



Promoting the Wise Use of all Natural Resources



Douglas Creek Board

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Summer is here!

The White River Conservation District and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts exist on behalf of the Rio Blanco County (RBC) landowners. We are here provide a voice for RBC landowners and to provide outreach, education and support for the stewardship of natural resources.

This newsletter provides highlights from the White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts' Annual Plan of Work:

1. *Implementation of the RBC Land and Natural Resource Plan and Policies (LUP)*
2. *Rangeland Health*
3. *Water*
4. *Wildlife*

Range Monitoring Workshop

Date: June 11, 2022

Cost: \$20.00 per person

Location: Piceance Creek Rock School House, 23404, CR5, Rifle, CO, 81650

Time: 10am-3:00pm, with lunch provided

The districts are partnering with the NRCS, Forest Service, and BLM to bring you easy to use tools and up to date information regarding rangeland monitoring to help you manage your range during drought years.

Get hands on experience with 3 different, simple monitoring methods.

Come join us to learn...

- New BLM requirements for monitoring grazing permits
- How to use the following monitoring methods
 - 1) Photo Point
 - 2) Line Point Intercept
 - 3) Landscape Appearance

Please RSVP by June 3rd: call 970-878-9838 or email julia.districts@gmail.com

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Annual Plan of Work Activities

#1 RBC Land and Natural Resource Plan and Policies (LUP)

The Rio Blanco County (RBC) Land and Natural Resource Plan and Policies (LUP) was developed in 2016 with extensive public input. It contains background and policy statements regarding multiple uses of public lands. The Districts utilize the LUP when working with governmental agencies to influence their decisions regarding the use of natural resources.

LUP Document Updates

- ◆ The Districts and the RBC are in the process of updating the LUP. We need your input! Please visit the districts website (www.whiterivercd.com) to view document changes and provide your comments by June 15, 2022.
- ◆ All inputs will be compiled and provided to the District Boards and RBC commissioners for a hearing and final approval.

Activities

- ◆ Staff continue to participate in weekly BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) meetings. This allows the districts to be engaged with BLM during their planning processes ranging from Greater Sage Grouse, to grazing permits and removal of excess horses
- ◆ Douglas Creek Conservation District board member, Scott Robertson, serves on the BLM Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). Exec. Director, Callie Hendrickson, has submitted application for a second term on the RAC and is still waiting to hear confirmation. Callie and Scott participated in the January and May meetings.
- ◆ Callie works closely with the multiple organizations such as Colorado Farm Bureau (CFB), Club 20, and Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD), and the Colorado Cattlemen's Assoc. (CCA) on natural resource and policy issues. She utilized the LUP to provide input on policy issues and positions. She is currently the Vice Chair of the CCA Private Property and Stewardship Committee as well as being active in the Federal Lands and Wildlife Committees.

Many of the priorities and activities mentioned in this newsletter are the result of the LUP and/or utilize LUP policies to guide the activity.

#2 Rangeland Health

Rangeland Monitoring Project

The Districts have wrapped up the fourth year of the intense range monitoring program which is invaluable to the BLM in trying to implement active management of the excess horses. The data and analysis show the impacts of excessive numbers of horses grazing year-round in the Piceance. The range has declined significantly, and multiple sites are showing 100% utilization in the late fall. The 2018-2021 report and analysis is available on the Districts' website under the "Projects" tab.

Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMP):

We are very excited to have received a **\$239,000 Colorado RESTORE grant** through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to implement CRMP range improvement projects over the next two years.

Staff continue to work with multiple landowners, BLM, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Colorado Dept. of Ag (CDA) and other partners to write and implement CRMPs. Receiving the RESTORE grant will be a huge help in implementing these projects. We anticipate at least one brush management, one tamarisk removal, and one water project will be implemented this year. More will be completed providing the NEPA and other requirements are finalized, and the drought conditions will allow it.

Horses:

District staff have worked closely with the BLM to inform decision makers of the need for removal of excess horses from Rio Blanco County. The intense range monitoring program data is exceptionally helpful in this!

Unfortunately, as of the end of March some of the horses in Piceance Basin are in extremely poor condition and the BLM is working on a strategy of how to proceed. This was predicted through our range monitoring given there was 100% utilization of the forage late last fall.

For more information on Rangeland Health, please see the Rangeland Health page on the Districts' website at www.whiterivercd.com.



Photo Credit: Piceance Creek Mustangs

1) White River Integrated Water Initiative (WR Initiative):

It has been a busy and productive start to the year for the White River Integrated Water Initiative. Assessment Coordinator, Kari Brennan, and Team Lead, Dr. Mario Sullivan, finalized the 21 riparian health assessment reports and distributed them to the respective landowners. With the Diversion and Riparian Health Assessments completed, there are several diversion improvement projects being initiated and funded through a partnership with the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association. The Conservation Districts are working with other partners to seek additional funding for multi-benefit projects.

As you may recall, the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) identified three segments (reaches) of the White River plus Piceance Creek, based on their unique characteristics and uses. Public meetings were held in each reach to refine the interests and ideas most beneficial to the respective reach in the next phase of the Initiative. All reaches were supportive of upland vegetation management (forest and rangeland). Upland vegetation management is critical to improving water quantity and quality. All the reaches were supportive of water storage projects to help diminish the impacts of decreased snowpack. There is also widespread support for conducting a hydrology study, perhaps focusing on the return flows from irrigated agricultural lands to the White River.

The PAC will review and consider the additional input from the third round of public meetings at their May 26th meeting in Rangely. This additional information will help them finalize the top priorities to focus on within the next two to three years. The PAC will develop a Scope of Work (SOW) based on those priorities and funding/grants will be sought to implement those priorities and additional projects.

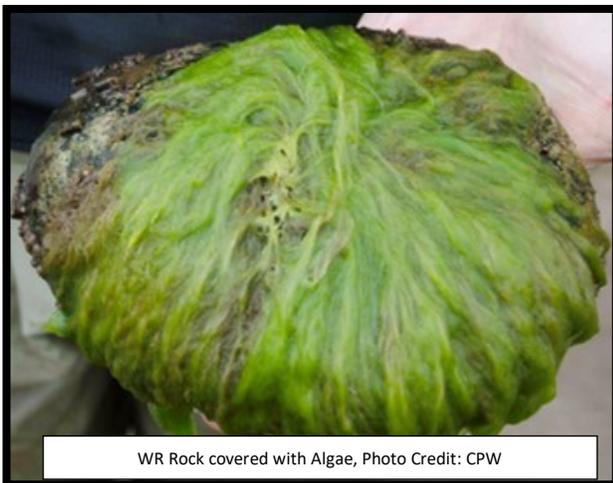
If you have ideas or questions, please feel free to contact PAC Coordinator, Liz Chandler, at liz.districts@gmail.com or 970-984-2728, or the White River & Douglas Creek Conservation District Office at whiterivercd@gmail.com or 970-878-9838.

For more information on the WR Initiative, please see the [WR Initiative page](#) on the Districts’ website at www.whiterivercd.com.

2) White River Algae Study & Technical Advisory Group (TAG):

The four-year USGS study to determine what is causing the excessive algal growth in the White River is wrapped up. The analysis is completed, and the reports are nearly finished. USGS will be presenting their findings at a public meeting on June 2nd at Fire Hall. Please plan to attend and learn about the various factors that are contributing to the algal growth.

For more information on the Study, please see the [Algae Study page](#) on the Districts’ website at www.whiterivercd.com.



3) Yampa-White-Green Basin Round Table (BRT):

White River CD Board member, Chris Collins, and Exec. Director, Callie Hendrickson, continue to serve on the BRT. Both serve on the Big River Committee where they learn and provide input on the Colorado River issues. Chris is also serving on the Grants committee. For more information, please visit www.yampawhitegreen.com.

Wolf Introduction

District staff attended the Stakeholder’s Advisory Group (SAG) meeting in Glenwood Springs again in February and in Meeker on April 27 & 28 to provide public testimony. Staff has worked to keep constituents engaged in the issue and encourage everyone to provide written comments. For additional information on wolf engagement please visit <https://www.wolfengagementco.org/>

Greater Sage Grouse:

The Districts have engaged in the Greater Sage Grouse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) discussions and will be a cooperating agency throughout the process. The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts are the only special districts currently engaging with North Western Colorado counties and BLM to ensure a strong local voice.

All involved are pleased that the national office determined each state will be doing an EIS rather than grouping them into regions or doing one large plan trying to make one size fit all.

New Faces in the Districts

Many of you know our District Manager, Tristan McGee, who is a huge asset to the Districts. We want to congratulate Tristan as she will be taking some maternity leave and then returning to the District as the part-time Project Manager. Therefore, the District has hired Fayanna Seely as the Districts’ Office Manager. She will ensure the smooth running of the office on a day-to-day basis. Her primary duties are bookkeeping and administration of grants, grant reporting, general office administration, and fulfilling statutory requirements for the two Districts.

Fayanna Seely

I am excited to be the new office manager for the Districts. I was born and raised in the area then left for a few years to raise 2 amazing kids. I’ve been back in Meeker for 6 years, working locally before becoming a part of the conservation effort for the White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts.



Julia Eskelson is the new District Conservation Technician (DCT). The DCT position is grant funded through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB), and the Intermountain West Joint Venture. Julia will be providing technical services to agriculture producers helping to initiate and/or enhance soil and water conservation practices. She will aid in conservation planning by working with landowners, groups, and units of government to apply and maintain a variety of conservation practices with an emphasis on water management and range improvements.

Julia Eskelson

I am eager to take on the roll as the District Conservation Technician (DCT). I was born and raised in Meeker then left to attend Chadron State College in Nebraska where I earned my Bachelor’s Degree in rangeland management with an emphasis in livestock production and a focus in communications. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the area where my interests for rangeland and agriculture began.



Funding for Stock Watering Maintenance and Improvements

Available!

We are proud and excited to share that, to date, the White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts have approved funding for a total of 60 stock water facility repair and maintenance projects for a total of \$35,500.

This was made possible through receiving drought stimulus funding from the CO State Conservation Board and CO Department of Agriculture, and by producer's hard work and decisions to do good projects. Both Districts chose to use this funding to focus on agriculture water projects that would improve drought resiliency by providing livestock water sources on private and/or public land which would improve livestock distribution and rangeland utilization. Funds were used for maintenance, upgrades, and /or new water sources such as ponds, water tanks, wells, etc. at existing stock water facilities.

All funds have been expended for the White River Conservation District's program, but **Douglas Creek Conservation District is still accepting applications!** Please contact a board member or the District office to get an application and apply for a \$750.00 stipend for each stock water facility maintenance/ improvement project completed in 2021 or 2022 (maximum of four projects per producer).



Update From Nakayla Lestina, District Conservationist

NRCS is currently in the process of finalizing Fiscal Year 2022 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications. This year there were 11 EQIP applications, 1 CSP application and 2 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The finalized numbers will not be available until the end of June. Currently, the Meeker Field Office is actively managing a total of 28 contracts among 3 different programs.

Below is a summary of the total number of contracts in each program along with the total obligated dollar amount and treated acres.

Program	Number of Contracts	Amount	Contract Acres
ACEP	2	\$ 1,400,000.00	4,578.1
CSP	15	\$ 1,393,497.66	53,393.1
EQIP	11	\$ 926,855.41	13,514.9
Total	28	\$3,720,353.07	71,486.1

While managing these active contracts, we are working with producers that have requested assistance to develop conservation plans in preparation for Fiscal Year 2023 signups. The NRCS has a fairly large request list and are diligently working through this list to address as many as possible during this coming field season. With new staff coming on board, the field office is hopeful to be able to address a lot of the requests. However, short an engineer, any projects that will require engineering work will possibly have an additional delay since there will be having to request assistance.

Douglas Creek and White River
 Conservation Districts
 351 7th Street
 PO Box 837
 Meeker, CO 81641



<p><u>Office Hours</u></p> <p>The Conservation Districts and the NRCS Office are opened for customer drop-ins! Come by and say hello!</p> <p>Office Hours: 7:30am-4:30pm</p>	<p>The Districts offer numerous conservation–related products for sale and rent including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock water tire tanks • Seedling Trees • No-till drill • Broadcast- seeder • PAM • Weed Sprayer <p>If you are interested in purchasing or renting, please contact the Office or visit the Sales & Rentals tab of the Districts' web-site.</p>
<p><u>District Board Meetings</u></p> <p>*Check the websites for any changes to meeting dates</p> <p>Douglas Creek Conservation District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Tuesday of the Month at 6:00 p.m. • 2253 E. Main Street, Rangely, CO 81648 <p>White River Conservation District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Thursday of the Month at 1:00 p.m. December—February and 5:00 p.m. March—November 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>District Contact Information</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">970-878-9838</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WhiteRiverCD@gmail.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.DouglasCreekCD.org</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.WhiteRiverCD.com</p>