

FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROJECTS AND OUTREACH UPDATE

By Debbie Mitchell, District Manager

The Fremont Conservation District (FCD) would like to update the landowners within our District boundaries of the projects that we have completed last year and the projects and outreach that we are working on for this year continuing through 2021.

In 2019, FCD received a matching grant from the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) in the amount of \$23,750 to restore the Dinkle Ditch in the Hayden Pass area that was destroyed by flooding on July 24, 2018. Hayden Pass, located in the Coaldale area, had three large events that occurred in that watershed. The first event was a wildfire that began on July 8, 2016, which burned approximately 16,000 acres and affected the Hayden and Cottonwood creek watersheds. There was a flooding event on July 13, 2017, which created post-fire flooding and debris flows which negatively impacted the watersheds and Dinkle Ditch. On July 24, 2018, there was another devastating flooding event 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 funds (based on the July 24, 2018 event) were used to restore the Dinkle Ditch by installing 1826 feet of 8" PVC plastic pipe and 137 feet of 12" ADS HD pipe; one steel inlet structure for the 8" pipe; assisting with labor and material costs for a 14 foot steel diversion structure for the creek; stabilizing the stream bank along Cottonwood Creek and Dinkle Ditch; and, resetting a water measuring device that survived the flood. Fourteen volunteers also assisted on the CSCB grant project for a total of 641.75 hours for a total in-kind dollar amount of \$16,319.70. Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Engineer Technician Rob Fontaine surveyed and planned the installation of all irrigation pipe and structures.

In 2018, FCD partnered with Fremont County Head Start on teaching students where their food comes from with a planting project and food tasting of different vegetables and fruits. In 2019, FCD received a matching grant from CSCB in the amount of \$1250 to continue this project with our local preschools. FCD partnered with Fremont County Head Start, Rocky Mountain Children's Discovery Center, SPIN Preschool (Starpoint) and The Ark Childcare. FCD also assisted in planting gardens for the students and staff to enjoy and learn from. In 2020, FCD received another CSCB matching grant in the amount of \$2150 to continue this project with these preschools for improving garden areas and classroom projects. This grant will continue through 2021. FCD has also participated in Family Night at Head Start speaking to the parents on how they can have fresh food no matter where they live. Overall, we have reached out to over 800 students, teachers and family members on where their food comes from!! Education on agriculture and ag products are important to the FCD Board. We are thankful to the preschools and schools that allow us to come in and make these presentations. We look forward to continuing this project into the future with new schools and additional school gardens!!

Fremont Conservation District also partners with NRCS and CSCB in providing a District Conservation Technician who is available to assist landowners with their projects and EQIP applications. This is a grant funded position with NRCS providing 75% support and the District 25% support. Our Technician, Mia Cory, is available for site visits for your projects. Mia assists the NRCS staff in the Canon City, Silver

Cliffe, Salida and Woodland Park Field Offices on their site visits and projects, as well as providing technical assistance for the FCD cost share program. Mia is located in the Canon City Field Office.

With the COVID-19 restrictions in place since March 2020, FCD has had all outreach planned for 2020 cancelled! For our Local Work Group meeting that was to be held last April, a survey was mailed out to 801 landowners with 102 being returned. Below are the Resource Concerns for our county based on these returned surveys: number one – Water Quality / Quantity; number two – Soil Health; number three – Livestock and Wildlife; number four – Pasture and Rangeland Health; number five – Forest Health; and, number six – Energy Conservation. If any of these are a concern for your property, please contact our office for assistance and / or information. Thanks to all who participated in the survey!!

We will be planning our 2021 outreach events accordingly as COVID-19 restrictions are hopefully lifted and venues start to re-open. These events could include: The Fremont County Home and Garden Show; the FCD Annual Banquet, the FCD Local Work Group meeting; Safety Town with Fremont County Head Start; Bloomin' Buddies with Touch of Love Florist; Kids' Day at the Fremont County Fair; the 5th and 6th grades Poster Contest with our local schools; and, workshops with the public or membership groups. As we are able to participate in these events, they will be posted on our website and social media page.

Our information can be found on our website, www.fremontcd.org or our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/fremontcd. Our office is located in the USDA Service Center at 248 Dozier Avenue in Canon City. Our office phone number is 719-315-3417. Our office is not open to the public at this time except by appointment only. We can continue to serve the public by telephone and email as well. We thank you for your patience through this trying year!! it has been our pleasure to serve the landowners of Fremont County for the past 70+ years!!