

Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service Employee Newsletter



# Out with the Old, In with the New: Putting Conservation Planning in the Forefront

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## Highlights

by  
**Allen Green**  
State Conservationist

We have just finished quite a year (both fiscal and calendar). We were successful in accomplishing all of our performance measurement goals, along with the first dedicated financial audit in our Agency's history.

As was to be expected, NRCS employees (with the support of our partners) once again stepped to the plate to meet the challenges and find a way to get the job done.

It was critical that we completed the audit to help assure that the Agency's fiscal house is in order and to assure others that we are capable and responsible enough to be trusted with the significant amount of taxpayer dollars that Congress appropriates to us. For all of your efforts this year, I offer my appreciation and thanks.

We now need to look to the future. We have worked hard to build a foundation for the delivery of our financial assistance programs, so now is the time to think beyond the world of contracts.

We need to refocus our efforts on providing the quality conservation products and services that our agency was founded upon.

We all need to make a concerted effort to promote and deliver conservation planning and the implementation of those planned conservation practices that meet both the producer and resource needs.

When I meet with various groups and individuals, the most positive comments I get are from those

producers that have had a positive experience with a local NRCS or partner employee that provided them on the ground assistance. I hope that you will all accept the challenge along with my commitment to you to put CONSERVATION back in the forefront of all that we do.

Lastly, it is important that we all recognize the severe economic circumstances that our country is facing. Everyday we hear of more instances of people losing their jobs, their homes, or life savings.

You, or someone you know, may also be experiencing some of the impact of this economic downturn.

*continued on page 2*

### Inside this issue:

- Ghosts in Our Soils ..... 2
- Streambank Restoration at its Finest..... 3
- One to Grow On..... 3
- Rangeland Management Specialists Publish ..... 4
- Sustainability Event Sparks Discussion..... 5
- Area 4 Welcomes Corey Kanuckel ..... 5
- NRCS's Newest Surveying Equipment ..... 6
- State Office News ..... 7
- State Office News Administration Office ..... 8
- Area Office News..... 9
- Employee Do's and Don'ts for Travel Cards ..... 11
- NRCS Awards more than \$350,000 to Kerber Creek ..... 12
- Making it Snow..... 12
- Earth Team Page ..... 13
- Rosenbach named 2008 Outstanding Conservationist..... 14
- Area 4 Range Management Workshop ..... 15
- Conservation, Habitat Improvement help Park County ..... 16
- Featured Landowner ..... 17
- Are You "Cert"-tified ..... 17
- Grazing Management Symposium a Resounding Success . 18
- Techno Tips ..... 19
- La Junta and Otero Junior College Host FFA Judging..... 20
- Arkansas Valley Farm/Ranch/Water Symposium ..... 21
- Colorado Snow Survey and Water Forecasting Program.... 21

*continued from page 1*

During these times, we need to be cognizant of how this situation may be impacting our customers, the community, our coworkers, and the taxpayers that help support us.

We need to realize that with so many private, state, and local government employees being asked to sacrifice, we in the federal workforce will be looked at with a higher level of scrutiny.

The best thing you can do under these circumstances is to put forth the absolute best effort possible every day to assure that the taxpayers (which includes you and me) are getting the best for their investment in us.

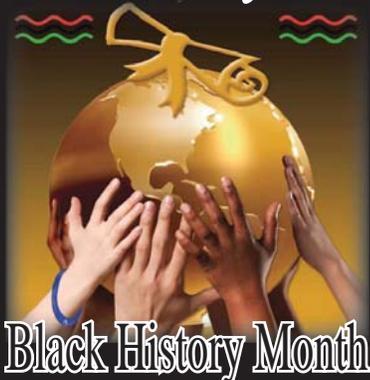
I would hope that we all realize how fortunate we are to not only have stable jobs with excellent benefits, but to also have jobs and careers that can make a difference to both people and the land.

When you find yourself being annoyed with a person or a process, or your day is just not going that well, I encourage you to stop and reflect on how much we in NRCS have to be THANKFUL for.

One of the things I am most thankful for is having the good fortune to work with so many dedicated conservationists such as each of you.



**February is**



**Black History Month**

# Ghosts in Our Soils

**By: Andy Steinert, MLRA Soil Survey Leader  
Fort Morgan MLRA Soil Survey Office**

As a soil scientist, I get a lot of different requests for information about soil, each unique in its own way.

This past summer, I received the most unique request in my eight and half years: Can knowledge of our soils help in determining the presence of ghosts? The request first came across Steve Park's (State Soil Scientist, Lakewood) desk last March from a member of the Rocky Mountain Paranormal Society.

They were currently working on the history of The Stanley Hotel in Estes Park and performing their own ghost hunting investigations. Rumor had it that The Stanley Hotel was located above a large deposit of magnetite that might be influencing electro-magnetic readings taken in the area.

They investigated further and found out there was not a soil survey for the Estes Park area that could help them determine if this rumor was fact or fiction.

As luck would have it, Steve had assigned me and Mike Moore (Soil Scientist, Fort Morgan) to finish a soil survey around the Estes Park area last summer.

A working relationship was thus created between our soil survey staff (Myself; Steve Park; Mike Moore; Jason Peel, IWMS, Lakewood; and Chris Fabian, MLRA SSL, Fort Collins) and the Rocky Mountain Paranormal Society staff in an effort to solve this mystery.

The paranormal staff worked with The Stanley Hotel management to get access to the property and we, in turn, got soils information from the property to use for the soil survey as well as to determine the fact or fiction behind this rumor.

Wes Tuttle (Soil Scientist -

Geophysical) from the National Soil Survey Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, was scheduled to be in Colorado with his Geophysical Tools and was glad to help in our investigation around The Stanley Hotel.

The Geophysical Tools use conductivity and strongly contrasting materials in the soil to produce data that can be converted to spatial maps. Interpretations from these maps help us understand what is going on beneath the soil surface without digging a large number of holes across the property.

Using electromagnetic induction (EMI) tools and ground-penetrating radar (GPR), we began the investigation. Surveys were conducted with the EMI and GPR as transects across the property.

Along with these surveys, holes were dug to verify soil type, depth to bedrock, and type of bedrock. A layer of granite, intermixed with gneiss and schist, was found to underlie the hotel property. No magnetite was found in the area. Geology maps of the area concurred with what we found.

Data from the EMI verified consistent soil characteristics across the area. A few "mysterious" features showed up in the survey and could be associated with metallic objects on the surface or beneath the soil surface.

Many were associated with utilities. There did not appear to be any "unexplainable" patterns or features from the EMI survey.

Most of the radar records collected at The Stanley Hotel were of marginal to poor interpretive quality. This was due to high GPR signal attenuation rates and little contrast between the soil material (texture and mineral content) and the underlying bedrock.



## Streambank Restoration at its Finest

By: *Lori Jazwick*  
*District Conservationist, Steamboat Springs Field Office*

The Little Snake Valley, located in Northwest Routt County, and North-east Moffat County, Colorado, is its own little piece of paradise.

This little valley is rich in agriculture, recreation, and Wild West history, and has to be one of the most beautiful spots in Colorado.

The lush green pastures produce high quality hay and the surrounding range enables the ranches to put on the best gain for pound on cattle during the short summer months.

In Routt County, this little area is unique because it is still home to several agriculture-only families. These families don't have second jobs, their isolated location doesn't allow them the luxury, so they still make their living from the sale of hay and cattle, and the occasional guest that comes to visit for awhile for a taste of the authentic old west.

This past summer, the Steamboat Springs Field Office had the pleasure of working with two landowners who live in this wonderful valley.

Terry Reidy, the owner of Focus Ranch, and Bick Marsh, the operator/owner of the Saddle Pocket Ranch, signed an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contract to do streambank restoration.

With the help of Jim Haskins from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), and Bob Timberman, with Partners for Fish and Wildlife, all three agencies were able to pool their money to stabilize three miles of the Little Snake River and a quarter mile of Battle Creek.

The Little Snake River runs through both these ranches, and Battle Creek empties into the Little Snake River on the Saddle Pocket Ranch.

CDOW was able to contribute \$50,000 via a Go-Co grant to help pay for the rock, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife provided cost-sharing to the participants for riparian fencing. It is important to control grazing to allow establishment of vegetation, and to protect the new restoration work.

Vance Fulton, Civil Engineering Technician, Gabriel Lucero, Area One Engineer, and Lori Jazwick, District Conservationist, spent many hours surveying and designing these projects.

The work included some limited channel re-alignment, bank sloping, installing rock cross vanes and J hooks, and transplanting willow mats. On the Focus Ranch, three of the cross vanes also serve as irrigation diversions. Frequent site visits were made to coordinate with contractors and to lay out the rock structures.

Gabriel stayed at the Focus Ranch part of the time, because the next closest place to stay was a two-hour drive from the project location. Two contractors worked for two months, and installed approximately 3,900 tons of rock, to complete these projects.

The benefits of this project will be seen next spring during high runoff. The ranches will no longer lose productive pasture due to bank erosion.

The rock structures, along with the establishment of vegetation will also provide much improved fish habitat.

## One to Grow On



**Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.**

~ Henry David Thoreau

**Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.**

~ John Wooden

**You will never plough a field if you only turn it over in your mind.**

~ Irish Proverb

**Determination is the wake-up call to the human will.**

~ Anthony Robbins

**Happiness will never come to those who fail to appreciate what they already have.**

~ Anonymous

**The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.**

~ Marcus A. Antoninus

**Start by doing what's necessary, then what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.**

~ Francis of Assisi

**We can do anything we want to do if we stick to it long enough.**

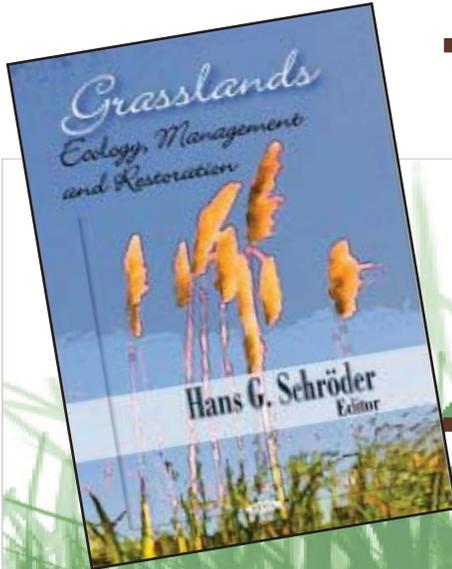
~ Helen Keller

**He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.**

~ Benjamin Franklin

**Niney-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses.**

~ George W. Carver



# Rangeland Management Specialists Publish on Prescribed Grazing

by Matt Barnes

Multi-County Rangeland Management Specialist  
Kremmling and Walden Field Offices

The NRCS Colorado rangeland management specialists weighed in heavily on the debate over multiple-paddock prescribed grazing in 2008.

Progressive livestock producers around the world have successfully improved both grazing land health and livestock production through various forms of rotational grazing, with which paddocks are grazed briefly and then given time to recover.

The NRCS promotes this kind of grazing management through the prescribed grazing practice. However, grazing studies on research stations have generally failed to find any advantage of rotational over continuous or season-long grazing.

Matt Barnes, of the Kremmling Field Office in Area 1, published a scientific research article, "Paddock size and stocking density affect spatial heterogeneity of grazing," in the July issue of *Rangeland Ecology & Management* 61:380-388.

This is the first study to quantify the beneficial effect of rotational stocking on livestock distribution. Matt concludes that rotational grazing can improve distribution, rangeland health, and grazing capacity, but that this improvement depends on good planning and adaptive management. The article is available online at <http://www.srmjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-abstract&doi=10.2111%2F06-155.1>.

Tim Steffens, of the Springfield Field Office in Area 3, and Matt Barnes coauthored the chapter, "Benefits of multiple paddock grazing management on rangelands: limitations of experimental grazing research and knowledge gaps," along with faculty from Texas A&M University, Utah State University, and Colorado State University.

The chapter explains the apparent contradiction be-

tween applied management and reductionist research, as well as how graziers can put the concepts of grazing management to use. The book, *Grasslands Ecology, Management and Restoration* is available from Nova Publishers at [https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=7954](https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=7954).

Tim Steffens, as President-Elect of the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM), organized the symposium *Strategy vs. System: Grazing for Desired Outcomes*, held on December 2-4 in Fort Collins.

The symposium was widely hailed as the best meeting ever held by any section of the SRM, and will be edited for publication by Steffens and Barnes. Steffens and Barnes submitted a poster presentation, "Effects of increased paddock numbers and stock density on the ability of livestock to select a high-quality diet," and Barnes submitted a poster version of his research article.

NRCS field and area employees were unable to attend the symposium due to the national audit review, to the disappointment of our partners in the rangeland science and management community, but both posters were on display. Videos of the oral presentations at the symposium are available on the SRM website at <http://www.rangelands.org/svsvideos/>.

These publications and the *Strategy vs. System* symposium collectively represent an emerging scientific understanding of grazing ecology and management, based on a holistic view of complex, self-organizing systems of soil-plant-herbivore interactions, and adaptive management of change on large and variable landscapes.

As such, it is a challenge to the traditional reductionist experimental approach, and a beacon of hope for restoration of the world's grazing lands.

# Sustainability Event Sparks Discussion, Idea Sharing



by Bill Gardiner, District Conservationist  
Salida Field Office

In reaction to the community's increased interest in "sustainability" issues, Colorado Mountain College partnered with Chaffee County government to bring an all-day event on September 27 to the Orpheum Theatre in Buena Vista.

The event featured a "showcase" or trade show, with nearly 30 participating businesses, which took advantage of the opportunity to network with each other, as well as display their wares to those attending.

The first speaker, alternative energy activist, Randy Udall, whose message regarding the path forward with an uncertain energy future, left the crowd with unsettled thoughts, but also with hope.

*"We have a lot of work to do collectively over the next 20 years, but it may be the greatest energy*

*odyssey we've ever been on,"* Udall said, reminding those present that Chaffee County is well positioned for small- and large-scale solar power, and a river that could be utilized for Micro-hydro power with little impact.

Quint Redmond, who coined the phrase, "Agriburbia," which refers

to integrating agriculture into subdivisions, pointed out that *"if all subdivisions were built this way, encouraging homeowners to plant vegetable gardens, we would have more than enough food -- even if they were only quarter-acre lots."*

Solar energy expert and founder of PowerMundo, Michael Callahan, pointed out *"The amount of sunlight that hits the earth in one hour is enough to power the earth for one year. The abundance of solar radiation, the minimal space required for solar panels and the cost makes solar power the obvious source for energy for the future,"*

Callahan concluded by saying, *"The solution to prevent more economic melt downs, wars and climate change is to create a clean energy economy that is based on solar energy."*

A two-hour panel discussion titled

"Restoring a local food economy," invited those attending to participate. Moderator Bill Gardiner began with a presentation which revealed a former booming local food production system and explored the question, "how can we again produce more food locally, and reduce dependence on outside sources?"

Several great ideas came from the discussion, including the possibility of starting a local beef co-op.

Morning coffee was provided by Buena Vista Roastery, whose "Coffee for a Cause" program donates to worthy organizations, and afternoon wine and cheese break was hosted by Mountain Spirit Winery of Salida, and Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy of Buena Vista.

A mini-farmer's market, open to the public, saw brisk business from 4 – 6 PM, which created talk of a weekly farmers market in that location next season.

The final highlight was a Community Mixer, with music provided by Avant Garage of Salida, and sponsored exclusively by Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, with beer provided by the New Belgium Brewing Company.

The next sustainability event is tentatively planned for late May in Salida.

## Area 4 Welcomes Corey Kanuckel

Corey is the new NRCS/CDOW/RMBO Private Lands Wildlife Biologist for the San Juan Basin.

He received his BS in Biology/Ecology from the University of Findlay (1997) and his MS in Environmental Studies/Conservation Biology from Ohio University (2003).

He spent two seasons with the US Forest Service in Salida, CO as a field biologist before coming to work as a private lands biologist with the NRCS/CDOW/RMBO partnership program. A native of Ohio, Corey has worked on a number of wildlife research projects across the country.

This has included a stream ecology study in southeastern OH, radio-

tracking Sharp-Shinned Hawks in PA, monitoring Bald Eagles in Eastern North Carolina, and breeding raptor survey and nest monitoring in Colorado and Utah.

Prior to his current position in Durango, Corey worked as a habitat biologist with NRCS and the PA Game Commission in Western PA where he planned native grass plantings, riparian buffers, and wetlands on private lands.



# NRCS's Newest Surveying Equipment



by **David Wolff**  
Engineer, State Office

Colorado NRCS is using the state-of-the-art surveying equipment and has invested over one-half million dollars in Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) surveying equipment in the last 10 years. With the use of this technology, engineers and technicians have been able to keep the backlog of large construction projects to a minimum.

With the efficient use of the DGPS surveying equipment, a surveyor can collect more than twice as many survey points in the same time as compared to a survey performed with conventional equipment such as a total station or standard level and measuring chain.

Also, the DGPS utilizes only one person to operate the equipment while the other surveying equipment requires a minimum of two.

While the DGPS surveying equipment is rather expensive, approximately \$40-50,000 per unit, if used efficiently, it will pay for itself within one to two years in increased productivity and/or reduced manpower.

The equipment operates using two GPS receivers that collect information from a constellation of 24-32 satellites that rotate around the earth approximately every 12 hours.

One receiver is called a Base Station and is stationary at one location. The other receiver is called a Rover and is used for collecting the survey information.

The Rover receiver can be hand-carried on a surveying pole, mounted on the roof of an automobile, or fastened to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) to permit rapid collection of field data.

The two receivers communicate via a radio to correct the Rover's position in relation to the Base Station. This is called differential correction, which increases the surveying accuracy to approximately  $\pm 1$  centimeters (cm) horizontally and  $\pm 2$  cm vertically.

Once the survey is completed, the information can be downloaded from the data collector into software packages such as AutoCAD or Survey Engineering Tool to produce plan maps and design drawings.

Colorado has purchased 13 of

these systems, which are scattered around the state. They are located at the following offices: Delta, Montrose, Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Fort Collins, Simla, Pueblo, Lamar, Monte Vista, Cortez, and Lakewood.

Questions about availability of the equipment for use by/for an office that doesn't have one should be directed to the area engineer.



**Rob Fontaine, Civil Engineering Technician, Canon City Field Office, surveys rim of an excavation with the new surveying equipment.**

# on the pulse **State Office News**

Recently the *"History of Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting"* was released. The principal author is Doug Helms, NRCS Historian in Washington, D.C.

Most of the nearly 300 pages of text include interviews with some of the early pioneers in the snow survey program.

It's interesting reading about how surveys got started around the West, and about some of the issues the ol' timers dealt with.

For example, before snowmobiles, surveyors set out on foot for many days at a time. They snowshoed to all their snow courses and spent the night in special cabins, which had been constructed and stocked with equipment just for this purpose.

The book covers the history of snow surveying from its inception in 1906 to the modern day SNO-TEL network. There are only a few books left at the State Office.

Please refer to the directive announcing the book, including instructions to request a hardbound copy: [http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/NB\\_290\\_9\\_6.htm](http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/NB_290_9_6.htm).

To access an online version (pdf) of the book go to: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/articles/the\\_history\\_of\\_snow\\_survey\\_and\\_water\\_supply\\_forecasting.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/articles/the_history_of_snow_survey_and_water_supply_forecasting.pdf)



The conservation provisions in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) will provide conservation opportunities for farmers and ranchers for years to come.

The new provisions build on the conservation gains made by farmers and ranchers through the 1985, 1996, and 2002 Farm Bills. They simplify existing programs and create new programs to address high-priority environmental goals.

For more information about the 2008 Farm Bill, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farm-bill/2008/index.html>.

The 2008 Farm Bill contains proposed changes to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the USDA's largest conservation program for working agricultural lands.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture published an interim final rule for the program containing the statutory changes seeking public comment through March 16, 2009.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, or 2008 Farm Bill, is authorized by Congress and governs federal farm and food policy, covering a wide range of programs, including commodity price and income support, farm credit, agricultural conservation, research, rural development, and foreign and domestic food programs, among others.

Reauthorization of the Farm Bill occurs about every five years. The NRCS administers a number of programs within the Conservation Title of the Bill under which EQIP falls.

Proposed changes to the EQIP program includes non-industrial private forestland as an eligible land use and provides payments for conservation practices related to organic production or the transition to organic production.

It also provides for increased payment rates to historically underserved producers, including limited resource, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

The public comments will be used to finalize the interim final rule. The USDA will publish a final rule, which will incorporate statutory changes and establish the program's policy for the life of the 2008 Farm Bill.

For additional information about EQIP, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EQIP/>.

# State Office News

## Administration Office - What Are They Up To?

### Management Services

#### C-H-A-N-G-E.

If there is one constant in life, it is that **CHANGE** will happen.

**CHANGE** swept through USDA with the new credit card systems for Management Services Division. This was the **CHANGE** in vendor for the purchase card and also the vehicle fleet cards.

**CHANGE** also swept through NRCS with Patti Phillips-Keller becoming Colorado's newly appointed Local Agency Program Coordinator (LAPC) for purchase cards and the newly appointed Local Fleet Program Coordinator (LFPC) for our fleet of vehicles.

With the audit taking a priority, a new point of contact, and the new card vendor, **CHANGE** did not happen as smoothly as we would have liked. We wanted everyone to know that we are not the only state having problems and we are in constant communications with NHQs with our issues.

We will pass along any information/answers as soon as we receive it. And yes, even this new **CHANGE** will end up being the norm and a new **CHANGE** will occur.



Purchase Card



Fleet Card

### Human Resources

On September 25, 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law a measure (S. 3406) that significantly amends the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Ironically, the original ADA was signed in 1991 by his father, former President George H.W. Bush.

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) provides broader protections for disabled workers and turns back the clock on Supreme Court rulings that Congress deemed too restrictive of disabled employees' rights. The bottom line is that more employees will fit within the definition of disabled under the ADA.

Currently, under the ADA, disability is defined as:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- A record of such an impairment
- Being regarded as having such an impairment

Over the years, the courts narrowed this definition to include limiting what is considered a major life activity and how impairment was defined.

The amendment overturns court decisions by stating that the ADA is intended to provide "a broad scope of protection" for employees. Mitigating measures such as medications, and other interventions that manage a disease or disability must be ignored. As a result, more employees will be covered.

### Financial Management

The following is a refresher for NRCS employees that have an official travel card.

- a. The Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-264) mandates use of the Government Travel Charge card for employees on official business. Employees are required to use the travel card for all official expenses.
- b. The General Services Administration (GSA) has awarded a contract to issue charge cards to designated NRCS employees. Such cards are issued for official government travel expenses and are to reduce travel advances.
- c. Standard travel requirements, such as the use of contract city-pair airlines, use of restricted airline tickets, GSA car rental contracts, and meeting attendance approval, must be fully observed.
- d. NRCS employees with a travel card can obtain travel advances from authorized ATMs or no more than \$50 per day, which should be obtained at the time of official travel.

If you have any questions about your travel card, contact your Area Administrative Coordinator.

# on the pulse Area Office News

## Area Two

Area 2 held its Annual DC and Area Staff Meeting at Pingree Park on October 15, 16, and 17, 2008.

The meeting included presentations and discussions from State and Area Staff focusing on accomplishments from prior years, new ways to address progress through teamwork, and goals for the new Fiscal Year and Farm Bill Legislation.

**NRCS Holds Conservation Financial Assistance Programs Public Input Meetings.**

Each watershed held a public input meeting last fall (Sept./Oct.) in order to garner input from all of our NRCS partners, various groups, agencies and private individuals concerning the new Farm Bill Legislation.

The meetings in Area 2 were held on Sept. 29, 30, and Oct. 2, 2008.



**Mark Cronquist held a Grant Writing Workshop** on January 9, 2009, at the Greeley Area Office for

District Employees.

The workshop was well received and was presented by Melissa Esposti, a professional grant writer.



**October 9th, 2008, the Byers NRCS Field Office and the Deer Trail and East Adams Conservation Districts were invited to May Farms to explain the functions of their respective offices of the USDA's Byers Service Center.**

Their audience was composed of inner-city middle school students. During the field trip, District Conservationist Sammie Molinaro, gave a short Power Point presentation on the importance of natural resources conservation.

Following Molinaro's presentation Patty Cec, Soil Conservation Technician, explained how the NRCS utilizes the global positioning system (GPS) for the planning of conservation practice installation.

The students were given a hands-on opportunity to assist Patty Cec, Tasha Chevarria, District Technician; Jane Carlson, Soil Conservation Technician; and Sammie Molinaro,

District Conservationist, with plotting waypoints on one of local landowner Gary May's nearby fields.

The service center employees received extremely positive feedback from both the field trip attendees and May Farms representatives.

The field trip attendees were able to view the way points they had just plotted on a GIS map generated from Patty Cec's mobile office.

Sammie Molinaro, District Conservationist, Byers Field Office, gives a PowerPoint presentation from inside the Sunflower Pavillion



In the picture below, Tasha Chevarria gives a demonstration of the global positioning system she uses in the field.



# Area Three

The Custer County Conservation District (CCCD), Colorado State University Cooperative Extension (CSU CE), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Colorado Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Committee sponsored a range management school in Westcliffe.

Robbie Baird LeValley, CSU CE, Dave Bradford, US Forest Service (USFS), John Murray, NRCS-retired, and Floyd Reed, USFS-retired, were the instructors. Kimberly Diller, multi-county rangeland management specialist, Canon City, organized the school.

Some of the topics covered included grass, forb, and shrub growth, time and timing of grazing, rangeland monitoring, grazing management, animal behavior, rangeland nutrition, and tying it all together in a grazing plan.

AutoCAD training continued in Area 3. Brady McElroy and Howard Clyma are providing six sessions of the computer design program. Each session builds on what was taught in the previous session.



Area 3 offices were recognized by Al White, Area 3 Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator for the number of volunteer hours they had in 2008.

The following are the first through fifth place offices:

- 1st place - Rocky Ford
- 2nd place - La Junta Area office
- 3rd place - Woodland Park
- 4th place - Hugo
- 5th place - Lamar

The Baca County Conservation District was honored to host Colorado's Commissioner of Agriculture John Stulp in Springfield on December 29th.

The Commissioner held "Town Hall Meetings" in Lamar and Springfield to hear local concerns. In Springfield 30 area farmers, ranchers, business owners, and County Commissioners voiced their thoughts on a wide variety of topics including CRP, renewable energy, carbon sequestration, transportation, and CDA's bovine trichomoniasis reporting.

The Baca County Commissioners spoke of the need for transmission lines in the county, for future commercial wind development.

Colorado State Representative Wes McKinley was also in attendance. During discussion about funding for the Farm Bill, Commissioner Stulp encouraged everyone to contact Wes and the other Legislators and let them know which programs are vital to the local economy.

Even though the 2008 Farm Bill was approved, with the mandated budget cuts, the actual number of dollars that will be appropriated for each program is uncertain.

As for CRP, Commissioner Stulp and Governor Ritter are sending a letter to the US Secretary of Agriculture in Washington requesting "a multiple-year extension, until we better understand carbon credits and allow more time for producers to make decisions."

BCCD greatly appreciates Commissioner Stulp's willingness to travel to Springfield and discuss local issues. Commissioner Stulp is a strong advocate for Southeast Colorado, fighting to ensure our agriculture communities remain viable.



Area 3 held a Halloween-themed Area Office/District Conservationist meeting on October 31. Some of the attendees decided to get in the spirit and wear costumes.



Patty Knupp, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist in the Pueblo field office, dressed up as a wetland enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program.

Now would be the time to start thinking about planting an effective windbreak, which is a good conservation practice to provide protection in Lincoln county.

Windbreaks can be used all over the Great Plains. They can be effective in reducing strong winds from livestock or farmsteads and reducing the amount of drifting snow from roads, highways, and driveways.

Windbreaks are fairly low cost to plant and a high value in cost return once they grow in size.

For more information about windbreaks and other conservation practices, please call your local NRCS in Hugo at 719-743-2408, x3.

# Employee “Do’s and Don’ts” for Travel Cards



**D**o use your government travel charge card to pay for official travel expenses.

**D**o obtain travel advances for official travel through an ATM if authorized by your agency.

**D**o track your expenses while on travel so you have accurate information for filing your travel claim.

**D**ON’T use your travel charge card for personal use.

**D**ON’T use your travel charge card to pay for alcoholic beverages.

**D**ON’T use your travel charge card to pay for other individual’s meals and then accept cash. This would be similar to obtaining a cash advance.



**D**o keep your receipts for all transactions made on your travel charge card.

**D**o file your travel claim within five days after you complete your trip (or every two weeks if you are on continuous travel).

**D**o submit payment in full for each monthly bill.

**D**ON’T forget that the card is issued in your name and liability for payment is your personal responsibility.

**D**ON’T write your personal identification number (PIN) on your card or carry your PIN in your wallet.



**D**o return your travel charge card to your Program Coordinator if you leave your agency.

**D**o immediately report a lost or stolen card to your Program Coordinator and the card-issuing bank.

**D**o destroy any lost or stolen cards that are recovered.

**D**ON’T procure meals before or after travel at restaurants within your official duty station (airports on day of travel is not acceptable).

**D**ON’T obtain travel advances through the ATM which exceed your expected out of pocket expenditures for a trip.

**D**ON’T obtain travel advances through the ATM unless you are on travel or will be on travel shortly.

**D**o follow your bank’s dispute process for charges which are incorrect.

**D**o contact your bank’s customer service number if you have questions about your monthly bill.

**D**o be aware that misuse of the travel charge card could result in disciplinary actions.

**D**ON’T obtain travel advances through the ATM after you have returned from travel.

**D**ON’T allow your monthly bill to become overdue as this could result in suspension or cancellation of your card.

**D**ON’T wait for receipt of your monthly billing statement to file your travel claim.



**D**ON’T obtain travel advances and then use your card for meals.

**D**o become familiar with the FTR and “USDA’s Zero Tolerance Policy.”

# NRCS Awards more than \$350,000 to Kerber Creek Restoration

by *Chanda Pettie, Wildlife Biologist*  
*Alamosa Field Office*

In 2008, the Kerber Creek stakeholders and partners submitted a proposal for funding through USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), requesting \$215,271 of federal funds to assist in restoration efforts within the Kerber Creek corridor.

By late March of 2008, the Kerber Creek project was selected as one of the top ranking in the State of Colorado and awarded \$353,214; which was 46 percent of the State's allocation.

### WHIP Obligations in FY 2008

National	\$57.8 million
Colorado	\$770,860
Kerber Creek	\$353,214

This funding opportunity has been one of many partnerships developed in an effort to restore Kerber Creek.



Kerber Creek Before Restoration, July 2008.

The WHIP funds were planned to provide restoration from 2008 to 2009, at which point we anticipated other funding sources to be available through partnerships such as the EPA's 319 grant administered through Trout Unlimited.

With tremendous support from the BLM and other partners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided stakeholders with restoration plans and engineering designs covering over 900 acres of the Kerber Creek watershed.



Kerber Creek Immediately After Restoration, October 2008.

To date, WHIP funds helped to restore 3,200 LF of stream and to treat 12.5 acres of tailing piles. This is a decent accomplishment considering the WHIP contracts were just written last June; many thanks to all the landowners, contractors, NRCS staff, and partners that have provided their expertise and time.

The 2009 season for WHIP implementation is expected to be a busy one, since the goal is to implement the remaining \$250,000 of contracted work items.

Starting in March, NRCS will be contacting WHIP participants in an effort to finalize designs and plans, and to start working towards a fun and productive upcoming season!

## Making it SNOW

by *Doug Ramsey*  
*RC&D Coordinator*  
*Durango, CO*

The San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Council has gotten into the snow making business.

The San Juan RC&D has partnered with the Southwestern Water Conservation District and Western Weather Consultants to manage the fiscal resources of the Weather Modification Program in Southwest Colorado.

In an effort to streamline the programs contracting and financial processes, the San Juan RC&D has stepped forward to manage the program's administrative and fiscal activities.

Working with Bruce Whitehead, District Manager for the Southwestern Water Conservation District and Larry Hjermstad, Western Weather Consultants, the San Juan RC&D has taken on the role of preparing, submitting and maintaining contracts with the 13 different agencies in SW Colorado and surrounding states.

They will also serve as fiscal agent for the program, receiving the contributions from the various participating cities, ski areas, and agencies in Colorado and surrounding states and making payments for services during the year.

The San Juan Weather Modification Project is a cloud seeding program that has been active in the area for several decades.

With the growth in the western U.S. and the current effects of climate change, efforts have grown to assure that adequate water is available to meet the needs of the citizens of Colorado and down stream states. Cloud seeding is just one tool that is in the tool bag of water users to help with this critical need.

In the winter of 2007-2008, the cloud seeding program operated 34 cloud seeding generators from Telluride to Pagosa Spring for a total of 8,530 hours.

Current research shows that cloud seeding can have a 10-15 percent increase in snowfall downwind of the generators. The efforts of the San Juan RC&D and other agencies will help to make the vital water needed in the future available for the citizens of the Colorado River System.





# Coordinator's Corner



**Colleen McCleary**  
State Earth Team Coordinator

As we eagerly enter the new year with anticipation, keep in mind that as long as NRCS has new programs, deadlines, and reduced staff--volunteers should be a GREAT asset to our agency.

Earth Team Volunteer hours should go UP, not down. Ask for and recruit volunteers to bring our Colorado hours up and above all other state volunteer hours this year. Let's make this a challenge and the goal for our entire state this year!

It's as easy to recruit from the rural areas as the suburban areas. There is a wealth of recruiting to be done in all aspects of our society--human resources work programs, senior citizens groups, civic groups, youth groups, church groups, useful public service programs through the court system... just to mention a few areas to consider.

Volunteerism is a "win-win" situation for our volunteers AND for our agency--providing them with work experience and training, and providing NRCS with jobs well done through valuable donated assistance.

## Smart Receives ET Volunteer Award

Deric Clemons, District Conservationist, Franktown NRCS Field Office, presents an Earth Team Volunteer award to Dennis Smart for his volunteer service in 2008 in the Franktown field office.

Dennis volunteered up to three days per week, six to eight hours per day for a total of 112 hours this year.

Dennis is retired, married to Alicia Smart and has an Agriculture degree. He has worked for engineering firms most of his career.

He grew up on a farm and he just wanted to get reconnected to agriculture and help keep conservation on the land.

Dennis was very instrumental in helping the field office meet their office goals last year and he worked well with our cooperators, Conservation Districts, and NRCS staff.

Dennis's efforts allowed the field office to focus on the audit while he focused on ways of getting conservation on the ground. We look forward to working with him in 2009.



## Congratulations



**Kathy Morgan**  
Individual Volunteer Award

**Monte Vista Boy Scout Troop 287**  
Group Award



**Simla Field Office**  
Field Office Award

## FY 2008 Earth Team Awardees!

**Lana Pearson**  
NRCS Employee Award



**Longmont & Boulder Valley Conservation Districts**  
CACD Award

**Donna Goodsell**  
Earth Team Coordinator Award



## Colorado Fiscal Year 2008 Year-End Earth Team Status Report

Office	Number of Volunteers (at Least One Hour of Service)	Number of Hours Donated (Including Groups)	Number of Offices that Use Volunteer Resources	Number of Offices within Jurisdiction
State Office	3	751	1	1
Area 1	51	2,070	15	16
Area 2	669	6,114	19	19
Area 3	290	3,100	19	19
Area 4	235	3,265	14	14
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,248</b>	<b>15,300</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>69</b>

# Rosenbach named 2008 Outstanding Conservationist of the Year

by Denise Swanson, District Manager  
Haxtun Conservation District

Bruce Rosenbach was honored as the Haxtun Conservation District 2008 Outstanding Conservationist of the Year at the recent Christmas dinner held December 9th at Kardales.

This award is one that Bruce could have easily been recognized for many years in the past.

An avid wildlife habitat enthusiast, he has literally changed the landscape in Phillips County with his numerous tree plantings, all the while encouraging many other landowners to help establish their own permanent pheasant habitats.

In 2002, Bruce was honored by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) as "Wildlife Landowner of the Year" for his outstanding contributions to wildlife habitat. That award was presented by Governor Bill Owens at the National Western Stock Show.

Bruce has served as habitat chairman on the Phillips County Pheasants Forever Chapter since it began in 1991. Joe Crowder, NRCS, calculated that since 1992, the Phillips County Pheasants Forever Chapter has planted approximately 1,250 miles or 2,300 acres of tree and shrub rows.

That is equivalent to planting a row on both sides of Interstate 70

from the Utah state line to the Kansas state line, plus both sides of Interstate 76 from the Nebraska state line to Denver.

Bruce has also served two consecutive terms as a supervisor on the Haxtun Conservation District's board of directors helping to educate our community on the many facets of conservation in agriculture.

He led the way in bringing the DOW Walk-In-Hunting Access program to Phillips and Sedgwick Counties.

Last year alone, Phillips County enrolled 28,000 acres in the program and participating landowners received payments totaling over \$50,300.

Local businesses have also benefitted enormously with the influx of hunters visiting our community throughout the hunting season.

Bruce's latest interest lies in renewable energy and he has been instrumental in bringing "National Wind" to northeastern Colorado. NECO Wind, LLC (Northeast Colorado Wind, LLC) was formed in October operating under the guidance of National Wind, which Bruce serves as advisory board chairman.



NECO Wind's community based model provides many benefits to area landowners with a substantial share of the project's proceeds staying in the community and is projected to be one of the largest projects in Colorado.

Whether you are a farmer, landowner, hunting enthusiast, or business owner, Bruce Rosenbach has most likely impacted you in one fashion or another with his contributions to our community and the preservation of our natural resources.

Helping People  
Help the Land

# Area 4 Range Management Workshop

by *Cindy Villa, Range Management Specialist*  
*San Luis Valley Field Office*

Conversations over the last couple of years with fellow USFS Range Specialist Lisa VanAmburg had us churning over the lack of participation of local ranchers to workshops, SRM events, and monitoring.

With the intention to increase producer involvement in continuing education, local livestock owners were informally surveyed regarding their desire to participate in workshops and the main criticisms were timing and location; traveling out of the SLV being a major deterrent.

The independent agreement for the timing of a workshop of this type was late October through November; cows are off the mountains, hay is put up, and not yet into the holidays or calving.

The aim of putting together a seminar was twofold: to pull together a panel of outstanding speakers that effectively navigate through land and livestock management issues with a progressive, proactive attitude that would draw land managers to the table, and to kick-start an annual event, building credibility for further draw to workshops we provide.

Further discussions prompted Lisa to write a grant proposal to the Quivira Coalition to support a forum for the improvement of livestock distribution.

The grant awarded was a matching grant in which money was used for supporting a speaker line-up, stocked monitoring bags for producers, conference space, and snacks.

On November 5, 2008, Area 4 NRCS partnered with the US Forest Service, Quivira Coalition, Western Center for Integrated Resource Management at CSU, Center Conservation District, Monte Vista Co-op, and



Crystalx Brand Supplements to host a seminar titled "Ranching Perspectives- Tools for Changing Times; Discussions on the Culture of Grazing and Livestock Management."

The speaker line-up pulled together was outstanding with Bob Budd, Fred Provenza, Bob Welling, and Roy Roath drawing an audience of 91 people; 46 landowners/land managers to 45 agency/business representatives/consultants. Six continuing education credits were offered for conservation planners and range professionals.

Bob Welling, representing Ridley Block and Crystalx Brand Supplements, paid for the catered BBQ lunch. Brenda Anderson of Center Conservation District administered the grant and greeted and signed in attendees the morning of the workshop.

The event was advertised through direct mailings from the Monte Vista NRCS FO and Saguache Public Lands Center, fliers distributed by hand to local businesses and landowners/managers, email, phone calls, Public Service Announcements through three radio stations and a local television station, and local newspapers.

The day dawned with snow and ice-covered roads and winter storm warnings throughout south-central Colorado. We were concerned that our attendance would be severely

depleted with this outlook. We were wrong. Attendees outside of the San Luis Valley traveled from Canon City, Fairplay, Gunnison, Rifle, Salida, and Albuquerque.

The workshop began at 8:45 with a welcome from local rancher and Saguache County Commissioner, Mike Spearman. Mike introduced Craig Conley, Quivira Coalition representative, who spoke about the Quivira Coalition's inception and mission and mentioned the Quivira Coalition Conference in Albuquerque.

Bob Budd presented a multiple part PowerPoint presentation that focused on ranch management, culture, challenges, and opportunities.

Bob Welling followed with a PowerPoint presentation on low-moisture block placement combined with low stress herding techniques used as a tool for achieving greater distribution without increased water sources or fencing.

After lunch Fred Provenza presented animal (including human) behavioral psychology, demonstrating how innate patterns could be used to change livestock foraging behavior.

Roy Roth finished the day engaging the audience asking for reasons why and what one monitors, on or off the range and introduced the Grazing Response Index.

Fifteen monitoring bags were handed out to producers participating in this discussion. Each bag included grass growth and vegetation monitoring literature, 100g scale, scissors, wooden folding measuring tape, small notepad, and a disposable camera.

Overall feedback from the event was positive with a request for another workshop that would allow time for a roundtable discussion.

# Conservation, habitat improvement help Park County tourism

## *Fly fishing program growing in county*

By Debra Orecchio, Correspondent  
(article courtesy of *The Flume*)

To help prevent streambed erosion and to create better trout habitats, several hundred trees burned in the Hayman fire in 2002 have been cut down and placed in the Tarryall River.

Called the Tarryall River Restoration Project, it is part of Park County's economic development strategy, said Gary Nichols, director of Park County tourism and community development.

The project is also a successful part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's conservation planning, said district conservationist Leon Kot in an e-mail. Conservation planning is the "backbone" of the NRCS, Kot said.

Such habitat improvements help tourism come into the county, said Kot. Indeed, Park County is seeing a direct tie to fly fishing.

### Fly Fishing

The South Park Fly Fishers program is an example of how improvements to fish habitats bring more tourists into the county. In that program, fly fishers can reserve one of seven historic ranches on which to fly fish.

Those ranches include the Tarryall Creek Ranch, Tarryall L&C Ranch, Santa Maria Ranch, Ute Creek Ranch, Lower Allen Creek Ranch, Upper Allen Creek Ranch, and the Lower Fourmile Creek Ranch.

Those ranch owners have leased their property to the county so the public can then access that private property to fly fish. The program charges between \$35 and \$60 for a day of fly fishing on one of those properties.

Most of the fees paid go back to the ranchers in exchange for letting

people use their property.

However, Nichols said, many of the ranchers are donating their revenue back into the program to help make the stream habitat better. The program has been in place for five years, Nichols said.

The first year, the fly fishers were from the Front Range area. This year, people came from all over the country to fish. Nichols said that 25 to 30 percent of the fishermen were from out of state.

Also, Nichols noted, the number of fishermen staying multiple days is increasing every year. The streambed restoration program is designed to reduce the amount of erosion into the stream, which decreases the amount of soil and sediment into the water.

It also increases the holding capacity for trout, in some cases doubling the number of trout in some areas, said Nichols. In some areas, both the number and size of the fish has increased. "This is the best example in the state of a public/private partnership," said Nichols.

There are more than 100 partners involved in those restoration projects in addition to Park County and NRCS. Some of the partners are the U.S. Forest Service, the Coalition for the Upper South Platte, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Open Lands, the South Park Wetlands Focus Area Committee, and the Governor's Office of Energy Management and Conservation.



A fisherman fly fishes on the Middle Fork of the South Platte River at Santa Maria Ranch, one of seven privately-owned ranches that the public can reserve for fly fishing through the South Park Fly Fishers program. (photo by Brian O'Keefe)

In addition to streambed restoration, NRCS helps landowners with other forms of conservation planning, which includes livestock management, fences, water developments for livestock and wildlife, irrigation management and water delivery systems, erosion control and forage improvement measures, as well as forest stand improvement and wildfire mitigation practices.

NRCS, which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provides landowners with consultation services free of charge, and, if the landowners qualify, the USDA provides them with financial assistance to implement those practices, Kot said in his e-mail.

Kot added that a conservation plan must be in place before that federal assistance can be offered.

Landowners can get paid a portion of the cost of their conservation efforts through such programs as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program, and others.

For more information about the Fly Fishers Program, visit the program's website at [www.southparktrout.com](http://www.southparktrout.com).

# Featured Landowner

Colorado CONSERVATION PLANNING Our Purpose. Our Passion.



Don Helmich, Mount Sopris Conservation District Supervisor, presents David Kelly with the Small Acreage Stewardship Award.

## David and Nan Kelly

by Sharie Prow, District Manager  
Bookcliff, Mount Sopris & South Side Conservation Districts  
Glenwood Springs Field Office

The Kellys have been active in making conservation decisions about their land over the last seven years.

Dave and Nan attended the Quality Living On Your Rural Land classes to learn about soil, water, plant, and animal resources on their land.

They have been very deliberate in analyzing the resources they own, including water rights and delivery system.

They considered the soils productivity in determining how to best manage the grass production for hay production and grazing.

They developed a conservation plan and have implemented the plan by installing an irrigation structure to divert, measure, clean, and serve as an inlet to a pipeline.

They continued the system with a pipeline to deliver water to

the fields under some pressure and to eliminate water loss in the delivery system.

The pipeline provides water to a sprinkler system that has a booster pump to supply added pressure when needed.

Dave and Nan are now managing water application to meet the needs of the grass they are producing.

They have properly managed their land for hay production and for grazing of a few head of cattle.

They are very active in controlling any weeds that are observed on their property. They will control weeds using several approaches including pulling by hand, using cultivation practices, and will spray if this is the most effective way to control the weed invasion.

It is a pleasure and honor to present this award to David and Nan Kelly.

## Are You “Cert”-tified?

by Deborah Clairmont, Soil Conservationist  
Brighton/Byers Field Offices

“In 2003, President Bush asked all Americans to volunteer in the service of their country.”

“The Citizen Corps program was created to spearhead this effort to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, and public health issues, and disasters of all kinds.” (2008 CERT Training: Participant Manual)

In August 2008, 30 people attended the weekly, 32-hour course to digest the ‘Community Emergency Response Team’ Student Handbook.

The topics included: Preparedness, Natural Hazards Awareness, Fire Safety, Disaster Medical I and II, Light Search and Rescue, Incident Command and Organization and Disaster Psychology, Terrorism, and Public Health Awareness.

To become a CERT team member you must submit to a background check and have successfully taken the 32-hour CERT training.

The main thing to remember is that if you are not a registered CERT team member, do not just show up at a catastrophic event.

The best way to help in an event is to get certified as a CERT team member and be deployed by the area you are from. Example; during the Windsor, Colorado tornados in 2008, many people were coming to help but were more in the way than actually helping.

The goal of a CERT team member is to help First Responders get information they need to save lives along with any assistance. The first rule is always to save yourself first, but with some CERT training you will know how to help others in a large emergency event.

# Grazing Management Symposium a Resounding Success

by **Tim Steffens**,  
**Multi-County Rangeland Management Specialist,**  
**Springfield Field Office**

**S**trategy vs. System: Grazing for Desired Outcomes was the title of a symposium held in Ft Collins December 2-4.

Almost 250 people from 12 states, the District of Columbia and one Canadian Province representing government agencies, non-profit organizations, wildlife interests, ranchers, and rangeland researchers came to hear scientists and ranchers widely recognized for their expertise in grazing management discuss how domestic livestock grazing can be managed to address conservation objectives including watershed function, soil health, plant community composition, ranch profitability and risk management, wildlife habitat, and animal husbandry objectives.

Tim Steffens, President for the CSSRM and NRCS multi-county Rangeland Management Specialist in Springfield, Colorado, who organized the meeting said, "The symposium came about in response to the controversy and division among the range community after a review of the scien-

tific literature by several range scientists recently concluded, 'There is no consistent or overwhelming evidence demonstrating that rotational grazing simulates ecological processes to enhance plant and animal production compared to that of continuous grazing on rangelands.'

A lot of people were really angry, and since some of those scientists are writing the CEAP documents for prescribed grazing, we thought it would be good to examine grazing management from a number of angles to foster communication among the different viewpoints."

The common thread among speakers, including some of the scientists who published the article, is that successful grazing management programs have to be goal oriented and managed strategically, adapting the operational decisions to changing circumstances.

They also generally agreed that inflexible systems are bound to fail eventually. Most speakers presented evidence that grazing animals can be a

powerful tool to address resource concerns and that periodic grazing deferment can often be beneficial. How deferment is accomplished can take numerous forms.

There was also a lot of discussion

about how scientific results can be interpreted in different ways and how the questions asked and the methods used to answer them can affect results or interpretation of those results.

The ranchers and many of the scientists provided examples to indicate that successful prescribed grazing is a learning process that should be based on scientific principles but has to be adapted to individual operations and changing conditions.

All the feedback indicates that the goal of the symposium to increase communication and foster discussion among different viewpoints was successfully met. The presentations will be put in an electronic format and be available soon on the Society for Range Management website at <http://www.rangelands.org/index.shtml>.

A statewide training session using the electronic presentations as training aids is currently being discussed. Currently funds are being solicited from interested partners to publish a hard copy of this memorable event.

The symposium was sponsored by the Colorado Section Society for Range Management (CSSRM) and numerous other USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partners including National Western Stock Show and their Scholarship Trust Fund, Colorado State Land Board, Colorado Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, The Quivira Coalition USDA Forest Service New Ranch Network, Crystallix, Colorado Holistic Management, Holistic Management International, and Colorado State Conservation Board.





# TECHNO TIPS

## Learning Opportunities for GIS and More

by Barbara W. Cencich, NRCS Area Resource Conservationist Technology  
Grand Junction, Colorado

A variety of technical- and subject-based courses on computer applications are available to NRCS employees. These courses vary in length, complexity, and style depending on the venue.

Courses on ArcGIS applications are included in our enterprise agreement with ESRI. Trainees can work from their desk but need to set aside time to work on and complete the course. The only cost is work time to complete the course.

Customer Service Toolkit doesn't allow us to do some ArcMAP functions; however, we don't have to go through Toolkit for everything we do, TA to counties, TA to districts, big picture for wildlife planning, etc.

Information on USDA and partner registration for ESRI virtual campus courses can be found at <http://www.nedc.nrcs.usda.gov/catalog/ESRIVirtualCampus.html>. AgLearn also has a course called ArcGIS Beyond Toolkit. This is a new listing.

The ESRI website, in general, is an interesting surfing experience. There are a few locations within ESRI that provide valuable training information. For free ESRI audio instructional podcasts go to <http://www.esri.com/news/podcasts/index.html>. These podcasts are about 10 minutes long and include topics on ArcCatalog, ArcMap Tips and Tricks, 3D Analysis and more.

ESRI also has live and recorded web seminars at <http://training.esri.com/campus/seminars/index.cfm>. Most of these are about an hour long on a wider variety of subjects and, of course, more detailed.

This site, <http://edcommunity.esri.com/arclessons/arclessons.cfm>, has lessons for educators but is interesting to those of you who work with youth organizations like 4H or Scouts.



Our folks down in Fort Worth at the National Cartographic and Geospatial Center also have recorded web seminars about various aspects of ArcGIS.

These NCGC recorded GIS Web Seminars can be found at <http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/gis/seminars.html>. This site takes you to a listing of five subject links. Each of those links takes you to the links for numerous seminars ranging from annotation to AutoCad data.

To take some short courses on Microsoft programs, get into AgLearn and select the catalog tab. Do a simple search on any topic of interest to you. For example, search for Word 2003 and for delivery type have only the online box checked. You should get about 23 total records.



Most of these subjects take two to three hours. There are also many courses available for **Excel, Access, and PowerPoint**. Also, by going through "help" in any Microsoft application you can get to Microsoft Office Online Training.

These on-line trainings have some pretty good explanations on just about any question you may have. For example, try Pivot tables in Excel or mail merging in Word.

AgLearn also has other online courses that have nothing to do with technology applications but are still very interesting and helpful.

We recently received an email from Washington, DC highlighting the various writing courses available in AgLearn such as *Writing to Reach the Audience*, *Grammar Skills - Writing Effectively*, *Business Writing for Results*, *Avoiding Grammatical Errors in Business Writing*, *Business Writing - The Fundamentals*, and *Crisp Composition*.

A few other courses that are applicable to our daily activities include *Around the World in 80 Cultures*, *Ergonomics*, *1st Aid*, and *Back Safety*.

# La Junta and Otero Junior College Host FFA Rangeland Judging Competition

by *Ben Berlinger, La Junta Area Office*

Future Farmers of America (FFA) students and their advisors from high schools across eastern Colorado arrived in La Junta on October 8th.

The purpose was to compete in a rangeland plant identification exercise and participate in judging the soundness of the rangeland. Otero Junior College hosted this all-day competition in the Student Center.

This state-level competition attracted 102 students representing 16 FFA Chapters from as far away as Merino to the north and Vilas to the south. The state contest rotates among three locations in eastern Colorado; Akron, Flager or Stratton, and La Junta.

The FFA rangeland judging contest is divided into two parts. The native plant identification involves the naming of 50 rangeland plants common to eastern Colorado together with rating important plant characteristics such as life span, grazing response, and palatability for cattle.

The second part of the contest takes place in the field and requires the students to judge the condition of two different rangeland sites. Here the students must determine the plant composition of each site, the range condition compared to the reference plant community, the suggested stocking rate, and range trend.

Finally, based on their evaluation of the existing plant community, each student must select the appropriate management practice (or suite of practices) that would be recommended to the land owner for improvement of the rangeland resource and livestock performance.

Team awards and top scoring individuals were recognized at the awards ceremony which was held at the conclusion of the competition.



Carl Otteman, Otero Junior College, (left) and Ben Berlinger, La Junta Area Office present Jessica Gutierrez, Kim FFA, with the award for the high score on the combined site judging and plant identification.

The Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) sponsored the individual honors while several of the Conservation Districts across eastern Colorado including the East Otero, West Otero-Timpas, Olney Boone, Agate, Baca County and Fremont Conservation Districts as well as the Republican River Watershed Association sponsored the team plaques and provide lunch for the participants.

This year, employees from Otero County Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service in Rocky Ford and La Junta and from the East Otero Conservation District facilitated the contest.

The winning teams recognized at this year's competition included:

**Kim FFA Chapter, 1st Place Gold Team**, members Jessica Gutierrez, Samantha Sikes, Avery Hollingsworth;

**Flagler FFA Chapter, 2nd Place**

**Gold Team**, members Philip Witt, Kelsey Burns, Weston Charles;

**Vilas FFA Chapter, 3rd Place Silver Team**, members Ryne Schroder, Cade Daughetry, Arnoldo Enriquez;

**Custer County FFA Chapter, 4th Place Silver Team**, members Whitney Curtis, Katie Wilcox, Ryan Byerly;

**Pueblo County FFA Chapter, 5th Place Bronze Team**, members Samuel Munoz, Joey Waggoner, Eric Wells;

**Branson FFA Chapter, 6th Place Bronze Team**, members Bailey McFerren, Michael Lingus, Corey McFerren.

Individual SRM awards were presented to Jessica Gutierrez of Kim for the high score on the combined site judging and plant identification (83% score); and to Philip Witt of Flager for the high score on the plant identification portion of the contest (98% score).

# Arkansas Valley Farm/Ranch/Water Symposium Held

by Mary Miller, Area Public Affairs Specialist



The Fifth Annual Arkansas Valley Farm/Ranch/Water Symposium was held recently. This year's topics included the new farm bill, bio-diesel from oil seed crops, and carbon sequestration.

Sponsors of the Symposium were Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District, and the City of Rocky Ford.

Chuck Hanagan, Farm Service Agency, and Dave Miller, NRCS, discussed the 2008 Farm Bill and how changes will affect farmers and ranchers.

A group of local producers, Dave Kitch, Joel Lundquist, and Hal Holder, discussed producing bio-diesel from oil seed crops.

Dr. Richard Conant, CSU, and Rich Mullaney, AgriTech Consulting, gave presentations on carbon sequestration and opportunities for farmers and ranchers to become involved in offsetting carbon emissions.

Bill Sauble shed light on his ex-

periences selling carbon offsets and management practices he uses on his ranch in New Mexico. John Stulp, Colorado Department of Agriculture Commissioner, provided a legislative update during lunch.

Short update sessions covered topics affecting today's farmers and ranchers. Dr. Jack Whittier, CSU Extension, provided an update on country of origin labeling for livestock and other products and how this impacts producers.

Animal feeding operations are common in agriculture. Ron Jepson, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, provided much needed information. Jepson also discussed protecting water quality.

As a follow up to last year's Symposium, Steve Witte, the Division 2 Engineer with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, gave an update about irrigation efficiency rules.

Dr. Mike Bartolo gave a presentation on the use of a lysimeter at the Arkansas Valley Research Center to determine water usage.

# Colorado Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program

by Mike Gillespie,  
Snow Survey Supervisor

(Full article published in the Colorado Water Institute at CSU newsletter)

Since 1935 the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program has monitored mountain snowpack and climate variables in the western United States to forecast spring and summer water supplies.

The earliest snow measuring sites in Colorado date back to the 1930s, at which time a network of manual snow courses was implemented across the state.

In the late 1970s, NRCS began installing automated SNOTEL (SNOWpack TELEmetry) monitoring stations throughout the West.

Today, Colorado NRCS coordinates the Federal-State Cooperative Snow Survey Program, which includes 107 manually sampled snow course and 104 SNOTEL stations in Colorado (throughout the West there are 1,200 manually sampled sites and about 700 SNOTEL stations).

This network provides the snowpack and climate data required to forecast spring and summer water supplies at 90 locations affecting Colorado water users.

A wide variety of economic decisions, totaling many millions of dollars annually, are dependent on the snowpack data collected and water forecasts issued by the NRCS.

To read the full story on the Colorado Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, please visit [http://www.cwi.colostate.edu/newsletters/2008/ColoradoWater\\_25\\_6.pdf](http://www.cwi.colostate.edu/newsletters/2008/ColoradoWater_25_6.pdf).