



2011 Annual Report

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

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

Fiscal Year 2010 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Statewide Activities

Number of Applications Contracted	12
Dollar Amount Approved.....	\$421,303
Acres under Contract	15,656

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

“The WHIP program helps the landowner create an environment that supplies everything wildlife needs, food and cover, in the correct spatial arrangement. When these habitat factors are in good supply, they ensure healthy individual animals, as well as a healthy overall population.”

NRCS Wildlife Biologist

The Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that encourages the creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance.

Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their properties.

- NRCS works with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat development plan.
- NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the practices to be installed.
- NRCS also provides greater cost share assistance to landowners who enter into agreements of 15 years or more for practices on essential plant and animal habitat.

Program Objectives

- To improve habitat for declining or at-risk species to avoid further species being listed under the Endangered Species Act
- To improve habitat and increase the population of economically important species
- To reduce significant agriculture/wildlife conflicts

Special Initiatives Under WHIP

Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPC)
The LPC Initiative focuses on improving habitat for lesser prairie chicken in the southeastern portion of the state. Prairie chickens are ground-dwelling birds, native to sand sage rangelands of the American West.

In fiscal year 2010, a total of \$81,000 was approved to fund two applications for Lesser Prairie Chickens under WHIP.

Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI)

The Sage Grouse Initiative in the western portion of the state. The Sage Grouse are ground-dwelling birds, native to the sagebrush steppe ecosystem of the American West.

In fiscal year 2010, a total of \$82,000 was approved to fund three application for Sage Grouse the WHIP program.

The Partnership

Landowners interested in enrolling into the WHIP Program enter into a contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop and enhance wildlife habitat.

The Assistance

- The WHIP program offers landowners up to 75 percent cost share for wildlife habitat improvement projects.



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NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Protecting Sage Grouse Habitat

The only two places in the world the Gunnison Sage-grouse can be found are on the Western slope of Colorado and in a small portion of Southeastern Utah.

Colorado, however, hosts the largest population of the species. The protection of sage-grouse habitat has been one of NRCS in Colorado's highest priorities for nearly a decade. The state hosts two species in the Sage-grouse family including the Gunnison as well as the Greater.

Over the past 10 years, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CDPW) placed the sage-grouse on its "species of concern list," and as a result, NRCS strengthened its partnerships with the agency to help support efforts to conserve sage-grouse habitat.

NRCS has not only partnered with CDPW, but also Partners in Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Wild Turkey Federation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), local Conservation Districts, landowners and numerous other stakeholders to map and enhance habitat as well as conserve it through easements.

NRCS conservation efforts to improve habitat for sage-grouse include the use and implementation of prescribed grazing systems, range planting, brush/pinon-juniper management, cross fencing and fence marking. NRCS efforts in 2010 and 2011 alone saw the treatment of nearly 40,000 acres.



Escape ramp installed in watering tank to assist sage grouse out of structure.