

Promoting the Wise Use
of all Natural Resources



Douglas Creek Board

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- V. President : Rosaly Coombs
- Sec./ Treasurer : Scott Robertson
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White River Board

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Just for you!

The White River Conservation District and Douglas Creek Conservation District boards exist on behalf of the Rio Blanco County (RBC) landowners. We are here to provide education and technical assistance for you regarding the wise use of our natural resources; rangeland, wildlife, forest, water, and soil. We work with multiple partners to provide these services.

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**

NEW Website

We update our website often to provide you with current news and information on numerous projects. Please visit the District websites www.whiterivercd.com and www.douglascreekcd.org. Notes from meetings, presentations, links for more info for each of the natural resource issues and projects can be found in the project tabs.



Inside this issue:

Website & Job Announcement	1
Annual Plan of Work Activities	2-4
Natural Resource Tour	4
Local Working Group Survey	5
Board meeting Information	6
Sales and Rental Information	6



Job Announcement

District Conservation Technician

The Conservation Districts are seeking a self-motivated, results oriented individual for the District Conservation Technician position located in Meeker, CO. The District Conservation Technician (DCT) is a 32 – 40 hour per week, grant funded position. Preference will be given to Rio Blanco County residents. This person will aid in conservation planning, working with landowners, groups, and units of government to apply and maintain a variety of conservation practices with an emphasis

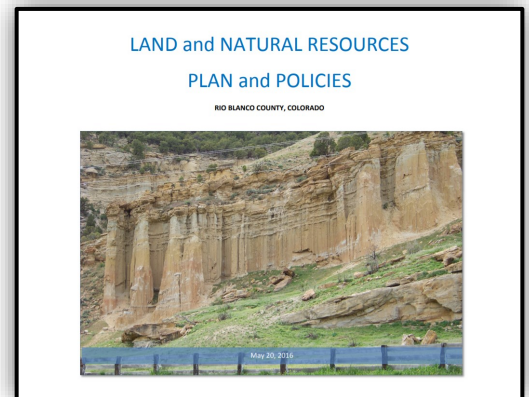
on water management and rangeland health. This person will assist the Conservation Districts and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in facilitating the development and implementation of resource management system plans by facilitating communications, coordination, and providing technical assistance. See www.whiterivercd.com for job description, requirements, and more information. Contact Exec. Director, Callie Hendrickson, at 970-878-9838 with any questions. Position is open until filled. Please submit your resume and cover letter to callie.districts@gmail.com by 5:00 p.m. October 1, 2021.

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.

- ◆ The LUP is currently being updated. Please watch for opportunities to provide input on the updates. These will be announced in the local newspaper and on the districts’ website. If you would like to be notified directly, please contact the office to add your email address to the list.
- ◆ The Districts continue to participate in BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) meetings on a weekly basis to engage in discussions regarding grazing permits, vegetation treatments, and wild horse management actions.
- ◆ District staff engage with multiple entities such as Club 20, Colorado Cattlemen Association, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, Colorado Farm Bureau, etc. encouraging the adoption of resolutions and policies which align with the LUP policies. By cooperating and partnering with all these entities, a more unified voice is developed to help encourage proactive management of the natural resources.

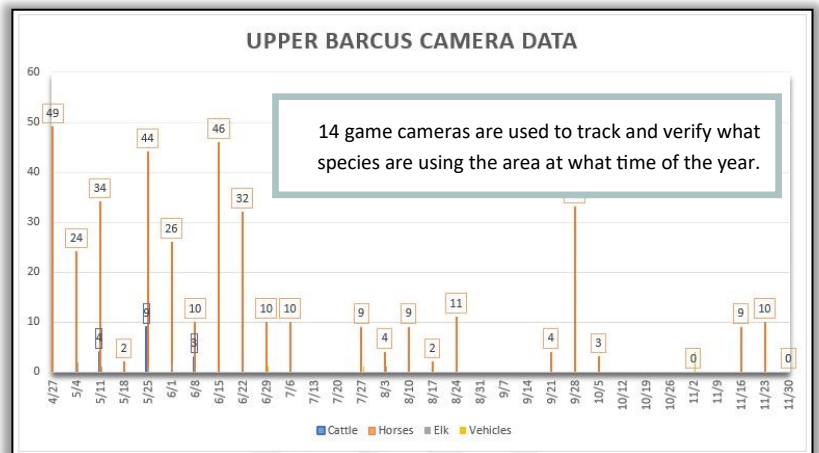


#2 Rangeland Health:

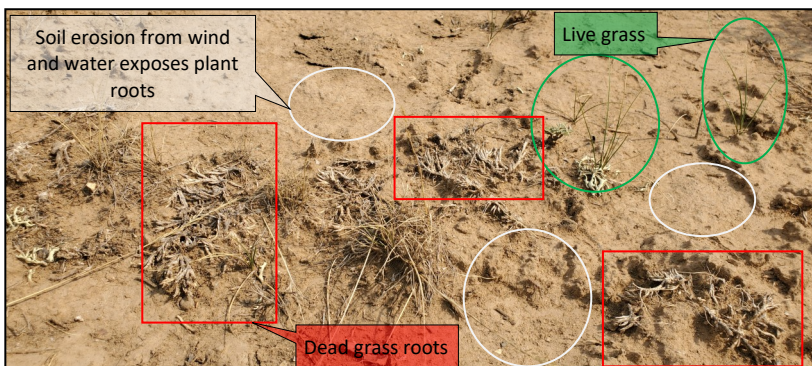
- Through a financial assistance agreement with the BLM, the Districts have two ongoing projects to improve Rangeland Health.

1. **Intense Range Monitoring:** Overall, the last three years of data collection in the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA) have proven to be over utilized primarily by wild horses. Several cattle permittees have voluntarily taken cuts in cattle numbers and/or time that they are grazing their permit. The BLM has determined that they would like to expand the intense monitoring into the West Douglas Herd Area. Our contractor will start that area this fall 2021.

2. **Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) Project:** We are proud to have two of four CRMPs completed with 6,500 acres identified for vegetation treatments and 26 water improvement projects. 1,378 acres of vegetation treatments and 4 water improvement projects have been approved for implementation in 2022 .



- The BLM recently conducted a successful gather of 457 wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area where there are supposed to be no horses. The designated Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 135 – 235 within the boundaries of the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA). The Conservation Districts will continue to push BLM to remove the excess horses from the PEDHMA this winter.



- Our Executive Director interviewed with the 9News regarding the impacts of non-managed and year-round grazing on the Rangeland (see photo on left). Unfortunately, they continue to portray this as an emotional issue using livestock as the scapegoat instead of helping the public understand the damage excess horses are causing on the range.

#3 Water:

- **White River Integrated Water Initiative (WR Initiative):** Phase II of the WR Initiative is in high gear this summer. The Diversion and Riparian Assessment Teams are in the field, the coordinators are holding public meetings, and the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) is actively working to set the objectives for Phase III.

The *Diversion Assessment Team* held two public workshops to demonstrate the criteria that are being used to assess water diversions in the river.



- ◆ They have completed a total of 20 individual assessments: 15 on the White River and 5 on Piceance Creek.
- ◆ The assessment team consists of several members with differing expertise, this affords them the ability to evaluate the functionality of the diversion to: move water into the ditch, allow for recreational passage, and to allow fish to move freely up and down the river and not become entrained in the ditch.
- ◆ The broad expertise of the team also benefits their ability to properly evaluate the diversion control structure, waste gate and measuring device.

The *Riparian Assessment Team* received four days of training from the state BLM Riparian Training Team. This was divided into two days of classroom work and two days of field training.

- ◆ The Riparian Team has members with varied fields of expertise which aids them in conducting the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) evaluation of the riparian areas.
- ◆ A total of 15 different sites will be assessed on the White River and 5 on Piceance Creek.

Kari Brennan and Liz Chandler have held four public input meetings in the different reaches of the White River and Piceance Creek for the community to review and provide feedback on the Mission and primary goals of the Initiative.



- ◆ The study is broke into four reaches:
 - 1) The headwaters to Miller Creek is the **Upper Reach**
 - 2) Miller Creek to just below Powell Park is the **Middle Reach**
 - 3) Powell Park to the confluence with the Green River is the **Lower Reach**
 - 4) **Piceance Creek** is considered one reach for the purposes of the WRIWI
- ◆ The Mission Statement and the Overall Goals of the WRIWI were introduced and discussed in these Public Meetings.
- ◆ They are now holding committee meetings in each reach. The committee will work to define specific areas of concern for each segment of the river and Piceance Creek.
- ◆ After reaching a consensus, each reach's ideas will move forward to the PAC. The PAC will use this information to help develop objectives and a Scope of Work for Phase III.



The PAC meets every other month to be informed on the progress of the assessments and any other work that is being done. Their role is to ask questions, provide direction, and make recommendations to the District Boards. In addition to these tasks, the PAC is bringing in speakers to provide expertise on different aspects of the identified goals of the initiative. This information along with the ideas and concerns from each reach will help to inform the PAC's decisions for the objectives and Scope of Work for Phase III.

Elizabeth Chandler is the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) Coordinator and Kari Brennan is the Project Coordinator. For more information, please visit the [White River Initiative tab](#) on the Districts' website at www.whiterivercd.com.

- **White River Algae Study & Technical Advisory Group (TAG):** The data collection portion of the three-year Algae Study is complete. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) continues to analyze the data and will provide a report by the end of 2021. For information on the Study, please see the [Algae Study tab](#) on the Districts' website at www.whiterivercd.com.
- **Yampa-White-Green Basin Round Table (BRT):** District staff engages in the bi-monthly BRT meetings and several committees including the Big River Committee that developed a "Demand Management Framework" which was submitted to the Colorado Water Conservation Board and others. The Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) committee is updating the Basin Implementation Plan. For more information, please visit www.yampawhitegreen.com.
- **White River Management Plan:** District staff and boards are working closely with Alden Vanden Brink of the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District to seek opportunities to actively engage in the conservation efforts through this Plan that will benefit the RBC community and the endangered fish.

#4 Wildlife:

- **Wolf Introduction:** The Districts are committed to working closely with members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to help inform the Wolf Management Plan.
 - ◆ The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Director, one CPW Commissioner, two Assistant Attorney General attorneys that work with CPW, and one SAG member attended the August Natural Resource Tour.
 - ◆ Our Executive Director attended the September CPW Commission meeting in Meeker.
 - ◆ The Districts submitted written comments regarding wolf management planning and did a Conservation Corner article encouraging the public to submit their comments as well. The Districts' comments were provided on our website as a reference.

IN OTHER NEWS...

2021 Natural Resource Tour

The Districts worked closely with the Rio Blanco County, Rio Blanco Stockgrowers, Rio Blanco County Farm Bureau, guides and outfitters, and oil and gas industry to pull together a comprehensive two-day Natural Resource Tour on August 30th and 31st. Highlights were the primary economic drivers for our communities that rely on natural resources including energy, agriculture, and recreation. The focus was on how we can make the best use of the natural resources with our current reality and discuss opportunities for the future. A total of 65 people attended between the two days. Among those was State Senators Rankin, Hisey and Simpson, State Representative Will, and State Water Engineer, Kevin Rein. The Upper Colorado Plant Materials Center provided a fantastic steak dinner for attendees after the first day of the tour.

Day one, we drove down river to Rangely and then to Piceance. Discussion topics included:

- Proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir site
- Town of Rangely Water
- White River Integrated Water Initiative
- Renewable Energy Options (solar)
- Multiple Use of Public Lands
- Proactive Fire Mitigation
- Wild Horse Impacts
- Rangeland Monitoring
- Coordinated Resource Management Plans
- Livestock Grazing Management in Drought
- Wolf Introduction Planning Update



Day two, we drove to Lake Avery and Up the South Fork of the White River. Discussion topics included:

- White River Algae Study
- White River Integrated Water Initiative
- Irrigation Efficiencies and Systems
- Lake Avery Enlargement
- CPW Big Game Migrations & Economic Impacts
- Anticipated Wolf Impacts
- Forest and Water Connections

Sponsors :

- Rio Blanco County
- Rio Blanco Stockgrowers Association
- Rio Blanco County Farm Bureau
- Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center
- Yampa, White Green Basin Roundtable
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Colorado Association of Conservation Districts



Natural Resource Tour Photos



Local Working Group Online Survey OPEN

The White River Conservation District, Douglas Creek Conservation District, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) typically conduct an annual Local Working Group (LWG) input session for land owners/managers to voice their natural resource priorities. With the everyone's busy schedules, we decided to do an online survey (link and QR Code below) rather than ask you to attend a meeting.

This is a great opportunity for you to provide input that will help guide NRCS in upcoming program planning and funding of conservation projects in Rio Blanco County. Topics include grazing lands, forestry, irrigation and soil health.

Survey link: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=5zZb7e4BvE6GfuA8-g1Gl-mSdlfoJxBEo0iuha-erF5UNFpRUEgxTEI2MIZRTTBLTDBTWVhBUKpLSS4u>



Use your camera to scan me to take you to the survey!

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



<p><u>Office Hours and COVID-19 Restrictions</u></p> <p>The Conservation Districts and the NRCS Office are available for service to the landowners by appointment. Please call 970-693-3012 (NRCS) or 970-878-9838 (District) before coming to the offices. Thank you for your patience.</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 • 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 pm • 2253 E. Main Street, Rangely, CO 81648 <p>White River Conservation District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Monday of the Month at 6:00 pm • Location TBA (see website), 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>