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# 2021 Annual Report

## WHITE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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# White River Conservation District

## What is the function of the Conservation District?

To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the standards and needs of the local land user with conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. The authorities, power, and structure are contained in the Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 35, Article 70.

## Mission:

To provide guidance and technical assistance to encourage and promote the wise use of natural resources within the district by private landowners and government land management agencies.

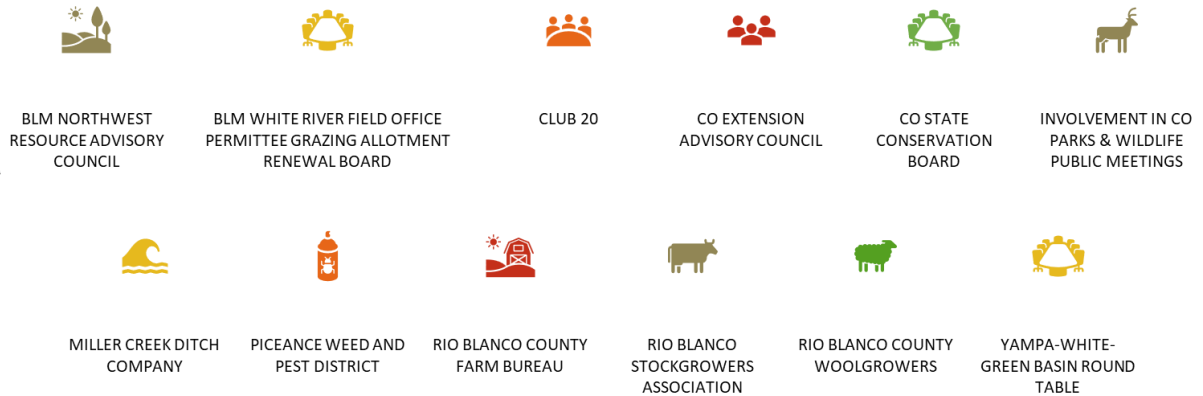
## Board Members

- Marc Etchart, President
- Chris Collins, Vice President
- Bill Lake, Secretary-Treasurer
- Neil Brennan, Supervisor

## Staff

- Callie Hendrickson, Executive Director
- Tristan McGee, District Manager

**Board Member & Staff Engagements in Addition to District Specific Business**



## Board member dedication!

 **1,727 Hours & 5,089 Miles**  
to work on district-related natural resource issues!

Where do your tax dollars go?



A constituent driven **Long Range Plan of Work** for the White River Conservation District (WRCD)



Implementation of **locally led conservation efforts**

- White River Algae Study | White River Integrated Water Initiative | Restoration and Monitoring projects (rangeland, water, riparian) | Information and education on natural resource issues through the local newspaper, website, social media, newsletters, and demonstrations



Implementation of the **Rio Blanco Land and Natural Resources Plan and Policies (LUP)** which gives the District the power to have locally led input on federal land management issues. Examples of topics to which letters were submitted quoting policies from the LUP:

- National BLM Grazing Regulations | Local BLM grazing permit renewals | U.S. Forest Service Yellow Jacket Timber Harvest project | National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations | Northwest CO draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Greater Sage Grouse Conservation | Vegetation treatments | removal of excess horses from Rio Blanco County | CO wolf introduction



**Technical Assistance**

- Offered at no-cost and provides the constituents with the knowledge and tools they need to conserve, maintain and restore the natural resources (soil, water, rangeland, wildlife) on their lands and improve their operations for the future. The goal is to give customers personalized advice and information to help them make informed decisions.

# ★ ACCOMPLISHMENTS ★

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

- ◇ The Districts and County are updating the LUP. This will be reviewed by the local communities and approved in 2022.
- ◇ District staff have engaged in the Greater Sage Grouse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) discussions and will be a cooperating agency throughout this process. The Districts' staff have joined several calls with BLM to ensure a strong local voice.
- ◇ Staff participate in weekly BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) meetings.
- ◇ Callie Hendrickson has submitted an application for a second term on the RAC and is waiting to hear confirmation.
- ◇ District staff work closely with multiple organizations such as Colorado Farm Bureau (CFB), Club 20, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) and the Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA) on natural resource and policy issues. Policies in the LUP are used to provide input on policy issues and positions.

**1) Intense Range Monitoring:** This project continues to be conducted in the Piceance East-Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA) to determine the forage use by species. Troy Osborn of Osborn Industries (Districts' contractor) is conducting this monitoring and is setting up new sites in the West Douglas area to monitor the rangeland recovery now that most of the horses have been removed. This work is expected to continue in 2022 and beyond pending BLM funding agreement.

### 2) Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP)

**Project:** The Districts have several completed CRMPs with public land permittees that are providing for conservation work across landownership. The Districts applied for grant funding and are working with partners to implement identified vegetation treatment and water improvement projects.

**3) Excess Horses:** Staff met with the BLM State Director, Jamie Connell, and requested BLM conduct the Piceance gather in 2022 and assured her that the Districts would provide support in doing so. This support would include the details of the Districts' range monitoring program in the Herd Management Area (HMA). The Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA) is on the national BLM gather schedule for September 2022.

**Wolf Introduction:** The Districts are committed to working closely with members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to help inform the Wolf Management Plan.

- ◇ Staff attends Stakeholder's Advisory Group (SAG) meetings and provide public testimony. Staff has worked to keep constituents engaged in the issue and encouraged them to provide written comments to the SAG and CPW Wildlife Commission members.
- ◇ The District staff and board members frequently communicate with SAG members to stay engaged in the process.
- ◇ The Districts submitted a wolf introduction plan resolution to the Colorado Assn. of Conservation Districts (CACD) that provided specific talking points to help ensure the wolf plan will do the least damage to our rural communities as possible. The resolution passed and is now policy of CACD.

**1) White River Integrated Water Initiative (WR Initiative):** It was a very productive year for the WR Initiative. The Riparian Health and Diversion Assessments are completed, and the Diversion Assessment Reports are in the hands of the water rights holders. The final stage of Phase II is under way. Phase II information will be used in conjunction with the finalized Mission Statement and Goals to establish priorities for Phase III. The major topics covered in the Goals and Mission Statement are: Protecting water rights; protecting water quality and quantity through best management practices for forest health, riparian health, rangeland health, and favorable streamflow conditions; infrastructure improvement; and long-term storage.

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

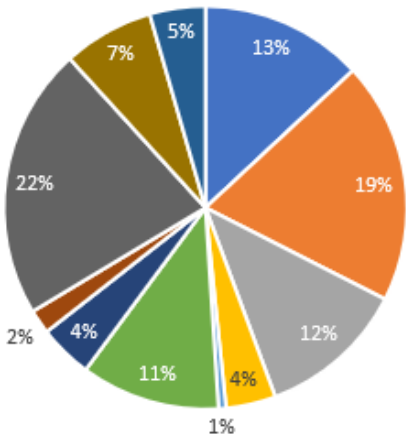
- The TAG has met approximately ten times over the last five years to identify the Scope of Work (SOW) for this project and to hear updates from USGS on the progress of the study.
- From the beginning of this process, it has been important to the local communities, Districts, and TAG that the reports created by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) were ground-truthed to ensure the analysis and reports reflect the reality on the ground.
  - ◇ In December 2021, the TAG met with USGS and reviewed the *Characterization of Streamflow and Nutrient Occurrence in The Upper White River Basin, Colorado, 1980-2020* report which describes historical streamflow and water quality characteristics. This meeting allowed the TAG to ask questions and ground truth the report. The *Investigation of Factors Controlling Benthic Algae in The Upper White River Watershed, Colorado, 2018-21* report was delivered to the TAG during the week of December 20th.
  - ◇ The TAG will meet several times in January/February 2022 to consider the data and analysis along with local knowledge to ground truth the report.
  - ◇ The final USGS Algae Study reports are expected to be ran through all USGS quality control processes and be completed and distributed to the public by June 2022.

**3) Yampa-White-Green Basin Round Table (BRT):** District Executive Director, Callie Hendrickson, continues to serve on the BRT as the House-Senate appointee.



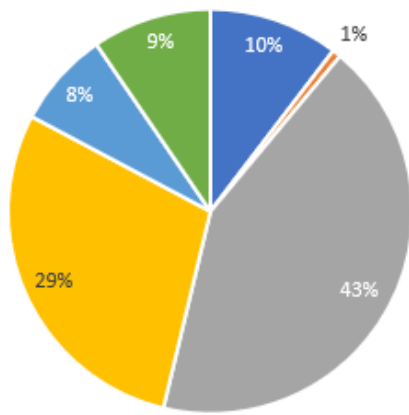
# Summary of 2021 Financials

## Income



- BLM Assistance Agreement
- County Contribution
- DCT Grant
- Douglas Creek CD Reimbursement
- Equipment Rent
- General Property Tax (Mill Levy)
- State (CSCB) Drought Stimulus Grant
- State (CSCB) Funding
- White River Algae Study Grant
- WR Initiative Grant
- Other (incl. Sales Items, Interest, Sponsorships)

## Expense



- BLM Assistance Agreement (Contractor and Supplies)
- Landowner Resource Improvements (water facility improvements)
- Payroll Expenses & Insurance (Project & Admin.)
- White River Algae Study (Contractor)
- WR Initiative (Contractors)
- Other (incl. meetings, LUP update, operations, accounting, etc.)

## Partners



Bureau of Land Management	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Colorado River Water Conservation District	Douglas Creek Conservation District	Elk Creek Ranch	Local Landowners	Meeker Sanitation District
Natural Resource Conservation Service	Rio Blanco County	Rio Blanco County Farm Bureau	Rio Blanco Stockgrowers Association	Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District	River's Edge West	Town of Meeker
Town of Rangely	Trout Unlimited	US Forest Service	US Geological Survey	West Slope Colorado Oil and Gas Assn.	White River Alliance	Yellow Jacket Water Conservancy District



**Natural Resource Tour:** Approximately 55 decision makers attended the natural resource tour in August 2021 including three State senators, one representative, the

