



Colorado Conservator

“your voice for locally led conservation”

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USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program General Sign-up

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 26, 2010 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that a general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will begin on August 2, 2010 and continue through August 27, 2010. During the sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized USDA to maintain CRP enrollment up to 32 million acres. Jim Miller, Agriculture Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services, made the announcement on behalf of Secretary Vilsack during a conference call with reporters.

"America's farmers and ranchers play an important role in improving our environment, and for nearly 25 years, CRP has helped this nation build sound conservation practices that preserve the soil, clean our water, and restore habitat for wildlife," said Miller. "Today's announcement will help us create a greener and healthier America, and I encourage all interested farmers and ranchers to contact their local FSA office to learn more how to take advantage of this opportunity."

To help ensure that interested farmers and ranchers are aware of the sign-up period, USDA has signed partnership agreements with several conservation and wildlife organizations, which will play an active role in USDA's 2010 CRP outreach efforts. Additionally, Secretary Vilsack has recorded two public service announcements, which are available to the press and public at www.fsa.usda.gov/psa.

CRP is a voluntary program that assists farmers and ranchers to use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for rental payments, cost-share, and technical assistance. CRP protects millions of acres of America's topsoil from erosion. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production by entering into long-term contracts for 10 to 15 years. In exchange, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation practices.

By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP also protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP makes a major contribution to wildlife population increases in many parts of the country. As a result, CRP has provided significant opportunities for hunting and fishing on private lands.

Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this sign-up provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall covering about 4.5 million acres may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this sign-up are scheduled to become effective Oct. 1, 2010.

FSA implements CRP on behalf of Commodity Credit Corporation. FSA will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

Those who would have met previous sign-up EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this sign-up. In addition to the general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program will be ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land. For more information, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

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President's Message



Harley Ernst

Hi! Hope all are having a good summer with wheat harvest going on and most fields producing well. CACD Board members are busy with statewide action. Many thanks to our legislation committee and legislators on passing SB98 which will give opportunity to partner with others to promote conservation across the state. Thanks to all who participated with our first statewide telephone conference on SB98 with your questions and concerns.

Two CACD Board members, Bob Warner and Gary Moyer, and Tracee Bentley, CACD lobbyist, attended the summer session of the NACD legislative conference

in Washington, DC and met with federal agency representatives, including BLM on wildhorse and burrow population control to stop the devastation of vegetation on grazing land, and US Forest Service on healthy forest management. They also addressed climate issues. They started discussion on the next farm bill and encouraged present CRP and new sign-up.

The teachers' conservation workshop was well attended and has a waiting list for the next session. The committee is considering a third year class to expand even further advanced education on conservation.

Camp Rocky, our youth group camp, was just completed with 75 in attendance. They participated with planning and installing a rock terrace and seeding waterways to control erosion and restored a slope with shaping, seeding, and mulching with chippings of trees that they cleared and thinned from a forest area to promote a healthy forest.

The CACD planning committee is working in preparation on the CACD Annual Meeting which will be held in Colorado Springs at the Crowne Plaza on November 15-19, 2020. Hope to see you there. God bless you. Harley L. Ernst

The Colorado Conservator

Providing Colorado With
Conservation News for 40 Years

Jerry Schwien, Editor
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GOAL: The Colorado Conservator informs residents of Colorado about natural resources conservation. Information from our sponsors will emphasize natural resources and conservation programs available to landowners.

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High Populations of Grasshoppers Predicted in Northeastern Colorado

By Assefa Gebre-Amlak
and Frank Peairs
Colorado State University
Extension

The 2010 grasshopper hazard map, based on the 2009 survey of adult grasshopper activity conducted by USDA-APHIS-PPQ, shows a greater than normal risk for outbreaks of these pests in some northeastern Colorado counties. This map may be viewed at <http://www.sidney.ars.usda.gov/grasshopper/Extras/map10.htm>. This website contains a large amount of useful grasshopper information.

Higher risk of grasshopper infestation is predicted for Yuma and northern Kit Carson counties. Other counties with more localized spots of high risk include Washington, Morgan, Logan, Lincoln, El Paso, and Weld.

Weather conditions will determine how much of the outbreak potential will be realized. For example, cool wet conditions after hatch can result in enough mortality in immature grasshoppers to prevent an outbreak. In addition, if adequate moisture is available, forage regrowth will offset much of the grasshopper damage. Most grasshopper outbreaks occur when drought conditions are prevalent.

There are over 100 different species of grasshoppers in Colorado but only about a dozen of these are considered important on rangeland, and five species cause most problems on crops. Grasshoppers are important on rangeland because they compete with cattle for forage. The forage consumption of a grasshopper infestation averaging 8 per square yard over a 10 acre area is roughly equivalent to that of an individual cow.

Landowners in high risk areas should start monitoring grasshopper populations in rangeland soon after grasshoppers hatch, primarily during late May and June. Early scouting is important because treatments are most effective when grasshoppers are small. The goal of scouting is to get an estimate of grasshoppers per square yard, as well as their stage of development.

Economic threshold for grasshoppers on rangeland:

The simple economic threshold for grasshoppers in rangeland is 15-20 grasshopper nymphs per square yard.

This number is equivalent eight to ten adult grasshoppers per square yard. However, the economic importance of an infestation is affected by such factors as range condition, cattle prices, and treatment costs. CARMA is a computer program that allows the landowners to include these factors in their treatment decisions. CARMA is available at the same website as the hazard map mentioned earlier.

Treatment options for grasshopper management are based on the Reduced Agent and Area Treatment (RAAT) strategy, which results in untreated swaths and swaths treated with reduced chemical rates. Using lower rates and leaving untreated areas reduces treatment costs by as much as 50% and preserves biological control. Grasshoppers move constantly, insuring that they will enter a treated swath and that levels of control will be similar to complete coverage applications. Large infestations can be treated aerially with malathion, carbaryl or diflubenzuron (Dimilin). Smaller infestations can be controlled with RAAT treatments applied aerially or with all-terrain vehicles appropriately equipped to apply carbaryl or diflubenzuron. All-terrain vehicles also can be used for spot treatments of egg-laying sites such as pastures, ditches, and untilled field margins. Grasshopper nymphs tend to remain concentrated in their hatching areas for some time after they emerge, where the application of an approved insecticide can provide effective and economical control of localized infestations.

The Yuma Pest District has been working with county landowners and aerial applicators to coordinate rangeland grasshopper management. To participate in this treatment program, contact the pest district at:

Strategies for managing grasshoppers in cropland are somewhat different. Recommendations for specific crops can be found in the High Plains Integrated Pest Management Guide, highplainsipm.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The CACD 66th Annual Meeting will be held November 15-19, 2010 in Colorado Springs at the Crowne Plaza. The event will feature training for districts, program review for partners and landowners, and policy sessions, booths and exhibits, poster contest, photo contest, silent and live auctions, banquet and awards programs. To obtain hotel/sponsorship/registration information or for further details please see the CACD website at: www.cacd.us or call the CACD office at 719-686-0020. The annual event will be entertaining with an emphasis this year on networking and training in a casual environment.

Kids Conservation Camp

By Melissa Strike, District Manager, Bent CD



What is the best way to get kids outside in nature? Have a Conservation Camp! That is just what the Bent Conservation group decided to do. On June 15-17 approximately 20 local ten-through-thirteen-year-old students met at the John Martin Reservoir to participate in many fun outside activities. In addition to the Bent Conservation District staff, the NRCS of Las Animas, Department of Wildlife, the Corps of Engineer, and the Forest Service teamed together to bring many nature experiences to the group.

Tuesday started with a nature hike around parts of the dam. Students observed plants, spotted turkey vultures and a deer, viewed petroglyphs, and compared different bushes with different berries. Steve Keefer from the DOW led the hike. Soil types and habitat games were presented by Linda Groat, another DOW employee.

The next day, the students boarded the school bus and rode to the Lance Verhoeff farm where they observed the wind turbine spinning rapidly, this project was funded through Bent Conservation

District from a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG). The NRCS also demonstrated how an auger truck worked and showed youth how to take soil samples. Patrick Greenback from the Bent Conservation District had flagged ten plants to identify whether the plant was harmful or helpful to the



cattle. Students were then given a paper with the pictures of different plants and asked to find them in the pasture. Nate Cranson from the NRCS of Las Animas also demonstrated how laser survey equipment is used to measure the differences in the slope of the land. In the afternoon, the students were given a demonstration of water safety by Don Headlee from the Corp of Engineers. Don Headlee gave a tour of the dam which ended in a controlled 50 degree treat as the students and adults went inside the dam.

Thursday started with a demonstration about fire and fire safety by Donna Davis from the Forest Service. Linda Groat from DOW gave a short introduction lesson GPS, and the students were then instructed to find the remaining viewpoints and a stamp at that each viewpoint. Preprogrammed

(Continued page 11)

Executive Director's Message

By Darlene Jensen

CACD faces a great challenge over the next year in its work to extend the sunset provision of the severance tax which supports the conservation districts' matching grants program and conservation technician cost share. CACD will be developing legislation to introduce in this upcoming session which calls for an extension of the severance tax for this support. The severance tax support of these programs is set to sunset in 2011. The severance tax provides \$450,000 annually to these projects.

What is the severance tax? The severance tax is paid by companies in the State of Colorado that extract non-renewable natural resources from the earth, including oil and gas, gold, coal, and molybdenum. Over the last five years, 92 percent of state severance tax collections has come from oil and gas, and nearly all of that from gas.

To help in reaching an extension of the severance tax to support the continued work of landowners and conservation districts in natural resource management through the matching grants program, CACD is encouraging the districts to invite state legislators and local elected officials to attend the watershed meetings and tours featuring conservation projects using matching grant dollars. Landowners are encouraged to be part of these tours to speak to their natural resource management successes using State matching grant funds and for partners to speak to the successes in leveraging these dollars which in some cases are up to 6:1 toward completion of the conservation projects. Conservation Districts are participating in watershed meetings over the next few months. Legislators will be invited to attend these meetings and landowners are encouraged to attend. Please contact your local conservation district for details.

CACD representatives addressed federal funding issues with one-on-one conversations with federal legislators in Washington DC.



Group photo of 2010 Camp Rocky participants with instructors.

Bob Warner of the Upper South Platte River Watershed and Gary Moyer of the North Platte-White-Yampa River Watershed, along with Tracee Bentley, CACD lobbyist also visited with federal representatives of BLM and USFS in D.C.

The NACD Southwest Region meeting will be held September 22 – 24 and CACD will have four representatives in attendance to further address wild horse and burrow management, water management, forest management CRP and Farm Bill issues.

Camp Rocky 2010 was again a success with instructors and students leaving completely exhausted; a true sign of a full program. This year's Camp Rocky was again at capacity with 75 students and 17 instructors. Five major conservation projects were completed at camp, including forest thinning, trail maintenance, channel diversion, mountain pasture reseeding and an erosion control bank stabilization project involving terracing, seeding, rock and log installation, and shrub and chip application. We are proud of all of the students as they worked very hard on all of the conservation projects. Great thanks goes out to the Conservation Districts and partners that provided sponsorships for students to be able to attend Camp Rocky.

Camp was visited by conservation partners including, Jeff Jahnke, Colorado State Forest Service; John Knapp, SE Area Conservation

ist, NRCS; Wendy Dew, USEPA, CACD President Harley Ernst, Branson-Trinhcera Supervisor Harold Unwin, Ag Teacher, Lee Hollingsworth, Cindy Lair, CSCB and Conservation District Managers, Tonya Strode, Flagler CD, Robin Young, Custer County CD and Joyce Wallace, West Greeley CD. Camp Rocky was also joined by representatives of Colorado Division of Wildlife, Coalition of the Upper South Platte, and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, among others. Camp Rocky 2011 is scheduled for July 10-17.

The Conservation Leadership Program has 11 participants entering the 2010-2011 program which is scheduled to begin in October 2010. Callie Hendrickson, CSCB and Larry Sweeney, CACD Director, will conduct the initial leadership training. The program will also include training in conservation leadership by Ray Ledgerwood scheduled for the November 2011 CACD Annual Meeting.

The CACD 2010 Annual Meeting will again feature training for the Districts and partners and will also provide information for landowners on conservation programs. The Annual Meeting will be hosted in Colorado Springs at the Crowne Plaza to be held November 15-19, 2010. Please see the CACD website at www.cacd.us for details and registration information.

This Issue Electronic

The *Colorado Conservator* comes to you quarterly and has been in print since at least 1963. This newsletter is a valuable communication tool for producers, landowners, public officials and conservation partners and is received by 8,000 recipients statewide. The cost to produce the newsletter is now at \$24,000 per year. Of that total to produce the *Conservator* in print and to mail to recipients is \$18,000 (\$11,500 for printing costs and \$6,500 for nonprofit postage.)

CACD has had active sponsor participants and wishes to thank the *Colorado Conservator* sponsors for their continued support. However, due to tough economic times and budget constraints, some sponsors have had to forego their sponsorship of the *Conservator* until the economy sees a resurgence and their budgets become balanced. Therefore, CACD has made the decision to publish every other issue of the *Colorado Conservator* by way of email and to make the *Conservator* available to you at your local Conservation District office.

CACD will continue to make the *Conservator* available to all through the CACD website at: www.cacd.us

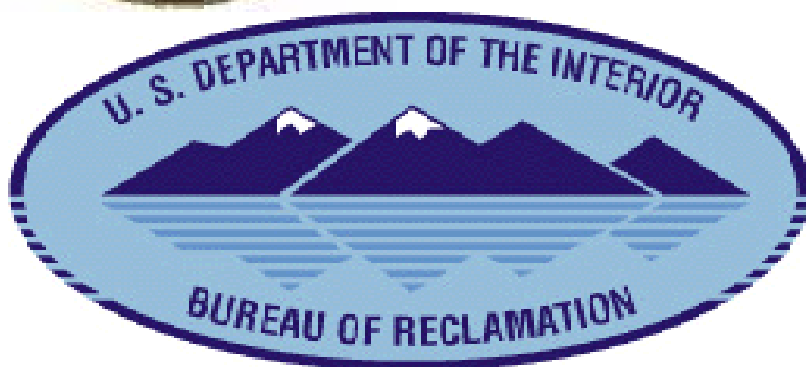
Please take a moment to notify CACD of your email address by sending it to: cad@cad.us.

If you do not have an email address and wish to receive the *Conservator*, please contact CACD by either calling 719-686-0020 or by writing CACD at: CACD, P.O. Box 4138, Woodland Park, CO 80866.

Black and white hard copies will be limited and available upon request. Thank you for your prompt attention and understanding of the need to scale back costs of the *Conservator* at least for the interim.

CACD will be seeking alternative funding sources to help contribute to the cost of producing the *Colorado Conservator*. Any suggestions or input you may have are welcome.

Partners in Conservation



CACD is proud to have these state and federal agencies as contributing sponsors to our newsletter. The following pages are dedicated to conservation programs of the sponsors.

Colorado's State Conservationist Testifies before House Natural Resources Committee

By Petra Barnes-Walker, NRCS State Public Affairs Specialist

The House of Representative's Committee on Natural Resources Sub-Committee on Water and Power held a hearing in Greeley, Colorado on May 19, 2010. The hearing entitled "Managing Water for the Future: How Federal, State and Local Entities are Supporting Agriculture" was held to examine the importance of agriculture in the region as well as to look at programs and grants available for water conservation and management. Allen Green, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist in Colorado served as a panelist and provided testimony.

The hearing was held in the South Platte River Basin which contains a portion of three states including Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado which hosts 79 percent of the Basin. The wise use of water is a critical issue in the West, but most particularly in this area because of the consumptive and non-consumptive water needs as well as the available water supply demands. Currently agriculture is the predominant use of water in the basin of which there is already a limited supply. Adding to the Basin's water quantity concerns is the estimation that by the year 2030 two-thirds of the entire state's increased gross demand for water will occur within this basin alone because of the rapid population growth along the Front Range.

"Water quality and quantity is one of our more pressing natural resources concerns," states Allen Green, "and when asked if water conservation in and of itself would be the solution to this increasing problem, he and the other panelist were unanimous in their reply of, "no, water conservation cannot exclusively solve these issues; *it is a vital and critical component of the solution, but it must coincide with other management and options.*"

In order to gain an increased understanding of other on-going activities that were being



utilized to help combat water quantity issues within the area, the hearing also focused and highlighted innovative practices of farmers in the region and looked at on-going water supply studies within the state.

"NRCS, much the like other entities that were represented on the panel, offers a variety of approaches to help Colorado landowners and natural resource partners explore opportunities to help resolve this mounting crisis," Green goes on to say. "We partner with many entities represented on the panel in one fashion or another either through cooperative agreements, or through our various grants or voluntary conservation program opportunities."

The hearing hosted two panels consisting of a variety of water and agricultural stakeholders. Allen Green testified on the first panel and was accompanied by Trudy Kareus, Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency in Colorado. Others to serve and testify with Mr. Green included the Regional Director for the Bureau of Reclamation; The Director of Colorado's Water Conservation Board; Colorado's Commissioner of Agriculture; and a Weld County Commissioner who is also a farmer and rancher.

NRCS Announces Funding for Two Conservation Programs

The Natural Resources Conservation Service announced additional conservation assistance for working lands through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). Colorado will receive more than \$7.5 million in additional Fiscal Year 2010 funding: FRPP - \$1,833,419 and GRP - \$6,012,764.

These voluntary programs offer private landowners the opportunity to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses.

"This additional funding will enable even more farmers, ranchers and landowners to protect environmentally and economically important agricultural land and preserve the resources that are so critical to the health and prosperity of our rural communities," said Tim Carney, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS, Lakewood, CO.

This funding is made available through the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) final program apportionment for

Fiscal Year 2010. Funds for the two programs are being allocated based on requests for program funding from Colorado. These requests take into account the number of applicable acres for each program and the interest the states' landowners have in program participation.

The FRPP provides matching funds to eligible entities (e.g. land trusts) to help them purchase conservation easements to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Landowners interested in the FRPP should contact a land trust for information about conservation easements.

The GRP helps landowners and operators protect working grasslands, including hayland, pastureland, native grasslands and certain other lands through rental contracts or conservation easements. NRCS and USDA's Farm Service Agency jointly administer the GRP.

For information on eligibility, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit NRCS online at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/.

Teachers Workshop Best Ever?

Is it too forward to say the “Watershed” Teacher’s Workshop Series was an extreme success?!

By Judy Lopez, San Luis Valley Conservation Districts

With 49 teachers from across the state of Colorado attending, 2010 was our best workshop ever! Both returning and first time teachers had the chance to experience water and its profound effects on our natural resources first hand. The series develops teacher skills in two ways, first developing background knowledge and then tying that knowledge into usable lessons for students tied to Colorado Content Standards. As each participating teacher will attest- they leave with skills, tools to do lessons, curriculum, experience with students and 3 graduate credit hours earned over a tough week of in the field training.

The workshop is set against the beautiful 14,000 foot peaks of the Sange De Cristo Mountains, at Colorado largest privately held ranch The Trinchera. The ranches landscape is a perfect watershed setting following waters amazing journey from snow melt, down high mountain streams, through timbered areas, down through pinion foothills, to agricultural centers, desert playas, dunes, and on to our urban settings. Students get to see the rich interplay between land managers both private and public as they work together to maintain the delicate balance that is land and water. The Trinchera donates (\$52,000.00 per week) which includes the meals, lodging, transportation and some of the best field expertise in the business. All in the name of resource conservation which helps ensure the preservation of those resources for generations to come. As ranch manager Ty Ryland notes, “It’s been a great experience for me and the other members of the Trinchera staff to be involved with the workshop and to help the outstanding educators who participate. It gives them an excellent opportunity to see the conservation efforts that take place on the Trinchera Ranch and learn from them.”

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Teachers learn stream ecology

Another major part of the funding component has come through a long time partnership with between the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts and The Federal Bureau of Reclamation (Grand Junction Office). Their commitment to quality resource management through ongoing education is obvious through the money that they continue to put to this effort, the \$10,000.00 grant makes it possible to have the workshop and educate teachers. Other major funders include the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, Center, Costilla, Conejos, Mosca-Hooper, Rio Grande, Teller Park, Deer-Trail and East Adams Conservation Districts.

The workshop has worked hard to dispel myths that prevail and provide a balanced set of facts from everyone who presents about the difficult task that land managers are faced with as they work to resolve resource issues. “We would all love it if there were pat answers for the difficult issues that we (society) face, the problem is, that there is not. When we hear things on the news it easy to form an opinion, when you experience it in real life, you see it is much more dynamic – far more systemic. That why it is so important for teachers to see and understand this, because the teachers teach all our futures,” Judy Lopez, Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative. The “Watershed to Cup” workshop taught stream quality, watershed health (forest ecology, riparian corridor health, and agricultural practices), water rights and use, succession events and their outcomes, wetlands and pond studies, National Park Service roles and Project Wet interactive work. The “Watershed to Sustainability” Workshop taught GPS mapping, composting, soil health, fire succession and water quality, ET rates and climate, plots and transects studies,

and Projects Learning Tree Interactive work. The workshop includes a wide variety of partners, the lead instructor and program organizer is Judy Lopez, from the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, other partners include the Trinchera Ranch, Rocky Farms, Compost Technologies, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, United States Bureau of Reclamation, United States Forest Service, and National Park Service.

The information age has brought us so far from the pollution commercials of the early 1970’s, when America for the first time as a collective got on board and saw that water was something more than you drank. Now we are at the other end of the spectrum and as we work to fight this barrage of information, we see now more than ever that meaningful hands-on/mind-on education is more necessary than ever if we want to protect what is truly precious --- the conserved use of our natural resources.



Teachers learn about ecosystems

Branson School Online to offer Conservation Education Course



Danielle Wollert

Branson School District and its online K-12 school, Branson School Online, are pleased to announce that they are launching their online agriculture program this fall. This one-of-a-kind program provides students throughout the state of Colorado online educational opportunities that can’t be found in other programs. The online agriculture program at Branson School Online will be led by former CACD Conservation Leadership Program participant, Danielle Wollert. Ms. Wollert brings more than ten years of teaching and agriculture experience along with vocational teaching credentials to this position. One of the first offerings for the online program is a Conservation Education course that will give students the opportunity to learn the basics about conservation, participate in their local conservation districts and possibly attend the CACD Annual meeting in November. For more information about Branson School Online, please visit the website at www.bransonschoolonline.com or call 1-888-863-7850. Specific questions can be directed to Danielle Wollert at dwollert@bransonschoolonline.com.

Colorado Conservator available by email:

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Thank you to readers who have responded with your emails to receive the Conservator by email to help reduce the cost of printing and mailing. All recent issues of the Conservator are available on the CACD website at www.cacd.us

Camp Rocky Completes Another Successful Year

Camp Rocky, the week long residential camp for 14 through 19 year olds, again was at capacity with 75 students engaged in the natural resource management camp in Divide, Colorado. The Camp completed its 48th year. The Camp Rocky professional staff helped the students learn about their environment through hands-on experience, with instruction in five principles; rangeland science, fish and wildlife management, forest management, soil and water conservation, and this year a new principle was added, recreation management. Students learned safety in nature and leave no trace techniques.

This new principle was developed by a former Camp Rocky student who went on to receive an education in the area of natural resource management and education. While attending Camp Rocky as a student, Michele Bratschun recognized a need for a fifth principle, to educate students on interaction in nature and safety while working in natural resource management. In her advanced studies Michele drafted a thesis and then presented her thesis concept to the Camp Rocky Committee. Through her presentation and the logic she provided, the Committee adopted this fifth principle into the program. Michele then returned to Camp Rocky to provide instruction in this new principle, which was highly successful in its first year.

Many thanks to the instructors and partners in conservation who gave of their time and expertise at Camp Rocky...Naomi Marcus, Co-Director, Amanda Bucknam, Mica Keralis, Kami Long, Michele Bratschun, Nick Young, Heather Lindsey, Mark Platten, Jan Manning, Julie Showler, Kim Diller, Ben Berlinger, Grant Slinger, Leah

Fugere, Pam Wright, Beth Fortman, Karl Mauch, and Darlene Jensen. The expertise and passion for their work in natural resource management translated to program instruction that was again engaging and unique for the campers. One of the instructors commended the program by stating it was one of the best Camp Rocky's ever!

Camp Rocky's capacity year was again attributable to the sponsorships and in-kind contributions of the conservation partners of Camp Rocky. Thank you to the many Conservation Districts within Colorado that provided students with scholarships to attend Camp Rocky. Several of these students would not have been able to attend without scholarships. Also thank you to the Izaak Walton League, the CACD Women's Auxiliary, the Conservation District's Employees Association, CSU Extension, and the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative Committee through NRCS for sponsoring students to attend Camp Rocky. Conservation partners provide Camp Rocky the continued support which makes the program tick and without their valuable contributions of funding and in-kind support the program would be limited. Sincere appreciation is extended to the support provided by Bureau of Reclamation, USEPA, NRCS, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State Conservation Board, Coalition for the Upper South Platte, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and CSU Extension for their invaluable support and participation. Applications for 2011 to be held July 10-17th are now being accepted. Please see www.camprocky.colostate.edu for information and registration forms.



Junior Natural Resources Camp a little brother?

By Judy Lopez, Rio Grande Watershed
Conservation Education Coordinator

Haven't you always wanted a little brother? Well, Camp Rocky has one, the Junior Natural Resources Camp! Located in the San Luis Valley, at beautiful South Fork, the camp has been an introduction to wildlife, forestry, range, and soil and water resources for kids from 8 to 13 years old, for the past 24 years.

The camp originated through a collaboration of partners from the Conservation Districts, Colorado Division of Wildlife, CSU Extension, NRCS, US Forest Service and other local conservation organizations. Extension took the lead role in organizing and funding, but over the past few years, as their funding has gotten cut, the program attendance has declined from a high of 70 campers down to 30 campers in recent years, until the camp was cancelled in 2009 due to rising costs.

After a partners meeting and many requests to continue the camp

(if the costs could be aligned for participants), the Rio Grande Conservation and Education Initiative offered to become the lead agency for the camp. So with heavy collaboration with the Center Conservation District, funding sources were connected through Saguache County Sales Tax Fund grant. Other funders also included Costilla, Conejos and Mosca-Hooper Conservation Districts, as well as area Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, SLVREC, Colorado Potato Administrative Committee, Jacks Market Del Norte and the Kiwanis Clubs. Through these efforts camp costs were lowered from \$315 to \$160 per attendee with 56 attendees the week of June 1-4, 2010.

The new collaboration was a success. The camp is slated for May 31 – June 1-3, 2011. If you have an 8-13 year old interested in natural resources camp or are interested in funding a camper, please contact Brenda Anderson at 719-754-3400 x 108.



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Woodland Park Subdivision First to Implement Community Wildfire Protection Plan

By Ryan Lockwood, Colorado State Forest Service

A mountain subdivision bordering the Pike National Forest west of Colorado Springs has become the first in the state to fully implement its Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Residents of Majestic Park, a rural neighborhood set apart by steep ridges of ponderosa pine and sweeping vistas of Pikes Peak, launched the plan to protect their community from wildfire 5 years ago. In late 2009, after a series of requests for grant funds, homeowners' association (HOA) meetings and forest-thinning operations, the community successfully completed the goals described in its CWPP. To Majestic Park residents, this CWPP means a significantly reduced risk of catastrophic wildfire sweeping through the subdivision and into the neighboring city of Woodland Park.

Majestic Park is one of nearly 150 communities in Colorado with an approved CWPP, but is the first community to meet all the goals identified in its plan.

CWPPs were authorized and defined by the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act, with the intention of bringing together local communities and government agencies to address wildfire preparedness and fuels reduction in the wildland-urban interface. Approved CWPPs are required to compete for many federal grants to implement forest treatments. In addition, communities with CWPPs receive significant assistance from professional foresters to help develop and implement their plans. Every plan is unique because, in addition to protecting lives and property from catastrophic wildfire, each community has its own unique set of priorities.

"First of all, a CWPP has to take community values into account. You've got to know what the community wants," said Dave Root, an assistant district forester for the Woodland Park District of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and a project administrator on the Majestic Park CWPP. Root, who is involved with almost 20 other CWPPs in his district, ensures that each plan meets specified standards such as treating high-priority areas to reduce hazardous fuels and establishing a more resilient forest.

"The first objective of a CWPP is to create a healthy forest," Root said. "If you do that, everything else comes out okay in the end."

Community bands together following Hayman Fire

The Hayman Fire, which burned nearly 140,000 acres northwest of Woodland Park in 2002, provided the initial motivation for the Majestic Park CWPP.

"The Hayman Fire occurred when development was just beginning in Majestic Park. Most property owners weren't aware of the wildfire risk when they bought their lots and built their homes, but the 2002 fire season dramatically changed their fire awareness," said Curt Grina, Majestic Park resident and HOA president. Although the Hayman Fire never reached Majestic Park, it ended up being the largest wildfire in Colorado's recorded history.



Treated forest (left) next to untreated in Majestic Park.

"Every region has some natural disaster threat. Ours is unique, though, because we can do a lot to mitigate wildfire hazard," said Grina.

After the fire, Grina initially bought expensive equipment and personally began thinning the forest on his own lot. He then started a cooperative effort with the other residents of the Majestic Park subdivision, the CSFS and other agencies to understand the fire risk in the subdivision and devise a plan to deal with it. The community's strong collective desire to protect their lives and properties is the reason Root says the Majestic Park CWPP was so efficiently implemented. "It was definitely the commitment of the community to get out and get the work done," he said.

Majestic Park consists of 15 lots, each approximately 35 acres of primarily ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir on steep terrain. While that landscape is typical of the region, the subdivision is unique in that it is located upwind of many surrounding residential areas; a fire headed toward these areas most likely would pass first through Majestic Park.

"What made the subdivision unique is that it's right next to the city of Woodland Park, with a lot of fuel between here and there," said Grina.

Funding pivotal to CWPP implementation

Grina, who served as lead author of the Majestic Park plan, said he was able to persuade his neighbors



(Photos courtesy of CSFS): CSFS Assistant District Forester Dave Root points out the lower tree density in a fuelbreak.



Heavy machinery grinds trees into mulch.

to implement the CWPP in part by explaining the benefit of cost-sharing using government grants. He said that the Coalition for the Upper South Platte Watershed (CUSP) was pivotal in identifying grant funds to help implement the CWPP. CUSP staff worked with the CSFS to link landowners to the best available sources of funding to help facilitate the Majestic Park plan.

"Citizens seeking to prepare a CWPP or seeking funding for priority projects often don't know what information they need or where to find it," said Marti Campbell, then Special Projects Coordinator for CUSP. "That's where we come in."

Root and other foresters from the CSFS Woodland Park District made frequent trips to Majestic Park to guide the HOA through the steps needed to obtain grant money. They also explained CSFS fuelbreak guidelines and described possible methods to create effective fuelbreaks in the subdivision. Foresters then marked trees for removal based on CWPP standards and landowner requests.

Fuelbreaks built to prevent crown fire

The Majestic Park strategy required what foresters call "thinning from below"—selectively removing excessive understory vegetation and leaving larger, more fire-tolerant trees standing in broad fuelbreaks. Contractors using heavy machinery created most of the 300-foot-wide fuelbreaks,



Machine used to create fuelbreaks in Majestic Park.

Root says the emphasis of the Majestic Park plan was to encourage approaching wildfires to transition from catastrophic crown fires to less-intense ground fires, not to completely prevent wildfires. "Because fire is a natural part of the ponderosa pine ecosystem, we want an approaching wildfire to act like a pre-settlement ground fire that does minimal damage to the ecosystem," he said.

Denny King, Majestic Park HOA secretary and treasurer, is confident that the subdivision is much better prepared now for an intense wildfire. "It's defensible now. It was indefensible before," said King.

To learn more about developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, call your local Colorado State Forest Service office. A list of district offices and related contact information is available at csfs.colostate.edu.

Silent Auction Supports Scholarships for Camp Rocky and other Worthy Causes

By Sally Fosha, CACD Auxiliary President

In the 1990's, the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) held the first Silent Auction at the CACD Annual meeting and requested each conservation district to donate two items. This event began as a fund raiser for CACD. In the late 1990's, the CACD initiated the first Live Auction. At this point, the CACD Auxiliary and the Colorado Association of Conservation District Employees (CACDE) took over the responsibility of the Silent Auction.

What is the Auxiliary? It is a volunteer organization made up of spouses of board supervisors from all 76 conservation districts. Every spouse is automatically a member. This organization supports conservation efforts within the entire state. We meet only once a year at the CACD Annual Meeting held in November. This year the meeting will be in Colorado Springs at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Auxiliary has no annual dues but we do ask for contributions for the Silent Auction and would welcome your attendance at the Auxiliary Meeting. This is an excellent opportunity for spouses to get acquainted, network and offer input to improve the organization and their activities. Following the short business meeting, we have a craft project that is easy and fun to make. We have a lot of fun and invite you to join us.

What is the CACDE? It is made up of any conservation district employee within the state (office manager, district technicians, district clerk, etc). There is a \$5 membership fee for the employee and for the conservation district and everyone is welcome. At the CACD Annual Meeting in November this organization provides training and networking for employees to perform their duties more effectively for their conservation district. These individuals are also asked to work with their district supervisors to obtain items to donate to the silent auction.

These two organizations have worked together for almost 15 years to make the Silent Auction a successful fundraiser. The majority of the proceeds generated by this activity are used for (a) scholarships for youth to attend Camp Rocky (a hands-on conservation outdoor classroom camp); (b) Colorado Foundation for Ag which supplies the *Colorado Reader* to classrooms over the entire state; and (c) support for the Sixth Grade Conservation Poster contest and (d) scholarships for members to attend the CACD Annual Meeting.

Who benefits from the Silent Auction? The conservation education programs supported by the Auxiliary and the CACDE benefit the youth in every conservation district. It is our youth who represent the future in conservation. As a result, it is of prime importance for each conservation district to be actively involved in the program donating items to the Silent Auction and helping facilitate this event.

What kind of items are we looking for in the Silent Auction? It can be anything: (a) something unique from your conservation district such as pinto beans, potatoes, wine, etc; (b) a handmade craft item from local crafters within your district like jewelry, wood carving, quilting, metal working, etc; (c) re-gifting of an item that you received or something you no longer use; (d) Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday decorations; (e) any thing that appeals to a man or woman such as western themed items, tools, home decorations, sport memorabilia, etc.

If you need more information about membership or the Silent Auction, please contact Sally Fosha, Auxiliary President at 719-347-2785 or foshabsr@calhan.net or Val Loose, CACDE President at 970-867-9659 ext 126 or val.loose@co.nacdnet.net.

Inspiration

John Cooley is a potato producer on the western slope, Austin, Colorado, and is poet and story teller. John's poems are featured in the *Conservator* each edition, with this month's poem entitled:



"Made It to the Turn"

Watched the Sun Rise with you,
Watched the Rebirth of the Sun
Watched the Eagles fly over and screech in the trees.

Watched the Sun glisten and shine
Through the crystals on the limbs.

Felt the energy of the endless spiral down turn,
quit and move on.
Saw and watched the two love doves on the lawn,
never far apart.

Saw the mist of the cold air warm and rise,
Saw the longest shadows of the year.

Walked through the Trees.
Sat by the river shivered as I noticed the clouds moving by.

Said a prayer of thanks to the return of light.
For without you cannot farm
It is our quiet time
Rest with all of Nature.

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Teller Park CD Involved in Earth Promise Day

Over the past two years, the Teller-Park Conservation District in Woodland Park, Colorado, has been working closely with a group of teachers and students at the Columbine Elementary School.



Vern Vinson, TPCD supervisor demonstrates the River Riparian Trailer and Snotel model. 2nd photo: Students plant trees for forest study.

For the second year, Columbine celebrated Earth Promise Day in May with a host of different conservation activities and the TPCD has been an integral part both years. This year TPCD participated in the fun-filled day by helping students plant seedling trees to create different forest scenarios for future study, constructing a retaining wall to help with soil erosion and discussed watersheds and water conservation through the demonstration of their River Riparian Trailer and Snotel model. Through these hands-on projects, Jinnie Will, TPCD Education Specialist, Vern Vinson, TPCD Board Supervisor, and Jeremy Buss, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, were able to get “down & dirty” with the kids while teaching them the importance of taking care of their earth.

Other projects TPCD has been involved with at Columbine have been helping them build their habitat nature trail and setting up vermicomposting bins in every classroom. Students have been recycling lunchroom scraps for about 1 ½ years now and use the “worm tea” to fertilize their flower garden and soon to produce raised bed vegetable garden. In addition to providing staff experience and training, TPCD also contributed materials for all of the above projects as well as transportation for second graders to take a field trip to a local bug museum.



This year the Conservation District sponsored two teachers from Columbine to attend the CACD (Colorado Association of Conservation Districts) Teacher’s Workshop in Ft. Garland, CO. The Board of Supervisors will look forward to hearing about all they learned and ways they will be able to incorporate their new knowledge into the classroom.

Working with the staff & students at Columbine Elementary School has been a great experience for the staff at TPCD and we hope to use our success story there to expand into other schools in our district.

Got Weeds? We Can Help!

By Mary Miller, NRCS Area Public Affairs Specialist, La Junta, Colorado



“Got Weeds? We Can Help!” is the motto of the Turkey Creek Conservation District (TCCD).

In 2008 Bill Alt, president of the TCCD and chair of the Pueblo County Noxious Weed Advisory Board, saw that Pueblo County had a void in the noxious weed program—no staff—so he said, “Why can’t Turkey Creek do this?” The TCCD decided that it would send a proposal to the county commissioners to be private contractors who would handle the county’s noxious weed program.

The TCCD board developed a concept of operations on how the program would work and presented it to the Pueblo County Board of County Commissioners. The district also told the commissioners that they could not do the program unless the county helped fund it. The commissioners agreed with the proposal and to fund the program. During 2008, the district and county worked to get all of the legalities set up. In December of that year, the county commissioners and the district signed an Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA).

While working on the IGA, the TCCD anticipated that everything would go as planned so it applied for a grant for assistance with its noxious weed program through the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB). By the time

the IGA was signed, the district had grant funds from the CSCB.

As 2009 rolled around, the district had approximately \$91,000 from the county and the CSCB to begin the program. County funds were used for outreach and for independent contractors. CSCB funds were used for cost-share with landowners. Other partners in the project were the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, various other Pueblo County Government offices besides the Pueblo County Board of County Commissioners, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

The district then hired Beth Campbell to be an independent contractor to help administer the program.

Since the weed program under the district was new, it had to create everything from scratch. Campbell spent time creating many documents, such as the form for the landowners to sign when the district does an evaluation of their property and another for the integrated noxious weed management plan. The weed management plan explains to landowners everything they need to do to control the noxious weeds on their place. Now that Campbell has the forms developed, she is able to streamline

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the process from the evaluation to the weed management plan. “The weed management plan that Beth developed is the best in the state,” Alt said.

The district works with landowners on a first-come-first-serve basis. To qualify for the program landowners must have property in unincorporated Pueblo County. They must also have A or B list weed species as found on Colorado’s Noxious Weed List on the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s website under the Conservation Services Division, Noxious Weed Management Program.

In 2010, the district has partnered with the South Pueblo County Conservation District (SPCCD) plus its previous 2009 partners on the noxious weed program. TCCD has CSCB grant funds for education and outreach while SPCCD has a CSCB grant for cost-share funds. In addition, TCCD has a Colorado Department of Agriculture High Plains Invasives Project grant for certain species east of I-25, such as diffuse and Russian knapweed. The Pueblo County Board of County Commissioners have also put funds into the 2010 work.



To get the word out, the district attended homeowner association meetings, produced radio commercials, wrote an article for *The Pueblo Chieftain*, distributed postcards and fliers, used word-of-mouth, and developed a static display on the program.

In only its second year, the district’s program is growing rapidly. “It’s nice to go out and do the field work. That is my favorite part,” Campbell said. “But the challenge is that there is too much work for one person.” To help with the workload, the district also hired

Jana Gregg as an independent contractor. Gregg helps Campbell in developing weed management plans. In addition Campbell and Gregg developed a display that the district takes to conferences and expos describing the noxious weed program.

“They [Beth and Jana] did a beautiful job on it,” said recently hired Eve Triffo, the district’s independent contractor in charge of outreach and education. Triffo hit the ground running and has already helped TCCD develop 60-second radio ads that are running on KIQN and KWRP and 30-second ads running on KCSJ. All three stations are broadcast from Pueblo. Triffo worked with Pueblo Community College’s New Media Center on these. As time progresses, Triffo hopes to put ads on more radio stations and on local TV stations. The TV ads will have testimonials from landowners who have worked with the district and even some humorous skits with a supposed “Weed Fairy.”

“They say that you have to hear an ad three and a half times before it sticks,” said Triffo. She has the radio ads running at least through July.

Through the noxious weed program, the district has dealt with most of the county’s targeted weeds, such as yellow starthistle, musk and Scotch thistle, Canada thistle, diffuse knapweed, leafy spurge, hoary cress, houndstongue, and Russian knapweed.

“There is one colorful

aspect of the property inspections that Beth and Bill do together,” said Triffo. “That is they always do them as a team because there are certain hazards out in the field, such as poisonous snakes, wild animals, terrain, and weather.”

For further information on the TCCD weed program go to www.puebloweeds.com.

Kids Conservation Camp

(continued from page 3)

GPS devices were then given to each student. Students returned to the home-base shelter on their last viewpoint where lunch of hamburgers was served! After lunch different types of water bugs were captured, examined and then returned to their habitat. The last item on the agenda was presented by the Rapture Center from Pueblo. Students were introduced to three birds of prey that are living in the rapture center. These included a golden eagle, a screech owl, and a falcon.

Local businesses from Las Animas and McClave helped with various donations to ensure that the students had a wonderful time in the great outdoors.

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CACD Benefits You You Can Help Us!

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) provides guidance for individual conservation districts and promotes conservation at local, state and national levels. In 2010 CACD continues its work to maintain and secure funding for the work of the conservation districts. Today there are 76 conservation districts in Colorado which represent the landowners and ag producers statewide in natural resources management matters. CACD is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts, representing 3,000 conservation districts nationwide.

We hear from landowners that the many programs and activities of CACD are essential to supporting the conservation movement, yet we realize it cannot be done alone. CACD is working to attract corporate and foundation sponsorships and individual membership to CACD. CACD is working toward increasing sponsorship for the CACD Annual Meeting, Camp Rocky, and other programs, and is active in communicating with your legislators on issues important to the conservation districts and landowners on the wise use of

natural resources in Colorado.

As you know, there is a cost for management of these programs and CACD is asking for your help to continue in its efforts on behalf of the conservation districts and landowners of Colorado. A **\$35 individual membership** from you and your conservation partners will assist in funding the long-standing work of this organization. You can play an important leadership role by becoming an individual CACD member and making an investment and by publishing your information in the *Colorado Conservator*, with 8,000 recipients statewide. CACD has provided an independent voice for conservation districts since 1945 and will strongly continue to do so.

CACD is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We encourage you to complete the form for your individual membership or sponsorship to CACD and become a part of the natural resource conservation movement in Colorado. For further details on CACD please visit www.cacd.us. Membership is open to all. Your membership in this fine organization is greatly appreciated.

Byers Ag Day

By Sheryl Wailes, District Manager, Deer Trail CD

The Byers FFA Chapter hosted an Ag Education Day for Byers Elementary School children in February. Approximately 120 children made their way through exhibits and farm equipment, (photo below) receiving instruction in the various types of farm equipment, welding and snow melt, among other ag production related subjects. The entire Deer Trail Conservation Board participated, Joe Kalcevic, Darrell Staner, Dave Moos, Peggy Jacob and District Manager Sheryl Wailes.

Vern Vinson and Darlene Jensen of CACD also attended. Darlene's son, Steven Jensen, age 12, provided the children with information on the importance of snow melt and water to farming and irrigation, using the snotel model made by Vern Vinson.

The FFA students provided hands-on instruction and education to the young future farmers, many of whom asked common sense questions, such as, where does the water go? A fact shared by Steven Jensen that 18 states receive water from Colorado intrigued even the teachers.

During the Ag Day, Darrell Staner made it a point to inform teachers of the Conservation Teachers' Workshop being held by the Rio Grande Watershed in June 2010, co-hosted with conservation partners including CACD. From this outreach five teachers from the Byers School signed up for the Conservation Teachers' Workshop. For information on the Workshop, please contact Conservation Education Specialist Judy Lopez at judy.lopez@rcdnet.net



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