Electronic

We'd like to thank the approximately 200 Conservator recipients who have switched to the electronic version of The Conservator! We appreciate your help getting conservation news and information to you in the fastest, most efficient way. If you haven't sent us your electronic information, please join us in migrating to an electronic distribution of your Conservator. This process will save everyone time and money – to say nothing of resources. Please visit CACD. contact.us@gmail.com and tell us your preferences:

- Email only – YES!! Good for you. Provide the email address if it is not the same as on your message to us.
- Email and Hardcopy please – this might help you decide in the wisdom of going email only.
- Hardcopy only – the ideal approach for those who don't have easy access to a computer.

Thanks much. CACD Board of Directors



Conservation Districts - A Respected Voice

This is a story of a small group of farmers in southeastern Colorado who gave hundreds of hours of their time to a rule making process that would not have turned out nearly as functional, without their involvement. The journey has taken nearly six years and it appears that it will be finished at the start of the 2015 irrigation season. With this conclusion, we hope will bring the farmers to a point where they can move forward. In 2008 the Division II Engineer made news by claiming improvements to surface right irrigated farms were depleting the Arkansas River by over 10,000 acre feet of water a year and that he was going to be pro-active and head off a potential law suit with Kansas because of potential Compact



violations. To do this, he would enact efficiency rules for improvements to irrigation. Most of these improvements involved converting flood irrigation to center pivot irrigation. The rules would require farmers to augment the water that would be saved by these improvements - or they would not be able to use their irrigation improvements in the future.

With the help of the Prowers Conservation District, a meeting with the Governor and a small group of farmers was arranged through the Commissioner of Agriculture to discuss the efficiency rules. At the meeting the Governor said that the newly appointed State Engineer was forming a committee that would be rewriting the efficiency rules to present to Kansas. A few of these farmers representing the counties and the Arkansas River Watershed were appointed to the committee, with the rest made up of various Government agencies. After nine months of meeting and many revisions of the draft rules, the calculated depletion was reduced to 930 acre feet per year and most improvements were found not to affect river flow. The exception was sprinklers from water-short canals and drip systems.

The sprinkler farmers argued that any gain in efficiency was offset by cleaning up the water and the efficiency, due to the “use it or lose it” doctrine, made the sprinkler efficiency less than a well. The State went to water court with the proposed rules. A couple of the sprinkler farmers represented themselves in water court and settled with the State with a stipulation that the State would change their pond loss for sprinklers if data from a study of 20 ponds(lasting a minimum of two years) proved that pond seepage losses exceeded what had been allowed by the existing model.

The study entails electronic measurement of inflow and out flow from the ponds and the environmental data is collected from local CoAgMet stations to determine evaporation loss. The study contracts an independent Engineer and Field Technician that reports results, monthly, to the Division Engineer’s Office.

For the first two years, Prowers Conservation District obtained a CIG grant from NRCS for \$75,000, raised another \$58,000, in cash, from all other Districts in the Lower Arkansas River Watershed, two Water Conservancy Districts, 60 private businesses, and thousands of dollars of in-kind donations.

In 2013, the Lower Arkansas Water Conservancy District took over the administration of the study and will manage it through its completion. This partnership is aided through a \$64,000 grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board and a few small grants from the Prowers Conservation District. If numbers remain as they are now (State under-determined the loss by 700%) the study will save farmers \$100,000 a year in replacement water and engineering. This water will be used by farmers who actually need it.

This has been an extremely difficult process for all involved. Without Conservation Districts, the Watershed, CSCB, and CACD none of this would have happened. The Conservation Districts helped landowners understand the laws, policies, and funding mechanisms that fuel such a process. Instead of being looked at as a few “loud, crazy farmers” we became a respected voice of rural Southeast Colorado. I wish to thank all Districts for their help and for funding the CSCB-CACD system that gave us a voice.

Don McBee

CACD Director for the Lower Arkansas Watershed

Soil Moisture Sensors Save Water

Landowners in Larimer County and their managers are learning “hands-on” about how soil moisture sensors can save them time and money while conserving water. Soil moisture sensors are installed in a field at various depths, then they are read with a meter that gives the producer detailed information about how much moisture is in the soil profile for the crop. Having this extra

information supports conservation of irrigation water which improves both water quantity and water quality while also reducing erosion.

The Fort Collins Conservation District conducted



intensive one-on-one training for producers who are participating in a program that shares 50% of the cost of the equipment. During the training sessions all aspects of soil moisture, soil type and the

preparation and maintenance of moisture sensors and additional supplies were explained. Although it was definitely tricky to organize meeting times with busy growers, they all mentioned

it was well worth the time to understand the technology and to be shown access to other online tools, such as the WebSoil Survey. We also created detailed, step by step instructions (with photos) for preparation and installation of WaterMark sensors at: <http://www.ftcollinscd.org/programs/cost-share/sms-watermark-guide/>

We had 7 producers in the program, including a man/wife team and one Spanish speaker who received his training in Spanish since we have a bilingual District Conservation technician. This program was made possible by a Natural Resources Conservation Matching Grant from the Colorado State Conservation Board. For more information on our program please visit our website: www.ftcollinscd.org.



Grants for Colorado Conservation Districts

The Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) once again offered the opportunity to all Colorado Conservation Districts to apply for the CSCB Matching Grants for the 2014 calendar year. The deadline to apply was June 21st and the CSCB received twenty-seven applications requesting \$503,588 for conservation practices and education programs. Funding for this program was severely limited in the last application cycle and barely 32% of the applications garnered conservation assistance for 2013. The economy appears to be bouncing back evidenced by the reinstatement of our program funding from the General Fund and the increased revenue in the Severance Tax Fund. With those two funding sources, we are hopeful that many more applications will benefit from the Matching Grant Program for 2014. A Review Committee of nine people with conservation experience is evaluating all the applications and providing recommendations to the CSCB. The CSCB will discuss and approve funding at their September meeting ensuring a balance of project type and geographical distribution of conservation benefits across the state. Their decision may include projects of good quality but with a lower ranking to provide that balance. Award notices for the 2014 grant cycle are expected near the end of September 2013.

The CSCB Matching Grant program provides a 50% State cost-share for on-the-ground local conservation projects and educational activities identified by the district or watershed. The Matching Grant Program began in 1998 and experienced a brief hiatus from 2003-2006, due to drastic state budget cuts. Since the Program's reinstatement in 2007, 145 projects have installed conservation practices on-the-ground and provided conservation education to youth and adults. The Matching Grant Program distributed \$2.7 million to participating Districts from 2007-2012. Districts, landowners, and their partners matched those funds with \$3.8 million during the same period (an average match of 139%). The total dollars

leveraged for conservation efforts in our great state over the last six years is \$6.5 million. Fifty-three of seventy-six Conservation Districts (70%) have participated in the Matching Grant Program since 2007. This provides conservation benefits to forty-five of the sixty-four (70%) counties in Colorado. This is quite an amazing cooperative effort to conserve our natural resources.

The District Conservation Technician (DCT) Grant began in 2003 primarily providing assistance with Farm Bill programs. Currently, twenty-one Districts participate in the program with about a third sharing technicians with a neighboring District. Technicians may be full-time, part-time or seasonal and there are approximately twenty-six technician positions currently. Many hundreds of landowners and many thousands of acres of land have benefited from the services of these technically trained District staff. Technician positions also provide skilled career opportunities in rural areas where employment options may be limited. With the budget cuts anticipated within the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) of the USDA, these local positions may become an even more valuable technical resource.

By the time this article reaches publication, the initial application window will have closed for the 2014 cycle, but if a District Board decides to hire a DCT later, there may be funds available. The financial advantage to the District is a minimal cost-share of 27.5%. The NRCS and the CSCB contribute the other 72.5%. This is such a fantastic opportunity to provide the practical and technical assistance so needed by landowners! Award notices for the 2014 DCT grant cycle are also expected near the end of September 2013.

Tammra Straub, Grant Program Administrator of the CSCB, will answer your questions regarding either of these two programs. You may reach her on 303-239-4170 or at Tammra.Straub@state.co.us.

Mount Sopris Conservation District Tour

The Mount Sopris Conservation District hosted a conservation tour with their partner, Natural Resources Conservation Service on September 5, 2013 to celebrate 60 years of conservation!

Conservation District supervisors and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff had the opportunity to explain their programs, while landowners had the chance to



showcase their projects and conservation efforts to elected officials and other landowners.

The tour began at the Lazy H Slash Ranch just south of Glenwood Springs. Sandy Jackson and patriarch “Doc” Jackson explained how their center pivot, siderolls, big guns, gated pipe and flood irrigation all worked on the ranch. Sandy stated that they currently have approximately 30% better efficiency with their irrigation water and it allows them to reach the high spots and areas that typically were neglected.

We continued on to the Milagro Ranch with Felix and Sarah Tornare as our hosts. Felix owns 87 acres and leases an additional 500 acres. He and his neighbors provide local, grass feed beef to many of the restaurants in the area. From Felix’s house we could see a panoramic view of the entire Missouri Heights area and which areas were under irrigation and areas that received little or no irrigation. The new irrigation systems have increased his production from 20 tons a year to 100-150 tons a year. Pitkin County Commissioner, Steve Child, asked Felix if he had any drought damage and Felix replied, “Good thing about a drought is everything afterwards is amazing!” He was pleased that he didn’t sustain any long term damage.

Felix is one of many landowners on Missouri Heights who are part of the “Targeted Conservation Project” which will line parts of the ditch with Mega Ditch. The main ditch

serves approximately 2000 acres. It is estimated that the ditch is currently losing 30-50% of their irrigation water in the first 3000 ft. The improvement will allow producers to irrigate an additional three weeks.

Felix also has been involved in the conservation district noxious weed program and educational programs. He thanked the district and the NRCS staff for their dedication to get the producers not only cost share but additional services.

We continued on through Garfield and Eagle Counties and on to Tom Clark’s in Pitkin County. Tom has worked with the office for many years and recently purchased the ranch next to him. He has improved his production by installing center pivots and siderolls. He also has worked with Division of Wildlife and installed wildlife friendly fences. Tom stated “There is a lot of wildlife here and we try to keep that in mind with our operation.”

Our final stop was the Sewell Ranch. Jason explained that his ancestors homesteaded the ranch in the late 1800’s. The family has been involved in agriculture since that time, some of the longest tenure in Pitkin County.

The Sewell Ranch raises local beef and sells to many restaurants in the area. This year they have started to replace the orchard that is over 100 years old and have installed a hoop house for Community Supported Agriculture. Jason explained how they have worked with NRCS and DOW to improve the high county for wildlife and cattle grazing.

If you would like more information about our local programs please call the Mount Sopris Conservation District at 945-5494 ext 105.



NACD 2013 Summer Board

Legislative Conference Report

The 2013 NACD summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference was attended this year by Gary Moyer, CACD's Board President, and Bob Warner, past Board Member and NACD alternate. Also attending the meeting was Kristie Martin, current CACD Board Member, and Brett Moore, CACD's legislative lobbyist. The 2013 conference was held from July 13 through July 16, in Washington DC.



NACD President Earl Garber signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bureau of Land Management

The conference started off on the morning of Saturday, July 13th, with Bob and Gary attending the NACD Board of Directors meeting. This meeting consisted of numerous updates on NACD activities, as well as reports from numerous NACD partners, including NASCA, NRCS, NCDEA, and NARC&DC. Later that afternoon, everyone broke out into their Regional meetings, with Colorado participating in the Southwest Region. Kristie Martin and Brett Moore were able to attend this session. The Southwest Regional meeting always consists of a lively discussion on various Western issues, and how new regulations negatively impact the way of life in the West. We were later joined by the Pacific Region's representatives for the purpose of sharing various thoughts and ideas that face both regions.

On Sunday morning, July 14th, the five Foundation Committee meetings were held. Starting in 2013, Colorado now serves on the Natural Resource Committee. Much of the discussion in the Natural Resource Committee meeting focused on the NACD Policy Book update, wherein each Committee has been tasked with updating the policies that came through their respective committees. The purpose of the update is to remove all outdated policy that new policy has replaced, as well as certain cleanup and simplification of the entire Policy Book. All of this is needed to be achieved without changing the intent of the current policies that have been already approved by the full Board of Directors. On that afternoon, there was a follow up NACD Board of Directors meeting.



Gary Moyer, Brett Moore and Kristie Martin attending the NACD Summer Legislative Conference

Monday morning, July 15th, consisted of a full day of various agency presentations. These included Tommy Beaudreau, who serves as the acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management with the US Department of the Interior. Sarah Brittleman, the Agriculture Counselor to the Administrator of the EPA, also presented. Jim Hubbard, the Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry presented for the US Forest Service. Michael Bean, Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks with the Department of the Interior provided an update to the group. Ann Mills, Acting Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, discussed the proposal for seven (7) regional hubs to be located in existing USDA facilities. She also discussed a project for carbon building in soil, a rapid carbon assessment, and soil health.

Michael Scuse, the acting Deputy Secretary for the US Department of Agriculture also presented, as well as Jason Weller, the acting Chief of the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Senator Debbie Stabenow, the Chairperson for the Senate Agriculture Committee, was the keynote speaker for the luncheon on Monday. She provided a very interesting presentation which gave the attendees some ideology on the Farm Bill from the Senate's perspective. That afternoon consisted of a panel presentation on water issues, along with another panel of Congressional staff persons discussing the current situation regarding the Farm Bill.

Tuesday, July 16th, consisted of meetings on Capitol Hill with eight of the nine members of the Colorado Delegation. We also met with the Bureau of Land Management, in order to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding between NACD and the BLM. Gary Moyer travelled to Alexandria, Virginia to meet with the US Forest Service in order to discuss forest health and the wildfire problems we are facing in Colorado and the west. There was also a meeting with Adam Ekman, a former Representative Scott Tipton staffer, who now works for the very powerful Natural Resource Committee in the House of Representatives.

Additionally, the Colorado Legislators' offices that were visited included the following: Senator Bennett, Senator Udall, Representative Gardener, Representative Coffman, Representative Lamborn, Representative Degett, Representative Tipton, and Representative Perlmutter. The primary issues of focus were the Farm Bill, water rights, and forest health.

Colorado Land Link- A Pathway to Land Access

Over the past four years, Guidestone—a nonprofit serving the Upper Arkansas River Valley---has been developing a regional Land Link Initiative to provide a tool for preserving active agriculture by linking next generation farmers and ranchers with retiring farmers and ranchers and absentee landowners.



Guidestone is working in collaboration with Colorado State University Extension's Building Farmers program as well as the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union. Having found it's beginnings in Chaffee County, Colorado Land Link is in the process of expanding to the lower Arkansas River Valley and Southeast Colorado.

Additionally, a statewide Land Link committee is being organized to oversee the feasibility of expansion across Colorado and to review resources and services offered through Colorado Land Link.

Not only will the program provide matching services for new farmers and ranchers and Colorado landowners, but also it is developing technical resources to assist with the matching process. Lease templates, checklist for lease agreements, business plan outlines, rental rate options, financial planning guidelines and whole farm planning principles will be among the many resource materials made available.

Colorado Land Link is also preparing to design an online introductory course to assist beginning farmers with a self-assessment process towards developing the small farm dream. This is anticipated to complement CSU's Building Farmer Program and be integrated into the pathway to successful farming and land access.

The Colorado Land Link Program currently provides a website which houses a database that includes new farmer applicants and land listings for the state. The database now contains over 100 farmer/rancher applicants and is in the process of seeking land listings throughout Colorado. Many of the applicants demonstrate years of experience and considerable agricultural education background while others are in the early stages of planning a career in farming or ranching.

Through it's monthly online newsletter, Guidestone offers postings of both farmer/rancher listings and works to screen applicants and land listings to insure compatibility. In some cases, Guidestone will offer facilitation services to assist with land lease negotiations.

Guidestone will hold its 2nd Annual Land Link Forum at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort in the Central Colorado Rockies, March 7-9 and is planning a Certified Farm Succession Coordinator Training to be held on March 4-6, 2014 prior to the forum. This training will be offered through the International Farming Transition Network and is intended specifically for agricultural professionals and organizational leaders who work with retiring farmers and ranchers on farm transfer issues. The Land Link Forum will be open to agricultural service providers, farmers and ranchers. It will be a collaborative event to continue building strategic partnerships in the efforts to serve the agricultural communities of Colorado.

For more information visit www.GuidestoneColorado.org or, contact David Lynch, Colorado Land Link director, at david@guidestonecolorado.org or by calling 719 966 2237.



Colorado Teachers Learn About Wildfire at a Weeklong Workshop

The 12th Annual Fire Ecology Institute for Educators, a weeklong forestry and wildfire workshop offered by Project Learning Tree, the flagship program of the Colorado State Forest Service for reaching younger audiences, brought together 22 educators from around the state to the Nature Place in Florissant, Colo.

From June 23 – 28, 4th – 12th grade educators received background information and resources to help educate their students about wildfire and its effects on Colorado's people and landscapes. Shawna Crocker, Colorado PLT Coordinator and organizer of the Fire Ecology Institute, took the teachers to a variety of locations impacted by wildfire. Crocker, who leads the flagship program of the Colorado State Forest Service that reaches younger audiences via workshops for PreK-12 educators, introduced the 22 educators to professionals from various local, state and federal agencies. Agency personnel demonstrated experiments and activities involving wildfire, both in the classroom and out in the field.

Among these professionals was Amy Sylvester from the Colorado Springs Fire Department, who spoke to the group about community actions taken during and since last summer's Waldo Canyon Fire. Peter Brown, a Colorado State University forest ecologist and dendrochronologist, instructed participants on historical and current impacts on forests by using increment borers to core trees in the forests surrounding the Nature Place, where the teachers were staying for the week. Steve Jennings, coordinator for the Colorado Geographic Alliance (COGA) and associate professor for the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, showed the teachers how to use ArcGIS as a tool to map wildfire activity. Several Colorado State Forest Service employees, including Staff Forester Rich Homann and Outreach Forester Lisa Mason, presented information on the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment



Portal (CO-WRAP), FireWise Communities and creating Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).

Teachers also spent a day touring sites in the Waldo Canyon Fire area with Theresa Springer, Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect the water quality and ecologic health of the South Platte watershed. The watershed provides municipal water to three-quarters of Colorado's residents and offers more than 1.5 million acres of recreational land.

At another area affected by the Waldo Canyon Fire, University of Colorado Professor Eric Billmeyer talked about the effects of fire on soils. The teachers also explored impacts of the Springer Fire with Mike Hessler, USDA Forest Service district fire management officer for Park County. Additionally, Tonya Sharp, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, took the group to the Hayman Fire burn area to discuss the impacts of wildfires on wildlife.

At the end of a jam-packed week, the teachers brainstormed ideas on how they can use the information in their classrooms. Institute participants were required to create standard-based lesson plans and report back on how they intend to use the activities, tools and experiments with their students. Some of these ideas include a mock trial where the students role-play a case involving a wildfire started by four high school students; incorporating wildfire into a data-based question as a tool for middle school students to make a claim using evidence to answer the question "Is fire good or bad?"; exploring how wildfire has driven evolution and adaptation; examining tree rings to learn about wildfire history in Colorado; studying the impacts of humans on nature; and exploring wildland firefighting as a career option.



Targeted Conservation Projects: Mount Sopris Conservation District

The Colorado River Watershed Association consists of seven conservation districts. In the fall of 2012 the association met in Silt, Colorado to identify resource issues which required additional assistance and funding to improve irrigation within the Colorado River Watershed. The locally led meeting was organized by the conservation districts and attended by district supervisors, Garfield County Commissioners, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts staff, Colorado State Conservation Board staff, and Natural Resources Conservation Service employees. Small focus groups listed possible solutions for the identified resources concerns. Two local irrigation ditch companies are nearing the implementation phase of projects that will reduce water loss and improve operation of the water delivery system thanks to the recognized solutions for the resources concerns.

The “Headgate and Irrigation Improvement” concern was submitted to Natural Resources Conservation Service. Mount Sopris Conservation District submitted two applications for consideration. The Ditch Companies and Mount Sopris CD requested NRCS complete conservation plans for the Missouri Heights Reservoir Pipeline and the East Mesa Water Company. It was also requested that they begin the complex engineering. Each of these projects is estimated to cost approximately \$500,000.

The Missouri Heights Reservoir ditch has been losing approximately 30% of its irrigation water at the outlet of the dam. With the prolonged droughts in our region this is a significant loss of water for hay and pasture production. The ditch company

serves 54 users including private landowners and homeowners associations. The users are approximately 65% to 75% agricultural. The Missouri Heights—Mountain Meadow Irrigation Company provides water to irrigate approximately 2000 acres of land. Irrigated acreage within the service area is primarily used for cattle ranching, hobby farms, nursery trees, sod production, and to grow hay and forage crops. The hay crop is used as cattle and horse feed, or is sold.

East Mesa Water Company Tunnel replacement project and service area lies in the Crystal River Valley in the western portion of Pitkin County and serves an area in the southeastern portion of Garfield County, Colorado. The Ditch Company has approximately 8.5 miles of distribution ditch starting at the river Diversion 9 miles south of the intersection of Highway 82 and 133 near Carbondale, Colorado. The service area is 740 acres in size and is known locally as the East Mesa of the Crystal River and lies 1 to 5 miles south of Carbondale. The ditch company serves 12 users including private landowners and homeowners associations. The users are approximately 100% agricultural. Irrigated acreage within the service area is primarily used for cattle ranching, nursery trees, and to grow hay and forage crops. The hay crop is used as cattle and horse feed or is sold.

These two projects could not have moved forward without the persistence of our NRCS staff, Mike Kishimoto, who engineered both projects, and Dennis Davidson, Mount Sopris Conservation Technician, who provided assistance to the ditch companies by completing grant and loan applications.

CACD Board Tours Southeast Colorado Drought Area

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts Board of Directors held its August meeting in La Junta, Colorado and stayed the next day for a tour of this area hit hard by drought conditions. CACD former Board Director J.D. Wright organized the tour and enlisted the help of the Olney-Boone Conservation District Board and Staff to put together this informative and eye opening tour.

Otero County Farm Service Agency Executive Director, Chuck Hanagan led the first leg of the tour through the farming areas of the county. Olney-Boone Conservation District President Ed Hiza showed us the ranchlands that included many areas of CRP lands left with only sage, cactus or Purslane. Nancy Ackerman, District Manager for three Districts in the region, coordinated the transportation and scheduling for the tour.



The farmers and ranchers of this area must always be thinking of water and the constant juggling act of the resources that drive their livelihood. The water that runs through areas in Southeast Colorado via several canals doesn't even offer much help. Most of this water has been sold to Front Range urban areas such as Aurora, Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

CACD wishes to thank all those who put together this tour for the Board and Staff. We appreciate the landowners and conservation partner agencies that work hard to make the best of the difficult conditions found in Colorado's Southeast region.



USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants Create New Economic Opportunities and Grow Markets in Local Communities

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA will invest \$52 million in grants to support America's specialty crop producers through the 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) Program awards. The funding includes 54 block grants to U.S. states and territories that will support 694 initiatives nationwide. These grants will assist producers of fresh fruits and vegetables and help strengthen markets for specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.

"These investments will strengthen rural American communities by supporting local and regional markets and improving access to fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables for millions of Americans," said Secretary Vilsack. "These grants also help growers make food safety enhancements, solve research needs, and make better informed decisions to increase profitability and sustainability."

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for fiscal year 2013 supports initiatives that:

- Increase nutritional knowledge and specialty crop consumption
- Improve efficiency within the distribution system and reduce costs
- Promote the development of good agricultural, handling and manufacturing practices while encouraging audit fund cost-sharing for small farmers, packers and processors
- Support research through standard and green initiatives
- Enhance food safety
- Develop new/improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- Control pests and diseases
- Create organic and sustainable production practices
- Establish local and regional fresh food systems
- Increasing healthy food access in underserved communities

The goal of the grant program is to promote and increase opportunities for specialty crop producers. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam received grants this year. Since 2006, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, which is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), has awarded over \$293 million. The program is part of USDA's integrated approach to programs and policies that stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development. A growing number of specialty crop producers are selling into local and regional markets. This year, all of the states and territories receiving Specialty Crop Block Grants are funding projects related to local and regional food systems.

States and territories are also investing their funds from the 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grants in projects dealing with the following key issues:

- Almost \$3.4 million is going to initiatives that help new and beginning farmers

- More than \$4.3 million will support child and adult nutrition
- More than \$4.5 million will support projects focused Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices
- More than \$4.3 million will fund additional food safety initiatives
- More than \$14.3 million will support local and regional food systems
- More than \$8.5 million will support sustainable agricultural practices

Visit www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp to read the 2013 project summaries and view a list of awards by location.

The Specialty Crop Block Grants, administered by USDA's AMS are designed to help strengthen the market for specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. AMS encourages states to develop projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, sustain the livelihood of American farmers, and strengthen local economies.

Many of the grants announced this round contribute to the development of local and regional food systems. USDA coordinates its work on this issue through the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative (KYF2), launched in 2009. KYF2 fosters new opportunities for farmers and ranchers and economic development in rural communities; promotes locally and regionally produced and processed foods; cultivates healthy eating habits and educated, empowered consumers; and expands access to affordable fresh and local food in underserved communities. KYF2 also leads a national conversation about food and agriculture to strengthen the connection between consumers and farmers.

An interactive view of USDA programs that support local and regional food system development is available at the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass. The KYF Compass is a digital guide to USDA resources related to local and regional food systems. The Compass consists of an interactive U.S. map of USDA-supported local and regional food projects and an accompanying narrative documenting the results of this work through case studies, photos and video content.

Get the latest Agricultural Marketing Service news at www.ams.usda.gov/news or follow us on Twitter @USDA_AMS. This is an external link or third-party site outside of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website. You can also read about us on the USDA blog.



A Thank You to our Conservation District Members

Thank You

to

Bent Conservation District
Bookcliff Conservation District
Boulder Valley Conservation District
Branson-Trinchera Conservation District
Center Conservation District
Colorado First Conservation District
Cope Conservation District
Costilla Conservation District
Debeque-Plateau Valley Conservation District
Deer Trail Conservation District
Delta Conservation District
Dolores Conservation District
Double El Conservation District
Douglas Creek Conservation District
Eagle Conservation District
East Adams Conservation District
El Paso County Conservation District
Fremont Conservation District
Haxtun Conservation District
La Plata Conservation District
Lake County Conservation District
Longmont Conservation District
Mancos Conservation District

Mesa Conservation District
Middle Park Conservation District
Mosca-Hooper Conservation District
Mount Sopris Conservation District
North Park Conservation District
Olney-Boone Conservation District
Pine River Conservation District
Prowers Conservation District
Rio Grande Conservation District
Routt County Conservation District
San Juan Conservation District
Shavano Conservation District
South Pueblo County Conservation District
South Side Conservation District
Spanish Peaks-Purgatoire River Conservation District
Southeast Weld Conservation District
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