

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

March 2013

Douglas Creek Board:

Pres: Scott Robertson
V Pres: Bill Hume
Sec/Trea: Wade Cox
Supv: Bob McKune & Anne Unie

White River Board:

Pres: Leonard Thompson
V Pres: Neil Brennan
Sec/Trea: Gary Moyer
Supv: JD Amick & Bill Lake

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White River Conservation District's Annual Meeting

The White River Conservation District held their Annual Meeting and Banquet on Saturday, January 18, 2013. The evening started with a presentation from Congressman Tipton. Followed by a dinner catered by Ma Famiglia's. The evening progressed into our presentation. Callie Hendrickson gave the District Update for 2012 and discussed our plans for 2013. Gary Moyer presented an award to District Employee, Matt Scott, for his excellence and workmanship. Bill Lake



introduced our 6th Grade poster winners. They were: 1st place to Abby Rosendahl, 2nd place to Krissie Luce, and 3rd place to Mikayla Cardile. Neil Brennan presented our 2013 Rancher of the Year Award to Dan and Cheryl Johnson of the Piceance Creek Ranch. They came to the Piceance Creek area in 1979 and the many different ways they are good stewards of the land, including: brush control, rotational grazing, weed spraying, and many more practices. Our Keynote speaker was John Stulp, who is the Special Policy Advisor to the Governor for the Water Interbasin Compact Committee and Cabinet Director for Governor John Hickenlooper. Mr Stulp recognized JD Amick for his service as a Colorado State Conservation Board and Mine Land Committee member which JD served on for 8 years. Mr. Stulp gave a discussion around the current water situation and what the future looks like for Colorado Water.



Above: Krissie Luce and Abby Rosendahl with their winning posters.



Top: Neil Brennan presents the Rancher of the Year to Cheryl and Dan Johnson from the Piceance Creek Ranch.

Right: Matt Scott accepts his award.

NACD Meeting in San Antonio, TX

The National Association of Conservation Districts held their Annual Meeting at the end of January in San Antonio, TX. District representatives from here that attended the meeting were: Callie Hendrickson, Gary Moyer and Bill Lake. Colorado took 4 resolutions that all passed and are now National Policy.



Left: Bill Lake gets an autograph from Timothy Egan, Author of The Worst of the Hard Times. Right: Gary Moyer with 2 other representatives from Colorado Association of Conservation Districts.



Kristi Wilson is back from maternity leave. The Meeker office will be open Tuesday through Thursday 8-4:30. If you need assistance on Monday or Friday, you can reach her in the Craig office at 970-824-3476.

FSA is migrating to a new computer system. All application processing is on hold until the migration is complete. The Meeker office is scheduled to be back online April 15th.

Wild Horse and Burro Update – There are now approximately 50,000 wild/feral horses in BLM holding facilities. The holding costs totaled \$43 million for FY-2012. With the continued increase in numbers and cost of feed, we can expect the figure to go up considerably for FY-2013. The holding facilities are 99% full with no more coming on line in the near future; therefore, BLM will not be gathering horses off the range except in emergencies. The BLM staff understand the effects of leaving excess horses on the range but they don't have an alternative until Congress removes language from BLM's appropriations that currently prevents them from selling horses without limitation. The other options include securing more contracts for holding facilities (requires even more \$\$) and initiating a large scale sterilization program on the range.

The Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board (WHBAB) met the first week of March and made the following recommendations. 1) Institute a spaying policy and move forward with actually implementing it ASAP, 2) Formation of a Range Health WHBAB subcommittee to focus on the range health concerns, 3) Review Herd Areas that have been "zeroed out" to determine if there have been any changes that would now make sense to manage non-reproducing herds on them.

The Wild Horse and Burro Program will be required to cut their budget by a minimum of 2.5%, but more like 5%, so it will be interesting to see when and where they make cuts.

Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)

Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) is a non-native deep-rooted perennial that spreads by seed and extensive, creeping roots. The roots can extend as deep as 30 feet into the soil and are extremely wide-spreading. The roots are brown and contain numerous pink buds that generally produce new shoots or roots. Leafy spurge can grow from 1 to 3 feet in height. The stems are smooth, pale green, and thickly clustered. Leaves are alternate, narrow, linear, and 1 to 4 inches long. The flowers are very small and yellowish-green. They are enclosed by very visible yellowish-green, heart-shaped bracts. The entire plant contains white, milky sap that exudes readily upon stem or leaf breakage. This sap can damage eyes and sensitive skin. Leafy spurge is one of the earliest plants to emerge in the spring. Flower clusters develop 1 to 2 weeks after stem emergence which is from mid-April to late May. One large leafy spurge plant can produce up to 130,000 seeds. Three-sided seed capsules explode when ripe and project the seeds up to 15 feet away from the parent plant.



Both sheep and goats can be effective grazers of leafy spurge. The flea beetles *Apthona nigriscutis*, *A. lacertosa*, and *A. cyparissiae*, are effective especially when combined with grazing and/or herbicides. For more information, contact the Palisade Insectary of the Colorado Department Of Agriculture, 970-464-7916.



New County Weed Director

Rio Blanco County Weed Department has a new County Weed Supervisor. Matt Scott began this position in February and has hit the ground running. Matt can be reached at: County Weed Department by calling (878-9670) or stopping by the office located at the Fairgrounds.

Sage Grouse Update

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released their proposed decision to list the Gunnison Sage Grouse as endangered even though all the partners have worked diligently to improve habitat and the numbers in the Gunnison Basin are much improved over the past 30 years. We will be providing comments on that proposed decision because of its potential effect on the listing of the Greater Sage Grouse that is within Rio Blanco County.
- District employees Callie Hendrickson and Stacey Gould continue to work with the BLM by providing comments in the Greater Sage Grouse listing. Both the White River and the Douglas Creek Conservation Districts are Cooperating Agencies with the BLM. The Greater Sage Grouse EIS will be released for comment this summer. The districts will continue to keep abreast and make comments on this issue.

Tire Top Giveaway

The Districts have accumulated a stack of the tire tops from their tanks. These can be used for anything from a mineral feeder to a field drag to a wind break. If anyone is interested in having some of these please call Stacey at the District office 970-878-5628 ext 101.

Range Monitoring Training Program

The Douglas Creek Conservation District is pleased to offer the Range Monitoring Training Program again this year in cooperation with the Colorado Cattlemen's Assoc. (CCA) BLM, and USFS. The program is offered to landowners within Rio Blanco County. The goal of the program is to assist landowners with starting their own monitoring program. When working with a permittee, we facilitate cooperation and coordination between the rancher and the BLM/USFS to determine the monitoring goals and where best to gather the data. The District's staff will offer hands on training and setting up photo points and transects on the property or permit in which the landowner/permittee can then continue to monitor over the years. The staff will also help them become familiar with the Colorado Resource Monitoring Initiative (CRMI) and enter the first year's data. Requirements include the landowner to participate in a CRMI Workshop, \$500 one-time fee to the Douglas Creek Conservation District, \$275 (\$375 non-members) annual enrolment fee to CCA for the database for a minimum of 3 years, and an agreement to continue monitoring your range for a minimum of three years.

