

Rocky Mountain Conservation Times

USDA Service Center • 248 Dozier Ave. • Canon City, CO 81212
(719) 315-3417



FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 315-3417

Meeting Time:

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

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

LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 486-0537

Meeting Time:

6:00 p.m. 3rd Tuesday of each month, at the Lake County Courthouse

MARY SMITH, President
PADRIC SMITH, Vice Pres.
EDWARD SHOBER, Sec/Treas.
ROBERT HOCKETT, Member
MARY SCHROEDER, Member
DAN TRUJILLO, Member
JOAN DAWSON, District Manager

CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 783-2481 X100

Meeting Time:

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

ROBERT MILLER, President
SHERON BERRY, Vice Pres.
TRENT STAFFORD, Sec / Treas
DOROTHY NEPA, Member
VACANT, Member
VACANT, District Manager / ROBERT MILLER, Acting District Manager
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

BRADY EVERETT, President
ED BERG, Vice Pres.
CHRISTY FITZPATRICK, Treasurer
NANCY ROBERTS, Member
BECKY LONGBERG, Member
NATALIE ALLIO, Member
Vacant, District Manager
upperarkansascd@gmail.com
Also on Facebook

MARCH 2020

USDA EMPLOYEES

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Canon City Service Center:

Greg Langer, District Conservationist
Josh Tashiro, Rangeland Mgt. Specialist
Vacant, 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:

Bill Gardiner, District Conservationist

FSA SERVICE AGENCY

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

County FSA Committee

Lee Rooks, Chairman
Lance Tyler, Vice Chairman
Mannie Colon
Bruce Griffin
Webb Smith

Fremont Conservation District Annual Banquet

Our Annual Banquet will be held April 10, 2020, at the Abbey Events Center in Canon City from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Ticket prices are \$25 for the meal, which is a beef dinner, salad and dessert. There are other meal selections available for those who are participating in Lent. RSVP to Debbie Mitchell, 719-315-3417, by March 27, 2020. Our program will be presented by Green Thumb Initiative, who are assisting our local schools in on-site food production and overall health and well being of the students.

The Upper Arkansas Weed Management Area will have a booth at Blossom Festival on May 2, 2020. We will be handing out information on noxious weeds and answering questions about those noxious weeds!! If you are in Canon City for the Blossom Festival Parade on Saturday May 2nd, please stop by our booth and visit with us!! We will be on the corner of 8th and Main Streets!!

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) is ready to start taking applications for Camp Rocky 2020! CACD also encourages students and parents to visit their Camp Rocky website page for more information and printable forms. Go to <http://www.coloradoacd.org/camp-rocky.html>.

Camp Rocky is a week-long residential camp for youth ages 14-19 who enjoy the outdoors and are interested in natural resources. The Professional staff helps participants learn about the environment through hands-on experiences. The students work in teams, and each year, students choose a resource field for their area of study: Soil & Water Conservation, Rangeland Science, Fish & Wildlife Management, or Forest Management. Other activities include nightly guest speakers from all aspects of natural resources and conservation, volleyball, basketball, hiking, kayaking, campfire, archery, group challenges, indoor/outdoor games, a talent show, and a dance. Campers gain valuable insight into natural resources management, agriculture and the human impacts on the environment; while meeting new friends from across Colorado, eating delicious food and having a great time!

Check with your local Conservation Districts to see if they have scholarships available for students who are interested in attending. Contact information is on the left side of the front page of the newsletter!! Thanks for your interest!!

AGENCY NEWS

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) - 7 CFR Part 1466.6 – Program for State, irrigation district, groundwater management district, acequia, land grant – merced, or similar entity (Interim Rule – subject to change)

The 2018 Farm Bill expanded eligibility regarding with whom NRCS can enter into an EQIP contract. In particular, NRCS may enter into EQIP contracts with State, irrigation district, groundwater management district, acequia, land grant-merced, or similar entity under a streamlined contracting process to implement water conservation or irrigation practices under a watershed-wide project that will effectively conserve water, provide fish and wildlife habitat, or provide for drought-related environmental mitigation, as determined by Secretary. NRCS has defined these entities as “water management entities.”

NRCS added provisions related to entering contracts with water management entities to implement water conservation or irrigation practices in certain circumstances.

NRCS introduced criteria for approving waivers and applying a different payment limitation to ensure the focus of EQIP assistance remains on practices that directly benefit producers with resource concerns on their operations. Additionally, the criteria help specify how this provision will be implemented, especially since water management entities can apply to RCPP as an eligible partner for irrigation-related infrastructure projects and that these types of projects are also eligible for assistance under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act.

Therefore, NRCS incorporated into this interim rule criteria for approving payment and AGI waivers, including the number of producers benefitted, whether the project is in conjunction with EQIP assistance being provided to identified producers who require the project in order for the overall project to be successful, and the establishment of a new payment limitation that ensures that such contracts address more site-specific concerns rather than systemic upgrade requirements. More particularly, NRCS has decided to limit these projects by authorizing a new payment limitation for contracts entered into by specific entities at \$900,000 between FY 2019 through FY 2023 if the projects qualify for a payment and AGI waiver. This new payment limitation for these entity-irrigation contracts is twice the payment limitation established for payments under contracts to individual producers.

Since the interim rule authorizes a waiver of the aggregate payment limitation for contracts with water management entities under this section, NRCS specifically requests comments on how this waiver should operate and whether the \$900,000 payment limitation has been established at an appropriate level. NRCS believes that this new authority to enter into an EQIP contract directly with water management entities should not conflict or compete with other NRCS assistance opportunities. Additionally, related to identifying the situations where NRCS should provide assistance to these projects, NRCS specifically requests public comment about whether additional parameters are needed for identifying “adjacent lands” eligible for such projects.

For more information, or to read in its entirety, go to www.regulations.gov.

Mia Cory is the District Conservation Technician for the Fremont Conservation District.

Mia has been assisting the NRCS staff with EQIP applications and site visits as well as providing technical assistance for the Fremont Conservation District (FCD) cost share applicants. Mia has been an integral part of our team since she came on board last August. If there are questions regarding the EQIP Program, FCD Cost Share Program or needing technical assistance, please give Mia a call at 719-315-3419.

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

Composting—How-to and Tips

By: Kara Harders

Composting is a natural process we can utilize to help break down and recycle materials which would have otherwise been considered trash or waste. Materials including food scraps, garden byproducts, and other organic “trash” can become the magical soil amendment we know as compost!

Because composting is a natural process, it can be induced by following some basic rules and creating ideal conditions for the process to happen. While people may think they are the ones composting it is really bacteria, fungi, molds, and worms doing all the heavy lifting. When we compost it is important to keep these organisms happy and healthy so they can do what they do best, turn trash into soil gold! Luckily, they only need a few things to do what they do best.

Food! (Nitrogen and carbon rich)

These composting critters work best when given about a 30:1 Carbon to Nitrogen ratio. The carbon source could be dead plants, bedding, grass clipping, leaves or even shredded office paper. The nitrogen source could be fresh grass cuttings, food scraps or animal manure.

Moisture

Like all living things, water is essential to the life in your compost heap. Most of the organisms breaking down materials in your compost pile live in the film of moisture around the “ingredients” in the pile. Too little moisture and they will die or become dormant and too much moisture and they will drown (and the pile will smell BAD). Aim for a pile that feels damp, like a wrung-out sponge. If the pile gets too dry spray it lightly with a garden hose and try to keep it covered with a tarp in a shady area to retain moisture and to keep out heavy rains.

Form

Compost needs to be grouped to maintain moisture and heat; therefore, the structure of your compost needs to be in a heap of sorts. This may seem obvious, but there are a few critical details.

Consider where you are putting your pile, avoid spots in direct sunlight for much of the day as this can dry out your pile. You should also avoid areas where water collects or drains. Compost piles are rich in nutrients that can be harmful to water ways and contribute to nutrient pollution. Think about keeping water from running through the pile when it rains or snow melts.

An ideal size is about one cubic yard, a pile this size can be built over time (cool composting) or all at once (hot composting), a benefit to doing hot composting is the sterilization of some weed seeds. Large heaps made all at once with the correct balance of materials and moisture can break down materials so fast the internal temperatures of these piles can reach 160°F! Smaller piles won't hold heat as well and can dry out quickly if done outside of a container, but they will be easier to turn. Speaking of turning...

Aeration

All those composting organisms you are after also need to breathe, in addition to design, to get them oxygen you will need to “turn” the pile.

Ideally, your compost pile will sit on some coarse materials to help allow air travel in from the base. When setting up the pile make an effort to use materials which create air pockets, such as stems, stalks, wood chips and other rigid materials. These will help to draw air up and out of the pile.

Use a composting thermometer to gauge the inside temperature. When it reaches 140°F, give it a turn and water as needed. Turning the compost will also help get air to the organisms doing the dirty work. You can turn the compost as often as the temperature reaches 140°F. It is recommended to let the pile go through three heating cycles to help sterilize weed seeds.

Particle size

While it is not always possible or realistic to select items for your compost pile by size it can make it more efficient. Because the organisms breaking down material work on the outer surface of the composted materials, they work much quicker when the surface area is large in relation to the particle size's mass, in other words, small pieces break down much faster. You can mulch logs/branches, cut stalks to less than 5”, mow leaves with the lawn mower, and break up manure clumps.

Noxious Weed Management in Fremont County

By: Brittany Pierce

Fremont County is home to a variety of beautiful native plants and animals. Every native plant or animal is kept in check by its own natural enemies. When a plant is taken out of its native surroundings and placed where it has no natural enemies, it is then free to reproduce across the new area. Just imagine if sharks could survive when introduced into our lakes. Luckily they can't and don't, but many weeds do.

Either through human manipulation or accidental introduction, our native plant communities are being threatened by these alien invaders. Noxious weeds are dangerous invaders because they can outcompete native plants for water, soil, sunlight or nutrients. In addition to taking resources from the native plant populations, noxious weeds also have the potential to pose a threat to wildlife, humans and agriculture and can even elevate the negative effects of a fire and/or flood disaster. Unfortunately these scenarios are occurring in our County and many others

Fremont County Weed Management has identified several noxious weed species in our area and continues efforts to restore our natural vegetation through removal of species by way of mechanical, cultural, chemical and biological control methods. We offer Cost Share to land owners in Fremont County, as well as herbicides at whole sale cost, and recommendations for management and control. If you need help managing noxious weed species on your property, please contact the Fremont County Weed Management office for more information and assistance at 719-276-7317 or email brittany.pierce@fremontco.com.

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.

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

AGENCY NEWS

Establishment of a Domestic Hemp Production Program – 7 CFR Part 990 (Interim Rule – subject to change)

To produce hemp under the USDA plan, producers must apply for and be issued a license from USDA. USDA will begin accepting applications 30 days after the effective date of this interim rule. USDA is delaying acceptance of applications for 30 days to allow States and Tribal governments to submit their plans first. This is to prevent USDA from reviewing and issuing USDA licenses to producers when there is a likelihood that there will soon be a State or Tribal plan in place and producers will obtain their licenses from the State or Tribe.

While a State or Tribal government has a draft hemp production plan pending for USDA approval, USDA will not issue USDA hemp production licenses to individual producers located in those States or Tribal Nations. Once USDA approves a draft hemp production plan from a State or Tribe, it will deny any license applications from individuals located in the applicable State or Tribal Nation. If USDA disapproves a State or Tribal hemp production plan, individual producers located in the State or Tribal Nation may apply for a USDA hemp production license.

The application will require contact information such as name, address, telephone number and email address (if available). If the applicant represents a business entity, and that entity will be the producer, the application will require the full name of the business, address of the principal business location, full name and title of the key participants on behalf of the entity, an email address if available, and EIN number of the business entity.

All applications must be accompanied by a completed criminal history report. If the application is for a business entity, a completed criminal history report must be provided for each key participant.

Once a license application has been approved, USDA will issue the producer license. Licenses are not transferrable in any manner. An applicant whose application has been approved will not be considered a licensed producer under the USDA plan until the applicant receives their producer license. Licenses do not renew automatically and must be renewed every three years.

Once a producer has been issued a USDA license, the producer must report their hemp crop acreage to FSA. Producers must provide specific information to FSA, as identified in this part, including, but not limited to: the specific location where hemp is produced, and the acreage, greenhouse, building, or site where hemp is produced. The specific location where hemp is produced must be identified, to the extent practicable, by the geospatial location.

USDA has established certain compliance requirements for USDA licensees as part of this rulemaking. This includes the ability for USDA to conduct audits of USDA licensees and to issue corrective action plans for negligent violations. Negligent violations by a producer may lead to suspension or revocation of a producer's license.

For more information or to read in its entirety, go to www.regulations.gov.

The Green Thumb Initiative (GTI), a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit has an office in Canon City, Colorado, with the aim of increasing the health and resiliency of young people. They are doing prevention work in Canon City and are very encouraged by the outcomes. They work with the schools and other community groups to enhance their overall health and well-being by using: **STEAM education, substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion, nutrition education, quality-of-food awareness, therapeutic horticulture, and community gardens and greenhouses.** GTI will soon be building a STEAM greenhouse on the Canon City High School Campus with the goal of all the schools in the Fremont County school districts to use for educational purposes.

GTI uses evidence-based practices such as Botvin Life Skills curriculum and the Blues Program along with other proven methods of life improvement such as age-appropriate physical activities, mindfulness, cooking classes etc. Their team consists of peer coaches and we hope to soon be able to send some of them to Eastern Fremont County and Custer County to meet the needs of youth and young adults there. Based on the surveys we conduct, GTI believes that young people in the whole region would achieve substantial improvement in their health if they have a chance to participate in their programs.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY NEWS

Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2020 crops. A notice of loss must be filed the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.

Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2020 livestock losses, eligible livestock owners must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent.

Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, producers must also submit an application for payment by March 1, 2020.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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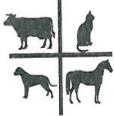
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**USDA Rural Development (RD)** offers financial and technical assistance to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural America. As the lead Federal agency for rural development needs, RD helps rural communities grow and prosper. Check their website for the variety of programs they offer at [www.rd.usda.gov](http://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.

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Thank you for your assistance!

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**CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARDS**

**U.S.D.A Service Center**  
248 Dozier Ave.  
Canon City, CO 81212  
(719) 315-3417 Phone

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.

**Silver Cliff Field Office**  
P.O. Box 389  
10 Hermit Lane  
Silver Cliff, CO 81252  
(719) 783-2481 Phone

**No-Till Drill for Rent in Fremont County**

**U.S.D.A Service Center**  
5575 Cleora Road  
Salida, CO 81201  
(719) 626-3169 Phone

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!

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326 W. Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC, 30250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.