



Promoting the Wise Use of all Natural Resources

Douglas Creek Board

- President : Bill Hume
- V. President : Rosaly Coombs
- Sec./Treasurer : Scott Robertson
- Supervisor : Ron Reich
- Supervisor : Jason Plummer

White River Board

- President : Marc Etchart
- V. President : Chris Collins
- Sec./Treasurer : Bill Lake
- Supervisor : Neil Brennan
- Supervisor: Kathy Nelson

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Locally led conservation efforts begin with the community

Douglas Creek

When: December 6th, 2022 at 6:00pm

Where: CNCC Weiss Conference Room

500 Kennedy Dr Rangely, CO 81641

White River

When: December 8th, 2022 at 5:00pm

Where: Meeker Public Library

490 Main St Meeker, CO 81641

Please join us at these meetings to help guide the future activities of the Districts and NRCS.

Your input as a landowner is invaluable.



President Bill Hume and Vice President Scott Robertson stand with the newly installed sign on HWY 139 South, Rangely.



Ron Reich, Supervisor and Bill Hume, President Prepare the ground for the new Douglas Creek sign.

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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 originally 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. The 2022 update was completed this summer and is now on the Districts' website. It has been submitted to the local Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service (USFS) offices.

Activities

- ◆ Staff participate in weekly BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) meetings, engaging in planning discussions on grazing permits and removal of excess horses.
- ◆ The Districts are engaging as cooperating agencies with various federal agencies regarding greater sage grouse, introduction of wolves, and water. As cooperating agencies, the Districts have the opportunity to engage in government-to-government discussions and offer suggestions in the planning process before documents go to the public for comment.

Many of the Districts' priorities and activities are the result of the LUP. The Districts utilize the LUP policies make written comments and public testimony on the respective topics.

#2 Rangeland Health

Rangeland Monitoring Project

The Districts have completed the 5th year of range monitoring in the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA) and the West Douglas Herd Area (HA). Osborn Industries was hired to conduct intense monitoring and analyze the data. The verifiable data indicated up to 100% utilization of forage in late fall of 2021 and that 80% of consumption was horses with 14% being cattle and 6% being wildlife.

Horses

A big thank you goes out to the local BLM staff for their dedication and perseverance in removing excess horses the last couple of years!

The Piceance East Douglas HMA attracted a lot of attention at the state and national levels with significant efforts to prevent the gather. Ultimately the BLM removed 761 head of the estimated 1,500+ horses in the County. Note, the appropriate management level (AML) within the HMA is 135 – 235 and therefore that is the maximum number of horses that should be in Rio Blanco County. While the Districts are very appreciative of BLM's efforts, we will continue to request the removal of all excess horses to get the number down to the AML of 135 – 235 horses.

Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMPs)

District Project Coordinator, Tristan McGee, is working with partners on coordination of new and existing vegetation treatments, water projects and fencing projects. Two coordinated resource management plans were finalized this summer. The completed treatments include: 4 acres of tamarisk removal (continuing summer 2023), 20 acres of pinyon juniper chopping, 133 acres weed spraying, and 53 acres of cheatgrass spraying.



This is a photo showing the chopping of pinyon juniper.

If you're interested in starting a CRMP project, call the district or email Tristan.

#3 Water

White River Integrated Water Initiative (WR Initiative):

The White River Integrated Water Initiative (Initiative) has recently finalized the Scope of Work for Phase III of the Initiative. There are four main project areas the Initiative will focus on during Phase III: Water Supply Study, Upland Vegetation Management, Water Measurement Demonstration, Diversion and Riparian Assessments.

The Water Supply Study will identify and quantify the effect of flood irrigation in the middle reach of the White River on return flows, municipal wells, and domestic wells within the Rio Blanco Community. A hydrologic model of the middle reach of the White River will be developed for landowners and the Rio Blanco Community to use in decision making.

Upland Vegetation Management will focus on private and public lands to improve the health of the watershed and reduce mega fire impacts to the White River drainage. The United States Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management are all partners in this work.

A Water Measurement Demonstration will be a series of water measuring devices open to the public to view for educational purposes as well as for water managers' information. Yellow Jacket Water Conservancy District, Town of Meeker, Recreation District, and others are supportive and working towards implementation next summer.

Due to the strong support and interest from landowners, diversion structure and riparian health assessments will continue in the next phase. The assessments will provide landowners with recommendations for functional and environmental improvements.

The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts (Districts) are in the process of securing grants from multiple sources to fund the diverse work planned for Phase III.



Above is an example of "Livestock Water Systems & Pond Maintenance" projects funded by the Districts

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

The White River Algae Study has concluded and found several variables to indicate the increase of algae blooms on the White River. The reduced spring and summer streamflow are major contributing factors to algae blooms. Other factors including water temperature, nutrient availability, and streambed stability also contribute to the increase. The study found phosphorous concentrations and loads have increased over time while the nitrogen concentrations and loads have decreased. The phosphorous increases occurred uniformly in the North Fork and the South Fork of the White River indicating this is a region wide occurrence. In fact, USGS has found the similar phosphorus increases in water across the entire western United States.

The Districts continue collecting algae, temperature, and flow data at five sites in the White River this year to help ground truth the findings of the USGS study. The Districts appreciate the Colorado River District for their support in this effort. The final USGS report is expected to be available to the public in December 2022.

The takeaway from the study is that given the regional low streamflow, high temperatures, and increased phosphorous, all land and water managers must consider the impacts of all consumptive and non-consumptive uses. It is critically important to implement best management practices (BMPs) in all activities.

Wolf Introduction

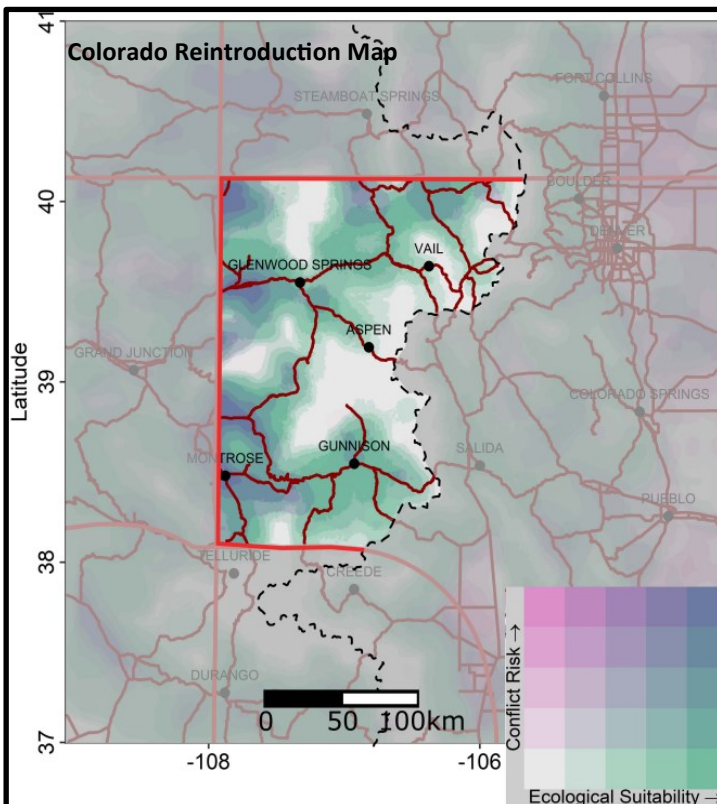
There is a State process and a federal process running simultaneously. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff is currently drafting the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan (Plan) that is required by Proposition 114 which was passed in November 2021. The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) recommendations have been submitted to CPW. Staff will present the plan to the CPW Commission on December 9, 2022 during a virtual meeting. The public is encouraged to view that meeting and will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Plan around the first of the year. The CPW staff expect to finalize the Plan by May 2023 and begin implementation by December 31, 2023.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is conducting the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at the request of the State of Colorado. "The Service is proposing this rulemaking to develop a 10(j) rule under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that would provide the state its requested management flexibility for reintroduced wolves..." A determination of wolves being introduced into Colorado as a non-essential experimental population under the 10(j) rule is the only opportunity for lethal control of problem wolves in Colorado at this time, given they are considered an endangered species in the State.

The Districts have been heavily engaged in the public engagement process of wolf introduction at the State and federal levels. Staff have attended and provided comments at the SAG and CPW Commission meetings regarding the impacts of wolf introductions to Rio Blanco County and citizens.



US Fish and Wildlife Services NEPA Process Reintroduction of Wolves into Colorado



The Districts are cooperating agencies with US Fish and Wildlife Service on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding Colorado Gray Wolf 10(j) Rulemaking. This provides an opportunity for government-to-government discussions and ability to influence the documents before they are available for public comment.

A heartfelt "Thank You" to Lenny Klingsmith and Marie Haskett for representing Rio Blanco County citizens so well regarding wolf reintroduction issues. Lenny serves on the SAG and has done an outstanding job of representing the ranching and hunting industries. Marie serves on the CPW Commission and is a great advocate for Rio Blanco County. Both have engaged in and developed productive dialogue and relationships that help everyone better understand the challenges on this issue.

For information on the wolf reintroduction processes, please visit the "Wolves" page on the Districts' website at www.whiterivercd.com. You will find links to both the State and federal processes there.



Please welcome the New White River Conservation District board member: Kathy Nelson

Recently retired from thirty years in education, the last seven as principal of Meeker Elementary, Kathy Nelson is the newest board member of the White River Conservation District. A native of Meeker, Kathy has returned to the ranch where she was raised. Kathy returned to Meeker in 1995 to establish a teaching career, helping with the ranch on the weekends and in the summer. Retirement has given her the opportunity to work full time at her family's White River Ranch where she oversees marketing and all things livestock. She also serves on the St. James Vestry, RBC Cattlewomen, RBC Extension Advisory Board, and the RBC Youth Fund. She enjoys working with livestock and 4-H members with her daughter Macy. Kathy enjoys riding and training horses and her mule and she and her "cow pug" Vinny volunteer at the elementary school working with students. Kathy is looking forward to sharing her perspective and serving the county in this important role.



Update From Nakayla Lestina, District Conservationist

The Natural Resource Conservation Service is wrapping up Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) and preparing for the next. To the right are the practices that have been completed for FY22.

As the NRCS wraps up fiscal year 2022 there are new conservation plans in the works with appreciated help from the producers. The technical request list has been addressed with the aid of new staff. We appreciate your patience as we work through the list trying to help all those that have reached out to NRCS for assistance. The engineering staff is short causing delays in projects. However, some planning staff is getting training to be able to assist in the engineering design process. This will shorten the delay for engineering projects.

The Meeker Field Office is actively managing a total of 30 contracts among 3 different programs. To the right is a summary of the total number of contracts in each program along with the total obligated dollar amount and treated acres.

Completed Practices	Extents	Unit
Fence	18,439	feet
Forage Harvest Management	863.9	acres
Prescribed Grazing	31,743.8	acres
Irrigation Water Management	99.5	acres
Livestock Pipeline	2,994	feet
Pumping Plant	3.0	no.
Well	1.0	no.
Water Facility	1.0	no.

Active Contracts			
Program	Number of Contracts	Amount	Contract Acres
ACEP	2	\$1,400,000.00	4,578.1
CSP	16	\$1,593,497.66	100,866.2
EQIP	12	\$1,051,128.60	14,426.4
Total	30	\$4,044,626.26	119,870.7

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



<p><u>Office Hours</u></p> <p>Drop ins are welcomed, however, due to minimal NRCS staffing it is encouraged to make an appointment.</p> <p>Office Hours: Monday– Friday 8:00am-5:00pm</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 (irriséal) • Weed Sprayer • Pipe Fusion Machine <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 • 351 7th St., Meeker, CO 81641 	<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>