

Rocky Mountain Conservation Times

USDA Service Center • 248 Dozier Ave. • Canon City, CO 81212
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OCTOBER 2019

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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:

Bill Gardiner, District Conservationist

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(719) 315-3417

Meeting Time:

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

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LINDA STONE, Vice Pres.
TONY TELCK, Sec/Treas.
RICH GREEN, Member
TOM LINZA, Member
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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

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PADRIC SMITH, Vice Pres.
EDWARD SHOBER, Sec/Treas.
ROBERT HOCKETT, Member
MARY SCHROEDER, Member
MARY SMITH, 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

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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

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NATALIE ALLIO, Member
Vacant, District Manager
upperarkansascd@gmail.com
Also on Facebook

Upper Arkansas Conservation District Annual Banquet

The Upper Arkansas Conservation District will be holding their Annual Banquet on Saturday, October 19, 2019 at the Chaffee County Fairgrounds from 5:30 to 8:00 P.M. The main dish of turkey will be provided by the Conservation District, vegetables will be provided by Weathervane Farm, and, those who are interested in attending are requested to bring a dessert to share!! Music will be provided by Andrea Early Coen and Seth Roberts. Adults are \$10.00 and kids eat free!! Come and enjoy good food and live music and see what new things your Conservation District is doing!

Fremont Conservation District recently hired Mia Cory as the new District Conservation Technician for Fremont County. Mia will be in training to assist NRCS with EQIP applications for landowner and / or agency projects. Mia has graduated from Lamar Community College with an AAS in Agriculture and will be continuing her education toward a BS in Business Ag. Please welcome Mia to our team!!!

Custer County Conservation District's first Targeted Conservation Proposal (TCP) in Forest Health 2017, is winding down. Out of 271 contracted acres, 223.6 acres are completed. All the landowners have been very pleased with the results and grasses and aspen are quick to fill in.

Our second TCP for Forest Health in 2019, consists of 14 landowners with 273.9 acres to be thinned and worked. Obligation funding was \$650, 501.

The District applied for another Forest Health TCP targeting a subdivision in the Rosita area. Since the shifting to Resource Teams, NRCS decided to fund many of the TCP applications with regular EQIP funds. Eleven applications for 458 acres and \$1.1+ million were also funded this year!

We are excited about the interest we've seen in forest health the past few years and hope to be able to see much more of the private forested areas improved. In the winter when snow was on the ground, the areas in the Sangre de Cristos that had been mitigated from the first TCP were very visible. It was great to see!

DISTRICT NEWS

FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Fremont Conservation District (FCD) received a Colorado State Conservation Board Matching Grant in the amount of \$1250 for the “Little Sprouts Garden Education” Project. Presentations on “Where your food comes from” and tasting samples were made to six preschools and one 2nd grade classroom to approximately 379 students and teachers. Presentations included how farmers and ranchers grow most of the food that we eat, with home gardens furnishing the rest. The presentation included all food groups, not just produce. The tasting and touching samples were only fruit and vegetables. Produce of all colors were purchased for these presentations in order to give the students a chance to see quite a few different varieties of food. Grocery stores, farmer’s markets, produce retailers and food co-ops were also mentioned as places to get fresh produce.

Head Start, in Canon City, had a Family Night program with a presentation made to 118 students and parents. Each family got to plant a tomato seed in a pot to take home. A presentation was also made on container gardens and how these could also be planted for fresh food, especially for families who live in apartments or rent. These were used as door prizes for the parents who attended.

At each of these presentations, soil health, water conservation, how and what plants need to grow, and pollinators were discussed as to how these all relate to conservation efforts. Some of the classrooms planted seeds in starter packs to take home for their own gardens. FCD provides all the seeds, soils, pots / packets and any other materials needed for these school projects, which is how the CSCB Matching Grant funds were used.

FCD assisted four preschools with in-ground and container gardens. One preschool had started most of their plants which were included in the garden area when planted. All students who wanted to help plant, did so, and were taught the correct way to plant seeds and plants. A pollinator garden was also planted at one preschool in the same area as the vegetable garden. The students and teachers are taking care of these gardens over the summer. The harvest from these gardens has been good throughout the summer with the produce being used in the classrooms and school kitchens. The teachers and students are looking forward to doing gardens again next year!!

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.

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

CSU EXTENSION SMALL ACREAGE MANAGEMENT

Organically Controlling Weeds with Taproots on a Small Plot

By: Kara Harders

Weed control is a constant battle but some are easier (in theory) than others. Some of the more difficult weeds to control are those which have a taproot. These weeds readily come back after being mowed, pulled, or eaten because they have enough nutrients stored in their roots to regenerate! There are several tools to consider for controlling weeds organically. No matter what tools are used, it is important to recognize weeds as a symptom of land management. You may control the weeds one season, but if the ground is left uncovered, over grazed, or reintroduced to weeds your problems will likely return quickly.

Obviously, life would be much easier if the weeds weren't there to start with. When it comes to organically controlling weeds, proactive strategies will save you far more time and labor than reacting to the weeds once they are present and established. Proactive approaches to weed management include mulching, crop rotations, or cover cropping. These methods all make it difficult for plants to get enough sunlight to grow or become comfortable in their surroundings. They also increase soil health, decrease erosion, and even help with pest problems. Consider adding these methods to your land to help prevent the problem!

If you only have a few of the pesky plants, using a spade to dig out the whole root can be a reasonable approach, especially if the ground is relatively soft. Getting the plants out before they go to seed helps prevent new ones from establishing too. Hand pulling is generally not effective on plants with taproots since they tend to break off leaving the roots safely underground ready to re-grow. This is why goats are less effective on taproot type weeds. If you want to use animals to control weeds, pigs are a more effective choice. Since they plow and root up the soil, they do a better job killing the root of these weeds.

Occultation is a less known method which helps germinate and kill weeds early in the season. By anchoring heavy tarps (UV-stabilized silage tarps work well) or dark landscape fabric over land you wish to farm, you can increase the temperature of the soil earlier in the spring and cause seeds to germinate earlier. When the plants under the tarp sprout, they have no sunlight and die off. After three to four weeks the weeds should have grown and died, leaving behind a bed of soil ready for planting. If well cared for, the tarps or fabric can be reused many times! A barrier to this method is the tarps can be too heavy, difficult to move, or hard to store depending on your situation.

Flame weeding is another method that can kill weeds from a seed bed after they have germinated. Flame weeding works by burning young plants when their root systems may not be established enough to allow them to recover. It also can knock back a weed population allowing desirable plants seeded shortly after to better compete for sunlight, moisture, and nutrients.

Herbicides can also be a choice in organic agriculture (although they are often less effective on established weeds with taproots). In order for an herbicide to be approved for organic use, the active ingredients need to be approved for use by the National Organic Program or NOP. The timing of the application is highly important and multiple applications are often required. One of the more frustrating aspects of organic herbicides is they have broad spectrum effects, essentially, they harm everything they touch. And remember, always read and follow directions on herbicide labels!

Here are some of the more common active ingredients in organic herbicides:

Herbicidal soaps – fast-acting, broad spectrum herbicides made from fatty acids. They are used as post-emergent and are most effective on annual broadleaf weeds and grasses.

Clove oil – an active ingredient in post-emergent, non-selective organic herbicides. Research has shown that it can be as effective as acetic acid in controlling broadleaf weeds but at a lower application rate.

Chelated Iron – These iron products are similar to the iron you would use to fertilize a lawn. However, the iron is bound to a chelating agent making it more available for plant uptake. Broadleaf plants absorb the iron more easily and when the high levels are oxidized it causes the broadleaf weeds to dry up and die quickly. Multiple applications are needed throughout the year and is most effective in lawns. See this document for more information. <https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/docs/programs/ipmnet/Iron%20Herbicide%20Info-UMD-IPMnet.pdf>

If you are looking for more weed management strategies, check out [this page](#). It is a ATTRA publication about proactive and reactive methods which provide an alternative to conventional tillage systems. (<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub-summaries/?pub=479>)

DISTRICT AND AGENCY NEWS

The Lake County Conservation District held their Annual Meeting on April 16, 2019 at Colorado Mountain College. President Ray Dawson called the meeting to order. Ray Dawson did the introductions and Norman Schroeder did the invocation. Dinner was served.

- J. T. Shaver from the Forest Service gave a power point presentation on Firewise Techniques.
 - Kayla Malone – Chaffee and Lake County Weed control – Kayla gave a power point presentation on Noxious Weeds, and Weed Management.
 - Zack Baker – Division of Wildlife – Zack answered questions that the Landowners had.
 - Fire Chief Dan Dailey – Lake County Fire Department – Dan reported on Fire Station #2 that has been under construction.
 - Lake County Commissioners – Sarah Mudge and Kayla Marcella reported on the projects that are going on in the County.
 - Mark Glenn thanked the Lake County Conservation District for all that they do for the County and the Community.
 - Brent Groenke gave away Door Prizes throughout the evening.
- There were 39 in attendance. 21 were Landowners. Ray Dawson closed the meeting.

On July 26, 2019 **Lake County Conservation District** held a Fire Wise Workshop at Colorado Mountain College. J. T. Shaver – Forester with the Colorado State Forest Service conducted the Workshop. Presentations Covered Post-Fire Flood Recovery- How is the public affected by fire after a wildfire, Ember Awareness-How embers can ignite your house on fire, A Fire Deficient Landscape-A Fire deficit landscape on Lake County and the need for forest treatment.

The Coronado Café at the College served lunch. The Workshop was very informative. There was a good attendance.

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

DISTRICT NEWS

FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Fremont Conservation District received Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) Matching Grant funds for the Dinkle Ditch Restoration Project in the amount of \$23,750. This project is located in Coaldale, Colorado, and had several natural disaster events that led up to the restoration projects in the area.

The first event was a wildfire that began on July 8, 2016, burning approximately 16,000 acres and affecting the Hayden and Cottonwood creek watersheds. The flooding event on July 13, 2017 created post-fire flooding and debris flows which negatively impacted the watersheds and the Dinkle Ditch. The initial fire and flooding in the area had negative impacts on multiple stream channels, causing significant streambank erosion, channel instability and a disconnected flood plain.

On July 24, 2018, the area had another devastating flood which additionally damaged the Dinkle Ditch and Big Cottonwood Creek. Thirteen landowners along the ditch were impacted by not being able to use their irrigation water or wells efficiently. This flooding event and erosion had negative impacts on water quality by introducing heavy loads of sediments into Hayden and Cottonwood creeks as well as Dinkle Ditch. The CSCB Matching Grant and TCP funds are based on this event.

There are three different funding sources being used to assist the landowners in the Hayden Pass area in restoration projects. The Hayden Pass EWP (based on the July 13, 2017 event), sponsored by Fremont County, finished construction on that portion of the project on August 18, 2019. This project involved sediment and debris removal, stream bank and channel stabilization and critical area planting to re-establish vegetative cover. The engineering was done by OTAK (based out of Denver) and the construction was contracted to Frontier Environmental Services from Arvada. Construction began in early April with debris and sediment removal on both Little and Big Cottonwood Creeks. Channel shaping soon began on 500 linear feet of Little Cottonwood which was lined with rock to prevent head cutting and erosion. On the Big Cottonwood, a 1250 linear feet section of channel was armored with rock to include grade control structures to reduce the velocity of the water. The stream banks were laid back and flood plains opened up to provide capacity in the event of another flood event. The total construction cost of the project was \$1,275,501.51, which was 90% of the costs and funded through NRCS. Fremont County received funding in the amount of \$453,850 from the Colorado Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, along with \$250,000 in grant funds from the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative and the Upper Arkansas River Conservancy District, which covered the remaining 10%. Fremont County also had matching in-kind labor for the project. The amount expended on engineering for the project was \$290,573.39.

The CSCB Matching Grant funds will be used to restore the Dinkle Ditch by installing 1500 feet of 12" ADS HD pipe; steel structures for water control at the inlet and outlet of the pipe; stabilizing the stream bank along Cottonwood Creek and Dinkle Ditch; installing a water measuring device; and grass seed for re-seeding along the restored ditch bank. Once the work is completed, the landowners along the ditch will be able to use their irrigation water efficiently. Reseeding should prevent future soil erosion and enhance wildlife habitat.

There were also Targeted Conservation Proposal (TCP) EQIP applications funded for this project in the amount of \$112,305+ with four landowners, with the amount of \$52,305 being used specifically on the Dinkle Ditch. These funds will be used to replace irrigation pipe on landowner properties; any additional materials not covered by the Matching Grant; contractor labor; and re-establishing the augmentation pond for the ditch. When this project is completed, the landowners along the Dinkle Ditch will be able to use their irrigation water efficiently beginning in Spring 2020.

DISTRICT NEWS

UPPER ARKANSAS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Land Speaks

Sometimes the land and its cohorts – water, flora and fauna – speak so forcefully to us that we humans are compelled to listen. Twice in August, with the assistance of *experts -in-the-field*, the land, water, flora and fauna next to Badger Creek gained our human attention in a fun and educational way so that we were able to better understand what has been happening throughout the watershed for the past 150 plus years that has led to a landscape in poor health. Better yet, the humans involved in these two events came away with an understanding of practical methodologies that can be utilized to rehabilitate range lands and watersheds.

Land Health Workshop at Badger Creek Ranch

In 2018 Badger Creek Ranch hosted the first Badger Creek Land Health Workshop in collaboration with Quivira Coalition. Local ranchers, land managers, students and others were introduced to practical on-the-ground methodologies for erosion control and ecological monitoring. Arielle Quintana, Education and Outreach Coordinator for Quivira Coalition, helped organize the 2019 Land Health Workshop at Badger Creek Ranch along with the Central Colorado Conservancy, the National Grazing Lands Coalition, the Colorado Section Society for Range Management, the Upper Arkansas Conservation District, the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. On Friday, August 16th, Kirk Gadzia of Resources Management Services lead the 35 participants on a walkabout where we examined the vegetation and shared our observations of the plants' role in soil structure and overall soil health. As a follow-up to the field work, Kirk shared the fundamentals of holistic grazing planning and rangeland health monitoring via an interactive analysis of methodologies. Ryan Parker of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies stressed the importance of grass height in bird habitat, confirming the importance of monitoring and evaluation so that we can better understand the holistic model of rangeland health monitoring from a human perspective.

On Saturday, August 17th, 27 participants walked out to a gully that was created by erosion and run-off from an old two track. Aaron Kauffman, of Southwest Urban Hydrology, pointed out some of the “one rock dams” that were built in the gully during the 2018 workshop. Upon inspection a year later, we observed that the “One rock dams” (dams made of multiple rocks that are only one rock in height) held soil that had washed down the gully throughout the year. We also discovered that grass seeds, spread beneath the rock structures had sprouted in that soil. So, in August 2019 Aaron Kauffman challenged us to make additional “one rock dams” as well as “run-downs” to divert water away from the gully. In the process of building the “one rock dams” and the “run-downs” the participants were able to reflect on how seemingly small actions can have a huge impact in the long run.

Pasture Management Study Tour

On August 28, 2019, ten land managers from Uzbekistan visited the Badger Creek Watershed to learn more about our community partnerships, holistic range management, and restoration strategies. They were accompanied by two interpreters and three team leaders. In Uzbekistan pasture management has become a high priority and the U.S. Forest Service is collaborating with the Uzbekistan government to promote sustainable resource management of common pastures. This study tour provided an opportunity for Uzbekistan professionals to learn methodologies for: 1.) “Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey”, 2.) “Sustainable management of forests in mountain and valley area in Uzbekistan”, and the 3.) “Central Asian Desert Initiative- Conservation and sustainable use of cold winter deserts in Central Asia”. What an honor for the Badger Creek Watershed!

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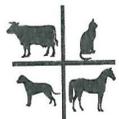
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**USDA Rural Development (RD)** offers financial and technical assistance to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural America. As the lead Federal agency for rural development needs, RD helps rural communities grow and 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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**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  
(719) 783-9528 Fax

**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!

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