

NRCS Partners with the City of Greeley to Help Protect City's Drinking Water *EWP Funded Stabilization Practices Now Complete*

DENVER, CO., August 1, 2012 –USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado recently invested \$500,000 to help stabilize privately-owned land impacted by the Hewlett wildfire. NRCS utilized its Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) in cooperation with the City of Greeley to fund aerial seeding and mulching on more than 500 acres. The treatments will reduce the risk of sediment, ash and debris from flowing into the Milton Seaman Reservoir which provides drinking water for some 300,000 Greeley residents.

The EWP program was established by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. It's designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. Its purpose is to help groups of people with a common problem, it is not generally an individual assistance program and its funding is dependent upon a special allocation from Congress.

"A critical component of the EWP program is the emergence of a sponsor. Without that, the program cannot be implemented," says John Andrews, NRCS State Engineer and EWP Program Manager, Colorado. *"EWP was structured so that its projects are implemented collaboratively between NRCS and local sponsors. Sponsor can be public agencies of state, county, or city government as well as special districts or tribal government entities."*

Sponsors for EWP projects work in collaboration with NRCS to efficiently implement and navigate the logistics of practice and structural installations onto private lands. They are responsible for providing land rights to do repair work, securing the necessary permits, furnishing the local cost share as well as successfully accomplishing the installation of work which could include removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges; reshaping and protecting eroded banks; correcting damaged drainage facilities; repairing levees and structures; reseeding damaged areas; and purchasing floodplain easements. NRCS may provide up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures or up to 90 percent in limited resource areas. The remaining cost-share must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

"We were pleased with how proactive the City of Greeley was in their outreach to us," Andrews goes on to say. *"When learned about NRCS' potential to assist in rehabilitation and stabilization activities on private lands, they quickly agreed to serve as a sponsor which helped expedite the process that has provided additional protection for both the Poudre River and the Seaman Reservoirs."*

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A Greeley City official states, *“Greeley takes great pride in the quality of our drinking water...In addition to its residents, Greeley’s business community and its largest employers depend on high quality drinking water for their products and operations, and we consider their needs to be critical to our City’s continued success.”*

In addition to the collaboration NRCS seeks in order to provide assistance through the EWP program, the Agency also works closely with other federal agencies including the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and others in their efforts to restore and stabilize landscapes impacted by natural disasters.

2012 brought with it one of the most devastating fire seasons in Colorado’s history and many agencies and organizations have and continue to work tirelessly to provide assistance not only for the landscapes that were impacted but also the people,” finally states Andrews. *“The great news is that although agencies have varying jurisdiction on public and private lands, we work collectively particularly in times of tragedy to supply the assistance each agency has the authority to provide. It’s important to understand that the recovery and rehabilitation of many landscapes burned during this fire season will take years upon years and the opportunities for assistance through the EWP program is designed to provide relief after a disaster for private lands that have an imminent threat to life and property.*

As NRCS completes EWP funded seeding and mulching on the Hewlett fire, it continues to work with entities and organizations who have volunteered to serve as sponsors for projects on the Weber, High Park and Waldo fires. The estimated amount needed to install the practices that will help stabilize the burned areas within these fire areas is expected to reach nearly \$15million.

For additional information about this release please contact Petra Barnes Walker, NRCS State Public Affairs Specialist at petra.barneswalker@co.usda.gov or visit www.co.nrcs.usda.gov.

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