

Rocky Mountain Conservation Times

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(719) 275-4465 x 101

Meeting Time:

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

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JOHN SANDEFUR, Sec/Treas.
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GARY RATKOVICH, Member
TONY TELCK, Alternate Member
DEBBIE MITCHELL, District Manager
DAVID HALLOCK, Farm Bill Tech
MELANIE SCAVARDA, Outreach Tech
www.fremontcd.org

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(719) 539-7331

Meeting Time:

7:00 p.m. 3rd Thursday of each month, 10544 Hwy 24 South, Leadville

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KEVIN CANNELL, Vice Pres.
EDWARD SHOBER, Sec/Treas.
ROBERT HOCKETT, Member
MARY SCHROEDER, Member
JOAN DAWSON, District Manager

CUSTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 783-2481

Meeting Time:

8:30 a.m. 1st Thursday of each month, USDA Service Center, Silver Cliff, CO

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BOB LEE, Treasurer
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www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org

UPPER ARKANSAS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 539-7331

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DAVID LYNCH, Member
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MARCELLA HELTON, District Manager

OCTOBER 2013

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Nick Trainor, Rangeland Mgt. Specialist
Patty Knupp, Soil Conservationist
Rob Fontaine, Civil Engineering Tech
Melanie Scavarda, Farm Bill Clerk

Silver Cliff Service Center:

Jim Sperry, District Conservationist
Carol Kuisle-Franta, Soil Conservation Tech

Salida Service Center:

William Gardiner, District Conservationist

FSA SERVICE AGENCY

Brent Fillmore,
County Executive Director
Vacant,
Lead Program Tech

County FSA Committee

Charlie Newlon, Chairperson
Tony Telck, Vice Chair.
Steve Oswald, Member
Buddy Draper, Member
Tom Murphy, Member
Bridget Gay, Advisor

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER 15—DECEMBER 10, 2013 - Chaffee County Building Farmers Program. See page 5 of this newsletter for details.

NOVEMBER 2, 2013—The Custer County Conservation District's 73rd Annual Dinner / Meeting. Reservations for dinner can be made by calling Carol Kuisle-Franta at 719-783-2481.

NOVEMBER 16, 2013—The Upper Arkansas Conservation District's 70th Annual Banquet. The Annual Banquet will be held at the Chaffee County Fairgrounds from 5 to 8 p.m. The theme for this year's annual banquet is: "*Celebrating our Young Folk and the Future of Agriculture.*" Dinner will feature a prize pig raised by one of our 4-H members and served by our local 4-H group here in Chaffee County. We invite you to complement this tasty main course with a potluck dish of your own. Join in the fun and share hearty conversation, savory local foods, and great entertainment as we celebrate our thriving agricultural community. Our young folk carry the torch for the future of farming and ranching in our valley, let's show them our support and appreciation through a celebration of an abundant harvest season. Please contact Marcella Helton at 719-530-3968 if you have any questions.

SPRING / SUMMER 2014—Custer County Conservation District will be having a Water Forum and a series of small acreage workshops. For more information visit their website at www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org, or call Carol at 719-783-2481.

FSA WORKDAYS— Reporting actual production and purchase NAP for 2014. Workdays scheduled: Chaffee, 10/2; Custer, 10/9; Fremont, 10/15. All times are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

DISTRICT NEWS

The Custer County Conservation District is looking for conservation-minded landowners to serve on our board of supervisors.

Eligible candidates for district supervisor include any person who is a landowner (in district boundaries). Conservation district supervisors are elected, public officials that represent and protect the needs and interests of the public in natural resource management and conservation planning. Colorado conservation districts are subdivisions of state government created by law. Colorado has 76 conservation districts, each led by people in the local community.

“The soil conservation district is the workshop through which those who love the land pool their efforts and information in making the land more stable and productive and our country more prosperous, more attractive and a better land in which to live. The fact that landowners themselves have the responsibility for petitioning for and voting in a district, formulating its program and work plan, administering its business and entering into cooperative agreements with their fellow landowners and operators, makes soil conservation districts a democracy in action.” V.C. Marshall - *“Father of the soil and water conservation district program in Texas”*. If you have a love of the land and feel inspired to be a leader in conservation education, planning and policy, please contact the district office at 719-783-2481.

The Fremont Conservation District held our 67th Annual Banquet at the Abbey Events Center on April 26, 2013 with 70 guests and landowners in attendance.

Our guest speaker this year, Mr. Jim Webb of Forest Stewardship Concepts, Ltd. gave a presentation on fire mitigation around houses and properties, and why we have moved from defensible space to survivable space. Mr. Webb is also involved in the Garden Park area Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Also welcomed at the meeting was Debbie Mitchell as the new District Manager.

.Lake County Conservation District held their Annual Meeting on April 18, 2013 at the Colorado Mountain College Coronado Café in Leadville.

There were 40 people in attendance. The winner of the 6th Grade Poster contest was recognized and honored. A power point presentation of the Upper Arkansas River Restoration Project UARRP was presented by Greg Brunjak, Project Manager. The presentation showed what has been done last year. He explained the scope of the project. Lake County Commissioner Bruce Hix gave a presentation on some of the projects that the County Commissioners are doing and plan to do in the future. Door prizes were presented throughout the evening.

UPDATE— Work has been continuing on the Upper Arkansas River Restoration project (UARRP).

DISTRICT NEWS

WORKSHOPS

The Fremont Conservation District co-sponsored two workshops in early summer. At the beginning of June, we co-sponsored a Colorado Resource Monitoring Initiative workshop hosted by the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. Discussed was how to monitor and implement monitoring practices for your area.

The second workshop was a soil health workshop held at the end of June with NRCS. The speakers discussed why it is important to keep a crop planted at all times in your field. The presenters returned to Fremont County to assist landowners with specific questions and solutions.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Lake County Conservation District awarded two scholarships to two deserving Seniors of the Lake County High School graduating class of 2013 in the amount of \$500.00 each.

Ryan Osborne and Matthew Graham were the recipients.

LINCOLN PARK KICKS OFF SOIL EXPERIMENT

The Fremont Conservation District is working with local farmer, Tim Madone, to demonstrate the effectiveness of using winter cover crops. Tim has agreed to plant a winter cover crop on property he farms in the Lincoln Park area of Fremont County with financial and planning assistance coming from the Fremont Conservation District and with the support of the Fremont County Extension Service. This is a follow up exercise from the Soil Health Workshop sponsored by your Fremont Conservation District in June.

The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of planting winter cover crops as well as the suitability of using the shotgun approach of planting multiple species instead of just one or two. Farmers in Fremont County have been using winter rye as a cover crop for many years, but what Agronomists in other areas are finding is that by combining grasses (rye, barley, millet, sorghum and sudangrass) and legumes (peas, clovers and vetches) with brassicas (turnips, mustards and radishes) and other forbs (like sunflowers, flax and buckwheat) it multiplies the positive effects of just one species. The benefits are erosion reduction, increasing biodiversity, managing soil moisture, increasing soil organic matter, suppressing weeds, and redistributing nutrients in the soil.

The experiment is to get something growing to keep the soil covered over the winter and then in spring all the plants should take off, covering the ground and shading out weed seeds. Then, prior to planting next spring the cover crop will be terminated and plowed under, adding organic matter. To document any changes on the soil, soil samples will be taken this fall, prior to planting and then again next year. The results will be compared to see what difference the cover crop made on soil health. Tommy Covington, Director, Fremont County Extension Service is providing the soil analysis that will be completed at the beginning and the end of this project.

COLORADO LAND LINK A PATHWAY TO LAND ACCESS

Over the past four years, Guidestone—a nonprofit serving the Upper Arkansas River Valley--- has been developing a regional Land Link Initiative to provide a tool for preserving active agriculture by linking next generation farmers and ranchers with retiring farmers and ranchers and absentee landowners.

Guidestone is working in collaboration with Colorado State University Extension's Building Farmers program as well as the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union. Having found it's beginnings in Chaffee County, Colorado Land Link is in the process of expanding to the lower Arkansas River Valley and Southeast Colorado. Additionally, a statewide Land Link committee is being organized to oversee the feasibility of expansion across Colorado and to review resources and services offered through Colorado Land Link.

Not only will the program provide matching services for new farmers and ranchers and Colorado landowners, but also it is developing technical resources to assist with the matching process. Lease templates, checklist for lease agreements, business plan outlines, rental rate options, financial planning guidelines and whole farm planning principles will be among the many resource materials made available. Colorado Land Link is also preparing to design an online introductory course to assist beginning farmers with a self-assessment process towards developing the small farm dream. This is anticipated to complement CSU's Building Farmer Program and be integrated into the pathway to successful farming and land access.

The Colorado Land Link Program currently provides a website which houses a database that includes new farmer applicants and land listings for the state. The database now contains over 100 farmer/rancher applicants and is in the process of seeking land listings throughout Colorado. Many of the applicants demonstrate years of experience and considerable agricultural education background while others are in the early stages of planning a career in farming or ranching. Through it's monthly online newsletter, Guidestone offers postings of both farmer/rancher listings and works to screen applicants and land listings to insure compatibility. In some cases, Guidestone will offer facilitation services to assist with land lease negotiations.

Guidestone will hold its 2nd Annual Land Link Forum at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort in the Central Colorado Rockies, March 7-9 and is planning a Certified Farm Succession Coordinator Training to be held on March 4-6, 2014 prior to the forum. This training will be offered through the International Farming Transition Network and is intended specifically for agricultural professionals and organizational leaders who work with retiring farmers and ranchers on farm transfer issues. The Land Link Forum will be open to agricultural service providers, farmers and ranchers. It will be a collaborative event to continue building strategic partnerships in the efforts to serve the agricultural communities of Colorado.

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.

CHAFFEE COUNTY BUILDING FARMERS PROGRAM

Kurt M. Jones
Chaffee County Extension Director

Applications are currently being accepted for the award-winning Chaffee County Building Farmer's Program to be offered in Salida on Tuesday evenings from October 15, 2013 through December 10, 2013. The Colorado Building Farmers program builds farm community and farmer capacity through classroom and experiential learning for beginning farmers (0 – 10 yrs exp). The course is a series of 8 evening classes designed to help New Farmers/Ranchers explore farming as a business and provide Intermediate and Experienced Farmers/Ranchers with tools and ideas to refine and enhance their business management, production, and marketing skills.

Classes include Strategic Business Planning, Introduction to holistic management, agriculture modalities, market analysis, land acquisition/leasing, marketing/distribution, financial planning/business organization, budgeting, food safety and other risk management, production Q & A, and presentations of student-created business plans. A variety of local growers and academic specialists make up the cadre of speakers for this eight-week course.

This course is open to new, intermediate and experienced farmers. Intermediate and Experienced farmers fuel the learning environment. Dinner provides time for socializing and networking. Sessions explore content useful to all levels of experience. New farmers learn in this community of farmer students and teachers.

Costs for the course are \$200 for new farmers/ranchers, \$150 for intermediate farmers/ranchers, and \$100 for experienced farmers/ranchers. Course fees include all tuition, expenses, and evening meals each week. Applicants will complete a short questionnaire about their experience and desires for the course, and a local advisory committee will screen applications to determine eligibility. For more information or an application, contact Kurt Jones at 719-539-6447.

FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT COST SHARE PROGRAM

The Fremont Conservation District (FCD) has cost share money available to 10 landowners and one ditch company per year. The cost share program helps pay for materials purchased – 50% up to \$700.00 – for gated pipe, underground pipe, butterfly valves, inline valves, air vents, alfalfa valves, barbed wire fencing, permanent power fencing, and seeding.

Approved practices need to be completed within 90 days of approval date of contract and bills submitted to FCD for payment. All practices must be installed according to NRCS guidelines. The landowner may not receive additional cost share money from any other source for their project. Participation is voluntary and the landowner must be in the district boundaries to participate.

Since the cost share program's inception in 2006, FCD has assisted 33 landowners with a variety of projects including gated pipe, pipeline, fencing, seeding, valves, water tanks, windbreaks, tree planting, drip systems, pumps for sprinklers, and a ditch check box. As 2013 comes to a close, we will have new cost share monies available in January 2014. Keep FCD in mind for your small projects!!

GARDEN PARK UPDATES...

GARDEN PARK P-J PROJECT FOLLOW-UP

Thirty nine inventory sites (plots) were visited on Garden Park properties this summer for the purpose of monitoring changes after the forest thinning project of the 2011-12 winter. Some interesting results are emerging, especially on the monitoring plots visited after the July monsoon rains began this summer.

Findings this year are:

1. The amount of bare ground continues to decrease. In 2011 the average percentage of bare ground was 39.75. After the thinning in 2012 it was 24.10% and this summer it is 18.85%.
2. The amount of organic ground cover continues to increase. In 2011 it was 55.15%, in 2012 it was 65.65% and this summer it increased to 68.45%.
3. The amount of vegetative ground cover continues to increase. Grass cover in 2011 was 4.35%, in 2012 it was 6.65%, and this summer it has risen to 8.55%. Forb cover in 2011 was 0.20%, in 2012 it was 0.60%, and this summer it has risen to 1.05%. Shrub cover has remained the same at 0.05%. Cactus cover decreased from 0.03 in 2011 to 0.25 in 2012, but has increased to 0.55% this summer.
4. Total ground cover vegetation has increased each year. Starting at 4.63% in 2011 to 7.55% in 2012 and this summer it continued to rise to 10.20%.

GARDEN PARK COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

Fremont Conservation District (FCD) is serving as a pass-through agency for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the Garden Park area in Fremont County. This is a grant through the U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Wild Land Fire Management and administered through the BLM. The FCD receives the funds and then pays these monies to our contractor, Jim Webb of Forest Stewardship Concepts, Ltd. Mr. Webb and a Core Team from local and federal agencies and landowners in the Garden Park area have determined boundaries and the natural resource issues that are of concern in case of a wildfire. The primary importance in this CWPP will be a detailed map identifying hazards, risks, resource and property conditions, risk assessment, emergency response, protection capability, technical mapping, and data collection. Once these have been determined, a plan of action will be put together which the community will want to implement. These recommendations may include clearing trees and brush around the perimeter of the house, building roads and turn-arounds for fire equipment and trucks, finding water sources, installing road signs, etc., for better community survivability in a wildfire.

With wildfires rampaging through our state and the West, it is a good idea to have a plan and to make you home survivable on its own – as there may not be enough firefighters to defend each home!!

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