

Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service Employee Newsletter



Colorado NRCS Continues its Focus on Targeted Conservation in Fiscal Year 2013

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Highlights

by Phyllis Ann Philipps State Conservationist

Hello Everyone!

As you know, we are in a continuing resolution until March 28, 2013. For the first half of the fiscal year, Colorado is looking good. We've positioned ourselves well by paying forward on agreements and making essential purchases last fiscal year.

We just received our program allocations and because of the increased amount of funding we requested for the targeted conservation proposals and fire recovery/drought, we actually received \$9 million more than 2012 with a total of \$39 million in financial assistance for all EQIP funds (general, initiatives, etc).

Colorado is 3rd in the nation for EQIP allocations this year. The allocation was based on our obligation rate and our implementation rate plus our additional requests for targeted conservation and fire/drought. This financial assistance funding brings us significant technical assistance funding, which helps to pay salaries and maintain staffing levels.

Our implementation rate will be key in the funding we receive in the future. While obligation is also important, please remember that it is not about just spending the money, it is about putting together good quality conservation plans and designs, following policy, and ensuring that we have integrity in all that we do. The rest will follow.

You are going to be hearing about the fiscal cliff, sequestration, and the farm bill battles as we move forward. We do not know what these three areas will do to our budget for the second half of the fiscal year, but I will keep you informed as we go along so there are no surprises.

Maintaining our partner agreements is one way to leverage our funds and maintain technical assistance to the field. Taking a hard look at where our workload is and what staff we need to facilitate quality conservation on the ground is another area we will be focusing on and we will have more for you on that later. Bottom line, is we want to keep as many of our field staff and those staff that provide direct technical support as possible. That will be our highest priority.

Have a joyous holiday season, and please take time for yourself and your family.

Phyllis Ann Philipps (handwritten signature)



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## Colorado NRCS Announces \$12 Million in Funding for 2013 FRPP

by Katherine Burse-Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist  
Colorado NRCS State Office

Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps announced the availability of \$12 million in funding for landowners to participate in the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in Colorado. Application packages are due on **Monday, April 1, 2013 no later than 4:00 p.m.** for funding consideration.

*"NRCS will be targeting \$10 million of the \$12 million received toward easement properties that will protect sage-grouse habitat in Colorado,"* said Philipps.

*"This provides a unique opportunity to help private landowners proactively, and voluntarily, work to prevent sage-grouse from being listed under the Endangered Species Act."*

In addition to the sage-grouse funding, a special funding pool for FRPP will be available to socially disadvantaged producers, as part of a new targeting effort.

To participate in the FRPP program, landowners agree to limit the use of their land for non-agricultural purposes and to develop and implement a conservation plan if they have fields designated as "Highly Erodible Land." The farm or ranch land must contain productive soils or historic archaeological sites, or support a state or local program policy.

Applicants (eligible entities) must be a Federally recognized Indian Tribe, state or local units of government, or a non-governmental organization.

Applicants must have an established farmland protection program that purchases agricultural conservation easements for the purpose of protecting agriculture use and



related conservation values by limiting conversion to nonagricultural uses of the land.

USDA provides up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement in this voluntary program. The landowner retains ownership and continues to use the land for agricultural purposes.

To be eligible to receive FRPP funding, applicants must demonstrate a commitment to long-term conservation of agricultural lands; a capability to acquire, manage, and enforce easements; a sufficient number of staff dedicated to monitoring and easement stewardship; and the availability of funds.

Completed application packets should be emailed to David Colburn at [david.colburn@co.usda.gov](mailto:david.colburn@co.usda.gov) or mailed to him at the following address: **David Colburn, Easements Coordinator, USDA-NRCS, Denver Federal Center, Building 56, Room 2604, Denver, CO 80225.** The deadline to submit the application packet is **Monday, April 1, 2013 no later than 4:00 p.m.** Postmarked applications sent via mail **WILL NOT** be accepted.

For more information about FRPP, contact Colburn at 720-544-2820. You can also visit your local NRCS Service Center or the Colorado NRCS website at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).

## One to Grow On



**"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."**

~Henry David Thoreau

**"The great thing in this world is not so much where you stand, as in what direction you are moving."**

~Oliver Wendell Holmes

**"To be happy, we must not be too concerned with others."**

~Albert Camus

**"You will never "find" time for anything. If you want time, you must make it."**

~Charles Bruxton

**"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."**

~John Quincy Adams

**"What is defeat? Nothing but education; nothing but the first steps to something better."**

~Proverb

**"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anyone else expects of you. Never excuse yourself."**

~Henry Ward Beecher

**"Never neglect an opportunity for improvement."**

~Sir William Jones

**"The essential thing is not knowledge, but character."**

~Joseph Le Conte

# Acting Chief Weller Shares Seven Key Priorities for NRCS

Excerpt from email by Jason Weller, Acting Chief, NRCS



In the 11 years that I've worked with NRCS, whether within the agency or in outside positions, every day I've learned something new – about the value of our mission, the commitment of our employees, and the positive impact our assistance can have on improving the quality of life in local communities. Through your hard work we have made incredible conservation breakthroughs and now we can raise the bar for conservation and deliver huge results.

At our NRCS family meeting last month, I outlined Seven Key Priorities as we look to the future, and I want to share them with you again today.

**Strengthening Business Operations.** How we do business is as important as the business we do. The Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) is crucial; it is going to let our conservation professionals spend most of their time doing what they love to do, what they were trained to do and what we need them to do – providing direct service to our customers. We also have to strengthen and streamline our core administrative functions, like financial management, human resources management, and contracting operations, to ensure the long-term health of our agency.

**Expanding Soil Health Campaign.** We kicked off our new soil health campaign in October and we're spreading the word about soil health and its benefits far and wide – to producers, partners and the public. We've initially focused our attention on cropland and we're going to expand this soil health effort to range, pasture, and forest lands.

**Enhancing Landscape Conservation Initiatives.** Through our Landscape Conservation Initiatives we have pushed the envelope on how we meet local, regional and national conservation needs. Now is the time to take a look at these initiatives – figure out what's working and what isn't so we can improve them going forward.

**Increasing Conservation Access for Underserved Communities.** One in six Americans is living in poverty and 90 percent of the highest poverty rate counties are in rural America. We launched the StrikeForce Initiative two years ago to tremendous success in pilot states and it's time expand those efforts nationally. Using our financial and technical resources, we can help underserved farmers and ranchers in these communities. We're not just investing in conservation practices – we're investing in families, communities and future generations.

**Broadening Regulatory Predictability.** In September, we made an announcement with our U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service partners that is changing the paradigm for species conservation. Producers who voluntarily implement and maintain conservation practices that enhance and protect habitat for seven key wildlife species will get regulatory predictability for 30 years. That means even if a species becomes listed, producers can continue working their land and be in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. This is a game changer and we've only just scratched the surface; we're going to expand this model to water and air quality as well.

**Harnessing Private Markets.** The Nation's conservation opportunities are bigger than any one agency, any one budget, or even the Federal government. We are going to use our expertise to harness the private marketplace for conservation. This means engaging private markets to drive conservation-based decision-making by producers and consumers alike.

**Deepening Strategic Partnerships to Leverage Outcomes.** Our core partners – Soil and Water Conservation Districts, State Conservation Agencies, and Resource Conservation & Development Councils – are vital to fulfilling our mission. But new partners will also be important, and we will be doing an even better job of identifying our shared priorities, not just for the current year but also for the long term, to bring more resources to bear for conservation.

Achieving these seven priorities won't happen in one year, but through hard work we can make great progress. I pledge to do everything I can to help our agency continue to be the proactive, relevant, results-driven agency that we have proven we are.

# Why Soil Matters

*“Essentially, all life depends upon the soil... There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together.” ~ Charles E. Kellogg*

**M**anaging for soil health is one of the easiest and most effective ways for farmers to increase crop productivity and profitability while improving the environment. Positive results are often realized within the first year, and last well into the future.

## Soil Health

Soil is made up of air, water, decayed plant residue, organic matter from living and dead organisms, and minerals, such as sand, silt, and clay. Increasing soil organic matter typically improves soil health since organic matter affects several critical soil functions. Healthy soils are also porous, which allows air and water to move freely through them. This balance ensures a suitable habitat for the myriad of soil organisms that support growing plants.

It's not difficult to improve soil health. Here's how: till the soil as little as possible; grow as many different species of plants as possible through rotations and a diverse mixture of cover crops; keep living plants in the soil as long as possible with crops and cover crops; and keep the soil surface covered with residue year-round.

## Soil Health Benefits

Farmers who manage their land in ways that improve and sustain soil health benefit from fewer nutrient and pest inputs, sustainable outputs, and

increased resiliency. Healthy soils benefit all producers – managers of large row crop operations to people with small organic vegetable gardens. Healthy soils provide financial benefits for farmers, ranchers, and gardeners, and environmental benefits that affect everyone.

Healthy soils lead to:

- **Increased Production** – Healthy soils typically have more organic matter and soil organisms which improve soil structure, aeration, water retention, drainage, and nutrient availability. Organic matter holds more nutrients in the soil until the plants need them.
- **Increased Profits** – Healthy soils may require fewer passes over fields because they are only minimally tilled and they aren't over-reliant upon excessive nutrient inputs to grow crops. Healthy soils can increase farmers' profit margins by reducing labor and expenses for fuel, fertilizer, and pesticides.
- **Natural Resource Protection** – Healthy soils hold more available water. The soil's water-holding capacity reduces runoff that can cause flooding, and increases the availability of water to plants during droughts. Good infiltration and less need for fertilizers and

*Soils, continued on page 5*

# JCD Holds 70th Anniversary Annual Meeting

by Jonathan Geurts, Soil Conservation Technician, Area 2

**J**efferson Conservation District (JCD) recently held its 70th Anniversary Annual Meeting at the Elk Creek Fire Department, west of Aspen Park.

The public in attendance stretched the venue but thankfully not past the fire marshal-approved safety limits.

The District presented two awards this year. Conservationist of the Year went to John Hendryx for his support of conservation practices both on his land and abroad. Operator of the Year went to Kurt Geiger for his sensitive and professional implementation of forestry work.

To commemorate the Anniversary, the staff gave a presentation on the proud history and promising future of the District.

JCD was established in 1942 to streamline the irrigation systems of farms between Denver and the Front Range. It rented a bulldozer to aid in building dams and ditches.

As development closed up the grass and shrubland, the District shifted focus uphill to work on forest health projects.

Today, the District's focus remains in the forest, but with a reintegration of grazing and cropping projects on the Plains.

The urban agriculture program, in particular, is fast gaining momentum, driven by outdoor education. Grazing expertise was



Jefferson Conservation District 70th Anniversary.

provided by JCD's associated NRCSs field office in Longmont.

Lastly at the meeting, JCD convened a panel of experts to field questions from its diverse audience.

Kurt Geiger, of Geiger Logging, talked about the practicalities and economics of logging in the Front Range.

Rachel Emmer, director of Evergreen's Alliance for Sustainability, presented methods for gardening at high altitude. Mark Anderson, of Eternamark Consulting, spoke of his plans for building largely self-sustaining hydroponic greenhouses.

Noe Marymor, wildlife biologist for NRCS, responded to concerns about wildlife, including elk and deer populations.

As jam-packed as the schedule was, meeting attendees still managed to snag a light dinner and cake to nibble on while participating in the event. Afterwards, the meeting's energetic conversation spilled out into the parking lot.

The staff and board at JCD hope to need an even larger venue next year, as the conservation message spreads.

*Soils, continued from page 4*

pesticides keep nutrients and sediment from loading into lakes, rivers, and streams. Groundwater is also protected because there is less leaching from healthy soils. Additionally, fewer trips across fields with farm machinery means fewer emissions and better air quality.



## Soil Health Management Systems

Implementing Soil Health Management Systems can lead to increased organic matter, more soil organisms, reduced soil compaction and improved nutrient storage and cycling.

As an added bonus, fully functioning, healthy soils absorb and retain more water, making them less susceptible to runoff and erosion. This means more water will be available for crops when they need it.

Soil Health Management Systems allow farmers to enjoy profits because they spend less on fuel and energy while benefiting from the higher crop yields resulting from improved soil conditions.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about Soil Health Management Systems and the technical and financial assistance available to help "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil."



## 30 Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP) Participants Lead the Way to Change in Rural Communities

**C**ommitted to investing in human capital, major companies have spent millions of dollars in leadership development. Although these companies have been developing leaders at an ever-increasing speed, the call to create and nurture the leadership skills of agricultural and rural individuals has largely been unheard.

Answering this call, the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP) develops and enhances the leadership capabilities of diverse men and women committed to the future of Colorado's agricultural and rural communities.

Coaxing a living from the land, providing rural community products and services, agricultural and rural peoples have significantly contributed to Colorado's tapestry. CALP enriches this culture through a hands-on, interactive program dedicated to produc-

ing graduates with the vision and commitment to lead change and ensure the sustainability of Colorado's agricultural economies and rural communities.

CALP is a two-year intensive study of agriculture worldwide that equips people in the agriculture industry to become leaders in their fields. The course will focus on communications, government, policy, economics, social and cultural issues, and change management. Through the program, leaders will have the opportunity to travel internationally, nationally, and statewide to extend their knowledge on the global agriculture industry.

Thirty participants have been selected to participate in the 2012-2014 CALP program. For more information about the CALP and to see the list of names of the participants, please visit [www.coloradoagriculturalleaders.org](http://www.coloradoagriculturalleaders.org).

## American Indian Heritage Awareness



The Pueblo Service Center recognized American Indian Heritage month with a potluck lunch. Ashley Ross, CSCB, shared what the Zuni, New Mexico culture was like as she lived there for a number of years. She talked of some of the native dishes, cultures, and customs.





# Employee Spotlight

## Veterans Who Make A Difference: Dennis Smart



*"I served my country to the best of my ability in a war where the conflict was not only in Vietnam, but also at home."*

**D**ennis Smart has a strong appreciation for his country. He values both the people and the environment, and has worked hard to successfully integrate these principles into his life.

Dennis was raised on a farm in eastern Washington, often referred to as the Palouse country. The closest town was Oakesdale, about forty miles south of Spokane.

In 1966, Dennis was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was deployed to the central highlands of Vietnam with an infantry unit in July 1967. This was a time of heightened military activity and action. One of his assignments was operating an armored car (see picture) as a convoy escort. The convoy would go from firebase to firebase delivering personnel and supplies. Other duties included patrolling local villages and the military base where he was stationed.

*"I served my country to the best of my ability in a war where the conflict was not only in Vietnam, but also at home,"* said Smart. *"It was a struggle to deal with, but it made me realize there are no simple solutions in life."*

After completing his military obligation, Dennis took advantage of the G.I. Bill and graduated from Washington State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Mechanization. Instead of farming, Dennis moved to the Denver area and worked in civil engineering until retiring.

Wanting to continue to focus his efforts in supporting his community, Dennis became an active volunteer for various agencies in order to challenge himself and to continue to make a difference in peoples' lives.

He plays piano in the main reception area at the University of Colorado hospital in Aurora and periodically at a retirement home in Denver.



He also volunteers at a local detention facility helping inmates who want to get their High School Equivalency Degree (G.E.D.), primarily tutoring them in math.

*"It is challenging work,"* said Smart. *"I often look for a way to convince each person that he or she can become proficient in math. Each person requires a different approach, but the message is always the same. If you are willing to struggle, you can achieve your goal."*

Dennis also puts a lot of time and effort into conserving and sustaining his community's natural resources. He began volunteering at the Franktown NRCS, where he inspected watershed dams in Douglas County and the Kiowa Conservation District. He has inspected most of the 84 watershed dams in this area.

In July 2011, Dennis began working part-time for NRCS. He notes that becoming familiar with local farming and ranching practices is required, as is becoming familiar with grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Dennis sums it up by stating that he enjoys working in an agency that preserves our natural resources - our land, water, plants, and animals.

# Workshop Highlights Rangeland Monitoring

Article by Deborah Grigsby, permission to reprint by Elbert County News

An afternoon workshop now has 15 eastern Colorado ranchers turning a more critical eye to the wide open spaces they use for livestock.

Sponsored by the Double E and Agate Conservation Districts, a special demonstration of rangeland monitoring techniques brought to light the benefits of developing good grazing practices, particularly during years of drought.

Historically, overgrazing has caused problems, but within the last 10 years, the practice of actively monitoring and documenting not only soil and vegetation changes, but also animal grazing practices, has begun to yield desirable results, helping ranchers leverage the power of their land.

Globally, rangelands occupy approximately 45 percent of the world's landmass, said Ben Berlinger, rangeland management specialist with the National Resources Conservation Service in La Junta.

*"Here in Colorado, they make up about two-thirds of the kinds of land we have in the state," he said. "And in Elbert County, those numbers are even higher, probably closer to three-quarters, so you can see that management of these resources is important from not only a conservation standpoint, but also from their extent within the area."*

Accompanied by Berlinger, ranchers at the workshop traveled to a local rangeland area and learned to create recurring land records, documenting specific changes in vegetation and soil, such as overgrowth and erosion, with digital cameras and quantifiable methodologies.

The techniques are relative simple and don't require much effort. The time involved is more directly related to the size of the land being observed.

*"Monitoring is so important from an economic impact as well," said Berlinger. "From a private ranch-*



Rangeland management specialist Ben Berlinger with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, centers, shows a group of local ranchers in Agate, Colo. how to monitor and document grasslands used for livestock. Dry weather and high hay prices make grasslands an attractive option for ranchers looking to stretch their budget. Photo by Deborah Grigsby

*er's standpoint, rangeland is free feed because he's not paying anything for the forage that's produced on that land. We monitor the quality and condition of the land, so if it's not in its most productive state, then we can rotate grazing from one section to another and allow the forage to recover."*

Hay production has also suffered across many parts of the state, resulting in higher prices, theft, and shortages, according to the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

Berlinger said that during drought years, ranchers have many tough decisions to make in preparing their herds for winter.

*"Drought is a pretty common occurrence, especially over the past decade because we've been so much drier than we have been wetter," he said. "And ranchers need to have benchmarks during the summer so as precipitation falls off, they need to be prepared to cull or sell off underperforming animals."*

Many legal dramas have played out over the years on U.S. rangelands, and Berlinger says those days are not yet over and careful documentation by landowners can be useful in the event of litigation.

## CONSERVATION ON THE GROUND

# REJOICE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE

by Beth Ritter, CO NRCS Green Team

**W**hether it's a New Year's resolution to recycle and re-use or you're overwhelmed by the leftover trappings of the holiday—you might be asking yourself, how do I begin to recycle or re-use some of this stuff?

I hope these ideas from a member of the CO NRCS Green Team will get you started.

Once-used wrapping paper can be used as wrapping paper again, of course. But have you ever thought of saving it and then shredding it next year to use as box filler in your packages? It is colorful and festive. Or, what about using it for origami, the Japanese art of paper folding?

You can always skip the wrapping paper option and go with a fabric alternative. Flour sack towels are a good size to wrap with. One of my favorite cloth alternatives is a bandana. They come in many colors and themes. Tie the corners together to hold the present inside. If you like to sew, fabric bags can be used again and again.

Gift bags are a sturdy alternative, but what do you do with the tissue paper, once it has seen better days? Just about anything! It's great for gluing on storage jars. I have used it to decorate piñatas and the back wall of my kitchen cabinet. Give me some diluted school glue and tissue paper and my house suddenly becomes a kaleidoscope of color.

Holiday cards are good for making stencils for yourself or the children in your life. You can also cut them out with pinking shears (or other special edge scissors) and make book marks or gifts tags. Calendars are good for making envelopes or collages. Cards and calendars are also great for decoupage.

Bubble mailer envelopes are a difficult thing to recycle. However, re-using them is pretty simple. Peel off the old label and put on a new label. Bubble

envelopes also make great padding for the tops, sides and bottoms of boxes.

If you put a piece on top of the contents before you tape the box closed, it will protect the contents from the dreaded box cutter.

Moving? Cut the edges off the envelope and cut into small, medium and large squares to place between the plates, saucers, and bowls. Cardboard is also good for this.

Boxes are a special case. While they add additional weight and thus a larger carbon footprint to the overall shipping process, they are easily recycled in most communities and are happily reused by children. We have had box cars, trains, and rockets in my house, all made with cardboard. They also make great kitty hide-outs and doggy beds.

What if we pause and try to think of ways that we can reduce our waste before it even reaches the house? Many retailers ask if you want to keep the hanger—if they forget, I ask if they can keep the hanger. I do the same thing with shoe boxes. Think before you buy that new calendar; ask yourself, "Could I use my 'droida-pod' phone? Do they make an app for that?"

I hope I've inspired you to look at your trash a little differently and find a new purpose for it, or send it on its way to be recycled.



Colorado Green Team  
REDUCE • REUSE • RECYCLE

# A Successful 'From Our Lands to Your Hands' Event



*By Sylvia Hickenlooper, Soil Conservationist  
Longmont Field Office, Area 2*

and relay to a feed bag where they learned about bushel weights of the crops used in the race. They eagerly chanted "wheat, wheat" or "corn, corn" to encourage their classmates in the relay race. Once they warmed up from some running they were able to get up close to a combine and a tractor from the Penner and Bateman family farms.

Nicole from the Arapahoe Campus Future Farmers of America chapter was the first to greet us as we began to unload the truck for the inaugural From Our Lands to Your Hands event in Boulder.

Her smile and enthusiasm set the precedence for the remainder of the day, even as the temperature was nearly 40 degrees cooler than the previous days leading up to the event.

Almost 300 fourth grade students from three schools arrived on buses at the Arapahoe Campus on October 4, 2012. They were eagerly ready to learn about the diversity and importance of agriculture in their daily lives.

Farm Service Agency provided a hands-on presentation that taught students about the actual plants that grow the wheat and corn that is ground into flour, which they then used to make brownies and cornbread.

The next event was a real treat for the students as they were able to view a live chicken embryo in the egg through a candling demonstration put on by Colorado State University Extension Boulder County 4-H. Students were even able to see the chick move within the egg, creating many "oohs" and "ahhs" among the audience.

Boulder County Parks and Open Space Agriculture Division highlighted products derived from local crops. There was even a corn and wheat relay race.

Students were given buckets of corn and wheat to fill cups

Students were able to sit in the cab of the tractor and meet local farmers, such as Jennifer Litzenberger, Keith Bateman, Terry Jo Laber, Bob Clyncke, Bill Haselbush, and Steve Penner.

The Arapahoe Campus FFA students not only served as group leaders, but they also provided an excellent presentation in the school's greenhouse of where food comes from and what food is grown locally in Colorado. The fourth grade students were able to plant a seed of their choice in planting pots to take back to their classroom.

The final presentation for the day was the Agrium Seed

Survivor trailer sponsored by the Colorado Foundation for Agriculture and Nutrients for Life. Students were able to visit the mobile classroom and engage in interactive displays that taught them about the importance of soil health, nutrients for crops, and the water cycle.



From Our Lands to Your Hands Boulder Event was cooperatively planned by the Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Boulder Valley School District, Arapahoe Campus FFA, Farm Service Agency, Colorado State University Extension Boulder County, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Nutrients for Life, and Colorado Foundation for Agriculture. This event would not have been possible without the amazing volunteers and presenters, as well as the wonderful organization and facilities provided by the Ag Department at the Arapahoe Campus in Boulder, led by Heather Riffle and her FFA students, as well as additional assistance from the Culinary Arts teacher and students.

# Wetlands Reserve Program Marks 20 Years of Wetlands Conservation

by Katherine Burse-Johnson,  
Public Affairs Specialist, State Office

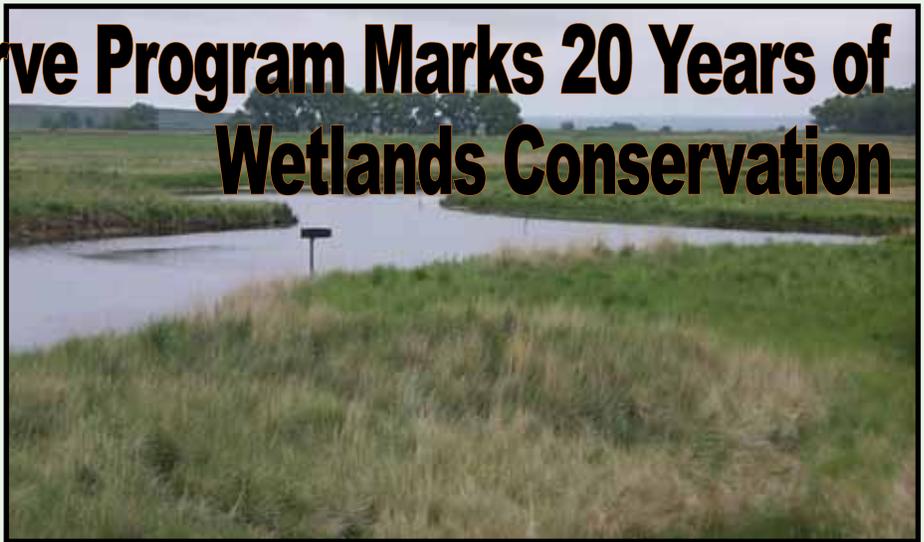
In its two decades of existence, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) has restored more than 2.6 million acres of wetlands habitat across the U.S, creating prime wildlife habitat and helping the environment by holding and cleaning water. This includes 19,228 acres here in Colorado.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the voluntary program that works with landowners to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on private and tribal lands, a mission that helps rural and urban communities throughout the country by reducing flood damage, contributing to groundwater recharge and carbon sequestration, and providing recreational opportunities. Seventy-five percent of wetlands in the U.S. are located on private lands.

Through the program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help landowners voluntarily restore and protect wetland ecosystems.

Landowners may select either a permanent or 30-year easement, retaining ownership of the land once the easement is in place.

In the 20-year history of the program, more than 11,000 landowners across the U.S. have participated in this voluntary program. Landowners can receive financial assistance to restore wetlands on the saturated and flooded portions of their property that are difficult to



farm, focusing their agricultural efforts on more productive soils.

Wetlands slow and store water, lowering the risk of flooding for nearby communities during hurricanes and other severe weather events.

The program is best suited for frequently flooded agriculture lands, where restoration will maximize habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, and improve water quality.

Wetlands are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the world. Rare and endangered wildlife, such as the Louisiana black bear, whooping crane, wood stork, bog turtle and other species, are thriving on WRP easement lands.

In Colorado, the program has offered landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their properties and to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

*"The farmers, ranchers and landowners in Colorado are not our only citizens who have benefited from the Wetlands Reserve Program,"*

Colorado NRCS State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps said. *"The program has led to cleaner water, aesthetic open spaces, and abundant habitat for wildlife. Colorado will continue to benefit from WRP as more land is set aside for wetland areas."*

NRCS attributes WRP's milestone achievements to landowner interest, strong partnerships and effective science-based technical assistance.

NRCS technical specialists work cooperatively with landowners, Federal and state wildlife agencies, researchers and universities, conservation districts and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement effective hydrologic and vegetative restoration and management techniques.

WRP success stories from around the nation can be found in the following publication: <http://go.usa.gov/g5bx>.

For more information about WRP, please visit: <http://go.usa.gov/g5bj>. Stay up to date on WRP and other Farm Bill programs through GovDelivery: <http://go.usa.gov/g5b5>.

# Local Partnership Aims to Improve Riparian Habitat



The Tamarisk Coalition is excited to announce the formation of a new partnership to protect and improve habitat along rivers and streams in the Grand Valley of western Colorado.

Participants in this partnership include: Mesa County, City of Grand Junction, Town of Palisade, City of Fruita, Grand Junction Audubon, Colorado Riverfront Commission, Water Center at Colorado Mesa University, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Watershed Assembly, Mesa Land Trust, Clifton Sanitation District, Western Colorado Conservation Corps, Bureau of Land Management, US Bureau of Reclamation, and private landowners.

Although it is still in its infancy, the Grand Valley Riparian Restoration Collaborative (GVRRC) already has a number of projects on tap for the coming year. Thanks to generous funding from the Colorado Basin Roundtable and Statewide Water Supply Reserve Account, administered by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the GVRRC will be implementing five on-the-ground projects in 2013.

These projects collectively strive to improve the ecologic function of the river and its floodplain through the removal of invasive riparian plants, such as tamarisk and Russian olive; secondary weed treatment; revegetation with native plant species; and long-term monitoring. Improved river access and recreational opportunities and experiences will also result from project implementation.

Some funding will be also be used for pre-project site assessments that include soil analysis, groundwater monitoring well installation, and other

baseline data collection. The remainder of the funding will be used to support facilitation of the collaborative by Tamarisk Coalition.

Specific on-the-ground projects that the collaborative will be working on in 2013 include:

- Bank stabilization and revegetation work at Riverbend Park in Palisade.
- Cottonwood fencing from beaver predation and wildlife browsing at the Ela Preserve, managed by Grand Valley Audubon.
- Tamarisk and Russian olive removal, secondary weed treatment, and revegetation at several different areas, including the Jarvis Property, Watson Island, and Las Colonias Park, owned by City of Grand Junction; Redlands Parkway property, managed by Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction; and Connected Lakes State Park, managed by Colorado Parks & Wildlife.

Several GVRRC participants spent two days in October touring sites where restoration work has been completed over the last several years in the Grand Valley. The purpose of these field trips is to provide land managers and land owners the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and to discuss strategies for moving forward with additional work.

Participants have also visited a cottonwood pole plantation in Mack that will provide a source of trees for local restoration work over the coming years. Cottonwoods, which were grown from locally collected seed or cuttings, will first be available for harvest and installation this coming winter.

*Riparian, continued on page 14*

# Playas - Landowner Workshop Successful

By Jerry Miller, Farm Bill Biologist  
NRCS/CPW/PF/QF, Area 2

We have all seen them (hopefully again soon), the low lying areas in northeast Colorado fields that periodically fill with water after rain storms and create farming challenges. These areas are often locally referred to as lagoons or "buffalo wallows." These shallow water areas can be difficult to farm, are never dry when the rest of the field is scheduled to be worked and only occasionally produce a crop.



Jerry Miller, Farm Bill Biologist NRCS/CPW/PF, explaining the value of playas and buffers to wildlife with a Playa in the background.

Jerry Miller, Farm Bill Biologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service/Colorado Parks and Wildlife/Pheasants Forever, hosted a landowner workshop November 27th in Holyoke, CO with 25 attending. The workshop informed landowners how to protect and restore playas while improving their net profit per acre.

The conservation challenge is ensuring these playas receive water, but not sediment, fertilizer, and herbicides that can be carried into them by runoff across exposed cropland – sediment that over time results in shallower or even vanishing wetlands. This challenge can be met by enrolling the playa acres and a protective buffer into programs designed to help landowners square up the areas so farming operations are more efficient and high-priced inputs are not applied to those acres.

Over the past several decades, researchers have gathered substantial evidence pointing to playa lakes as the primary source of recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer. This is big news for Phillips and Sedgwick Counties, which have relied on pumping the Ogallala for agricultural, municipal, and industrial use since the early 1900s.

Since about 99 percent of playa lakes are located on private lands, this information is crucial for farmers, ranchers, and natural resource managers who hope to conserve water and maintain agricultural economies of the region.

Christopher Rustay from the Albuquerque Office of the Playa Lakes Joint Venture explained how playas were formed, how the playa basins are connected to the Ogallala aquifer, and the importance of playas as recharge sites to that aquifer. He also explained the research and inventory the Playa Lakes Joint Venture has done and how landowners can access and use that information at [www.pljv.org](http://www.pljv.org).

Greg Stoebner with Partners for Fish and Wildlife talked about the importance of playas to wildlife. He explained that in an area where there are no permanent rivers or streams and that only receives 14 to 18 inches of rain per year, playas are important because they store water, attracting and supporting an astounding array of wildlife.

Migrating waterfowl are commonly seen around playas at different times of the year. Shore birds feast on the many invertebrates found in the muddy shoreline. Mayflies, dragonflies, salamanders, hawks, pheasants, deer, turkeys, and many other animals can be found at playa lakes. Plant diversity along the shoreline of playa lakes supports this wide variety of animals.

Playas contribute significantly to the biodiversity of the High Plains and provide valuable nesting and brood rearing habitat for upland wildlife.

*Playas, continued on page 14*

*Riparian, continued from page 12*



In order to maximize the effective use of funding and personnel resources, the collaborative will undertake a prioritization exercise to determine where additional restoration could confer the greatest long-term cost benefit.

Partners will also continue discussions about how best to understand system-wide changes as a result of woody invasives removal and restoration. While emphasis is currently on vegetation management, the GVRRC is open to tackling other riverine health concerns and issues.

More information about the collaborative can be found at the following website: <https://sites.google.com/a/tamariskcoalition.org/grand-valley-riparian-restoration-collaborative/>.

This is part of a series of articles coordinated by the Water Center at Colorado Mesa University in cooperation with the Colorado and Gunnison Basin Roundtables to raise awareness about water needs, uses, and policies in our region.

To learn more about the basin roundtables and statewide water planning, and to let the roundtables know what you think, go to [www.coloradomesa.edu/WaterCenter](http://www.coloradomesa.edu/WaterCenter).

*Shannon Hatch is restoration coordinator for the Tamarisk Coalition. Contact her at [shatch@tamariskcoalition.org](mailto:shatch@tamariskcoalition.org) or by calling 970-256-7400 if you would like to learn more, or if you are interested in becoming involved.*

*Playas, continued from page 13*

Noe Marymor, Private Lands Biologist with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory/NRCS/Colorado Parks and Wildlife, explained to landowners the program opportunities available to them.

USDA, State, and NGO funds are available to landowners to help with the implementation of plans that will remove playa acres as farm ground and establish permanent wildlife habitat.

Jerry Miller discussed the realities of farming with ever-larger equipment, the pressure of producing as much income as possible to support the high value of farm land, and the ever increasing costs of crop inputs. He used an economic analysis

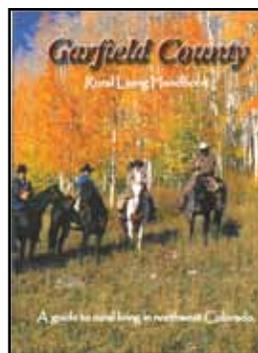
tool to show landowners that, by eliminating input costs on the acres that rarely produce a crop, the net income from the remaining farmed acres can be raised. He also stressed the need to be as efficient as possible with farming practices and field configuration.

Planting playa acres and associated buffers that match the farming operation improves the landowner's bottom line and will create excellent wildlife habitat.

The attendees enjoyed a barbecued brisket lunch sponsored by the Phillips County Chapter of Pheasants Forever and then boarded a bus to tour playa sites in Sedgwick and Phillips Counties.

.....  
**Mount Sopris CD Publishes "Rural Living Handbook"**

*by Sharie Prow, District Manager  
 Bookcliff, Mount Sopris & South Side CD*



**M**ount Sopris Conservation District is happy to announce the completion of our "Rural Living Handbook".

Our Conservation District was formed almost 60 years ago as a result of the impact of the Dust Bowl era.

Our mission is to promote sustainable management of the natural resources of our district and to balance the needs of agriculture, open space, and urban growth.

We have included information and contacts in the handbook to assist new and old landowners in how to be good stewards and good neighbors while enjoying the best our district has to offer.

We could not have completed the project without our partners including Donna Gray, NRCS, Garfield County, CSU Extension, and all the photographers!

If you would like a copy of the "Rural Living Handbook," please call the district office at 970-945-5494 ext 105.

# NRCS State Conservationist Addresses American Agri-Women at the 37th Annual Convention and Annual Meeting



NRCS State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps addresses participants at the American Agri-Women National Convention.

by Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer

**R**ushing West to Seek Our Fortune in Agriculture; that was this year's theme for the American Agri-Women's (AAW) National Convention. Denver, Colorado hosted some 100 women in attendance for the five-day meeting.

Participants conducted annual business meetings, engaged in educational workshops; toured historical landmarks, farms, and agri-businesses; as well as shared in keynote addresses presented by Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture John Salazar; Farm Service Agency (FSA) Colorado State Executive Director, Trudy Kareus; Phyllis Ann Philipps, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for Colorado, and many more.

*"It was a pleasure to have been asked to speak during the Agri-Women's convention,"* says Philipps.



*"Agriculture is one of our nation's most important industries generating over \$4 billion in revenue annually for Colorado alone. It's also one of the state's most important landscapes. Agriculture, lands, and the conservation of our*

*natural resources are often the foundation and are always critical to the quality of life we all enjoy."*

Philipps was among the panelists who shared insight and updates on the emerging Farm Bill, which is an authorizing piece of legislation that governs an array of agricultural and food programs and is renewed about every five years. Other presenters discussed Ag in the Classroom, Farm Business Strategies and Planning, and opportunities for women within FSA.

The American Agri-Women Association began with just four states over 30 years ago and today hosts 50 states and commodity affiliate organizations, as well as individual members throughout the country. The group represents tens of thousands of women involved in agriculture, with activities making a difference in legislative and regulatory matters at the local, state, and national levels. The group has also been instrumental in student and consumer education about agriculture.

*"It was a privilege to welcome participants to The West for the 37th Annual... Convention. Denver - - the Mile High*



*City...offers us a beautiful vista and a perfect opportunity to learn about western agriculture,"* stated Karen Yost, President for American Agri-Women.

NRCS is a USDA federal agency that works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

The Agency has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and more resilient to environmental challenges.

# Congratulations Debra Pummill!



On December 13, 2012, Debra Pummill, Human Resources Officer, Denver State Office, received recognition for her “Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.”

The award was presented to Pummill by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and read as follows:

*“For contributing to national security and protecting liberty and freedom by supporting employee participation in America’s National Guard and Reserve Force.”*

Pummill was nominated by Kent Amott, a Human Resources Specialist who also serves active duty in the Air National Guard. (photo above: Kent Amott and Debra Pummill)

## Employee Happenings

### Promotions (non-career ladder)

Name	Title	Location	Effective Date
Shoup, BJ	State Soil Scientist	State Office	9/9/12
Billig, Paul	District Conservationist	Simla	9/9/12
Jager, Dustin	Soil Conservationist	Hugo	9/9/12
Jaouen, Steve	District Conservationist	Glenwood Spgs	11/18/12

### Reassignment

Jipsen, Wayne	State Administration Officer	State Office	10/7/12
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### Reinstatement

Costner, Dawn	Soil Conservation Tech	Monte Vista	10/7/12
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### Resignations

Stroud, Alyssa	Soil Conservation Aid	Hugo	9/21/12
Hoskins, Mark	Budget Officer	State Office	10/25/12
Wolf, Karen	Soil Conservation Tech	Trinidad	9/21/12

### Retirements

Hastings, Jodi	Soil Conservationist	State Office	11/3/12
Sage, Terri	Biologist	State Office	12/28/12

## NRCS Partners with AISES to Reach American Indian Students Pursuing Careers in STEM

by Levi Montoya, District Conservationist  
Trinidad Field Office, Area 3

The NRCS recruiting cadre achieved tremendous recruitment success at the 34th annual American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) conference held in Anchorage, Alaska on November 1-3, 2012. NRCS participated as a Lapis sponsor for the conference, which was themed “Adaptability.”

Robert Jones, Alaska State Conservationist and NRCS cadre member, accepted the NRCS recognition award at the AISES Gemstone Reception. NRCS was also recognized and honored for their sponsorship of the conference’s Opening Ceremonies, Closing Ceremonies, and Honor Banquet. This conference attracted over 2,918 attendees, college students from 173 tribal colleges and universities across the Nation, and 116 high school students.

NRCS provided the Nation’s brightest and finest American Indian and Alaska Native college students with information on the new Pathways opportunities. Cadre members handed out 300 of the NRCS 2012 American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Heritage posters and Pathway flyers.

NRCS cadre members Nathaniel Todea, Dr. Carol Crouch, Rose Webb, David Elliott, Levi Montoya, and Seanna Sparks presented two professional and student concurrent sessions on November 3. The sessions were entitled: Intertwining Leadership Competencies and Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Balancing STEM; Native Traditions; Cultural Values; and Protecting Our Land and Feeding America: Who are these Professionals and Can Your STEM Degree Play a Role?

NRCS’s presence at the conference was a huge success.



NRCS representatives help make AISES conference a success

## Colorado Farmers and Ranchers Help Voluntary USDA Conservation Program Reach 50M-Acre Mark

In just four years, America's top conservationists have enrolled 50 million acres in USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a program that helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners take conservation to the next level.

CSP is aimed at producers who are already established conservation stewards, helping them to deliver multiple conservation benefits on working lands, including improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat.

The land enrolled in CSP is more than 78,000 square miles, an area larger than Pennsylvania and South Carolina combined, making it one of the top Federal programs for private lands offered by

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. This year, nearly 12.2 million acres across the U.S. were added to the program's rolls.

From improving soil health to sending cleaner water downstream, this program is improving the environment, including the landscape here in Colorado. Landowners in Colorado have enrolled 2.5 million acres into CSP.

*"The Conservation Stewardship Program allows our conservation-minded farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to go that extra mile in conserving natural resources,"* NRCS State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps said.

*CSP, continued on page 18*

## 2012 Diversity Day Celebration Contest Winner

by the Franktown Field Office, Area 2



Franktown Field Office wins the 2012 Diversity Day Celebration Contest, a contest that occurs annually in the month of October. The Colorado Civil Rights Committee encourages offices to learn about different cultures and vow acceptance and tolerance in the workplace.

Diversity was the theme for the NRCS/Kiowa and Douglas conservation districts' (CD) staff meeting.....and diverse it was! We lunched on perogies, kielbasa, cooked red cabbage, sardine and garlic sandwiches, Flichky (noodles and ham), baked beans, and fruit salad and washed it all down with Kvas....washed it down with what....Kvas, a Slavic wheat malt brew....non-alcoholic of course.

We are a small but mighty group and are mostly from Colorado with a couple of Arkansas transplants and a dash of a Nebraska cornhusker.

Our fearless leader was Deric Clemons who hails from Pine Bluff, AR and has a wild sense of humor (must be his military background) and included the Franktown NRCS staff: Dan Nosal, Linda Pollick, Dennis Smart, Lana, Armon, Debbie Rigo, Dennis Smart; and Douglas CD and Kiowa District Administrators Pam Brewster and Jane Penley.

Family history, origin, traditions, pictures, and family tree information were brought in to celebrate diversity month this year and everyone participated and the event was enjoyed by everyone present. We also shared family and background stories that ranged from a small town athlete who played football, track, basketball and baseball so his school would have enough members on a team, to a daughter from a family of nine and a young woman who went to college while raising her sister's child.

Along with our various life stories we had memorabilia from all over: Russian Nesting Dolls (that were of previous dictators), Hawaiian tiki gods, Czechoslovakian dolls, Peruvian and Mexican trinkets, and pictures of Dennis and Alicia Smart's trip to Egypt.

It's wonderful that we all have such varied backgrounds and yet have a common goal; and that is to be good stewards of our land and natural resources even though each of our backgrounds were so diverse.

# Girl Scout Farm Tour

By Jennifer Cook  
Small Acreage Management Coordinator, NRCS/CSU Extension



In cooperation with the Byers field office, I organized a farm tour for an Aurora girl scout troop. The sixteen-year-old girls were working on a badge called "Sow What?"

They learned about the origins of the components of a hamburger, and about the carbon footprint of what they eat; but they wanted to learn about their local agriculture first-hand.

On a crisp morning in October, we all gathered on John Webber's no-till wheat field to start the tour. John Webber, a local no-till wheat farmer, talked with the girls about growing wheat and the challenges of dryland farming.

We then showed the girls some wheat seed and John demonstrated how his no-till drill planted seeds.

John is an innovator and, with the help of Byers NRCS office, has been experimenting with growing cover crops in his rotation. He discussed the soil health benefits of using cover crops.

Next, the girls got their hands dirty as Sammie Molinaro, District Conservationist in Byers, showed them how to manipulate a ball of soil to determine soil texture. Sammie also discussed soil moisture

and demonstrated how to measure soil moisture with a Watermark soil moisture meter, which he has been using to collect soil moisture data on John's field for the past year.

Down the road at Bud Grimm's cow/calf operation, we stood at the corral fence and watched the animals eat and moo. Bud talked about how cattle are raised, what he feeds them, and how long it takes for them to grow.

The girls came to understand the impact of drought on farming, as Bud explained that he had to sell some of his heifers and bulls because he didn't have enough feed to last through the winter.

Finally, I discussed the various jobs within the field of agriculture. The thirteen girls enjoyed the tour and they left with a better understanding of the farming that happens in the fields that surround their town of Aurora.



Girl Scout troop listens to no-till wheat farmer, John Webber, talk about the benefits of cover crops.

*CSP, continued from page 17*

*"This program leads to cleaner air and water, enhanced wildlife habitat and healthier soil, among many other benefits. Colorado producers using this program are innovators in conservation and they're making great contributions to our rural communities," said Philipps.*

For example, the Dugan family uses rotational grazing systems for their 250 head of cattle, energy-wise conservation practices for wells on their property, and irrigation methods to facilitate emerging wetlands on their 20,000 acres in the San Luis Valley.

Eligible landowners and operators in all states and territories can enroll in CSP. NRCS local offices accept CSP applications year-round and evaluate applications during announced ranking periods.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, stewardship threshold requirements, and payment types. It is available from local NRCS offices and on the CSP website: <http://go.usa.gov/g9dx>.

Learn more about CSP and other NRCS programs here: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs>.



# Area Office News - Area 2

## The Area Office and District

Conservationists met for their Annual Operations planning meeting on October 11, 2012 in Fort Morgan, Colorado.

Presenters included Roy Hall, Bernice Dyer, Noe Marymor, Jennifer Cook, Donna Goodsell, Gene Backhaus, Mark Cronquist, Paul Weber, and Jon Wicke.

Discussions at the meeting included upcoming meetings, events, and anticipated policy direction and changes.

## Pheasants Forever with Jerry

Miller as lead, partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Washington County Conservation District, the Cope Conservation District, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, the Farm Services Agency, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to conduct a Pollinator Workshop.

Representatives from these organizations discussed pollination economics, seed mixes and species selection, site selection and site preparation, wildlife benefits, and Farm Bill Programs designed to establish pollinator plots.

The program will include a field tour to see first-hand how pollina-

tors can be successfully planted in Washington County. Pollinators are essential to our environment.

The ecological service they provide is necessary for the reproduction of nearly 70 percent of the world's flowering plants, including more than two-thirds of the world's crop species.

Beyond agriculture, pollinators are keystone species in most terrestrial ecosystems. In many places, the essential service of pollination is at risk from habitat loss, pesticide use, and introduced diseases.



## On November 11, 2012 the Deer

Trail and East Adams Conservation District out of the Byers Field Office held a Soil Health Workshop for producers. Ross Roberts with Diversity D, Inc. presented on the efficiency of and design of drip irrigation systems.

The NRCS staff including Jon Wicke, Ron Schierer, and Gary Barkey presented the NRCS Soil Health Trailer to about 25 producers

with emphasis on cover crops, and their benefits when included in a dry land cropping rotation.

The overall result was a lot of questions about cover crops fit into reduced till systems and how we measure success. The meeting was a success and many producers asked for more related workshops.

**On November 28th, Colin Lee,** WRP Partner Biologist from the Area 2 office held a WRP Meeting in Fort Morgan.

The meeting included key NRCS and partners with the focus of the meeting on how WRPs are being monitored, managed, and evaluated in Area 2. The meeting was a success with on-going activities and reporting planned.



## On September 21, 2012, Soil

Conservationist Sherri Brandt and Civil Engineering Technician Greg Hansen assisted the Kimball NRCS office with their Outdoor

*Area 2, continued on page 20*

Area 2, continued from page 19

Classroom for local 6th graders. The Outdoor Classroom was held at Lake Oliver east of Kimball.

Greg and Sherri showed the kids different kinds of surveying equipment, ranging from the hand levels to the Topcon. They then had the kids measure the height of a tree using the survey equipment.

They also discussed our natural resources, why math is important, and job opportunities in NRCS with the kids.



**Winter Driving Tips 2012**

**1. Pay attention to the road in front of you**

According to a driver's safety website on the internet, "If you have to react to road conditions, you've already made a mistake."

In winter, it is imperative that you anticipate trouble and put your vehicle in position to handle it.

*"In almost every instance, your best reaction is to slow down as stopping distances can be in-*

*creased by four to ten times when on ice or snow. By anticipating, you can slow gradually and under control."*

**2. Don't rely too much on technology**

The perception of control afforded by safety technologies such as all-wheel drive and traction/stability control can often get drivers into even more trouble.

All-wheel drive helps you go but doesn't do anything to improve braking ability on a slick surface. Too many drivers get over-confident once they experience that all-wheel-drive traction.

**3. Follow the rule of 1-2-3**

Driving on icy roads is like trying to play basketball in an ice rink. Your traction is compromised, it's impossible to making the sudden starts, stops, and changes of direction you could accomplish with ease on a dry court.

If you were trying to run in a rink, you'd need to accelerate slowly, allow more time to slow down and probably come almost to a stop before you could move to the side.

Employ this mind-set for winter driving. First, brake to an appropriate speed. Then release the brakes and steer through the turn.

And finally, accelerate only after you have completed the turn.

**4. What about the tires?**

If you are driving in the winter on a set of worn all-season tires, your traction is really compromised. It's like trying to get through winter with tennis shoes on your feet.

Winter-rated tires can be identified by a mountain/snowflake symbol molded on the sidewall. They have a specific tread design, tread depth and pliable rubber compound designed to excel on snow and cold surfaces.

A winter-rated tire can offer 33 percent more traction than a tire with a "mud and snow" rating.

**Area 2 HALLOWEEN Contest**

Greeley Field Office Mascot



Beth (NRCS)- Goldfish; Sharla (FSA)- Pippy Long-stocking; Sherri (NRCS)- Butterfly



Jennie - Witch, Dori-Evil Zorro, Jennifer-Bobby Sock Rock, Shannon-Jase Duck Density, Kristi-Burlington Cougar Fan, and Kyle-Cat in the Hat.

# First Steps to Identifying Grasses on Your Property

By Jeanne-Marie Bakehouse - a small acreage owner living in Frantown, Colorado and an NRCS Earth Team volunteer.

**B**ird watching teaches you that closely observing the details is crucial to correctly identifying species that may seem similar at first glance. When I first started bird watching here in Colorado, I noticed an orange and black bird that I immediately identified as a Baltimore oriole. It was only when I carefully observed small details about the bird's shape and behavior in addition to color that I realized I was wrong. The bird, which was vigorously scratching at the ground and creating a loud ruckus, had red eyes. This was not an oriole, but a towhee.

The misidentification of the bird taught me the importance of noticing details and taking time to carefully examine small differences. This lesson is widely applicable, but it is absolutely essential in the task of identifying grasses. There are thousands of identified species in the Grass family, so paying attention to small details is the first step in correctly and successfully identifying grasses present on your property.

It is possible to identify some grasses without an in-depth understanding of plant morphology, but you must be committed to closely observing the grass and its specific attributes. Additionally, you must be willing to watch the grass over the season, noting its growing and seeding cycles.

Grasses fall into some distinct categories: warm or cool season, bunchgrass or sod-forming, native or non-native. Warm season grasses grow primarily during the summer months, and cool season grasses grow best during the spring and fall when temperatures are cooler.

Bunchgrass organizes into tight clumps, or bunches, that can be strikingly ornamental. Sod-forming grasses have stems that grow horizontally, either above or below ground. Native grasses, defined as grasses that existed here before European settlement, are typically beneficial and desirable.

Non-native grasses and plants are introduced, and although some are beneficial and harmless, others are aggressive and without natural enemies, likely to become invasive and competitive for the same resources the natives are using.

To begin your list of identified grasses, start when the grasses have produced their seed heads. Much like colors on the birds, the striking visual indicators of grass seed heads immediately help narrow the list of potential candidates. Keep in mind, though, just like the lesson learned in identifying birds, you need to take as many details of the grasses as possible into consideration along with the characteristics of the seed heads to correctly and confidently identify them.

Three readily recognizable grasses present in Colorado are Blue grama, Western wheatgrass, and Orchardgrass. They are a good place to start.

Blue grama, Colorado's state grass, is easily identifiable by its curved seed heads, likened by some to resembling eyebrows. Because of this striking seed head, Blue grama may be one of the first grasses to easily make it on your list. It is a beautiful warm season grass, catching the afternoon light and sifting it out again through its seeds in the late summer.

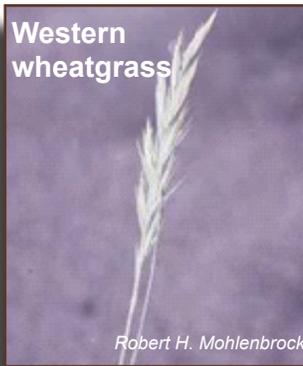
Long-lived, Blue grama is a native perennial that can be a nice alternative to a Kentucky bluegrass lawn. It is a shorter grass, reaching heights of 20 inches under good growing conditions, and once established it is fairly drought-tolerant.



*Grasses, continued on page 22*

*Grasses, continued from page 21*

Western wheatgrass is another native grass prevalent in Colorado. It is a long-lived cool season grass with a bluish tinge in its leaves. Seen in the correct



light, Western wheatgrass gives a hillslope or rangeland area a wonderful hue of alternative color.

Western wheatgrass is not only beautiful, but it also has strong sod-forming tendencies making it excel at erosion control. In addition to its long and narrow seed heads and bluish leaves, height can be another helpful identifying characteristic as Western wheatgrass typically grows to between one and three feet tall.

Orchardgrass has distinctive clumped seeds atop stately stems that grow upwards of two to four feet tall, making it another readily identifiable grass and potential addition to your list.



This cool season bunchgrass is introduced, but it can be beneficial with its propensity to recover rapidly after grazing. Orchardgrass tends to form a dense network of roots and so provides a decent measure of erosion control.

Moving beyond using just visual clues and seed heads, grass identification takes on a new level of difficulty. You need to be prepared to learn about roots, stems and leaves, and you must be willing to learn a new vocabulary of terms, including inflorescence, spikelets, florets, ligules, and auricles to name a few. You'll need a magnifying lens, an eye for detail, and a lot of patience. Much like learning to identify birds, identifying grasses can be rewarding and exciting, and it will go a long ways to helping you understand what's growing on your property.

For those serious about grass identification, there are a number of resources out there to help you. Robert B. Shaw's Grasses of Colorado and H.D.

Harrington's How to Identify Grasses and Grasslike Plants are a good start, and there are numerous guide books dedicated to Colorado's plants and wildflowers that include a section on grasses.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Plant Database website provides in depth information on grasses and plants (<http://plants.usda.gov/>), and other places to find information are your local NRCS Offices, County Conservation Districts, and Extension Offices.

**2012 Earth Team Award Winners**

**Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award**  
Colleen McCleary, La Junta

**Individual Volunteer Award**  
Jenny Nehring, Monte Vista

**Group Award**  
Rick Enstrom and Tamerisk Project

**CACD Award**  
Boulder Valley CD & Longmont CD

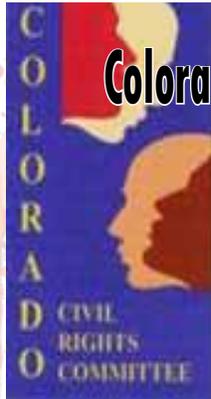
**Chief's Field Award**  
Longmont Field Office

**NRCS Employee Award**  
Sylvia Hickenlooper, Longmont

**Partnership Award**  
"Our Lands to Your Hands"

**Congratulations!**





## Colorado Civil Rights Advisory Committee: *Functions and Responsibilities*

The Colorado Civil Rights Advisory Committee is responsible to the NRCS Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer (State Conservationist).

The Committee serves the following functions:

- Serves as an advisory body to the State Conservationist, to promote and assist meaningful and effective affirmative action consistent with the goals and objectives set forth by management.
- Provides feedback on the performance of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights program, identifies areas of weakness, and makes recommendations for improvements.
- Identifies emerging areas needing special attention by the State Conservationist.
- Makes recommendations to the State Conservationist regarding policies, practices, and procedures as they affect Equal Opportunity in Colorado.
- Promotes the career employment and advancement of NRCS employees to maintain a high quality diverse workforce consistent with the goals of the Affirmative Employment Plan.

### VISION:

To be an inclusive diverse and equitable Agency that delivers programs in a manner based on and consistent with fairness availability and accountability.

### MISSION:

To be an inclusive, diverse and equitable Agency that delivers programs in a manner based on and consistent with fairness, equality, availability and accountability while ensuring that applicants and employees are treated with respect, dignity and free from discrimination.

### DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

**Recruitment:** The Committee shall review programs and make recommendations to ensure that equal opportunity and fair treatment is provided in recruitment.

**Training:** The Committee shall review training programs and make recommendations to ensure that equal opportunity is provided for all employees to receive training which will increase their potential for advancement.

**Promotions:** The committee shall review current personnel practices to determine whether the procedures set forth in the Merit Promotion Plan and other personnel regulations are being applied without discrimination for reasons of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, marital status, and any other non-merit reason.

### WHO MAKES UP THE COMMITTEE?

The Committee is made up of 13 members and 3 advisors. The members include a representative from each Area in Colorado, a representative from the State Office, a representative from the Colorado State Conservation Board, 6 Special Emphasis Program Managers, and a Chair.

*If you have any issues in your office or if you have any questions about Colorado Civil Rights, please contact (720) 544-2809, or contact anyone listed on the Advisory Committee below.*

## The 2013 Colorado Civil Rights Advisory Committee

**Charlene Lucero**, Chairperson  
**Katherine Burse-Johnson**, State Office Representative  
**David Price**, Area 1 Representative  
**Lana Armon**, Area 2 Representative  
**Colleen McCleary**, Area 3 Representative  
**Tony Panek**, Area 4 Representative  
**Allen Maez**, American Indian/Alaskan Native SEPM  
**Josh Toshiro**, Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM  
**Victoria Turnipseed-Henderson**, Black SEPM  
**Randy Randall**, Disabilities and Veterans SEPM  
**Jennifer Griffin**, Federal Women's Program Manager  
**Jim Armendariz**, Hispanic SEPM  
**Susan Hansen**, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) SEPM

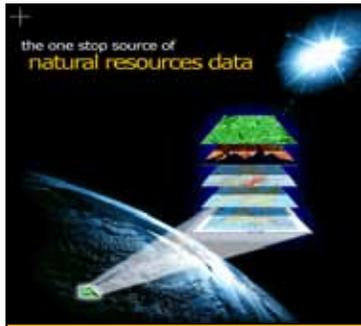
### Permanent Advisors/Officers

**Phyllis Ann Philipps**, Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer  
**Randy Randall**, Principal Advisor (Title 6)  
**Wayne Jipsen**, Equal Opportunity Liaison Officer/Principal Advisor (Title 7)  
**Omelia Madison-Bierbaum**, Advisor  
**Debra Pummill**, Advisor

## NRCS Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The NRCS Employee Assistance Program provider is called The Sand Creek Group.

The EAP is a **free, confidential** counseling service available to you and your family members and is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week, at 1-800-632-7643.



# TECHNO TIPS

## NRCS CAD

### Related Products and Updates

**A**re you an AutoCAD user? Are you having difficulty in finding an answer to your AutoCAD questions? Or would you like to expand your knowledge in using Civil 3D 2012?

If this is what you have been asking then here are some of the answers to your questions. The following information was sent out by Kathy Miller, CET with the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center in Fort Worth. The amount of information available to NRCS CAD users is plentiful. All you need is some patience and uninterrupted time. However, the information is invaluable and well worth the time spent viewing the many training videos that are available to NRCS CAD users.

#### rGuide Library (formerly known as vBooks)

Maybe you are asking yourself what is the rGuide Library? Well, if you are an AutoCAD user you may be interested in knowing what the rGuide Library has to offer. Formerly known as vBooks, the rGuide Library is a digital training library that has been updated to include new Custom NRCS Civil 3D 2012 training content. Training videos are available for everyone, from the basic user to the more advanced AutoCAD users.

There is a three-volume course available titled *Civil 3D 2012 Essentials Training Volumes 1, 2, and 3*. These training videos begin with the basics such as drawing settings, importing points and creating a surface; and advance to corridors, pipe networks and grading and feature lines. It will take several hours to complete these three training volumes, so it is recommended that you allow yourself enough uninterrupted time to view these videos. There are downloadable data sets and drawing files that you can download from the lessons if you would like to work along with the instructor in the videos.

On the top shelf of your rGuide Library you will find the *NRCS Getting Started Guide*. This guide will give you all the assistance you will need on how the

rGuide Library is set up and how to navigate it. If you are new to using the rGuide Library then it is recommended to begin with the *NRCS Getting Started Guide*.

Now if you have never visited the rGuide Library website then you will need to create an account. From the rGuide website, <http://nrcs.rguidelibrary.com> you will click "Need To Register?". Fill out the form completely, then click the register button. This will create a new rGuide Library user account for your use.

#### NRCS Custom Civil 3D Templates

The Civil 3D 2012 NRCS Custom Templates rGuide can be found on the Standards/Training shelf located at the bottom of your library. These rGuides contain downloadable template files along with instructions on how to customize these templates to fit your needs. There is also a revision to the Civil 3D 2012 template (Rev.1.1) available for download.

#### NRCS National CAD Support SharePoint

You can also download the NRCS customs Civil 3D 2012 templates from this SharePoint website located at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/st/ndcsmc/CAD/default.aspx>. This website also contains other helpful information such as several Getting Started with Civil 3D 2010 training videos created by Norman Friedrich in Iowa, a list of State CAD Contacts, and over 2,200 standards drawings submitted by FL, IL, MN, MO, NE, OK and NDCSMC that are available in dwg and/or pdf formats for download.

#### Civil 3D Helpdesk/Support

If you are still having trouble with some aspect of Civil 3D, remember that you can request Civil 3D support from Andrew Walther and Mike Carris by opening one of the NRCS custom Civil 3D rGuides and clicking on the icon that looks like a person in the upper right hand corner. You can also find more information on this in the Getting Started Guide on the the top shelf of your library.