

NRCS Announces National Water Quality Initiative in Colorado *Agricultural Producers located in Custer and Delta may be eligible for enrollment*

DENVER, CO, May 8, 2012 — State Conservationist, Phyllis Ann Philipps announced the launch of a new National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) committed to improving waterways on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 303(d) list of impaired waters in Colorado. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will manage the initiative by making funds available to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in the selected watersheds. If you are a producer engaged in agricultural production in Custer or Delta Counties you are encouraged to contact your local NRCS field office. Applications are being accepted until June 15, 2012 for consideration for this fiscal year's funding.

“Colorado’s DeWeese and Fruit Growers watersheds were identified as high priorities for this Initiative for several reasons,” says Gene Backhaus, NRCS Colorado State Resource Conservationist. *“The selected watersheds were identified with the help from state agencies, partners and the NRCS State Technical Committee.”*

“NWQI allows NRCS in Colorado to focus technical and financial resources in our priority watersheds. We hope by focusing our efforts we will be able to have a cumulative impact on water quality,” says Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver. *“This is an opportunity for farmers and ranchers within those watersheds to obtain a conservation plan and implement conservation practices which will benefit the sustainability of their operation and contribute to cleaner water.”*

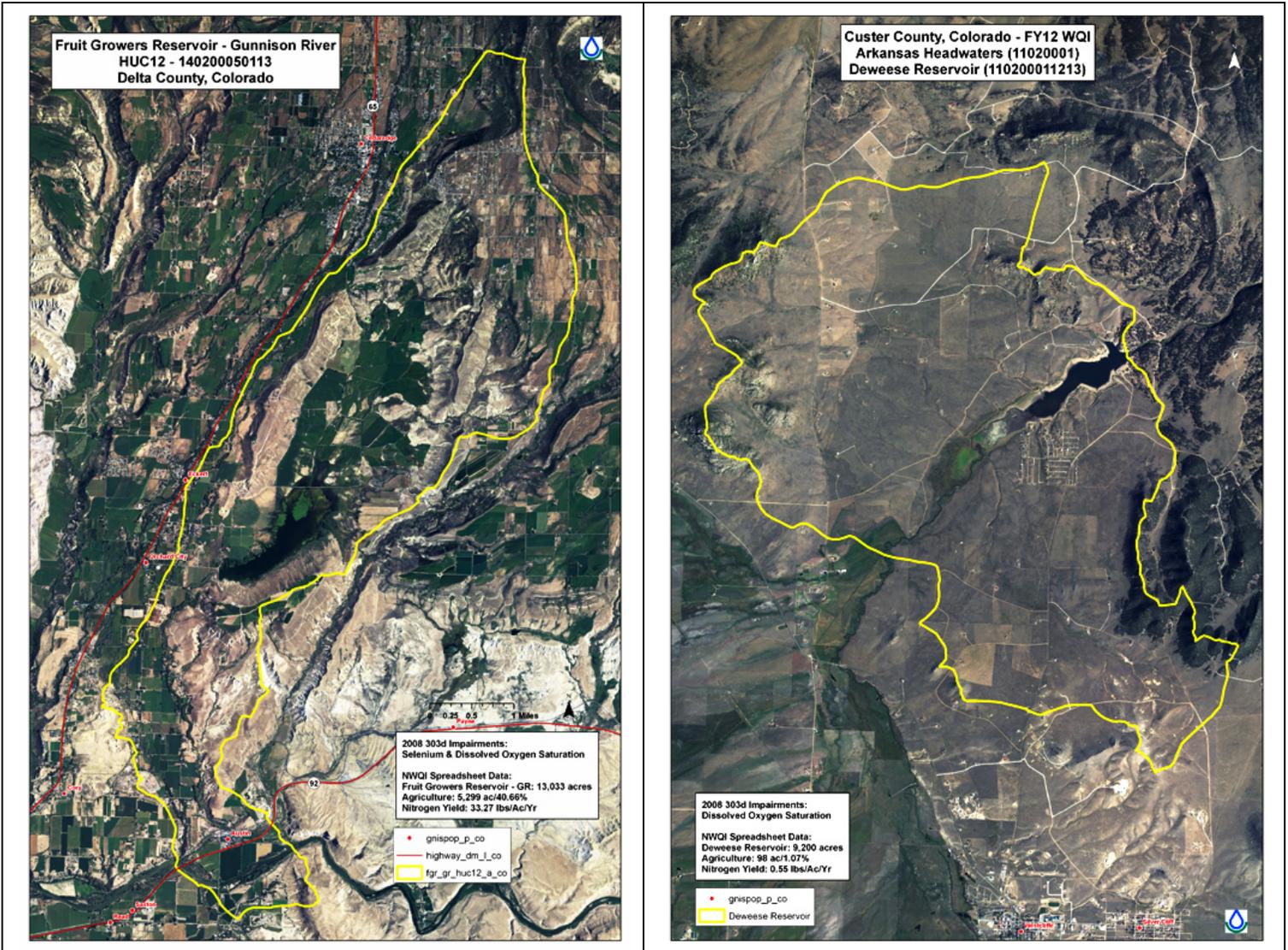
Using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS will provide funding and advice to producers to install conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and nutrient management in watersheds with impairments where the federal investment can make a difference to improve water quality. Through this effort, eligible producers in the Deweese and Fruit Growers Reservoir watersheds will invest in voluntary conservation actions to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities.

“American farmers are good stewards of the environment, especially when they have the tools they need to protect or improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality,” said NRCS Chief Dave White. *“We look forward to collaborating with producers in key watersheds to help them have a positive impact on streams with impaired water quality.”*

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year. If you are an agricultural producer in Delta and Custer counties and are interested in participating in this initiative, please check with your local NRCS field office to see if your operation is located within a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during this fiscal year, must be received by June 15, 2012 with contracts to be developed by July 1.

Since 1935, NRCS's nationwide conservation delivery system works with private landowners to put conservation on the ground based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests. For more information about NRCS' programs, initiatives and services in Colorado visit us online at www.co.usda.gov

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