



Colorado CONSERVATOR

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

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CACD Honors Outstanding Conservationists



CACD Annual Meeting Planning Committee

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) honored many deserving conservationists at the 66th CACD Annual Meeting in November in Colorado Springs. Congratulations to:

Brian Neufeld of the Center Conservation District was named District Supervisor of the Year for his exceptional work in conservation education outreach. Brian serves as the Rio Grande Watershed

President and Director on the CACD Board.

Judy Lopez, conservation education specialist for the San Luis Valley, was recognized as CACD's Conservation Teacher of the Year, for the 4th consecutive year. Colorado benefits from her endless efforts and outreach in continuing conservation education for teachers, students, her region and the state. Judy provided a very motivating and inspirational pre-

sentation on conservation missions.

The Outstanding Conservation District Education Program was awarded to the **Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation Districts** with its innovative conservation education programs.

“

CACD's Board, members and annual meeting planning committee are proud to honor our 2010 outstanding land stewards.

”

CACD President Harley Ernst

Wishing You a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

A lot has happened this fall and winter. We had a good CACD annual meeting with a large attendance. We have 3 resolutions that are going to the National meeting. They are with clean air, administration of policy procedure, and managing wild horse herds on grazing to prevent over grazing and devastation of the forest and grazing land.

Water issues still remain a large issue across the state with conservation being a large player in most beneficial use or reuse of water.

We have been thru elections with many changes being made, good or bad makes no difference now, but how we move forward does. We need to work with and inform each other and those in position now. Thanks to all that have served and supported us in the past and hope that you will continue to do so in the future. Now, also for those who move to new positions, we look to continue with your support and what you have done, and can do to better serve the stewards of the land to produce quality food, fiber, clean air and water for both human and wildlife for the present and future generations in a beneficial and productive way.

Thanks to Brian Starkebaum for his service as Vice President and chairing of the annual planning meetings. Job well done. Gary Moyer has been elected Vice President and appointed as delegate to National Association with Bob Warner as alternate. Tom Hartnett, Brian Starkebaum, Gary Moyer, and Harley Ernst were elected as executive committee and Vern Vinson as Secretary-Treasurer.

We have a full calendar again this year, but with the full board working together much can be done. However, we are awaiting the appointment of the replacement of Larry Sweeney as he was elected to the Colorado State Conservation Board. Thank you Larry for your service on the CACD Board.

**God Bless You All,
Harley L. Ernst**



Thank You from the CACD Auxiliary & CACDE



Sally Fosha of the CACD Auxiliary presents the 2010 Raffle Prize of a Stihl Chainsaw to Brian Schoonveld and his family in November.

Thank you, Brian Starkebaum of the Lower South Platte River and to Harley Ernst of the Republican River Watersheds, in conjunction with Potestio Brothers Equipment, Inc. in Colorado Springs, for donating the much sought-after Stihl M250 18" Chainsaw at the CACD Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs. Brian Schoonveld, President of East Adams CD, held the lucky ticket.

This year's Silent Auction topped all proceeds! We received over 155 items that sold from \$1.00 to \$250. Your donations were unique - they ranged from a chainsaw carving of a moose, to a custom built cedar coffee table, to a child's tractor to, an antique necklace, to beautiful western clocks...with so many more outstanding donations I wish I could list them all. Thank you to the twenty-seven CD's who participated as well as fifteen private contributors to this year's success of the Silent Auction for the CACD Auxiliary and CACD Employees.

Funds raised from the Silent Auction are used primarily to support scholarships for children from each district that would like to attend Camp Rocky. They are also used for prizes, monetary gifts and ribbons for those children who place in the annual poster contest. The money raised also goes back to the Colorado State Conservation Board to help sponsor state-wide agricultural programs that are available to the schools in your area.

Thank you, everyone, who worked so diligently with your CD to make this worthwhile endeavor so successful. We look forward to the challenge of another outstanding Silent Auction in 2011.

BCCD Conservation Technicians Helping Landowners



BCCD District Conservation Technician Tanner Meltabarger surveys terraces which will control erosion and capture precipitation.

Conservation districts are very fortunate that the "District Conservation Technician Program" is available. And landowners reap the benefits! This competitive grant from the State Conservation Board allows BCCD to hire one full time District Tech and one Summer Tech each year. These employees "live to serve" by providing district landowners technical assistance for conservation planning and practice installation.

Most of you have met our full-time District Conservation Tech Tanner Meltabarger, who has an Associate's

Degree in Natural Resource Management from Colorado Mountain College. Tanner worked two summers as a Conservation Tech while attending college, and is now our full-time Tech. He spends his time out in the field with landowners, helping them improve conservation practices on their places. Tanner works independently on projects for the District, as well as in tandem with NRCS staff on EQIP, WHIP, and recently on CRP contracts.

He makes inspections during practice installation and upon completion. Our Techs verify that the practices meet NRCS Standards and Specifi-

cation. On any given day they can be found checking pipelines, tanks, and fence, doing residue and cover crop compliance reviews, helping NRCS survey terraces, helping landowners with invasive species or with planting trees.

Fifty percent of the funding for the District Tech program is provided by NRCS, 25% is from the State Conservation Board, and the remaining 25% is from the conservation district. BCCD would be unable to provide landowners with this type of technical assistance without this grant program.

Mark Your Calendars



NRCS is Accepting Applications Until...

- ◆ **March 1, 2011** for the Sage Grouse Initiative funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs (WHIP).
- ◆ **April 1, 2011** for the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative being offered in Baca, Prowers, Kiowa, and Cheyenne counties and is funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
- ◆ **April 1, 2011** for the Air Quality Initiative being offered in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld counties. NRCS utilize the EQIP to implement the initiative.
- ◆ **March 4, 2011** for the Organic Initiative targeting Colorado organic producers and aspiring organic producers to address the resource concerns identified in their organic systems plan (OSP). Applications for enrollment into this special initiative are being accepted on a continuous basis. However, to be considered for 2011 funding, applications should be completed by March 4, 2011.
- ◆ **February 15, 2011** for the Seasonal High Tunnel practice which will help Colorado's farmers with food and other specialty crop productions. Seasonal high tunnels are polyethylene-covered structures, at least six feet in height, and are constructed of metal, wood, or plastic bow frames. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis and the goal is to increase the availability of locally-grown produce in a conservation-friendly way. Eligible agricultural producers may apply for financial assistance for seasonal high tunnels through the NRCS EQIP program.
- ◆ **EQIP and WHIP** -- General EQIP and WHIP is available in 2011 and applications will be accepted on an continuous basis.



CACD Executive Director Darlene Jensen

A New Year Brings New Opportunities

The 66th CACD Annual Meeting brought together a host of conservation partners with over 250 in attendance. Thank you to the many partners that volunteered their time and expertise in making the annual meeting another successful and educational event. Please mark your calendar for the 2011 Annual Meeting, November 14-18, 2011 in Loveland, Colorado.

CACD will again be assisting in the coordination of the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative, small acreage workshops, 8 digit-watershed input sessions and Rapid Watershed Assessment campaign sessions through its valuable partnership with NRCS.

CACD will be introducing legislation this Session requesting extension of the severance tax which sunsets this year. The severance tax placed upon natural resources extractions in Colorado helps to fund the matching grants program which funds are leveraged up to 5:1 by the Conservation Districts.

Camp Rocky, under the co-directorship of Naomi Marcus, looks forward to its 49th year, and under the coordination and instruction in conservation education through Judy Lopez, the Teachers' Workshop will offer an added third week this year. The Teachers' Workshop is held in Fort Garland, Colorado in June and is highly successful greatly in part due to the generous in-kind contribution and support from the Trinchera Ranch. The Trinchera Ranch received the Conservationist of the Year Award in corporate ranching.

Under the newly appointed Commissioner of Agriculture, John Salazar, CACD looks forward to its continued valuable relationship with CDOA in assisting the ag producers of Colorado.

And, finally, CACD is proud of all its outstanding conservationist who were honored during the 2010 annual meeting.

*Sincerely,
Darlene Jensen*

John Salazar Named Colorado's Commissioner of Ag



John Hickenlooper, Governor recently announced John Salazar will be Colorado's new Commissioner of Agriculture. A sixth-generation farmer and rancher, Salazar served three terms representing Colorado's 3rd Congressional District and was a member of the House Agriculture Committee. Before his time in Congress, Salazar served in the Colorado General Assembly for two years.

"A thriving agriculture sector is critical to Colorado's economic recovery," Hickenlooper said. "Farmers and ranchers are also leading the way as business innovators. Their prosperity helps build a foundation for all of Colorado. And no one has been a more passionate champion for agriculture and rural communities than John Salazar. We are fortunate to have his leadership at the helm of the Department of Agriculture."

Salazar's advocacy in Congress earned him recognition for outstanding service by the American Farm Bureau and the Golden Triangle Award from the National Farmers Union. He played a key role in passing the historic farm bill of 2008. With a seat on the powerful House Appropriations Committee in his third term, Salazar worked on national energy issues, jobs creation and the economy.

"I look forward to working with Gov. Hickenlooper and serving the people of Colorado as the Commissioner of Agriculture for the next four years," Salazar said. "I am excited about the great possibilities of expanding our energy opportunities along with marketing value-added products and promoting the second-largest economy in Colorado."

Salazar was raised on a San Luis Valley farm, where he and his five siblings shared a bedroom and had no electricity or running water. His experience influenced his public career. He served on the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Forum and the Colorado Agricultural Commission before being elected as a state Representative in 2002.

He was one of only a handful of active farmers in Congress after he was first elected in 2004. A veteran, Salazar served on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and was a proud member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog congressional coalition. Salazar earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Adams State College after serving three years in the U.S. Army.

Nonpoint Source Pollution in Colorado

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Small Acreage Workshop

Bookcliff, Mount Sopris and South Side Conservation Districts will host a Small Acreage Workshop on **Saturday, February 26 at the Glenwood Springs Community Center fom 9:00am - 2:30pm.**

The workshop speakers will address holistic horse hoof health, soils 101, forensic horticulture (why is that established tree dying?) and biological control.

Cost for the workshop is \$10.00 and will include lunch. **In the past, this workshop has filled to capacity so call with your reservation early!** Reservations are required by Feb 23 by mailing your \$10.00 registration to Gar-Pit Conservation Districts, 258 Center Dr., GWS, CO. 81601.

John Stulp named Special Policy Advisor to the Governor for Water



Colorado Governor, John Hickenlooper announced John Stulp will be Special Policy Advisor to the Governor on Water and will chair the Interbasin Compact Committee.

Stulp was until recently the Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture, a position he held since 2006. In his new role he will continue working with Colorado's agricultural community, developing policies and solutions to how water is managed statewide.

"John Stulp's service to Colorado's ranchers, farmers and universities is remarkable," Hickenlooper said. "And a cornerstone of that service is his deep understanding of our water resources and the need to manage them carefully and effectively. Most importantly, John understands an age-old truth in the West: whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting. John's task will be to replace the fighting with collaboration."

Stulp, a farmer and rancher from Prowers County, committed himself to furthering Colorado's agricultural community during his time at the Department of Agriculture. He pursued Chinese trade opportunities, participated in Canadian and cattle industry roundtables and played a lead role in numerous other producer and industry events.

"I am excited to be a part of the Hickenlooper team," Stulp said. "Water has always been a critical part of Colorado's quality of life. From food production to commu-

nity development, to recreation, the environment, or how we create new jobs, Colorado's water resources are an important piece of our future. Gov. Hickenlooper's emphasis on water and how we manage this limited resource speaks volumes, and I welcome this opportunity to be a part of Colorado's water future."

Stulp is on the board of directors of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), which works to develop and implement sound public policy and programs to support and promote the American agricultural industry, while protecting consumers and the environment. He is also the President of a subset of NASDA, the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

A member of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union since 1975, Stulp has been a leading proponent of building wind farms in rural Colorado as a way to develop new economic opportunities and jobs for Colorado's farmers and ranchers. Stulp's family farming operation is home to the Lamar Light and Power Wind Farm, and Stulp is a principal in Prairie Wind Energy LLC.

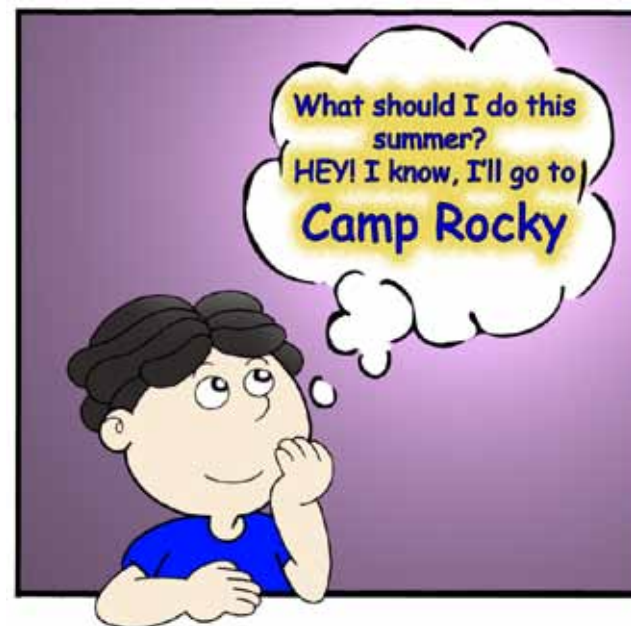
Stulp served as a Prowers County commissioner from 1991, when he was appointed to fill a vacancy, until January 2005. He also served on numerous other boards and commissions, including the State Board of Agriculture (1986 to 1995), state Wildlife Commission (1995-99), the Connect Colorado technology committee (1996), the State Land Board (1997-2005), and the Colorado Ag Development Authority & Value Added Board (2005-06).

Stulp graduated from Yuma High School. He earned a bachelor's degree in veterinary science and a doctor of veterinary medicine, both from Colorado State University.

Camp Rocky

July 10 - 16, 2011

www.camprocky.colostate.edu



What is Camp Rocky?

Camp Rocky is a week long, residential camp for 14 through 19 year olds who enjoy the outdoors and are interested in natural resources. The Camp Rocky professional staff helps participants learn about their environment through hands-on experience. The students work in teams making new friends from across Colorado. Each year, new and returning students choose one of the following resource fields for their area of focus.

- ◆ Recreation Management
- ◆ Rangeland Science
- ◆ Fish & Wildlife Management
- ◆ Forest Management, and
- ◆ Soil and Water Conservation

Who can come?

Graduates of 8th grade by June 2011 through age 19; or ages 14-19 year olds.

Where is it?

Rocky Mountain Camp is in the mountains above Colorado Springs, near Pikes Peak and Divide, CO.

How much does the camp cost?

\$300.00 (all inclusive)
Limited scholarships available.

How Do I get more information?

Call CACD at 719-686-0020 or email cacd@cacd.us

IMPORTANT: Prior to attending camp, every camper MUST have a physical exam by a licensed medical doctor.

Center Conservation District received the CACD Conservation District of the Year Award for its outstanding achievements in its community conservation programs. Center Conservation District also received its third consecutive recognition by the Colorado State Conservation Board as Direct Assistance District of the Year accepting the State Board's travel trophy.

Macella Helton, District Manager of the Upper Arkansas Conservation District, was recognized by the District Employees' Association as District Employee of the Year for her dedication to the development of the District's programs.

West Greeley Conservation District was honored by CACD for its exceptional work in conservation communications receiving the CACD Communications Award.

Turk Wendell was nominated by the Kiowa and Douglas County Conservation Districts for his exceptional work in small acreage management receiving the Distinguished Service recognition.

Senator Lois Tochtrop and **Representative Jerry Sonnenberg** were recognized as CACD's Legislators of the Year, Senate and House. Due to their staunch support and willingness to step up on behalf of the conservation districts across the state during a time when state funding for the work of the districts was being seriously challenged, CACD and the districts are extremely appreciative of their successful efforts in helping to maintain funding for the valuable services provided by the conservation districts and for their sponsorship in the successful passage of Senate Bill 98, providing funding opportunities for conservation district projects on public lands.

Michaela Owsley, a Camp Rocky program graduate, provided a presentation on her first hand experiences at Camp Rocky receiving a communications awards recognition from CACD.

The **Branson Trinchera Conservation District** was recognized for their sponsorship of 8 students in the 2010 Camp Rocky program.

The **Trinchera Ranch** of Fort Garland, Colorado in the Costilla Conservation District was recognized for its exceptional ranching conservation practices, receiving Corporate Conservation Rancher of the Year.

The **Cross Creek Farm** in the Rio Grande Conservation District received recognition as Innovative Farmer of the Year for its application of biochar.

The **Ritschard Cattle Company** was nominated by the Middle Park Conservation District and received the Conservation Rancher of the Year award and the **Cecil Family Farm**, nominated by the Cope Conservation District, was recognized as the Conservation Farmer of the Year.

Now in its third year, CACD inducted six individuals in the Colorado Conservation Hall of Fame recognizing the inductees for their combined decades of dedication and commitment to conservation:

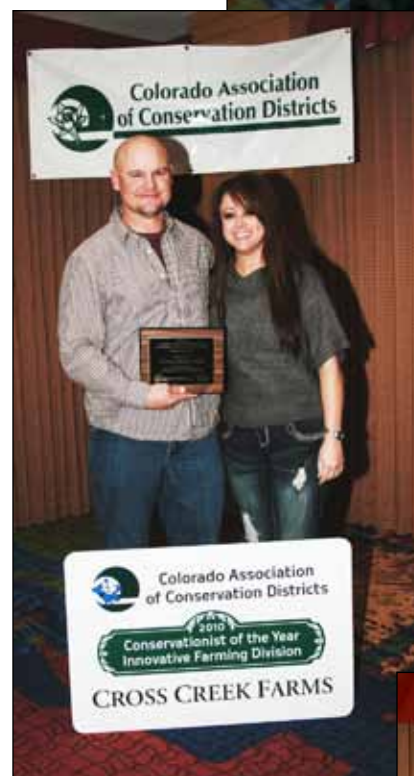
Bob Cordova, El Paso County Conservation District; **Ed Cecil**, Cope Conservation District; **Bob Warner**, West Adams Conservation District; **John Frezieres**, Mesa Conservation District, **Vern Vinson**, Teller Park Conservation District, and **John Taylor**, San Juan Conservation District.

Clarence Robinson of the Mosca-Hooper Conservation District was recognized by CACD for his 30 consecutive years in attendance at the CACD Annual Meeting.

Brian Neufeld of the Center Conservation District was named District Supervisor of the Year



Cross Creek Farm receives the innovative Farmer of the Year award



Michaela Owsley receives the CACD communications award.

Trinchera Ranch Honored as CACD 2010 Corporate Rancher



Conservation Districts have long lived by the belief that careful management of change is important to preserving natural resources for our future needs. This comes from sharing the significance of places and understanding that their qualities are part of a unique system that must first be understood and then carefully and thoughtfully managed to be protected and preserved for future generations. But then, this is how farmers and ranchers look at their ground.

This is the criteria that the Rio Grande Watershed Association of Conservation Districts begins with when looking at who will be their Conservationist's of the Year. Each of the five districts in the San Luis Valley, Center, Conejos, Costilla, Mosca-Hooper and Rio Grande, chose a Conservationists of the Year from within each district, this operation can either be a farm or a ranch, or one from each category if they choose. The nomination is based on the on the ground conservation that is being implemented by the operation, their goals for the resource and their level of public outreach. This year there were two outstanding conservationists from the Rio Grande Basin, both winners went on to the state competition where they were recognized for their outstanding conservation practices.

The Rio Grande Watershed Association of Conservation Districts is pleased to announce, from the Costilla Conservation District, the Colorado State Conservationist of the Year – Corporate Division – Trinchera Ranch, Ft, Garland, Colorado and from the Rio Grande Conservation District, Colorado State Conservationist of the Year - Innovative Farmer Division – Cross Creek Farms, Monte Vista, Colorado.

CACD 2010 Farmer of the Year Goes to Cecil Family Farm

The Cecil Farm is located at Cope, Colorado in the southern part of Washington County along the Arickaree River. The farm was started in 1919 with Ed's grandmother

Mattie Cecil "proving up" the homestead land with son, H. L. Cecil. During the great depression they moved to town for a brief time where there was work. The Cecils returned to their



Photo by Mark Cronquist

Cecil Family Farm con't.

farm in 1931 and have remained on this land to the present date. H.L.'s son, Ed took over the operation in 1960 and to the present time has grown to a total of 10,527 acres.

The 1,010 acres of farm ground is used for growing grain crops with 110 acres of alfalfa hay which is fed to the livestock. The first dry land corn was planted in the late 1930's. The first irrigation well was established in 1966. Irrigation began with hand move sprinklers then was converted to side-roll sprinklers then the first center pivot was installed in 1972. They now have 6 energy efficient pivot sprinklers.

On their 8,000 acres of rangeland the Cecils have 10 active livestock wells which includes 2 with solar pumps installed, 21 bottomless stock water tanks, 10 miles of cross fencing, and 5 1/2 miles of underground pipeline. This supports 750 head of Angus cattle.

The first conservation trees were planted in the late 1940's at the original Cecil home site. Ed, along with his brothers and father, planted and watered over a thousand trees by hand! Throughout the years, the Cecils have planted 4 farmstead windbreaks, 5 livestock shelter belts, and 7 Pheasant Forever sites. A total of 10,000 trees have been planted since 1919.

The Cecil Family has a strong commitment to agriculture and conservation on the land. They plan to maintain the present conservation practices and to continue building for the future. Ed's son Jim is now co-owner and operator and is continuing on the tradition. Ed remains an active member of the operation, contributing to the daily management and decisions for the Farm.

Ritschard Ranch Receives CACD 2010 Rancher of the Year Award



Photo by Mark Cronquist

Con and Gladys Ritschard began the Ritschard Cattle Company in 1939 in Grand County, Colorado. They purchased the property with money earned from a mail route and selling milk and cream from five head of dairy cattle. The operation transitioned from a Hereford ranch to an Angus cross with Charolais bulls in the 1960's and 70's. Currently, the business is run by Mike Ritschard.

Several irrigation projects have been put into place which allowed the Ritschards to access their full water rights and to decrease the degradation of the river bottom, protect gambien baskets and replace degraded wooden boxes with check structures.

In 1991 Con Ritschard won the Leonard Horn Livestockman of the Year award from Colorado Cattlemen's Association. Other range projects include moving fences, building new fences and building two spring lines all with the purpose of distributing cattle to utilize a rotational grazing system.

Projects that enhanced wildlife habitat include ponds for ducks and geese, and using corrals and buffer fencing along the Colorado River to keep pollution out of the River. Fishing habitat on the Troublesome was enhanced through the installation of cross veins and other river structures that would stabilize the channel and the stream banks.

The Ritschard family has always been very involved in the community by sharing their successes and failures with neighboring landowners. They leave a legacy of learning, community involvement and optimizing the use of natural resources to create a viable economic enterprise.

Eastern Colorado Farmer Begins Production of Biodiesel

by
Dori Seamans
Conservation District Technician, Burlington

“We dreamed about being able to produce enough oilseed to use in engines. We started with 300 pounds of dryland yields and now are at 1,200 pounds. Being out here on Mr. Clapper’s farm and seeing it working is a great surprise and fun to see”

Chuck Clapper’s dream of producing his own biodiesel and gaining independence from soaring fuel prices is now a reality on his farm in eastern Kit Carson County. Mr. Clapper recently held an Open House to demonstrate his seed crushing and biodiesel production plant and to inform many curious people about how he pulled it all together. Approximately 125 people from towns in Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska traveled to his farmstead, south of Stratton, Colorado, to see the facility. Representatives from universities, industry, and government were on hand to describe how they helped provide technical and financial support for the project.

Mr. Clapper has been told that he has the only vertically integrated biodiesel plant in the United States. This means he grows and processes his own canola, uses the canola oil to make biodiesel to fuel his tractors, and uses the co-products to feed his cattle. The canola seed is crushed by a German-made expeller press. The oil is pumped to settling tanks and then filtered to produce raw canola oil. A simple chemical reaction converts 250-gallon batches of oil into the same amount of biodiesel each day. The remainder of the seed, called oil cake, comes out of the press as pellets that provide a high quality feed for fattening cattle.

During the Open House, researchers and engineers from Colorado State University, and the International Center for Appropriate and Sustainable Technology (iCAST), discussed various aspects of biodie-

sel production, including the agronomics of growing oil seed crops, the effects of biodiesel on engines, the chemistry of biodiesel production, and recent improvements in the production of clean energy.

Mr. Clapper relied on (iCast), and conservation agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), to help him with the project design and to coordinate funding. Sam Anderson, Technical Projects Manager for iCAST, and an engineer with extensive project experience in the biodiesel industry, explained, “Our goal is to help build rural economies and help underserved communities solve problems in economically and environmentally sustainable ways. We do that by getting funding and technical expertise, and providing support to make the project come together.”

According to Bob Mailander of the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO), *“Biofuels is a primary focus of our organization. You have to give Mr. Clapper a lot of credit for pioneering this project and allowing the kind of support services to come together to do this work. The GEO will continue to support this kind of activity.”* Jerry Johnson, Professor of Soil and Crop Sciences at CSU, has grown tests plots of oilseed crops for nine years. *“We dreamed about being able to produce enough oilseed to use in engines. We started with 300 pound dryland yields and now we are at 1,200 pounds. Being out here on Mr. Clapper’s farm and seeing it working is a great surprise and fun to see.”*

Mr. Clapper’s plans for the future include adding more expeller presses to increase the production of biodiesel and to produce 50,000 gallons of fuel for his tractors every year.



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Agriculture Award for Excellence in conservation



Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture John Stulp, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, is pleased to announce the presentation of the second Commissioner of Agriculture's Award for Excellence in Conservation to Donnie McBee of Prowers Conservation District. The award is presented annually to a Conservation District Supervisor within Colorado that demonstrates leadership and vision for the state conservation community while providing volunteer services to a local Conservation District. Good conservation practices on their own land, as well as personal fostering of future leaders and the developing of new conservation partners are also required. Donnie upon his humble acceptance of his award remarked ... "had I known I was going to get this award I would not have shown up." Donnie continues to be very active in representing ag producers on water quantity issues.

Special thanks to the Sponsors of the 2010 CACD Annual Meeting



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NRCS in Colorado, Achieving its Mission and Witnessing its Vision



2010 marked the 75th year the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been “helping people help the land.” Although the USDA agency throughout its 75 years has undergone a few changes, including its name, the basic principle of the organization has remained the same. NRCS is and has always been the lead federal agency that helps America’s farmers and ranchers improve the condition of natural resources (soil, water, air, plants and animals) by encouraging the implementation of sound conservation practices onto the land. And, although the mission has not changed, the way the agency goes about it and who it collaborates with to realize its vision has expanded.

“The way in which today’s NRCS works is diverse and multifaceted,” says Allen Green, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver, CO. “We are dealing with more complicated issues like energy, organics, carbon sequestration, water consumption, urban encroachment onto prime production agricultural lands, as well as determining the most appropriate way to meet the needs of a new customer base, the small acreage landowner. Property owners with less than 40 acres are our fastest-growing customer, because many have little to no experience in how to properly manage natural resources. And these are just a few of the ever-changing issues the agricultural landscape must address. As a result, the agency that has historically spoken for the land must keep up and I’m very happy to say that NRCS does an exceptional job.”

In order to continually meet the needs of managing the natural resources and to exceed the expectations of its customers, NRCS incorporated a number of innovative initiatives and activities within the last few years, specifically with the passing of the 2008 Farm Bill. Within the

past few years, NRCS has partnered with numerous entities and organizations to leverage and combine efforts in reaching common natural resource goals. The agency has also introduced a number of initiatives to help address some of the most emerging natural resource issues.

“Not only is partnering one of the most significant changes in how NRCS goes about doing business, it’s also one of the most important and most valuable,” Green goes on to say. “NRCS in Colorado maintains its traditional partnerships with key organizations like local conservation districts and Colorado’s Department of Agriculture, but in recent years we have developed and expanded critical alliances with partners like the Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Service. We expanded our relationship with CSU to help address the needs of Colorado’s small acreage landowners. We also established an exceptional partnership with the Division of Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Pheasants Forever. This collaboration has allowed for a significant increase in technical assistance to landowners interested in the improvement of wildlife habitat in a more timely fashion.”

NRCS in Colorado also works very closely with the Farm Bureau, Cattleman’s Association, the US Forest Service, Land Trusts organizations, organic and other specialist growers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Nature Conservancy, and many others.

Special initiatives have also been on the rise within the NRCS organization. Recently NRCS in Colorado introduced an initiative to improve agricultural energy conservation and efficiency, as well as the organic, lesser prairie chicken, sage grouse, and air quality initiatives. NRCS utilizes these proposals because they provide for increased collabora-

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tion, innovation, and rapid, flexible, and targeted assistance to landowners.

“As a result of areas of emphasis, NRCS has been able to specify certain wildlife habitat improvements; as well as offer financial assistance to Colorado organic producers and aspiring organic producers; help agricultural producers in Colorado transition to more energy-efficient operations; provide an opportunity for producers to install conservation practices that directly benefit the water quality and water quantity issues in the Ogallala aquifer, as well as implement cost-effective and innovative practices that reduce harmful 8-hour surface ozone (the primary component of smog),” states Dawn Jackson, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Denver, CO.

In 2010 NRCS in Colorado provided more than \$5 million in financial assistance to special initiatives impacting more than 75,000 acres of production on agricultural lands.

In addition to some of the more non-traditional opportunities NRCS offered to help landowners achieve their natural resource goals, 2010 brought traditional opportunities as well. The agency’s technical and financial assistance programs continue to be one of the most critical components in helping the agency achieve its goals. The Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA) is the backbone of the agency. CTA is the agency’s program that provides landowners access to our expertise, knowledge, skills, abilities, and technology.

“There are a number of landowners, groups, and entities, who want to work with NRCS, yet don’t need any financial assistance,” Green further states. *“Through CTA landowners can get assistance to maintain and improve private*

lands and their management, implement better land management technologies, protect and improve water quality and quantity, maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat, enhance recreational opportunities on their land, maintain and improve the aesthetic character of private land, explore

opportunities to diversify agricultural operations, and develop and apply sustainable agricultural systems. Assistance may be in the form of resource assessment, practice design, resource monitoring, or follow-up of installed practices.”

Although the CTA program does not include financial or cost-share assistance, clients may develop conservation plans, which may serve as a blueprint for those interested in participating in USDA financial assistance programs. CTA planning can also serve as a door to financial assistance and conservation programs provided by other federal, state, and local programs.

For those who choose to take advantage of NRCS financial assistance and cost-share opportunities to help reach natural resource goals, there are numerous programs available. A very popular one in Colorado is the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) which, through payments, recognizes those land stewards who are currently making a positive impact on natural resources as a result of existing conservation practices, and encourages those land stewards to improve and increase their conservation performance. In 2010, NRCS in Colorado enrolled some 470 landowners into the CSP program, providing \$11.8 million in payments for increased levels of conservation efforts, totaling 1.3 million acres.

“It’s not surprising that so many landowners qualify and express interest in enrolling into the CSP program. The condition of Colorado’s rural landscape is very important to them,” Jackson further states. *“One of the most recognizable factors of the state is the quality of outdoor activities. Resources must be managed properly to maintain the quality of life we all enjoy. This is why*

wildlife is so very important to many Coloradoans. That resource must also be managed and managed well. As a result, the conservation and improvement of wildlife habitat is critical. In 2010, NRCS provided more than \$530,000 in cost-share assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.”

Through WHIP, NRCS assists landowners implement management practices as well as install various structures like fences, water developments, and wells. “These are all conservation practices that help wildlife, and they all support the enhancement of their habitat in different ways,” says, Eugene Backhaus, NRCS State Resource Conservationist. *“For example, landowners install fences to help manage the timing and duration of grazing on pastures. This helps wildlife and livestock by improving the quality and health of range and pasture vegetation because fencing helps restrict the area in which grazing can occur, allowing for areas not being grazed to rest and produce better food”*

Other conservation programs managed and administered by Colorado’s NRCS include the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), which provides assistance to purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in use; the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) that helps protect, restore, and enhance grasslands; and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which offers cost-shared assistance to landowners to help address significant natural resource problems. Utilizing each of these programs, within 2010, NRCS provided some \$37 million in assistance to Colorado landowners on over 650,000 acres.

NRCS is the federal agency that works with private landowners and strives to reach its vision of productive lands and a healthy environment by helping people help the land. Within the last 75 years, the positive impact the agency has had on America’s rural landscapes is undeniable. These strides have only been possible through its partnership with local conservation districts and other key conservation partners. NRCS in Colorado looks forward to serving and speaking for the land for another 75 years.

For more information about NRCS please visit www.co.nrcs.usda.gov

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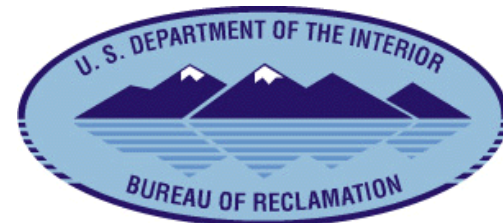
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