

White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts Natural Resources Conservation Service & Farm Service Agency

March 2013

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Sec/Trea: Wade Cox
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As a voice for you, the Rio Blanco County landowners, the Districts continue to be actively engaged in many public lands and natural resource issues. You will see a summary of the various issues below followed by a challenge to each of you.

U.S. Forest Service Water Grab – The USFS has been requiring ski resorts to convey their water rights to the U.S. Government as a condition of their permits. The ski industry filed suit to stop this water grab and the judge ruled that USFS had not followed the correct public process in making the decision to require transfer of these water rights. Therefore, the USFS is now in the process of drafting proposed rules for public comment.

Why should you be concerned about this issue? Based on our conversations with USFS Associate Deputy Chief, Jim Pena, we believe it will take an overwhelming outcry from the public to stop this water grab. Mr. Pena is committed to ensuring the USFS will require the transfer of water rights as a condition of the permitting process. He has also indicated that USFS will be expanding this requirement to other permit holders. In other words, any rancher with a USFS grazing permit or municipality that has a USFS water conveyance permit to get water to their town could be required to transfer any water right, that originates on the USFS, to the U.S. Government as a condition of the permit.

The District will be providing written comments on this issue and will keep you informed on when these comments are open so you can also comment on them.

America’s Great Outdoors Initiatives – “President Obama launched the America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda. AGO takes as its premise that lasting conservation solutions should come from the American people - that the protection of our natural heritage is a non-partisan objective that is shared by all Americans.

Instead of dictating policies, this initiative turns to communities for local, grassroots conservation initiatives. Instead of growing bureaucracy, it calls for reworking inefficient policies and making the federal government a better partner with states, tribes, and local communities.” <http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/index.cfm>

While the above language from the website for the AGO sounds like it is locally led, there is an example of how it is being implemented in our neighboring Moffat County where the BLM worked with a conservation group and purchased approximately 900 acres of deeded land along the river without the support from the Moffat County Commissioners.

Blueways Secretarial Order – According to the Secretarial Order, the purpose of the National Blueways System is to “provide a new national emphasis on the unique value and significance of a “headwaters to mouth” approach to river management and create a mechanism to encourage stakeholders to integrate their land and water stewardship efforts by adopting a watershed approach.” This causes the District Boards anxiety because the Secretarial Order also creates a committee which consists of seven federal agency representatives. This committee does nothing to indicate that the process is locally led.

In fact, the Wyoming Conservation Districts who are intimately involved with water issues were blindsided with a proposed Blueways designation on the Yellowstone watershed. At various times over the past three months, White River Conservation District Board Member, Gary Moyer, and White River & Douglas Creek CD, Exec. Director, Callie Hendrickson, have traveled to Washington D.C. to express our concerns with the Interior's overreach on this and many other issues. We are pleased that Interior Secretary, Sally Jewell's, has decided to "pause" the Blueways order while she learns more about the program.

Wild Horse and Burro Update – The BLM commissioned report by the National Academy of Science (NAS) has been released regarding their independent assessment of the Wild Horse and Burro Program. While we are still analyzing the 450 page report entitled "Using Science to Improve the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program: A Way Forward," we are working closely with local, state and national entities to encourage BLM to take common sense approach to fixing the challenges with the program. We encourage you to visit the National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management website at www.wildhorserange.org.

New statistics have been published on the BLM website indicating their on-the-range count, as of February 2013, is over 50,000 horses. BLM also has approximately 50,000 horses in holding facilities that are costing the taxpayers over \$44 million. Until Congress removes the language in the Department of Interior's appropriations language, BLM cannot sell these excess horses as required by the Wild Horse and Burro Act. We encourage you to let your Congressman and Senators know your wishes on this issue.

Sage Grouse – The Districts joined many counties, organizations, and the State in providing comments on the proposed listing of the Gunnison Sage Grouse endangered species listing. The U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service has now extended their timeframe for making the final decision because of the great quality and quantity of comments received providing solid science showing the species does not warrant listing.

The Districts joined the Counties and State in being actively engaged as BLM Cooperating Agencies regarding the Greater Sage Grouse. We anticipate the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being released by mid-August. We encourage you to provide comment on the EIS in addition to the Districts' comments. Please call the Districts' office to stay up to date on this issue and for information about how to provide your comments.

As you can see from the above examples, it is critical that we all stay well informed and provide comments on all these issues. While this is all very discouraging, it is important to remember that our government is still the best form of government in the world. As citizens living with the decisions made in Washington D.C., we must be vocal about our interests to balance out the advocacy groups that want to control all the public lands and uses but don't understand what is involved in multiple-use management. Decision makers will not understand it without you sharing your stories and concerns with them.

The Districts will keep you informed so that you can join us in providing input on these types of issues. It is important that you let your Congressmen and Senators as well as the agency staff know your opinions.

Legislative Contact Numbers:

Senator Udall - (202) 224-5941 or Northwest Colorado Office at (303) 650-7820
 Senator Bennet - (202) 224-5852 or Grand Jct. Office at (970) 241-6631
 Congressman Tipton - 202-225-4761 or Grand Jct. Office at (970) 241-2499



WRCD & DCCD board members and staff, UCEPC, and NRCS attended a tour with Encana at their TLQ location. We viewed their reclamation sites and pads and then discussed possibilities of working together in the future. Thanks to Steve Hale and Kathy Vertiz for hosting us!





FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Due to the recent resignation of Kristi Wilson, Program Technician in the Rio Blanco Farm Service Agency office, Rio Blanco County agricultural producers are being asked to conduct their routine Farm Service Agency (FSA) business at the Moffat County USDA Service Center, located at 145 Commerce Street in Craig, CO. This change in location of producer records and program files is effective immediately. We know Kristi wants to spend more time with her family and we all thank her for her services and wish her the best.

We will continue to provide service at the Rio Blanco County FSA Office, 351 7th Street in Meeker, but by appointment only. Producers will need to call (970) 824-3476 to schedule those appointments.

As the USDA Farm Service Agency budget has been significantly reduced and continues to be under pressure from the sequester action of January 2013, the Rio Blanco County FSA Committee and management believe the location of FSA employees and farm program records in the Craig office will provide the best opportunity to improve program delivery and customer service through a more efficient use of all available resources, including limited staff resources.

The Rio Blanco County FSA Committee will continue in their responsibility to oversee and direct FSA programs for Rio Blanco County producers through regular business meetings.

If you have questions or concerns about this change in operations and how it might impact you, don't hesitate to contact me; Valeen Jacobs, County Executive Director at (970) 824-3476.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we make this transition. Your satisfaction is important to us and this change is being made with providing quality of service to Rio Blanco producers foremost in our minds.

Sincerely, Valeen Jacobs, County Executive Director (970) 824-3476

AUGUST 2 – Extended Deadline to file 2013 Acreage Report. With the implementation of the MIDAS software and other computer issues we will use a register for producers who have contacted us and have pending mapping issues that must be resolved prior to signing their report.

SEPTEMBER 16 – Extended deadline to sign-up for the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP)

NOVEMBER 15 – Deadline to file 2014 Acreage Reports

NOVEMBER 15 – Deadline to file 2013 Hay production reports

WITHIN 15 DAYS – NAP participants must file a notice of loss within 15 days of when a loss becomes apparent. If you do not intend to harvest you must file a notice of loss prior to putting the crop to another use so that the acreage can be assessed by a loss adjuster.

Not harvesting hay is considered another use even if it is not grazed. **DECEMBER 1** – Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) sales Closing Date for hay and pasture.

COUNTY COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS: The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The COC nomination period runs from June 17, 2013 through Aug. 1, 2013. For more information contact your local FSA office.

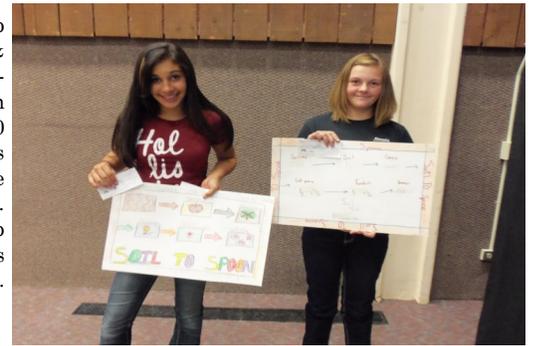
DCP SIGN-UP ENDS AUGUST 2ND: The DCP sign-up period is still open, but will end on Aug. 2, 2013.

ACREAGE CERTIFICATION: Acreage reports on crops covered by NAP are due in the county office by the earlier of November 15 or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported. There are no late file fees for 2013. Please report by July 15th. DCP participation also requires acreage reports by July 15th.



WRCD, DCCD, UCEPC, FSA, and NRCS participated in the July 4th parade where the theme was "Keeping Traditions Alive." Thanks to Gary Moyer for the Yanmar.

Samantha Lapp won 1st place & \$50 and Kaylalle Wyman won 2nd place & \$30 in the Douglas Creek 6th grade poster contest. Calvin Bishop won 3rd and is not pictured.



Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*)

Like all biennials a first year plant will only produce a rosette and the following spring will bolt forming a flowering stalk and die after flowering and producing seeds. An individual plant may produce 100 or more flowering heads. Musk thistle plants are also prolific seed producers with a single plant being able to produce up to 20,000 seeds. This plant is generally considered unpalatable to livestock, although some animals will eat flower heads from time to time. Musk thistle can be found in a variety of habitats but generally prefers disturbed areas. Flowers form in late May through June with seed setting about two weeks after flowering.

Prevent the infestation of Musk thistle by promoting and maintaining healthy and vigorous plant communities. Reduce instances of disturbance and prevent the formation of bare spots. The most important key in effective Musk thistle control is limiting seed production and dispersal.

Mechanical activities such as mowing or chopping that severs the root below the surface of the ground will kill the plant. This is most effective when the plants are in full bloom. Gather and burn or dispose of the cut or mowed parts so that seeds will not mature and spread after the plant has been cut down.



