



Colorado Conservator

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

CACD's 2015 Annual Meeting In Beaver Creek

November 16 – 19, 2015

This past November, CACD held its 71st Annual Meeting at the Park Hyatt Resort in Beaver Creek, CO. The event this year started off on Monday evening with a fantastic membership reception sponsored by Bob Warner, Warner Ranch, that included a variety of heavy appetizers and two complimentary drinks for its attendees.

Our meeting theme this year was: "Conservation through Partnerships – Strategies for Success". That concept was started off on Tuesday morning, despite the wintry weather, with a special keynote address to the CACD General Assembly from Don Brown, CO's new Commissioner of Agriculture. The other speakers that morning included: Gary Moyer, CACD's current President; Clint Evans, CO's State Conservationist; Brent VanDyke, NACD's First Vice President; and Brett Moore, CACD Lobbyist. Tuesday's networking luncheon included an introduction to and a brief address by Jeff Burwell, who is the new NACD Western Issues Specialist. Tuesday afternoon was filled by the Resource Committee meetings and the 2015 Resolution hearings. This year, there were a total of twenty-one By-Law or Policy resolutions that were reviewed, with twelve passing out of Committee and then sent on to be voted on by CACD's General Membership. (A complete listing of those resolutions will soon be available on the CACD website.)

The 2015 Live Auction Fundraiser on Tuesday evening was a great success as well as being an entertaining event, which included live music by Tim Sullivan from the Durango area. Travis Hakert, from the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, came down to provide his regionally renowned services as our auctioneer. Over \$9100 was raised that night, with the help and generosity of the members and partners that attended and participated! CACD profusely thanks those folks that helped out at our only annual fund raising event for the state association. A good time was had by all!

On Wednesday morning, the General Assembly resumed with Cindy Lair, the CO State Conservation Board's Program Manager; John Swartout, Governor Hickenlooper's Rural Policy Advisor; and Connie Richmeier, the past President of the National Conservation Districts Employee Association. These speakers were followed by a variety of Breakout Sessions that continued throughout the day. Some of the session



Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture -- Don Brown



*House Legislator of the Year - Don Coram,
with Gary Moyer and Brett Moore*

topics included information on: Oil and Gas in CO; Youth Educational Programs; CO Water Plan updates; "Duct Tape/

WD40" and "Annual Plan of Work Rx" for Conservation Districts; Endangered Species in CO updates; Local Land Use Plans for CD's; Farm and Ranch Succession Planning; Nutrient Impairment to Waterways in CO; and NRCS Program updates.

Wednesday evening's Awards Banquet recognized the 2015 Conservationists of the Year in the categories of Farmer and Rancher. Lawrence Ortega, from the San Luis Valley won the award for the 2015 Farmer Conservationist of the Year

CACD's 2015 Annual Meeting In Beaver Creek cont.

and Triple R Farms, from Agate, won the award for the 2015 Rancher of the Year. Other conservation awards that were given out are as follows:

NRCS Earth Team Award:

Platte Valley CD, Southeast Weld CD, and West Adams CD

Soil Water Conservation Society:

Jim Anderson, Anderson Farms, Erie, CO

CSCB Direct Assistance Award:

White River Conservation District

CSCB Certification Program Award: Numerous!

CACDEA District Manager Length of Service Awards:

Judy Lopez, Sheryl Wailes, Judy Garrigues, and Pam Brewster

CACDEA District Employee of the Year:

Caitlin Hansen, East Otero, Olney Boone,

West Otero Timpas CD's

CACD Poster and Photo Contest Winners:

Diego Loranca (Montrose) and Patrick Hladkey (Brighton)

CACD Camp Rocky Volunteer Recognitions:

Beth Fortman and Ben Berlinger

CACD Legislator of the Year – House:

Representative Don Coram, CO District 58

CACD Legislator of the Year – Senate:

Senator Randy Baumgardner, CO District 8

CACD Educational Program of the Year:

Montezuma Farm to School Project, Sarah Syverson

CACD Hall of Fame Award:

First Board of Supervisors, Branson-Trinchera CD; Charles

Ryden, Bookcliff CD

CACD Conservationist of the Year – Small Acreage:

Fred and Joan Clifford, Boulder Valley CD

CACD Communications Award:

Brian Allmer, BARN Radio; Lorrie Boyer, KSIR Radio

Congratulations to all of the CACD 2015 Award Winners!

Finally, at Thursday morning's 2015 General Membership Business Meeting, the 2014 Minutes were approved, along with the 2016 CACD Annual Budget. The twelve 2015 Resolutions that passed out of the Resource Committees, were passed by the General Membership present, or there represented by proxy, at



Past President, Gary Moyer and CSCB Program Manager, Cindy Lair



Past President, Gary Moyer and NACD Board Alternate, Bob Warner

the conclusion of the 2015 Membership Business meeting. I, along with the CACD Board of Directors, would like to thank ALL of those individuals and partners that volunteered countless hours to help make CACD's 71st Annual Meeting a success. Many thanks also to our 2015 Annual Meeting attendees and sponsors—we couldn't hold this meeting without your participation and generous financial support. **Best wishes to you all in 2016!**



CACD 2015 Rancher of the Year -- Rector's Triple R Farms



CACD 2015 Farmer of the Year -- Lawrence Ortega



Message from the President

Hello, I am Don McBee, introducing myself to you as the new President of the Colorado Association of Conservation

Districts. For those of you that don't know me, this will be the start of my fourth year serving on the CACD Board, with the past two years in the position of CACD's Vice-President. I am from Lamar, represent the Lower Arkansas River Watershed, and also serve on the Board of the Prowers Conservation District. My family and I have an 1100 acre irrigated farm, with the majority of acres devoted to alfalfa, with secondary crops in grain production. We also have a small beef herd that we feed our quality hay and scrap forages. In my spare time, I enjoy collecting antique toy farm equipment. This is a hobby that helps me to relate to those in agriculture that came before me.

First, I would like to thank outgoing CACD President, Gary Moyer for his four years of service and valuable guidance. We will still have him on the CACD Board though, representing his own North Platte, White, and Yampa River Watershed. He will be serving on the National Association of Conservation Districts' Executive Board as the Southwest Region representative, starting that position in February. Bob Warner will move into Gary's vacated position as the state NACD representative for Colorado. I am sure that they will continue to devote much time to Colorado's natural resource conservation challenges at the state and national level. Anthony Lobato, CACD Director from the Rio Grande River Watershed, was elected as Vice President. CACD Director from the San Juan River Watershed, Gary Thrash, has offered to work closely with Sharon Pattee, our Executive Director and Treasurer/Secretary, on accounting and budgetary issues.

Brett Moore, CACD's lobbyist has already started sending the Legislative Committee language of a few newly proposed bills to be presented during this upcoming 2016 Legislative Session. By the time this reaches you, the CACD Board will have met in Denver, during the National Western Stock Show, where we introduce ourselves to new and seasoned legislators, allowing us to familiarize them to natural resource conservation and agricultural related issues. While there in Denver at the NWSS, CACD honors our 2015 Farmer and Rancher Conservationists of the Year during an evening rodeo performance.

According to Colorado NRCS's State Conservationist, Clint Evans, it appears that the problem with the state historic cultural resource approvals, in order to move forward on stalled NRCS EQIP projects, has been fixed. Also, the reintroduction of the local working group meetings last year helped NRCS hear and benefit directly from local District and landowner input as to their conservation priorities. We will look forward to working with NRCS this year, as it seems that the local field offices that I have recently visited are energized by their new leadership at the state level.

As most of you may know, CACD is faced with our annual dues income not meeting the expense side of CACD's operational administration. We are thankful for the Districts that pay 100% of their annual dues and we realize that it is difficult for some Districts to provide CACD with even a small amount of dues support. Scott Nocks, past CACD Director from the Colorado River Watershed, has initiated a "CACD Lifetime Membership" campaign, in order to generate an additional amount of funding. Anyone can purchase a CACD Lifetime Membership for a \$350 tax deductible donation. In addition, we will be looking for larger corporate sponsorships to help with our funding challenges.

Being on the job for just a couple of weeks, I feel that it is important to immediately look forward with a good grasp of new responsibilities, duties, and challenges that lie ahead for CACD and the 76 Conservation Districts statewide, in addition to working with our various partner agencies in order to further the Districts' needs and those of their landowners. I feel that my biggest goal will be to continually advocate for the Districts' private landowners, who voluntarily watch over the land, protecting and enhancing its natural resources, for the benefit and betterment of all.

Thanks to all of you, in advance, that will be helping me in my new position as CACD's President and the responsibilities that come with it. I'd like to think that the best times are ahead of us!

Sincerely,
Don McBee

2015 Fall/Winter Legislative Update

Happy New Year! I am thankful for the privilege to represent you as lobbyist for the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts. I serve at the direction of the ten CACD Board Members, elected by you at the Watershed level. Much of my work on your behalf is done at the Colorado State Capitol, representing the interests of private landowners and the 76 Conservation Districts of Colorado.

The First Regular Session of the Seventieth General Assembly convened on January 7, 2015 and adjourned sine die on May 6, 2015. The 35 State Senators and 65 State House members introduced 682 Total Bills, out of which 53 bills dealt with natural resource and private property rights. CACD tracked:

- 9 Supported, 5 Governor Signed, 4 Postponed Indefinitely (died)
- 4 Opposed, All 4 Postponed Indefinitely
- 25 Monitored
- 14 Member FYI

Among the bills that CACD actively lobbied in favor of were HB15-1006 Invasive Phreatophyte Grant Program; HB15-1364 Limited Scope Inspections Hydroelectric Projects; SB15-119 Sunset Pesticide Applicators Act; and SB15-234 2015-16 Long Appropriations Bill, which contains the annual state budget. The 4 bills that we opposed were all water-related, and all would have weakened the Prior Appropriations system in Colorado, which CACD's Policy directs us to support.

CACD's Policy Book is a direct product of your CACD Resolution Process. Throughout the year, you have the opportunity to advance any new, desired statewide CACD policy through a resolution coming up from your District to your Watershed. Those that pass, at the Watershed level, will be reviewed by CACD Resource Committees at the November 2016 Annual Meeting. This process further refines the language and intent. Then, the resolution is made available to the entire CACD membership and voted on during the General Membership Business Meeting. If it is passed, it is then added to the Policy Book, which gives the CACD Board and Legislative Committee their direction. A couple of examples of policy from 2014, that directed our actions in 2015, on the previously mentioned bills were:

Legal Reforms to Colorado Pesticide Law

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) shall be involved in any review of the Pesticide Application Act as it is presented to the Colorado Legislature.

Micro-hydro Electrical Generation Opportunities in Western Colorado

CACD supports the renewable energy efforts of agricultural producers throughout Colorado to generate electricity via micro-hydro turbines where such production can be placed on the grid by legislative action.



Direct Assistance Allocation

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts set a goal of increased funding, including Direct Assistance allocations that makes up for and reflects the cost of living increases that have occurred since the last adjustment in the Direct Assistance allocation.

This last one is a particularly positive success for CACD in 2015, from your direction and the resolution process, as we were able to successfully lobby for an inflation-adjusted increase of \$92,053 in Direct Assistance Funding for the Districts. To put this success in lobbying for additional funds over the last several years in perspective, the Districts were receiving just short of \$200k in funding annually, from 2009 to 2012. In the subsequent years, we have been able to increase that total to \$708,767 for the 2015-2016 budget year. This is an increase of half a million dollars annually, over 2012 levels, with a total of \$1,942,195 in funding over the last three years, which includes over 1.3 million additional dollars CACD lobbied for on your behalf.

The \$1000 annual District dues that allow us to continue to tell the Conservation Districts' story at the Colorado State Capitol, which in turn helps fund the important work you do on behalf of the private landowners in your particular District. Past results are no guarantee of future success, but with your continued support, CACD we will continue to make the case that the stewardship of these funds in CO's private land natural resource conservation is a high and worthwhile use of tax payer dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your CACD lobbyist!

Brett Moore is the principle of OnTheBallot Consulting, and has represented CACD since 2011. He hails from a 5th generation family of farmers and ranchers in Northwest Kansas, but calls Denver home.

Lower Arkansas River Watershed
Don McBee, President
Lamar, CO

Lower South Platte River Watershed
Brian Starkebaum, Director
Haxtun, CO

Republican River Watershed
Jim Cecil, Director
Cope, CO

Rio Grande River Watershed
Anthony Lobato, Vice President
Center, CO

Upper Arkansas River Watershed
Elaine Kist, Director
Hartsel, CO

Colorado River Watershed
Scott Jones, Director
Gypsum, CO

North Platte, White, Yampa Watersheds
Gary Moyer, Director
Meeker, CO

Upper South Platte River Watershed
Charlie Carnahan, Director
Kiowa, CO

Gunnison-Dolores River Watershed
Mike Cleary, Director
Crawford, CO

San Juan Basin Watershed
Gary Thrash, Director
Durango, CO

CACD MISSION STATEMENT: *The mission of the CACD is to serve as the unified voice for the Conservation Districts of Colorado, facilitating outreach, education, and support of landowners in their stewardship of natural resources.*



LPCI Special Report

Conservation Across the Range

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) led Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative works to enhance Lesser Prairie-Chicken habitat, one ranch at a time.

Find out how in our new report, *Conservation Across the Range*.

Go to <http://lpcinitiative.org>.



SAVE THE DATE
2016 CAMP ROCKY
July 10 – 16, 2016
Divide, CO

CACD's Executive Director's "Short Reports"...

2016 Greetings Conservation Districts and CACD's Partners in Conservation, This year is off to a shotgun start! I did enjoy a little bit of quiet time over the holidays, when the mere fact that with the rest of the business/conservation world slowing down a bit, it allows me to do some of the same. I hope that the Christmas season was great for the rest of you--we are truly blessed to live in such a beautiful state as Colorado! Here are my "Short Reports" for your review:



In December 2015, I attended several important meetings —

- CO Envirothon's Steering Committee met to discuss an MOU between CACD and the Rio Grande Watershed Education Initiative, where they would take the lead in organizing the 2016 CO Envirothon competition. This year's statewide contest will be held on the front range this year, in Douglas County, April 25th – 26th. Further details can be found at: www.coloenvirothon.com
- CO Farm Bureau hosted the final 2015 meeting of CO Ag Council at their offices in Denver. As a member, CACD continues to stay connected with this group and is recognized as a valuable partner in CO agriculture. As a group, CO Ag Council is more effective on the various issues that impact agriculture in our state.
- The Camp Rocky leadership met, via teleconference, to start planning this year's camp program. CACD sponsors this week long, youth camp will be held outside of Divide, July 10 – 16. All of the registration forms and materials can be found on CACD's website: www.coloradoacd.org
- The Colorado Ag Water Alliance held its bi-annual CO Ag Water Summit in Loveland, at The Ranch complex. Despite the wicked winter weather, the conference was well attended and enjoyed by all that braved the storm to listen to speakers discuss our statewide water issues.

And, so far in January 2016 —

- Due to the problem with trespass livestock in Mesa Verde National Park, CACD sent a comment letter to them and the National Park Service, supporting their desire to exercise the federal authority that they possess in order to deal with these abandoned animals. Action needs to be taken in order to prevent further damage to the Park and its natural resources.
- And, last week, another letter was written and taken in hand to the CO Parks and Wildlife hearing in Denver, with regard to the possible Introduction/Reintroduction of Mexican and Grey Wolves into Colorado. Supported by CACD's membership driven Policy, I expressed our opposition of the introduction of wolves into CO. The hearing was well attended and quite contentious, to say the least.
- CACD honors our 2015 Conservationists of the Year, in the Farmer and Rancher categories, at the National Western Stock Show on January 20th during the evening's rodeo. Our lobbyist Brett Moore, invites various CO legislators to join CACD's Board of Directors for this event, in order to bring awareness to CACD and the legislative issues that can impact our Districts and their members, with regard to any natural resource conservation concerns in CO. Bob Warner helps sponsor this annual January gathering.

- The Colorado State Conservation Board will have their first quarterly meeting in Denver at the CO Department of Agriculture's offices in Broomfield, on January 27th and 28th. CACD meets with the CSCB quarterly to discuss leadership, District outreach, along with a variety of topics relative to conservation and our state programs.
- The National Association of Conservation Districts' 2016 annual meeting will be in Reno, NV from January 30th through February 3rd. Gary Moyer, as a newly elected NACD Executive Board member, Bob Warner, as CO's NACD representative, and I will be attending this year. Colorado will be taking two Resolutions that were passed from the state, to the region, and now on to the national level with regard to dealing with the management and ever increasing populations of wild and feral horses in the west. This is a very important meeting for natural resource conservation at the national level.

As you can see, CACD keeps very busy keeping a finger on the natural resource conservation "pulse" here in our state of Colorado. Please know that I am here to help assist you, your Conservation District, and our conservation partners whenever possible. We will be successful if we continue to work as a team!

*Respectfully,
Sharon Pattee, CACD Executive Director*



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FFA Rangeland Judgers Compete in Akron

By Ben Berlinger, Society for Range Management, Youth Activities Chair

Future Farmers of America (FFA) students and their advisors from high schools across eastern Colorado arrived at the Washington County fairgrounds in Akron October 7th. The purpose was to compete in a rangeland plant identification exercise and participate in judging the soundness of the rangeland. This state-level competition attracted 130 students representing 15 FFA Chapters from as far away as Merino & Otis to the north and Hoehne & Pritchett to the south.

Team awards and top scoring individuals were recognized at the awards ceremony which was held at the conclusion of the competition. The Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) sponsored the individual honors while nineteen of the Conservation Districts across eastern Colorado and some local business sponsored the team plaques and provided a breakfast snack and a cafeteria lunch for the participants. The Washington County & Cope Conservation Districts provided the local coordination for the activity. Carolyn Payne, Conservation District Manager in Akron, handled the local arrangements for the two Conservation Districts. Colorado Conservation Districts have always united to provide support for natural resources education for our youth in Colorado.

The Colorado Section SRM individual awards were presented to Ashley Yergert of Kim FFA Chapter for the high score on the combined site judging & plant identification (88% score); and to Micah Cane of Pritchett FFA for second place honors with his combined score of 86% correct. McCrae Rider of Burlington FFA was recognized as the top individual for the plant identification part of the contest. He scored 93% correct in this exercise requiring the identification of 50 rangeland plants and their characteristics. Ashley was presented with a \$200 check from the Colorado Section SRM along with her plaque.



These students are judging the second of two ecological sites located near Akron, a loamy ecological site.



There were 130 FFA students participating in this year's contest, representing 15 schools from eastern Colorado. This group of students is judging a sands ecological site, one of two ecological sites located near Akron.

The winning high schools recognized at this year's state competition included:

Kim FFA Chapter, 1st Place Gold Team; Lone Star FFA Chapter, 2nd Place Gold Team; Crowley County FFA Chapter, 3rd Place Silver Team; Stratton FFA Chapter, 4th Place Silver Team; Fowler FFA Chapter, 5th Place Bronze Team; Burlington FFA Chapter, 6th Place Bronze Team. In the beginning rangeland judging class Merino FFA Chapter place first, Akron FFA Chapter was second, and Lone Star FFA Chapter placed third.

The FFA rangeland judging contest is divided into two parts. The native plant identification involves the naming of rangeland plants common to eastern Colorado together with rating important plant characteristics such as life span, grazing response, and palatability for cattle. The second part of the contest takes place in the field and requires the students to judge the condition of two different rangeland sites. Here the students must determine the plant composition of each site, the range condition compared to the reference plant community, the suggested stocking rate, and range trend. Finally, based on their evaluation of the existing plant community, each student must select the appropriate management practice (or suite of practices) that would be recommended to the land owner for improvement of the rangeland resource and livestock performance.

The CO Section SRM & Colorado's Conservation Districts congratulate all of the Colorado high school youth who participated in this year's rangeland judging exercise and wish them continued success with their accomplishments to learn more about the conservation of our natural resources.

Colorado Rangeland Judging Sponsors & Supporters

October 2015 – Akron, CO

Akron Dental Clinic
CPS – Steve Sacket
Farmers State Bank of Akron
Kevin Brown
Melanie K. Arnold
Perry Brothers Seed
Y – W Electric

Baca County Conservation District
Cope Conservation District
Deer Trail Conservation District
El Paso County Conservation District
Haxtun Conservation District
High Plains Conservation District
Prairie Conservation District

South Pueblo County Conservation District
Turkey Creek Conservation District
Upper Huerfano Conservation District
Washington County Conservation District
Yuma County Conservation District
Republican River Watershed Association



Profiles in Soil Health

An Approach Rooted in Improving Soil Health

He's 27-years-old, doesn't own a single acre of land and farms using principles that are virtually unheard of in Northeastern Colorado.

So why are landlords entrusting John Heermann with 1,600 acres of their land? Heermann offers this explanation; "By improving their soil and improving the land that they own, I'm putting money in their pocket essentially by increasing the value of their land."

Despite the fact that his farming principles are unconventional for this part of the country, Heermann said landlords are increasingly

realizing the value of improving the health of their soil. But Heermann, himself, only recently discovered the untapped potential of soil health. After he graduated from the University of Nebraska with an Ag Economics degree, he came back to the farm where he grew up and farmed with his father for another five years. During that time he started attending workshops and learning from other farmers like soil health advocate Gabe Brown. **To read the complete story, please go to: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/co/soils/health/?cid=nrcseprd416103>.**

John (right) and Lauren Heermann, Phillips County, Colorado

1,600 Acres, Diverse Crop Rotation, Small Grain Covers: Multi-Species



While the quontset shop on his farmstead is replete with typical farming tools, seed sacks and supplies, there's one piece of unconventional, but often-used equipment that rests on a bench along the shop wall: a microscope, which Heermann uses to monitor his "underground livestock."

A Message From Outgoing President, Gary Moyer

It has been an honor to have served as the President of the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts for the past four years and I'd like to thank everyone for that opportunity. It is with genuine pride that I have completed my final term as President of this statewide Association.

As with most private nonprofit associations, there always seems to be financial challenges, while at the same time staying successful in our efforts to maintain our mission. My belief is that the need for private landowner representation, at both the state and national level, has never been greater. Private landowner representation is a large part of the mission of both the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts and the National Association of Conservation Districts, as well. I have been elected by NACD's Southwest Region leadership, as the region's Executive Board member. Bob Warner will replace me as the NACD Representative for CO. I look forward to representing the NACD Southwest Region at the national level. I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year!

Gary Moyer
CACD Past President (2011 – 2015)

Fremont Conservation District Assists Local Ditch Company With New Pump

Fremont Conservation District received funding from the Colorado State Conservation Board's Matching Grant program to assist the Fruitland Water Company in replacing one of their pumps and motors. The pump that was replaced was a 60 hp pump that was installed in 1975. The pump and motor were completely worn out from 40 years of work, and their other pump was not in much better shape! The District assisted them in upgrading to a new 75 hp variable speed drive pump that will increase water quantity and energy efficiency. In late summer / early fall, their other pump did fail, so the timing was perfect!

The Canon City Field Office NRCS staff, Rick Romano (DC) and Rob Fontaine (Engineer Tech), were instrumental in getting this project on the ground and completed. Doug Burford, ditch rider for the Fruitland Water Company, was also instrumental in this project for his knowledge of the water needs for the ditch company. Black Hills Energy Company also provided a crane and manpower to remove the old pump and install the new pump. Along with the new pump, a flume was installed in November, and, data recording equipment will be installed in 2016 for more accurate water readings. This ditch serves 140 landowners with approximately 300 acres of hay fields and lawns that need irrigating.

Along with a new pump, the Fremont CD also held a Hydrology Workshop in August 2015 for landowners on the Ditch, local ditch companies, and other interested landowners in the area. Our guest speakers were both experts in the field of Hydrology, Professor Marty Frisbee of Purdue University, and Mr. Brett

Jordan with HydroGeo Designs, LLC. Mr. Frisbee gave his presentation on groundwater and surface hydrology, and, Mr. Jordan gave his presentation



on erosion, river flow and river restoration. Both presentation were well received by those in attendance for the morning.

The Fremont CD will follow up with the ditch company for three years to ensure energy savings from this new pump, and, continue to encourage water conservation to all landowners!!



**COLORADO
ENVIROTHON**

SAVE THE DATE
2016 CO ENVIROTHON
April 25 – 26, 2016
Douglas County Location TBD

NRCS State Soil Scientist Helps Kids Spot Erosion in Action

Submitted by William Shoup, USDA

William Shoup, State Soil Scientist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado knows, understanding soil isn't a dirty job and he wants to get more young people involved. Recently, Shoup visited Shaffer Elementary school in Littleton, Colorado to share and enlighten students about the wonderful world of the soil. The presentation is part of a series of guest lectures Shoup conducts to help educate urban and suburban youth about agriculture principles and soil science.

"The presentations in this series are designed to teach students about the bigger picture of soil," shares Shoup. "Soil erosion is devastating and helping kids realize that soil is a resource just like trees and water helps get them thinking that it too needs to be conserved. It's my job to get kids to say or think soil, any time they hear the word conservation."

The NRCS is a federal agency within the US Department of Agriculture and was founded upon soil

conservation principles and understanding the complexities and appropriate uses for varying soil types. NRCS leads a partnership comprised of Federal land management agencies, state agricultural experiment stations, and state and local units of government that adhere to set standards for map production, data collection, and publication of soil surveys to provide a common national system of soil classification and interpretation.

"Soil is fascinating," Shoup goes on to say. "Soil surveys provide a scientific inventory of soil properties and qualities. They include maps showing the locations and extent of soils,

data about those soils, and the scientific information needed to manage soils sustainably." Soil surveys are used by agricultural producers, community planners, engineers, zoning commissions, developers, as well as homeowners. They can also provide information needed to protect water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

"Understanding soil is important," shares Shoup. "Luckily here on the Front Range we have some excellent settings to demonstrate erosion in action. Looking out the window and seeing the mountains, foothills, and plains can really make kids think in terms of landscapes. Kids have great imaginations, they can see the soil move from place to place on those landforms." The erosion and weathering workshop included several hands on displays that illustrated erosion taking place on scaled models.

For additional information about soils and the soil lecture series, please contact William Shoup at william.shoup@co.usda.gov or 720-544-2850.

USDA **NRCS**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Change

Submitted by Cindy Lair, Program Manager, Colorado State Conservation Board

Change is happening all around us and it seems to be happening at an accelerated pace as more years go by. Often we look at change in a negative way, as if times before were somehow easier. Hmm.... Was the Cold War easy? Was Vietnam a happier time? Not hardly. Perhaps it comes from the demands on us to change with the times that cause it to feel so abrupt because we are always trying to catch up with technology and new trends. Conservation Districts go through a similar pressure to metamorphose. We often look back at the history of the conservation movement as “the good times” – but I hardly think of the Great American Dustbowl or any of the subsequent multi-year droughts as easier times no matter how relevant the Conservation Districts were during those days.

Early in our lives there is an expectation for us to be relevant and connected to society. Once we achieve it, we try as we might to hold onto that relevance. As times progress it becomes more difficult to maintain, but that pressure is actually beneficial for building new skills and abilities. Conservation Districts have been around longer than a lot of us. The successful ones have learned

how to change with the times and evolve with the needs of their landowners. The ineffective Districts stand by and curse the times for passing them by and look

back at how things used to be, blaming everything but themselves for their insignificance.

Being relevant to your landowners requires more than money, a Long Range Plan and a monthly meeting. It requires leadership, management skills, and a sense of purpose – for starters. Unfortunately, we’re not all born with those skills. It takes the test of time and life’s changes to bring about those skills – or maybe a class or two. But there are many Districts who are really serious about their sense of purpose – and it shows.

The State Conservation Board and Staff believe deeply in the vision and mission of Colorado’s Conservation Districts. We’re here for you and offer our assistance to sort out the big questions. We encourage all District supervisors and staff to look closely at what it is that brings meaning to what you do in conservation. Is it helping the landowners, society, or connecting with your partners, that gives meaning to your service? Or is it more personal, thinking how your involvement might help you improve conservation efforts on your own land? Some District Board Supervisors are involved because it’s what their fathers or grandfathers did.

Whatever brings meaning to the time you spend with your Conservation District, I encourage you to look to the New Year and try something that is different -something that would bring a new spark. It’s 2016 – we’ve definitely come a long way, together.

Have a great year!



Hello from your Colorado State Conservation Board President

The Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) has endured much change over the past couple of years. This past year, some of our staff has moved on, some have gone away and come back, and we are now lucky to have some new faces, too! As your State Board president, I have enjoyed participating in selecting and welcoming the new staff, like Karen Wolf (Western Slope Field Specialist) and Rachel Theler (Southeastern Field Specialist), as well as greeting a new CO Commissioner of Agriculture, Don Brown, along with our new NRCS State Conservationist, Clint Evans.

The CSCB representatives come from all parts of our state to help guide Conservation District funding and office administration at the state level. It is amazing to see how well this group of individuals functions as a team, with the goal of improving the delivery of conservation around the state. It's a higher level of volunteering that they add on to serving on their local Conservation Districts' Board at home. The CSCB appreciates the dedication and hard work of CACD that lead to an increase the 2015 Direct Assistance funding for our Conservation Districts last year by \$92,000.

Also, the State Board is happy to work with DOA Commissioner, Don Brown and NRCS State Conservationist, Clint Evans. There is no better time than right now to harness the wisdom and energy of these two key leaders in order to create solid partnerships that are lasting and productive. The District Conservation Technician (DCT) program is a long standing partnership that brings technical expertise to local Districts in order to help landowners put conservation practices on the ground. Programs like NRCS's EQIP and CSCB's Matching Grants programs offer funding support for our Districts and their landowners to assist in responsible land stewardship.

This past year, I have participated in a variety of meaningful conversations and meetings with CACD's Board of Directors that focused on what it means to be a successful functioning Conservation District. I have seen firsthand how important the Local Work Group Sessions and the grassroots Resolution Process can be. Last winter, when I attended the National Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Meeting in New Orleans, and then the NRCS State Technical Committee Meetings during the course of the year, I was brought up to speed on both of these important processes to conservation policy and practice here in CO. Having this view at both the state and national level, it is evident to me that what happens at the local Conservation District level is more important than many of us realize. It is crucial that the State Board continue to work with and assist our different partners on getting conservation "on the ground", such as weed programs, our matching grant program, and helping to incorporate additional partnerships. I do think that as long as we, as partners, can sit down at the table and discuss the issues of concern to this great state of Colorado, we can accomplish almost anything that comes before us, now and in the future.

I am looking forward to this upcoming year and all we can accomplish as we represent our local District and their landowners' conservation interests. If I can be of assistance to you, at any time, please don't hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,
Harold R. Unwin



Farming Evolution 2016

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Jill Clapperton, Lance Gunderson, Paul Jasa & Clark Harshbarger

NO-TILL FARMERS

Michael Thompson, John Heermann, Dietrich Kastens, Steve Tucker & Nathan Pearce

Event Center, Phillips County Fairgrounds, Holyoke, CO

Wednesday, February 17th– 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Considering No-Till or New to No-till

Thursday, February 18th – 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Experienced with No-Till and Looking for the Next Step

Check-in, coffee & rolls: 7:30 a.m.

Registration By 2/5/16, \$25 single day, \$35 both days

Registration After 2/5/16, \$35 single day, \$45 both days



Day 1

Clint Evans- NRCS State Conservationist- *Welcome*

Lance Gunderson- *“The Effects of Tillage and the Importance of Soil Structure”*

Dr. Jill Clapperton- *“The Living Soil” & “Changes to expect through No-till”*

Clark Harshbarger- *“Where and How to Soil Sample”*

Michael Thompson- *“Park the Iron- How to Improve Your soil and Profits with No-till”*

Paul Jasa- *“Equipment for No-Till”*

John Heermann- *“Why and How I went to No-Till”*

Question and Answer Panel

Day 2

Lance Gunderson- *“Understanding the Haney Test”*

Dr. Jill Clapperton- *“Soil Biology and Soil Health-tweaking System” & “Choosing Companion and Cover Crops that work for you”*

Clark Harshbarger- *“Where and How to Soil Sample”*

Nathan Pearce- *“Integrating Livestock into and Converting CRP with No-till”*

Paul Jasa- *“Modifying Equipment to Work with Additional Crops”*

Dietrich Kastens- *“Management Challenges in Long Term No-till Systems on the High Plains”*

Michael Thompson- *“If you Build it They will come-Take the Soils to the Next Level”*

John Heermann- *“What I’ve Learned about cover crops in Eastern Colorado”*

Dr. Jill Clapperton is the Principal Scientist and Co-founder of Rhizoterra Inc. She is a renowned Soil Ecologist that promotes an understanding of how soil biology and ecology interact with cropping systems and soil management systems to facilitate long-term soil quality and productivity.

No-Till farmers Michael Thompson, John Heermann, Dietrich Kastens, Steve Tucker & Nathan Pearce will all give first hand information about their no-till journey: Why and how they converted to no-till, why they’ve stuck with it over the years, and changes they’ve made over time.

For complete workshop, lodging and registration information:

www.farmingevolution2016.eventbrite.com

Or email julie.elliott@co.usda.gov , haxtuncd@gmail.com or call 970-854-2812 ext. 3.

SUPPORTED AND SPONSORED BY

Haxtun, Sedgwick, West Greeley & Yuma County Conservation Districts, Upper Republican NRD, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado State Conservation Board, Phillips County Pheasants Forever

Wildflowers, Weeds & Water Education Event at Bison Reservoir

On Saturday, August 1, the Teller-Park Conservation District (TPCD) cosponsored a Wildflower, Weeds & Water tour of Bison Reservoir and the associated West Beaver watershed. Event cosponsors included the City of Victor, Colorado State University Extension, and the Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Company. The impetus for the event was a sighting of Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*) in 2014 during a Native Plant Master field outing held at the Reservoir. The Native Plant Master course is a program of CSU Extension.



Orange Hawkweed

While this pristine and strikingly beautiful property is host to a couple of small patches of Orange Hawkweed, it is also host to a wide variety of native plants. The City of Victor, with the support of the Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Company, carefully manages the property to keep land disturbance to a minimum, as the site provides city water supply and a premier fishing and camping destination for members of the Gold Camp Fishing Club. The club is a members-only property open only to landowners who have a water tap in Victor.



Participants were privy to at least 25 species of flowering native plants. After a guided hike to the beaver ponds above the reservoir, participants ate a delicious and hearty sack lunch packed by the Gold Camp Bakery in Victor. After lunch, the group tromped in and around the bog to view Rose Crown, Star Gentian, and a mass of hill-side Sego Lily. Participants also received event t-shirts.

As one participant said “Wow, this is the best way to spend a Saturday. We’re surrounded by beauty eating a free meal in a new outfit!”

Orange hawkweed is a List A weed species. List A species call for swift eradication before they spread or become unmanageable. The name hawkweed comes from the Greek word hierax for hawk. Its $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch flower head is capable of spreading seeds to form dense patches in just a few years. It also spreads via underground rhizomes and stolons, similar to strawberries. There are other species of hawkweed that are not alien.

TPCD, with a grant Colorado Department of Agriculture, organized the education event and treated the orange hawkweed with an herbicide targeted to eradicate the species.



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A Big Thank You To Those Districts That Sent In 100% Of The Annual Dues For 2015!

Many thanks for your commitment to CACD; we value your support as a CACD Team Player! We appreciate that you had placed funding your state association as a high priority in 2015.

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