

Rocky Mountain Conservation Times

USDA Service Center • 248 Dozier Ave. • Canon City, CO 81212
(719) 275-4465



FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 275-4465 x 3417

Meeting Time:

7:00 p.m. 1st Wednesday of each month, USDA Service Center, Canon City

GARY RATKOVICH, President
LINDA STONE, Vice Pres.
TONY TELCK, Sec/Treas.
RICH GREEN, Member
TOM LINZA, Member
VACANT, Alternate Member
DEBBIE MITCHELL, District Manager
BRITTANY PIERCE, Farm Bill Tech
MELANIE SCAVARDA, Outreach Tech
www.fremontcd.org / also on Facebook

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6:00 p.m. 3rd Tuesday of each month, 10544 Hwy 24 South, Leadville

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2:30 p.m. 2nd Thursday of each month, USDA Service Center, Silver Cliff, CO

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SHERON BERRY, Vice Pres.
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TRENT STAFFORD, Member
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custercountycd@gmail.com
www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org

UPPER ARKANSAS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 626-3169

Meeting Time:

6:00 p.m. 1st Monday of each month, U.S. Forest Service Building, Salida

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SANDY GARDUNIO, District Manager
upperarkansascd@gmail.com
Also on Facebook

MARCH 2019

USDA EMPLOYEES

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Canon City Service Center:

Greg Langer, District Conservationist
Josh Tashiro, Rangeland Mgt. Specialist
Jeremy Buss, Soil Conservationist
Rob Fontaine, Civil Engineering Tech
Cheryl Lawson, Program Support Specialist
Kara Harders, Regional Specialist, Small Acreage Mgmt

Silver Cliff Service Center:

Beth Fortman, Soil Conservationist
Carol Kuisle-Franta, Program Support Specialist

Salida Service Center:

Greg Langer, District Conservationist

FSA SERVICE AGENCY

Megan Colletti, County Executive Director
Linda Myers & Mariah Pillmore, Program Technicians

County FSA Committee

Lee Rooks, Chairman
Theresa Springer, Vice Chairman
Lance Tyler
Mannie Colon
Bruce Griffen
Vacant

Fremont Conservation District Annual Banquet

Our Annual Banquet will be held April 12, 2019, at the Abbey Events Center in Canon City from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Ticket prices are \$20 for the meal, which is a beef dinner, salad and dessert. RSVP to Debbie Mitchell, 719-315-3417, by March 29, 2019. Our program will be presented by Jeramy McNeely, CSU Extension Director, and Blake Osborn, CSU Extension Regional Water Specialist.

POLLINATOR WORKSHOP

Fremont Conservation District and CSU Extension Small Acreage Management will be hosting a Pollinator Workshop on March 30, 2019, at the USDA Service Center, 248 Dozier Avenue, Canon City, CO, from 9 a.m. to noon. RSVP to Debbie at 719-315-3417 by March 25, 2019. **Space is limited to 25 attendees.**

HEALTHY LANDS OPEN HOUSE

The Upper Arkansas Cooperative Weed Management Association will be hosting a Healthy Lands Open House at the Lake Pueblo Visitor Center on the south end of Lake Pueblo on May 18, 2019 from 9 a.m. to noonish. The topics for the Open House will be focused on noxious weeds and native plant species; Small Acreage Management; Biocontrol options for controlling noxious weeds; Label interpretation for herbicides and sprayer calibrations for herbicide application; Disaster Recovery from fires, floods and other natural disasters; Plant identification and, native and non-invasive plants for landscapes; a tour of the Pueblo Reservoir Native Flower Gardens; Tackling Tamarisk and Russian Olive and river restoration when these trees are removed. There will also be two presentations made on "Disaster Recovery" and "Fake News / Pseudoscience" (regarding what is true and what is fake in the scientific world related to noxious species and herbicides being used). The following websites will have more information posted in the upcoming months: <https://upperarkcwma.weebly.com/> and, <http://www.fremontcd.org>.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

The 2018 Farm Bill-FSA: What is New and What Has Changed

Noninsured Crop Disaster Program (NAP)

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of crops that are not eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters.

NAP provides basic coverage equivalent to the catastrophic level risk protection plan of insurance coverage. This is based on the amount of prevented planting in excess of 35 percent of intended acreage at 55 percent of the average market price, or loss of yield or value in excess of 50 percent of expected production or value at 55 percent of the average market price (or other determined prices) for the crop.

NAP also offers higher levels of coverage (buy-up) ranging from 50 to 65 percent of production, in five percent increments, or the same prevented planted coverage level of more than 35 percent of intended acreage at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up coverage is now permanently authorized under the program and does not expire in 2023.

Coverage, payment limitations, and service fees for NAP have all changed with the 2018 Farm Bill.

Producers who elect higher levels of coverage must also pay a premium equal to:

- The producer's share of the crop, times
- The number of eligible acres devoted to the crop, times
- The approved yield per acre, times
- The coverage level, times
- The average market price, times

Note: Producers may now elect to use the contract price or other prices such as local, organic, or direct market price instead of the average market price.

A 5.25 percent premium fee.

The payment limitation per producer and legal entity has increased to \$300,000 for buy-up coverage; it remains at \$125,000 for basic coverage.

Service fees have increased to \$325 per crop per county, and to \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed \$1,950 per producer.

Disaster Programs

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP)

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease (including cattle tick fever), adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires that are not covered by LFP and LIP. In addition to covering the cost related to gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever, ELAP will now cover the cost related to gathering livestock to inspect for cattle tick fever.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

LIP provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths or injuries in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather or attacks by animals that have been reintroduced into the wild by the federal government. "Cold" is now considered a covered eligible loss for unweaned livestock without regard to any management practice, vaccination protocol, or lack of vaccination.

LIP now covers diseases that are caused or transmitted by a vector and are not controlled by vaccination or an acceptable management practice. These diseases were previously covered under ELAP.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP provides financial assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines lost by natural disasters.

For beginning or veteran farmers or ranchers, the reimbursement costs for TAP increased from 65 percent to 75 percent for replanting lost trees, bushes, and vines; and from 50 percent to 75 percent for the cost of pruning, removal, and other costs incurred for salvaging existing trees, bushes, and vines.

CSU EXTENSION SMALL ACREAGE MANAGEMENT

More to the Business than Harvesting and Selling By Kara Harders

In many ways the small and backyard farmers are making wonderful changes to our food industry; more local products, better understanding of where food comes from, a higher appreciation for “ugly veggies”, however it is important to remember that food safety is a key principal for all produces, both the very large and the very small. It would be hard to have missed the December 2018 *E. Coli* outbreak in Romaine lettuce. As of December 6, 2018, 52 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 had been reported from 15 states. Even though evidence indicated romaine lettuce from the Central Coastal growing regions of northern and central California was the culprit, all romaine lettuce, nationwide, was taken off shelves.

While a smaller producer likely wouldn't have the large market that made this a nationwide issue, it is still important to their 50 people in the CSA, 20 friends, or three family members who are eating the product that is has been grown, processed, and handled in a way that makes it safe and free of food borne illness (FBI) causing germs and bacteria. The truth is, there is a possibility of contamination at nearly every step of the way. Luckily, Colorado has a ton of resources to help producers grow and market a safe product for their consumers.

An excellent resource to get started on is the Colorado Farm to Market website (cofarmtomarket.com). This site was developed to familiarize Colorado food producers and food product manufacturers with federal, state and local food licensing regulations and to help ensure that the path food travels from farm to fork is safe. With a wide range of topics including raw agricultural products, value added products, prepared foods, regulations, and licensing, this page is a great starting point to discovering what rules and best practices apply to you and your specific products.

Another resource to consider is the Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health page for CSU Extension (<http://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/nutrition-food-safety-health/>). In addition to contact information, fact sheets, and other information, you can also see their various newsletters focusing on topics such as food safety or food nutrition.

Becoming aware of the ways FBI travel and contaminate food can help you make better processing choices and habits. Some good agricultural practices (GAPs) are common sense, such as washing your hands and wearing gloves, while others are a little less obvious, such as, testing the water you use for its microbial water quality. Some other practices include: Signage (in multiple languages), established farm policies, easy access bathrooms and hand washing facilities, first aid supplies, designated smoking and eating areas, and worker/volunteer trainings.

Lastly, make an effort to determine if your business is covered under the Produce Safety Rule. This is a newer rule under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) which establishes science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption. Head to this site to learn more: <http://www.coproducesafety.org/>.

It can be easy to consider yourself exempt from rules or habits due to small size but we on the SAM team believe that every bit counts! Now that we are in the off season for many farms, consider what you can do on your property to make food production/consumption safer and cleaner, even if it is just washing the veggies you buy from the store for your own table.

USDA Rural Development (RD) offers financial and technical assistance to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural America. As the lead Federal agency for rural development needs, RD helps rural communities grow and prosper. Check their website for the variety of programs they offer at www.rd.usda.gov. They have more than 40 loan, grant and technical assistance programs that they offer.

The office for assistance to Custer, Chaffee and Fremont Counties is located in Alamosa, Colorado. Their phone number is 719-589-5661, extension 4. The office for assistance to Lake County is in Delta, Colorado. Their phone number is 970-874-5735, extension 4. There is also a toll free number, 1-800-670-6553, that can be called for assistance.

DISTRICT AND AGENCY NEWS

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Due to staffing shortages in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, producers are encouraged to call the Canon City office to make an appointment at 719-315-3416. This office is staffed on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For urgent needs, please contact the Pueblo FSA office at 719-744-5468, or, Megan Colletti, County Executive Director at megan.colletti@co.usda.gov. For more information on FSA programs, check their website at www.fsa.usda.gov/co.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARDS

Each local Conservation District encourages landowners who have an interest in agriculture, conservation, and education and would like to serve on a local board to contact their Conservation District—information on the front of the newsletter. Landowners are also encouraged to participate in meetings and workshops being held by the Conservation Districts. Most of these workshops and meetings are free to attend and loaded with information on conservation practices and concerns.

CAMP ROCKY 2019

Camp Rocky is a Conservation camp for students ages 14 to 19 years old. This camp teaches the students conservation practices in the Resource Fields of: Rangeland Science, Forestry Management, Soil and Water Science or Fish and Wildlife Management. Students pick one of these practices to work in for the week they are at camp. The Camp this year will be held July 7 –13, 2019, in Divide, Colorado. Contact your local Conservation District for any scholarships for Camp that may be available. For more information on Camp Rocky, visit the Colorado Association of Conservation District website at www.coloradoacd.org/camp-rocky.html.

The Lake County Conservation District held 6th Grade Poster Contest last October. Alexa Bujard was the 1st place winner and she received \$50.00, Kassandra Riquetti was the 2nd place winner and she received \$40.00, Manuel Bujanda was the 3rd place winner and he received \$30.00. There were 5 Honorable Mentions. The First place winner will be honored at our Annual Meeting in April.

LCCD will be hosting a Firewise workshop in June. Details will be announced at a later date.

NRCS PROGRAMS

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

The StrikeForce Initiative is designed to better serve persistent poverty communities and socially disadvantaged farmers through the coordination of activities among USDA agencies and the use of Community Based Organizations.

Conservation Client Gateway is an NRCS website that provides secure access to conservation plans, practice implementation schedules, financial applications and contracts, documents and payment information. Conservation Client Gateway is a voluntary program and an option to long distance travel to your local field office. For step-by-step instructions on getting started, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway>, or, call 970-372-4200 for additional assistance

FREMONT COUNTY WEED MANAGEMENT

Biocontrol of Noxious Weeds By: Nick Bankston

Biological control methods are an important aspect of integrated pest management (IPM), involving the release of insects, diseases, or other organisms that target specific weeds. One reason most invasive species are so problematic is that they do not encounter the natural predators, parasites, and pathogens in their introduced range that keep their populations in check in their original habitats. Biocontrol aims to introduce these different species to invasive populations in an effort to reduce their competitiveness and make them easier to manage. The speed and amount of control varies, but Canada thistle rust (*Puccinia punctiformis*), a host-specific fungus, has reportedly reduced Canada thistle infestations by 80% to 90% in as little as two years.

Any biocontrol species goes through rigorous testing over numerous years before it is made available to the public to ensure that this control mechanism will only affect that target pest species and won't have any unintended consequences on other plants or the ecosystem in general. For example, Canada thistle rust doesn't affect native thistles.

Biocontrol is often a much cheaper and less labor-intensive management option than chemical or mechanical methods. However, there are some limitations. Most biocontrol species take a couple of years for their population to reach a point where they will have a significant impact on the pest population. In addition, biocontrol will only suppress the target pest and never fully eradicate it. Biocontrol can be an extremely effective form of long-term weed control, though, especially when used as part of an IPM program in conjunction with chemical, mechanical, and/or cultural control methods.

The Colorado State Insectary offers biocontrol for a variety of noxious weeds, including Canada thistle, Russian knapweed, salt cedar, field bindweed, and puncturevine, most of which only cost \$30. Please visit the State Insectary website at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/agconservation/biocontrol> or contact the Fremont County Weed Management department at 719-276-7317 or nick.bankston@fremontco.com for more information.

For assistance with noxious weeds, contact Fremont County Weed Management, 719-276-7317, for Fremont and Custer counties. For Chaffee and Lake counties, contact Chaffee County Weed Department, 719-539-3455. For more information on noxious weeds in the State of Colorado, check the Colorado Weed Management Association website at www.cwma.org.

DISTRICT CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN

Brittany Pierce is the District Conservation Technician for The Fremont Conservation District. Brittany assists the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with EQIP applications for landowner and / or agency projects. Brittany also assists District landowners with District Cost Share applications for irrigation improvements, fencing, seeding for rangeland, erosion control and burned areas; ditch repair caused by flooding; and noxious weed identification. Brittany has been assisting the landowners in the Hayden Pass burn scar area with a Targeted Conservation Project to assist in clean up and restoration of property damaged by last year flooding in the area. Brittany is a valuable asset to both NRCS and the Fremont Conservation District!!

COLORADO LAND LINK A PATHWAY TO LAND ACCESS — For more information visit www.GuidestoneColorado.org or, contact David Lynch, Colorado Land Link director, at david@guidestonecolorado.org or by calling 719-966-2237

DISTRICT NEWS

FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

No-Till Drill for Rent in Fremont County

Have you ever been interested in no-till seeding or would like to rent one locally? **Fremont Conservation District** now owns and rents out Great Plains No-Till Drill for anyone interested and within Fremont Conservation District boundaries. The No-Till Drill offers 3 different seed boxes for different variety of seed mixes and can be calibrated to preference. It can be towed behind most pickup trucks and can operate with a minimum 40 HP tractor. Rental days are a minimum of two days and a maximum of five days. For information on how to rent the No-Till Drill or more about the implement, please call the Fremont Conservation District at 719-315-3417. Call today to reserve your dates!

5TH GRADE POSTER CONTEST WINNER!!

Reven Wright, 5th grade student at Harrison School in Canon City, Colorado, was one of the Co-Champion winners with Fremont Conservation District's Poster Contest. Reven's poster was submitted to the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in Loveland, Colorado in November 2018, and **won 1st place in the State!!** Reven's poster was then submitted to the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in February 2019, where she **won 2nd in the nation**—competing against posters from all 50 States. **CONGRATULATIONS** to Reven on her winning poster!!! A **big thanks** to all the students who participated in Poster Contest last October in all the schools!! We appreciate your efforts!!!

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTRODUCED, INVASIVE, NOXIOUS AND NUISANCE PLANTS?

As gardening season comes upon us, knowing the meanings of the terms “invasive species”, “introduced species”, “exotic plants”, and “noxious weeds” can assist in planning and planting an environment that is not only beautiful, but beneficial for the environment inside and outside your garden.

What does “**invasive species**” mean, and why are they bad? The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines invasive species as “a species that is non-native or alien to the ecosystem—the introduction of the species causes or is likely to cause harm to human health, or to the economy or environment”. The term “invasive species” refers not only to plants, but to living beings such as animals, birds, insects, fungus or bacteria. Invasive species are bad because they displace native species and alter entire ecosystems. The damage created by invasive species is mounting, and attempts of control have cost many millions of dollars. Two examples of invasive species are Kudzu in the American South, and English Ivy in the Pacific Northwest.

“**Introduced species**” occur as a result of human activity, which may be accidental or on purpose—not all introduced species become invasive or harmful—some may even be beneficial. There are many ways species are introduced into the environment, one of the most common is by ship. Some other ways of introduction are: insects or small animals and rodents tucked into shipping pallets, aquatic life picked up in ballast water, or people transporting small organisms on their clothes and shoes. Some species were introduced to America by settlers who brought favorite plants from their homeland. Other species were introduced for monetary purposes.

“**Exotic species**” is usually used interchangeably with “invasive species”. The USDA defines an exotic plant as “not native to the continent on which it is now found”. For example, plants that are native to Europe are exotic in North America, and plants native to North America are exotic in Japan. Exotic plants may or may not be invasive, although some may become invasive in the future.

“**Nuisance plants**” (noxious weeds) are simply pesky plants that grow where they are not wanted. The USDA defines noxious weed plants as “those that can directly or indirectly cause problems for agriculture, natural resources, wildlife, recreation, navigation, public health or the environment”. They can also be native or non-native.

Article information from Gardening Know How: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com> (2016)

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