



# 2011 Annual Report

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

### Colorado Ogallala Initiative

*This report contains fiscal year activity for the state of Colorado from the time period of October 2010 to September 2011.*

#### Who We Are

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others care for the land. NRCS has six mission goals that include high quality, productive soils; clean and abundant water; healthy plant and animal communities; clean air; an adequate energy supply; and working farms and ranchlands.

#### Vision

Productive Lands -  
Healthy Environment

#### Mission

Helping People Help the Land

*“In 2011, sound conservation planning impacted the Ogallala Aquifer by increasingly improving residue and reducing tillage on 1,218 acres of cropland.”*

**Resource Conservationist for Programs**

#### Fiscal Year 2011 Colorado Ogallala Initiative

##### Statewide Activities

Number of Applications Contracted .....	13
Dollar Amount Approved.....	\$718,249
Acres Treated .....	5,003

#### The Program

The Ogallala Aquifer, also known as the High Plains Aquifer, is a vast yet shallow underground water table aquifer located beneath the Great Plains in the United States.

It is one of the world’s largest aquifers and covers an area in portions of eight states, which include Colorado, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas.

Much of the High Plains region relies on the Ogallala for water. The water in the Ogallala Aquifer is diminishing because of widespread irrigation use in the High Plains states.

In Colorado, water quantity and quality have been a high priority resource concern under EQIP. The additional funding will allow opportunity for agriculture producers to address these concerns.

#### The Benefits

The Ogallala Initiative provides an opportunity for producers to install conservation practices that directly benefit the water quality and water quantity issues.

#### Ogallala Initiative Funding Allocations

The Colorado Ogallala Initiative is funded through EQIP and are distributed in Colorado’s eastern counties.

These areas are identified at the local level and are reviewed and supported by the State Technical Committee, made up of conservation partners from various Federal, state, and local agencies, several agricultural organizations, and others.

#### The Assistance

Ogallala activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan of operation developed in conjunction with the producer.

- Contracts may include practices that improve irrigation efficiency, nutrient management, irrigation water management, or prescribed grazing.
- EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term of two years and a maximum term of ten years.
- NRCS pays up to 75 percent of the cost of certain conservation practices.

Total cost-share and incentive payments are limited to \$450,000 per individual.

#### For More Information

Visit our web site at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).



[www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov)

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

# NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

## The Ogallala Aquifer & Colorado's Water

The Ogallala Initiative Proves Vital to Water Quality and Quantity Issues in Colorado

Much of the High Plains region of Colorado relies on the Ogallala for water but the water in the Ogallala Aquifer is diminishing because of widespread irrigation use.

NRCS in Colorado places special emphasis on land use conversion from irrigated to non-irrigated cropland, and conversion to perennial vegetation and managed for livestock. Conversion of irrigated lands to perennial vegetation promotes practices for improved soil health, plant community composition, ranch profitability, and wildlife habitat, while meeting animal husbandry objectives.

In 2011, it is estimated that Colorado awarded nearly \$800,000 in contracts for the Ogallala Initiative, resulting in resource conservation plans on approximately 5,000 acres and although this is a new initiative in the State, the plans impacted the aquifer by increasingly improving residue and reducing tillage on 1,218 acres of cropland.

In addition, better irrigation water management will be implemented on approximately 4,042 acres, as well as nutrient management plans on 400 which can positively impact water quality irrigation efficiency of water delivery systems has been improved on 1,949 acres.



Center pivot irrigation allows producers to irrigate with a higher application efficiency and uniformity, minimizing runoff from the field or water moving below the root zone where it is unavailable for the crop.