



# Colorado CONSERVATOR

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## NRCS and Conservation Districts provide Fire Rehabilitation Assistance

By Jerry Schwien, Editor

All Colorado private landowners impacted by Colorado's 2012 fires are asking, "What about my Land?" NRCS and Conservation Districts may be able to provide you with assistance. For complete details on fire rehab, see the special insert in this Conservator..



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in cooperation with Colorado's Conservation Districts provides private landowners relief from imminent hazard to life and property caused by natural disasters such as wildfires. NRCS support includes providing technical assistance through its Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program as well as helping coordinate resources through its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

## CONSERVATOR is going electronic!

Please join us in migrating to an electronic distribution of your Conservator. This process will save everyone time and money – to say nothing of resources. Please visit: [CACD.contact.us@gmail.com](mailto:CACD.contact.us@gmail.com) and tell us your preferences:

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# CACD President *Gary Moyer*



The summer of 2012 brought with it many examples for common sense conservation in Colorado. Our State is experiencing extremes in many areas. Much of our State is experiencing severe drought conditions. Wild fires have burned out of control to the point of actually destroying homes and properties in large metropolitan areas. The need for Colorado's Conservation Districts to be a strong voice on natural resource issues for the landowners that we represent has never been stronger. The States' Conservation Districts can and should play a large role in determining how our natural resources are managed into the future.

The current wildfires that are burning may only be the tip of the iceberg as the weather conditions have our forests in a very flammable condition. The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) policy on forest health calls for the removal of dead and dying trees to reduce fuel loads in our forests. Because of the increased fuel loads in Colorado's forests, these fires have an increased potential to be catastrophic. My opinion is that there has been a trend in the last few decades to "let nature take its course" when it comes to forest management. By no longer allowing significant amounts of timber to be harvested, this approach has all but done away with the forest products industry in Colorado. The two tools available to manage our forests and reduce fuel loads are fire and harvesting forest products. Without the forest products industry, we are left with fire as our only tool. As we are currently witnessing, fire can quickly become uncontrollable and the consequences can be catastrophic. It is time for everyone to understand how we are managing our forests and the consequences

of this management. Current conditions clearly demonstrate the need to look at a new approach, as well as to look at what has worked in the past. This needs to happen rapidly. With the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent fighting fires this summer, the financial consequences of managing the forests also needs to be taken into consideration. This is just one example of the need to manage our natural resources; we need to make our voices heard.

## Agricultural Community Gives Back to Local Organization



Bookcliff, Mount Sopris and South Side Conservation Districts held their annual landowner / partner appreciation picnic on May 30, 2012. Attending were 99 landowners, partners and elected officials. This annual event is held to recognize the people we work with and all the conservation accomplishments that we have achieved.

The last several years Marie George, Rifle Senior Nutrition Program, has donated homemade hamburger buns with the help of her staff. The Districts "passed the can" and we were able to present Marie with over \$220 for the Senior Lunch Program. The Districts, landowners and partners are proud to be able to give back to our community and thank Marie and her staff!

# CACD Annual Meeting to be at Vail Marriott



It's time to start planning the 68<sup>th</sup> installment of the CACD annual meeting! The meeting will be held November 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> at the Vail Marriott Mountain Resort and Spa. The Vail Marriott is a beautiful facility within walking distance of wonderful restaurants and shopping. The facility is offering a special rate of \$92 dollars per night. We're pleased that we're able to offer a lodging rate lower than the Annual Meeting venues for the last three years. Plan to join us for a week of news and issues, educational training and great networking opportunities.

We are looking for volunteers to help plan and facilitate this year's annual meeting. Please contact CACD or Brian Neufeld at [neufeldfarms@hotmail.com](mailto:neufeldfarms@hotmail.com) if you would like to volunteer or help sponsor this event.

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npscolorado.com is supported by a grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

# CACD Legislative Update

By Gary Moyer, CACD President

CACD and its membership were represented at the NACD Summer Legislative conference by CACD Board President Gary Moyer and past CACD Board Member, and current member of the Southeast Weld Conservation District Board, Bob Warner. Gary Moyer also serves as the Colorado representative with Bob Warner serving as Colorado's alternate representative on the NACD Board. The conference was held from July 13th through the 18th in Washington, DC.

This year's conference consisted of several meetings including NACD Board meetings, Southwest Regional meetings and NACD Foundation Committee meetings. Gary Moyer is the Southwest Regional chairman and therefore serves on the Nominating Committee in charge of selecting candidates for nomination as NACD Officers. Several meetings of the Nominating Committee were held during the conference.

This year, one full day of the conference was spent on a tour and meeting at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House grounds. While at the Executive Office Building, several speakers gave presentations including Mike Pool, the current acting BLM director. The speakers offered numerous opportunities for questions and valuable discussions. The day also included a tour of the Chesapeake Bay area. DuPont Chemical hosted a tour of their farm demonstration testing of new herbicide technology currently under development.

The final day of the conference was a full day on Capitol Hill meeting with legislators. During these one on one meetings, CACD focused on the following issues: The Farm Bill, Forest Health, Water Rights, Equal Access to Justice Act and the new issue of the EPA's Guidance Document relating to the clean water act.

Gary and/or Bob met with the following Colorado legislators or their staff while on Capitol Hill: Rep. Doug Lamborn, Rep. Scott Tipton, Sen. Mark Udall, Rep. Cory Gardner, Rep. Mike Coffman and Sen. Michael Bennet. The day also included a meeting with US Forest Service Director of Forest Health, Robert Mangold at his office in Arlington, VA and Deputy Director of the BLM, Ed Roberson at the Department of the Interior.

While at the USFS office, there was heavy emphasis on discussions concerning drought conditions creating potential for more catastrophic wild-fires. At the BLM, discussions included overpopulation of wild horses and the potential listing of the Sage Grouse as an endangered species.

CACD especially appreciates Bob Warner for volunteering to represent the Southwest Region on the NACD Membership Committee. Bob continues to serve at the local, state and national levels in many ways and Colorado is fortunate to have him devoting so much time to conservation in this state.

Most especially, CACD wishes to thank its Membership for their participation in the policy process and their dues payments which enable CACD to bring the importance of these policies and issues to the attention of our legislators. With your support, conservation issues in Colorado and the west are heard.

## CACD Executive Administrator's Report

By Jeanne Segars, CACD

We wish to extend a sincere Thank You to our Conservation District and Individual Members for 2012. We appreciate your support! Our goal for 2012 is to increase communication, support and benefits for our dues paying members. It is because of you that we are given the opportunity to be the voice of Colorado landowners through the strength of the state's Conservation Districts.

A big Thank You to the MANY Conservation Districts and other sponsors that pledged support for this year's Camp Rocky. Special thanks to the Fremont Conservation District for enthusiastically sponsoring 8 campers and to the former CACD Auxiliary for its generous donation to the program. The Auxiliary discontinued its operations this year but its legacy will live on for a long time to come.

If you haven't heard, this year's camp was cancelled due to the fire issues in the state. Thankfully, the Waldo Canyon fire ultimately did not impact the camp area. However it did impact many others. Next year's camp will certainly provide valuable conservation lessons to 14 to 19 year old youth.

The students registered for the 2012 camp will be the first contacted about 2013's camp. Several parents and sponsors have opted to leave their registration deposits and/or scholarships on file. CACD is dedicated to providing a wonderful, fun and learning experience at Camp Rocky – Summer 2013. We'll provide information in our next issue about how you can get involved.

Our next issue of the Conservator will include all the information you'll need for the 2012 Annual Meeting being held in beautiful Vail this November. If you'd like to get a jump start on your planning, call us today at 719-686-0020. We'll be glad to provide you with web links, forms for registrations, sponsorships or donations and the latest information about this year's conference.

Finally, SharePoint is coming soon. Stay tuned for this exciting AND EASY way to get the latest information from the conservation world. We can't wait to show it off!

Jeanne Segars, CACD Executive Administrator

# Camp Rocky Cancelled Because of Fire Danger Throughout Colorado

By Jeanne Segars, CACD Executive Assistant

We made a decision this year to cancel the 2012 Camp Rocky event due to the fire conditions throughout the state. It wasn't an easy decision, but we feel it was the best one. It is important for us to make the 2013 Camp Rocky a truly great event. We're already working on it and thought the readers of the Colorado Conservator might like a feature of this historic camp and our upcoming celebration in the issues leading up to July 2013 and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Colorado Conservation Workshop known today as Camp Rocky.



*Students participate in fish and wildlife demonstration.*



*Students learn forestry techniques.*

## Notes on the History of Colorado 4-H Conservation Workshop "Camp Rocky"

Prepared by Mark Cronquist, Conservation Specialist, Colorado State Conservation Board

In speaking with Ralph Kotich, retired Colorado State University Cooperative Extension District Director, former CSU Cooperative Extension Range Specialist, and one of the founders of Colorado 4-H Conservation Workshop, the inaugural camp was conducted in July 1962 at the United States Forest Service's Manitou Experimental Forest near Woodland Park, a part of the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station. Other agencies and organizations involved in presenting this camp included the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Soil Conservation Service, and Colorado Division of Game, Fish and Parks.

Through the years, there were a number of CSU County Extension Agents and Home Agents involved in planning and conducting this camp, providing programmatic leadership as well as chaperoning for the camp's youth participants. Professionals from a variety of agencies and organizations brought their knowledge and expertise to camp each year as young people had the opportunity to learn in one of four natural resource disciplines: forestry, soil and water, range, and wildlife.

Approximately 50 youth took part in the first camp and subsequent camps until the Conservation Workshop moved to its current location at the Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp near Divide in 1971 or 1972. During the management of this camp by CSU Cooperative Extension, a second camping experience was developed called Girls 4-H Resource Symposium (until both camps became coed). While Conservation Camp focused on specific natural re-

sources and the technical aspects of conserving and managing these, Resource Symposium provided a forum for teens to learn about natural resources-human interactions and how the natural world impacts our lives through the media, art, entertainment and other areas of human interest. When Extension's Youth Development program discontinued their management of these camps, Resource Symposium was dropped.

Fred Kaehler, State 4-H Specialist, provided Extension support to Conservation Workshop for many years as part of his professional responsibilities to oversee camping and outdoor education in Colorado's 4-H program. Upon Kaehler's retirement, Albert Meier assumed this role for the Colorado State 4-H office. Delwin "Del" Benson, Extension Wildlife Specialist and Professor of Wildlife Biology, acted as co-director the Workshop for a number of years while sharing this role with a number of Extension field agents who assisted at the camp. Del also served as the Wildlife discipline instructor during this time. A very incomplete list of other instructors at the Workshop includes Harvey Sprock (SCS/NRCS, Range), Dennis Davidson (SCS/NRCS, Soil and Water), and Larry Helburg (CSFS, Forestry).

Conservation Workshop has provided a distinctive environmental educational experience for 4-H teens and other Colorado youth. For many years, one of the highlights of the camp was a field trip to Pikes Peak, with private access provided by the Colorado Springs Water Department. Campers and adult staff alike had the rare opportunity to learn about alpine ecology and experience a unique high-mountain environment. It was a rare year when the group didn't get to observe the resident Rocky Mountain bighorn herd.

Another tradition for many years for Conservation Workshop participants was taking in a melodrama put on by the Imperial Players in Cripple Creek. Learning to boo and hiss the villain and cheering for the hero or heroine was part of the Workshop experience for decades.

# NRCS Announces National Water Quality Initiative in Colorado

*Agricultural producers in Custer and Delta counties may be eligible for enrollment*

Edited by Jerry Schwien from information provided by Petra Barnes-Walker, NRCS

State Conservationist, Phyllis Ann Philipps announced the launch of a new National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) committed to improving waterways on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 303(d) list of impaired waters in Colorado. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will manage the initiative by making funds available to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in the selected watersheds.

“Colorado’s DeWeese and Fruit Growers watersheds were identified as high priorities for this Initiative for several reasons,” says Gene Backhaus, NRCS Colorado State Resource Conservationist. “The selected watersheds were identified with the help from state agencies, partners and the NRCS State Technical Committee.”

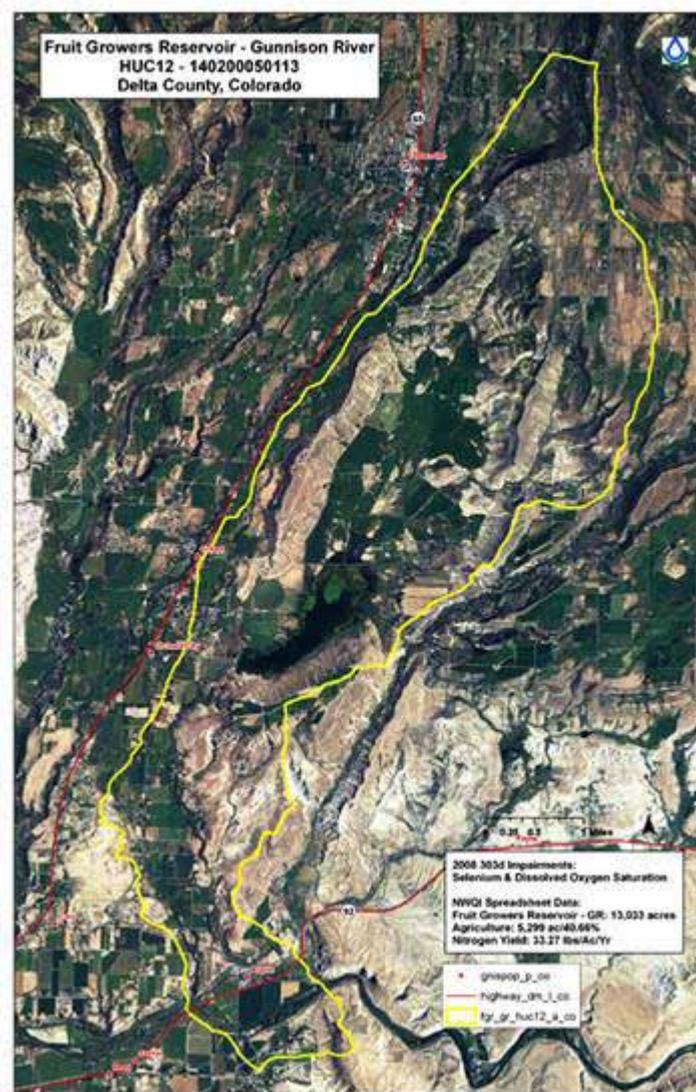
“NWQI allows NRCS in Colorado to focus technical and financial resources in our priority watersheds. We hope by focusing our efforts we will be able to have a cumulative impact on water quality,” says Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver. “This is an opportunity for farmers and ranchers within those watersheds to obtain a conservation plan and implement conservation practices which will benefit the sustainability of their operation and contribute to cleaner water.”

Using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS will provide funding and advice to producers to install conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and nutrient management in watersheds with impairments where the federal investment can make a difference to improve water quality. Through this effort, eligible producers in the DeWeese and Fruit Growers watersheds will invest in voluntary conservation actions to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities.

“American farmers are good stewards of the environment, especially when they have the tools they need to protect or improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality,” said NRCS Chief Dave White. “We look forward to collaborating with producers in key watersheds to help them have a positive impact on streams with impaired water quality.”

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year. If you are an agricultural producer in Delta and Custer counties and are interested in participating in this initiative, please check with your local NRCS field office to see if your operation is located within a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during this fiscal year, must be received by June 15, 2012 with contracts to be developed by July 1.

Since 1935, NRCS's nationwide conservation delivery system works with private landowners to put conservation on the ground based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests. For more information about NRCS' programs, initiatives and services in



# NACD's Statement on Drought Assistance Bill



Edited by Jerry Schwien, CACD

WASHINGTON, D.C.— August 3, 2012— The following is a statement from National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) President Gene Schmidt regarding the House passage of a drought assistance bill:

“As our nation deals with the worst drought we’ve seen in more than 50 years, it’s critical that producers and landowners have the tools they need to continue caring for the land and providing food, feed and fiber for the world. We recognize that the House needed to take action to provide much-needed assistance during this difficult time; however, this is only a short-term solution that does not provide producers and landowners with the assurances they need to plan for the future.

“Additionally, we realize that realistically this short-term assistance will not be provided to producers overnight. Conservation districts and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service have the tools and resources available right now to help producers and landowners implement conservation practices on the ground to help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events. We encourage producers to reach out to their local conservation district offices to find out what resources are available today. Locally-led, long-term conservation planning and practice implementation is our best defense in helping to preserve our nation’s natural resource base no matter what weather lies ahead.

“NACD continues to call on Congress to pass a new, five-year Farm Bill when it returns rejuvenated from the August recess. As stewards of the land and producers of the food and fiber we rely on every day, our nation’s producers deserve to have a long-term framework providing them with the ability to effectively and efficiently manage natural resources for the years ahead.”

## USDA Authorizes Emergency Grazing of CRP Acres

**The USDA Colorado Farm Service Agency (FSA)** State Executive Director, Trudy Kareus, announced recently that all counties are authorized for emergency grazing use of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for fiscal year (FY) 2012. The CRP emergency grazing authorization ends on September 30, 2012. **However, CACD is currently acting on a proposal from the Upper South Platte Watershed** to encourage extension of the Emergency CRP grazing to March 1, 2013.

Eligible producers who are interested in grazing CRP under the emergency authorization and current CRP participants who choose to provide land for grazing to an eligible livestock producer must first request approval to graze eligible acreage and obtain a modified conservation plan from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to include grazing requirements.

Additionally, there will be a 25 percent CRP payment reduction for CRP acres used for grazing under these emergency provisions.

For more information and to request approval for emergency grazing of CRP acres contact your local FSA office.

## Colorado NRCS Approves \$2 Million in Financial and Technical Assistance to Drought Stricken Landowners

Edited by Jerry Schwien from information provided by Katherine Burse-Johnson, NRCS

**D**enver – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps recently announced nearly \$2 million in financial and technical assistance to get much-needed help to landowners and producers in Colorado who are facing extreme and exceptional drought conditions. With this limited funding, higher priority will be given to those who have been in the exceptional drought (D4) areas of the state the longest and will include additional criteria based on erodible soils and other sensitive areas. This will ensure that the funds provided will be applied to the most vulnerable areas of the state.

Priority will be also given to those who are within areas of the High Park Fire that occurred in Larimer County. A map of the areas defined by the National Drought Mitigation Center in Colorado is located at: [http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM\\_state.htm?CO,HP](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM_state.htm?CO,HP).

Colorado will hold special signups for landowners and producers interested in applying conservation practices that will alleviate the drought’s impacts and improve soil health and productivity.

*“NRCS is committed to helping landowners and producers through this challenging drought period by providing additional financial and technical assistance through our conservation programs,”* said Philipps. *“Program authorities allow us to reschedule practices, extend contracts, and substitute practices so producers are not penalized for circumstances beyond their control.”*

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), funds will allow eligible producers to apply for selected conservation practices. These practices include

prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, and water conservation practices. Eligible producers also can re-apply for financial assistance to re-apply failed conservation practices due to drought.

Landowners with a current EQIP contract can request a contract modification to re-schedule planned conservation practices such as prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, water conservation and other conservation activities on pasture and forest land until drought conditions improve.

*“With this funding, we hope to provide some immediate relief in specific geographic areas where we can address critical resource concerns caused by the drought,”* Philipps said. *“It will also help producers keep their cattle healthy, restore pastures, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and protect forest land.”*

Through the WHIP funding, landowners interested in reducing erosion, sedimentation, and the effects of debris flows that complement wildlife habitat, and who are willing to install erosion control practices to protect the riparian and lowland areas from sedimentation are encouraged to sign up.

According to the August 7, 2012, U.S. Drought Monitor, 65 percent of Colorado is in an extreme drought and approximately 6 percent is in an exceptional drought (please check website for updated information at <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM>).

Landowners and producers are encouraged to visit with their local USDA Service Center for assistance with drought-related issues. Additional program requirements and information about EQIP and WHIP is available on the Colorado NRCS website at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).



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throughout the coming year.  
Thanks.***

# Your Conservation District activities

District articles edited by Jerry Schvien, CACD



Shavano Conservation District holds its 20th Annual 4th Grade Festival

On Tuesday May 8th approximately 540 4th grade students from private and public schools in Montrose, Olathe, Ridgway and Ouray gathered at Baldrige Park. Along with the students were teachers, parent volunteers, FFA students and 43 presenters from 19 different organizations. The reason for the gathering was the “20th Annual Natural Resource Festival”.

Colorado West Christian School attended for their second year and for the first time Ridgway and Ouray schools were able to experience the fun.

The festival took on a new name this year along with a wider span of learning. The past 19 years it has been the Water Festival and all the booths were related to water. Due to the change in the 4th grade curriculum the festival has been changed to the Natural Resource Festival. The stations now cover all our natural resources not just water and have a lot of history added to the presentations.

The week before the festival Shavano employees Cyndee FesEducation Coordinator, Shannon Castrodale, District Manager and Debbie Stewart, Planning Technician, visited all the 4th grade classrooms and conducted presentations prior to the festival



## Scholarships awarded

The Bookcliff Conservation District is proud to announce their two scholarship recipients for 2012 for the Norman Hunt Memorial Scholarship. Bookcliff CD partners with the Norman Hunt Family to offer two \$1000 scholarships for students in the District that are continuing their education in agriculture or conservation. Norm Hunt was a board member for fourteen years, contributing countless hours and was instrumental in receiving several grants to assist the water users in the Silt

water Conservancy District.

This year's recipients are Annie McNeel and Kayla Hinkley, both graduating from Coal Ridge High School. Annie will be continuing her education at Northeastern Junior College in animal science and Kayla will be attending Colorado State University in veterinary and animal science. The Bookcliff Conservation District and Virginia and Kyle Hunt would like to commend Annie and Kayla in their academic achievements.



The Yuma County Conservation District was excited to sponsor a one day conservation camp for kids at a local historic site known as Beecher Island. The camp's main focus was on teaching the kids about the importance of conservation through a hand on approach. Other lessons of the camp focused on teaching the kids survival skills and historic facts about the local area. Special thanks to Scott Chartier (DOW) for assistance with aquatic animal/bug identification and Linda Groat (DOW) for the use of nets, bug cages, and gps equipment. This was the second year the Yuma County Soil Conservation District has put on the camp and it has been a great success and continues to grow.

## White River CD features guest speakers



**Tracee Bentley**

The White River Conservation District held its Annual Meeting on January 21, 2012 with over 85 attendees. Among awards and the district update, the WRCD also hosted two guest speakers. Tracee Bentley (above) the former CACD lobbyist now works for the Governor's Energy Office and spoke to the attendees about the Governor's future outlook for energy and how that relates to the Western Slope and our Conservation District. Karen Budd-Falen (below) is a Natural Resource and Ag Issue attorney from Cheyenne, WY and spoke to the attendees about the Equal Access to Justice Act and how our taxpayer money is being spent for litigation by environmental groups against the federal government. The evening was educational and informational, a great time was had by all.



**Karen Budd-Falen**

## Long Time Rocky Ford Conservationist Retires



**Dave Miller**

Dave Miller, long time USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationist (DC) in Rocky Ford, CO retired on April 1, 2012 after more than 34 years of federal service. Miller left his graduate teaching position at the University of Arizona and moved his family from Arizona to join the Colorado Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in the late 1970s. His first position was as a soil conservationist in the Flagler, Colo., field office. A year later he was promoted to the DC position. The field office emphasized minimum tillage and flat channel terraces on wheat ground. Range management was also a concern.

In 1981, Miller took the DC position in Durango, Colo. Work here included sprinkler irrigation of valley land.

Miller returned to the Eastern Plains as the DC of the Rocky Ford field office in 1983. Miller attributed his tenure here to the constant challenge of melding the conservation ethic with the needs of production agriculture. "Every time a project or program would wind down, a new challenge came along for the field office to master," noted Miller. "The goal was to always have the conservation work and programs benefit the producers in Crowley, Otero, and Pueblo counties.

In the 1980s, the Rocky Ford field office conservation efforts focused on protecting the natural resources after the water sales. Up to that time, land that had the irrigation water sold off of it only had weeds on it. The weeds were not

enough to keep this land from eroding. By working cooperatively, the West Otero, Timpas, East Otero, and Olney-Boone Conservation Districts (CD) influenced the water courts so that any future water sales included a mandatory revegetation clause. To assist with this effort, the field office set up test plots to document the techniques needed to revegetate with grass and shrubs on the abandoned land. These results set the standards for all revegetation efforts in Colorado.

Additionally, the 80s saw the onset of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In Crowley and Otero counties 95 percent of all dryland farm ground was accepted into the program. CRP has had a profound influence on the reduction of dryland soil erosion rates. Crowley County also passed a land use ordinance to control the plow out of native rangeland containing fragile soils. This was orchestrated by the conservation districts and the SCS.

Erosion compliance plans also became a big part of the field office's workload in the 1980s. Producers had to have and continue to need compliance plans in order to receive any government benefits. Miller and John Knapp and Lorenz Sutherland, SCS agronomists at the time, pooled their resources to keep the intent of the law but to adapt it to fit the land in arid Southeastern Colorado.

The 1990s saw many irrigation assistance programs to help irrigators in the Arkansas Valley. The Patterson Hollow Hydrologic Unit Project in Otero County was unique in the state. The intent of the project was to monitor the positive changes that could be made in traditional Arkansas Valley irrigation methods. East Otero CD, West Otero CD, and CSU Extension were partners in this project. The East Otero and West Otero districts also sponsored two PL-566 watershed projects—Holbrook Lake and Highline Breaks. Monies from these two programs were used for improving irrigation systems. The field office and irrigators continued

this trend through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), maximizing irrigation improvement application.

"In the early 2000s, we saw the worst 5-year drought in history," said Miller. Range managers, dryland farmers, and irrigated farmers—all producers—suffered alike. The Rocky Ford field office, Olney-Boone, West Otero Timpas (the two districts are now combined), and East Otero CDs had started an intensive effort to help range managers and dryland farmers prepare for and handle the drought. Irrigators received cost-share dollars to move toward more efficient methods of irrigation. Drip irrigation took a firm foothold. Center pivot sprinklers also became more popular. EQIP dollars through the field office were used on many of these systems.

Miller noted that over the years, he has been fortunate to work with dedicated conservation district board members of the Olney-Boone, East Otero, and West Otero Timpas CDs. "I have also been fortunate to work with many dedicated SCSers/NRCSers and partners over the years," said Miller. "I am most proud of the staff I have had in the field office since I began," he added. "Many went on to be district conservationists in other Colorado field offices. All—past and present—have been and are dedicated to serving the local producers."

Through changing times and political direction, Miller has tried to keep the Rocky Ford SCS/NRCS field office focused on serving the conservation and agricultural needs of the farmers and ranchers in Otero, Crowley and Pueblo counties.

Miller will retire to his and his wife's (Mary) sheep ranch in Crowley County.

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