



**White River and Douglas Creek  
Conservation Districts'  
Annual Activities Update  
September 2020**



**Purpose:**

To make available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

**Mission:**

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

The two districts leveraged the Rio Blanco County's (County) 2020 financial support (\$100,000) to raise an additional \$372,000 to implement the below projects supporting the wise use of natural resources for Rio Blanco County landowners and citizens in 2020.

The County's support allows the Districts to provide Rio Blanco County citizens locally led services addressing the natural resource priorities of local constituents as noted below.

See the current and on-going activities of the Districts below.

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

- The County initiated an effort to address the excessive algae blooms in the White River in 2016. In 2017, the Districts accepted the responsibility, from the County, to coordinate, facilitate, and administer the White River Algae Study 2018 – 2021. The scientific study from USGS will be finalized in 2021.
- Successful grant applications by the Districts provided funding for the 2019 - 2021 Study with limited contributions from the local entities.
- The Districts coordinated volunteer efforts to assist USGS in determining appropriate timing in collecting data at the height of the algae bloom.
- Successful District grant applications provided an opportunity to expedite analysis and the final report of CPW benthic macroinvertebrates (bug data) study so that information can be used in the final USGS analysis and report.

**White River Integrated Water Initiative:**

- Acting upon the Colorado Water Plan and conversations about developing a Stream Management Plan for the White River by state and national non-governmental organizations, the District Boards offered to coordinate the White River Planning effort. Through input from the Districts' annual meetings (150 people), 30 individual interviews, and 4 public meetings (another 75 people), the local community requested the Districts lead this effort.
- With community support for the Districts leading this effort, the Districts formed a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) to help guide the process. The PAC is made up of 16 members, plus their respective alternates, representing agriculture, recreation, environment, industry, and local and State governments from across the County.
- The Districts received a grant to support this effort in 2019 & 2020 and we are in the process of applying for funding to support the continuation of the process and to initiate diversion structure and riparian health assessments.
- The PAC is in the process of developing a full plan of work for the future which will be vetted back through the community to verify community support.

**Land and Natural Resources Plan and Policies (LUP):**

- The Districts continually utilize the LUP policies developed by Rio Blanco County citizens.
  - The Districts provide multiple documents and frequent testimony to local, state, and national agencies each year supporting the LUP policies.
    - 2020 letters and testimony have included issues such as: instream flow water rights, water quality, protecting water rights (private property), removal of excess horses, timber harvesting, public lands grazing, and multiple use of public lands.
- The District participates in weekly BLM National Environmental Planning Act (NEPA) meetings providing a local government voice at the federal agency table during planning efforts, providing benefits to the local community.
- The Districts work with the BLM and permittees to find opportunities that benefit both parties and the natural resources.

**BLM Agreement:**

- The BLM financial assistance agreement
  - The Districts manage a range monitoring and weed control contract to determine the use of forage in Piceance East-Douglas Herd Management Area (HMA) which will help all better understand how to improve the range.
  - Additional funding in the agreement would be used to implement identified Coordinated Resource Management Plan projects discussed below.
- **Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP):**
  - The Districts have partnered with the Colorado Dept. of Ag to help develop these plans that provide opportunities to manage resources across land ownership boundaries. We expect to have five CRMPs completed by the end of 2020 and to begin implementing on-the-ground projects.
  - The Districts will continue to apply for grants that will help get conservation practices on the ground across the landscape to improve rangeland health and reduce uncontrolled fires. This benefits the livestock producers, wildlife, and the overall watershed health.

**District Conservation Technician (DCT):**

- Through grants, the Districts anticipate retaining the District Conservation Technician (DCT) in 2021. The DCT will be instrumental in the White River Integrated Water Initiative's diversion structure assessment work (noted above) benefiting all of Rio Blanco County. Additionally, this position is heavily involved in assisting landowners with the CRMP processes noted above, providing technical assistance to landowners, and providing outreach for the Districts and NRCS.

**Other Activities:**

- The Districts provide landowner services including a no-till drill, fusion machine, weed sprayer and broadcast seeder rentals along with tire tanks, polyacrylamide (PAM) ditch/pond sealer, and tree sales.
- The Districts provide the White River community representation at regional, state, and national levels:
  - District Executive Director serves as the Yampa-White-Green Basin Round Table's (BRT) House/Senate Appointment and is active in the Big River Committee as they develop a position statement on the State's Demand Management efforts.
  - District Executive Director serves as the alternate board member on Club 20.
- Frequent communications with various agriculture and conservation organizations and agencies to address policies impacting our community.
- Communicate with the Division Water Engineer regarding her request/orders to install headgates and measuring devices. Providing information and education to landowners/water right holders to help them remain in compliance with State requirements and protect their water rights.
- The District provides information and education through newsletters, local newspaper, and workshops such as the Water Law in a Nutshell class and a State Division of Water Resources website navigation demonstration by the local Water Commissioner. All of which are available on-line.

See the Districts' website at [www.whiterivercd.com](http://www.whiterivercd.com) for additional information.