

## Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service Employee Newsletter



# Colorado NRCS Targets Upfront, Quality Conservation Planning

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## Highlights

by

**Phyllis Ann Philipps**  
State Conservationist

Hello!

Below are just a few highlights:

**NRCS keeps going and going:** The business of conservation is in full force. Program contracting is coming to a close just as CRP planning is just beginning in some offices.

Our new July 1 deadline for Farm Bill program applications will hopefully provide everyone with more time to do the upfront quality conservation planning that will assist in our contracting efforts in FY2013.

**Targeted Conservation:** There were 48 targeted conservation proposals submitted for review and ranking. Two proposals were chosen from each watershed to move to the next step of marketing and obtaining landowner/operator applications. The projects were very diverse, focusing efforts on water quality, soil health, forest health, water quantity, riparian improvements, and wildlife habitat benefits. This was a resounding success and has generated interest from the local level which will continue to carry forward as we continue toward funding requests.

**Quality Reviews:** We have just completed two quality assurance reviews for NRCS Colorado as a State. We have had a civil rights and an operations review which looked into a variety of areas from procurement to programs.

In both reviews, Colorado received more commendable items than findings. The final documents will be shared with all employees so everyone will know where we excel and where we can do even better.

A group of folks from the National Emerging Leaders Development Team will be assisting us in revamping our current within state quality assurance process and will provide recommendations for implementation in FY2013.

**DC to DC:** We had a very successful “All DC Leadership Challenge” meeting which gave the opportunity for DCs throughout the state to network, share ideas, and offer recommendations for improving effectiveness. Leadership is now reviewing the recommendations and once the action plan is in place, it will be shared with all employees.

**Field Office of the Future:** In addition to leadership, there are eight District Conservationists who were selected to provide input into the Field Office of the Future exercise.

Joining leadership and representing the employees in their area are: John Lestina, Ron Riggenbach, Cindy Schleining, James Sperry, C.W. Scott, Dollie Gonzales, Deb Heeney, and Dale Woodbury.

We are working with the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts and the Colorado State Conservation Board members to identify the most effective and efficient ways to deliver services to our customers. We will keep everyone posted as we go through this process.

As we move forward into FY 2013, there may be additional challenges that we face with the many changes being instituted as a result of the efficiency

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and effectiveness teams in all areas of the agency. You can find out more about these teams at <https://my.nrcs.usda.gov>.

I want to thank everyone for their efforts in delivering quality conservation assistance and getting conservation on the ground. I especially applaud those of you who have taken on extra work to assist with initiatives on very short notice and with very short turn around times.

I'd like to recognize James Sperry and Wes Boyce for their work on the National Water Quality Initiative in particular. They were given less than 60 days to market, plan, and contract with producers. Jason Peel was also very helpful in providing some watershed inventory and evaluation information which assisted in these efforts.

The Working Lands For Wildlife Initiative is still underway and again under a very short turn around to produce conservation plans that will benefit the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

Todd Boldt is busy working on the fires along with John Andrews, who quietly but persistently steps up to the plate to help provide timely advice and assistance for the fire assessment and recovery.

I am beyond appreciative for all of you who continue to take another one for the team without complaining and who try to do your best under sometimes frustrating circumstances. All of these initiatives are invaluable in ensuring support for our conservation programs in light of the Farm Bill negotiations going on as we speak.

Have a great summer. Don't forget to have fun and enjoy this lovely weather.




**USDA Celebrates 150 Years in 2012!**

# One to Grow On



**“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”**

~Thomas A Edison

**“Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things.”**

~Peter Drucker

**“Success is what you attract by the person you become.”**

~Jim Rohn

**“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life's about creating yourself.”**

~George Bernard Shaw

**“An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie, for an excuse is a lie guarded.”**

~Pope John Paul I

**“Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.”**

~Will Rogers

**“We don't see the things the way they are. We see things the way WE are.”**

~Talmud

**“That some achieve great success, is proof to all that others can achieve it as well.”**

~Abraham Lincoln

**“Believe deep down in your heart that you're destined to do great things.”**

~Joe Paterno

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# Employee Spotlight

## Veterans Who Make A Difference: Calvin Melcher

by Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer



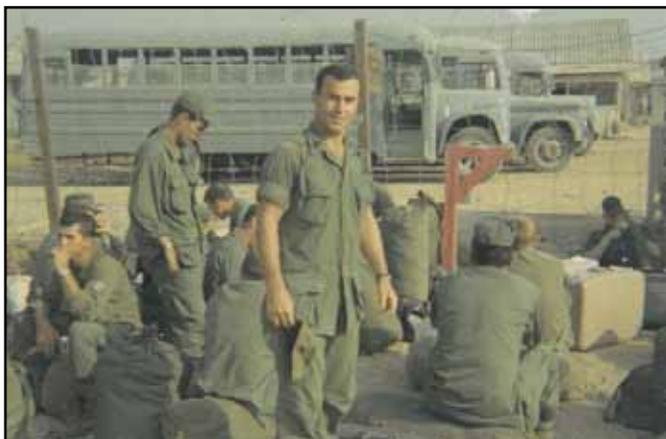
*“Not only did serving my Country provide me with experiences I would have never received anywhere else in life--from the travel to the life tools to meeting different people--it also provided one of my greatest sources of pride.”*

There is but one word that can adequately describe Calvin Melcher and that is Patriot. He is a man who loves his country and is proud to have served to protect it. Although drafted back in 1966, one would have to believe that if he wasn't, he would have enlisted.

*“I think every able bodied person should serve his country,”* Melcher states. *“I was, of course, a bit scared but was more than willing to answer the call when it came.”*

Melcher spent two years in the Armed Forces from 1966 to 1968 stationed in Ft. Hood, Texas and then serving in the Vietnam War. He was just 22 years old.

*“I could not have known at such a young age the history that was being made and the indelible impact the Army would have on my life,”* Melcher goes on to say. *“The sense of pride, tradition, love of country and my fellow man has been forever etched into my soul because of those two years.”*



Melcher is currently a Soil Conservation Technician in the Holly Field Office in Colorado. As a federal employee with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), one could say he has continued his stewardship and expression of his respect and love for this land by serving and working to conserve its precious natural resources.

*“Not only did serving my Country provide me with experiences I would have never received anywhere else in life, from the travel, to the life tools, to meeting different people, it also provided one of my greatest sources of pride,”* Melcher finally states. *“And, although several years have passed, we still, as a nation find ourselves needing people to step up and serve. I am proud to know and to have been one of those who answered the call and was willing to sacrifice for the freedom we all enjoy.”*

# Producers Get a Lesson in Range Monitoring



By Sarah Hanlon, Rangeland Management Specialist,  
Area 3

**S**pringfield NRCS and Baca County Conservation District recently hosted their sixth range monitoring course.

Nearly 40 people gathered on Tim Steffen's property east of Springfield on June 5, 2012. There were NRCS personnel and producers from at least four counties present.

The course taught producers how to utilize photo points, range cages, the grazing response index, and rangeland health. The ultimate goal was to help producers realize that the health of their rangeland is important and that it is directly tied to the health of their cow herd. Although the main topics were specific to monitoring techniques, the NRCS staff discussed various range management

topics to allow for more complete understanding.

Most producers attended the course to fulfill contractual obligations and others attended for personal education. Those who have attended multiple courses said that they learn something new every time.

In three years, over one hundred producers have attended the range monitoring course, led by Tim Steffens and Sarah Hanlon, both Rangeland Management Specialists in the Springfield Field Office.

Many other field offices in the area--Holly, Eads, Las Animas, Lamar, and Trinidad--have participated in these trainings as well as encouraged producers to attend.

## Soil Health Workshop Stimulates Local Producer Discussion

by Jim Cecil, Cope CD Board Member

**A** recently held Soil Health Workshop in Akron attracted 46 participants. The activities were sponsored by the Cope Soil Conservation District, the Washington County Conservation District, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The day was filled with information on how, when, and why to plant cover crops as well as how to implement grazing paddocks. Producers were encouraged to think outside of the box and look for alternative ways to conserve our natural resources.

Producer Darrell Oswald and Holistic Management Educator Josh Dukart traveled from North Dakota to share their expertise in using cover crops to promote soil health, reduce crop inputs, and keep the operation sustainable.

The speakers displayed a wide range of information, from the scientific make-up of soils to improving seeding rates and water and nutrient use.

Participants learned about warm and cool season cover crops and mixes that can be planted to maximize profitability and enhance soil quality. Local producers had the opportunity to discuss how cover crops might be introduced into their individual operations.



Ed Kilpatrick, Springfield NRCS, discusses rainfall simulator.

The group then gathered outdoors to view the Rainfall Simulator, demonstrated by NRCS Technicians Storm Casper and Ed Kilpatrick from Baca County. This demonstration used a sprinkler and five soil plots with different types of cover to show the rate of runoff and percolation. The demonstration also showed the impact of weather erosion on soils with different amounts of cover and tillage.

# National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association Meeting

by Cathy Dix  
Resource Conservationist, Area 4



On Thursday, May 24, the NRCS Alamosa Field Office and the National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association (NL-FRTA) co-hosted an informational outreach meeting for farmers and ranchers of the San Luis Valley.

Biologist Ruth Lewis gave a presentation on Conservation Easements programs. Resource Conservationist Patrick Naranjo and Soil Conservationist Andy Laca spoke about CSP, the purpose of the program and the application process.

Area Resource Conservationist for Programs Cathy Dix and District Conservationist Tracy Miller presented information about EQIP, specifically the Acequia program, Seasonal High Tunnels, Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, and the Organic Program.

Miller also touched on the definitions of our socially disadvantaged classifications and basic eligibility requirements for USDA programs. There were twelve farmers and ranchers in attendance.

Rudy Arredondo, the NLFRTA director and Regional Director Jaime Chavez both attended and spoke to the group about their work on the new Farm Bill and Chief Dave White's wish for them to promote a dialogue between the NLFRTA and NRCS.

Local Chapter Director Alfonso Abeyta thanked the local NRCS staff for their dedication and assistance to him and his family throughout the years.

## Sutherland Named as Technical Reviewer by ASABE

Dr. Lorenz Sutherland, Resource Conservationist (Programs), La Junta Area Office, has been named by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) as a technical reviewer for a special collection of refereed journal papers.

The collection of papers from the ASABE International Symposium

on Erosion and Landscape Evolution (ISELE) will be published in the Transactions of the ASABE.



**NRCS CELEBRATES**

# #6 "Bring Your Child to Work" Day

April 26 is not only a great chance for your child to see what you do when you're not at home, but it can also help start a conversation about his or her own future. This year, NRCS employees in Colorado got the opportunity to do just that with children in their family. From spending time in a Soil Survey Laboratory to measuring snow to simply helping out around the office, kids had the opportunity to explore the various careers of their mothers, fathers, and even grandparents. Our employees had these pictures to share!



Alan Stuebe, Alamosa Field Office, brought in his daughter to help him out in the Soil Survey Laboratory.



Michael Daskam brings his children (left to right) Pearl, 9; Royce, 7; and Evelyn, 6, to work with him to lend a hand at the Northeast Prowers Field Office.



Pictured on the left: Charlene and Ted Lucero, State Office, brought in their son, Antonio, to help out around the office.



Pictured on the right: Antonio Lucero helps out Marsha Sims, State Office, during Bring Your Child to Work Day.



Above: Tiffany Harvey, Meeker, brings her son, Reese, in to show him a thing or two about working for NRCS.



Jackson Mitchell, 13-year-old son of Betty Lawrence, Las Animas, shadowed his mother at work setting out range cages for the Las Animas Field Office.



Marta Villano enjoys having her grandson Chance help her out at the State Office during Bring Your Child to Work Day.

# Strikeforce

## Colorado Named as a USDA 2012 Strikeforce State

by Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced Colorado as one of its 2012 Strikeforce Initiative States.

The Strikeforce Initiative is designed to better serve “persistent poverty communities” and socially disadvantaged farmers through the coordination of activities among USDA agencies and the use of Community Based Organizations (CBO).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado has identified 35 Counties as high priority areas for which it will focus its efforts.

Strikeforce allows USDA to illustrate its commitment to improving access to USDA programs while enhancing the visibility and profitability of small farms and ranches, beginning farmers and ranchers, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. It also provides the opportunity to promote and assist in the development and sustainability of rural communities, recognizing that 90 percent of all persistently impoverished communities are in rural areas.

The initiative will work to provide technical expertise about USDA’s programs, regulations,

and criteria in addition to notify communities of new and updated programs to bring about quality applications for enrollment into technical and financial assistance programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA), both managed and administered by the NRCS.

NRCS’s Strikeforce priority areas include: Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Archuleta, Baca, Bent, Boulder, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Delta, Dolores, Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Fremont, Garfield, Huerfano, La Plata, Larimer, Las Animas, Logan, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Saquache, Washington, Weld, and Yuma counties.

For additional information about the USDA StrikeForce Initiative, please contact Omelia Madison, NRCS Outreach Coordinator at [Omelia.Madison@co.usda.gov](mailto:Omelia.Madison@co.usda.gov) or 720-544-2826.



### 5th Grade Tree Presentations to YCCD Schools

Julie Elliott, Wray NRCS Field Office, spoke to 5th graders about all the amazing things made from tree products (toothbrushes, makeup, medicines and ice cream).

They also learned how to pick good planting sites for trees and proper care after planting.

The Yuma County Conservation District provided each student in the Liberty, Idalia and Wray schools with either a Colorado Blue Spruce or a Rocky Mountain Juniper.



*Colorado NRCS would like to wish you and your family a Happy and Safe 4th of July!*

# Green Team, FGC, FEC, EO 13514?



by Marianna Young, Resource Conservationist (Tech)  
Alamosa Area Office, Area 4

“Green Team, FGC, FEC, EO 13514? What’s all that gibberish,” you ask. Well, let me sort it out for you!

The Green Team is a group of enthusiastic Colorado NRCS employees who have agreed to help the state meet the requirements of the Federal Green Challenge (FGC) and the Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC). An email was sent to all CO NRCS employees in May soliciting volunteers.



The Federal Green Challenge is a national initiative under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Sustainable Materials Management program, challenging EPA and other Federal agencies throughout the country to lead by example in reducing the Federal Government’s environmental impact.

The Federal Electronics Challenge is a partnership program that encourages Federal facilities and agencies to purchase greener electronics, reduce impacts of electronics during use, and manage used electronics in an environmentally safe way.

EO 13514 is an Executive Order signed by President Barack Obama on October 5, 2009, that has two parts. The part that will involve the Green Team is the first section: establishes greenhouse (GHG) emission reductions as an overarching, integrating

performance metric for all Federal agencies.

If you’ve read this far, you’re probably still asking, “what’s all that gibberish?”

Late in 2011, State Conservationist Phyllis Philipps readily accepted an offer by EPA to join the Federal Green Challenge. Colorado NRCS is the first state to join the FGC. Being a member of FGC means that we were asked to choose two target areas to focus on, out of six, over the course of one or more years. We selected Waste and Electronics (the other target areas are Transportation, Water, Energy, and Purchasing).

CO NRCS will need to show measurable progress in each of the two target areas, and the Green Team will help us determine our baseline, and then measure and achieve our progress.



It’s my hope that over the next several months you’ll start seeing and hearing about green actions that the Green Team is carrying out. You can be comforted by the thought that you will be helping CO NRCS reduce the size and impact of its environmental footprint. With a name like Natural Resources Conservation Service, it’s the least we can do!



# Jefferson Conservation District and Partners Monitor Recovery of Lower North Fork Fire Burn Area

by Brian Devine, Conservation District Technician and the Jefferson Conservation District Staff, Area 2

On March 26th, 2012, extremely high winds in the range of 50 to 80 miles per hour descended on Colorado's Front Range, following Colorado's driest month of March in recorded history. No fewer than seventeen small fires were reported during this extreme combination of fire conditions. One such fire was a prescribed fire in a masticated treatment area on Denver Water property located uphill from the Lower North Fork of the South Platte River.

This fire had been started four days earlier by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) as part of their management of Denver Water properties in the area. Though snow was still covering the ground when CSFS began preparing for ignition, conditions had worsened significantly within the following week, not a single recordable millimeter of precipitation fell in Denver during the whole month of March, and as CSFS crews monitored the prescribed fire in the following days, conditions were ripe for the fire to escape containment.

On Monday, the 26th of March, the Lower North Fork Fire did just that. Extreme wind conditions forced the fire to the northeast, where a series of small drainages separated the growing burn from a collection of several dozen homes sitting atop a high ridge along Kuehster Road (pronounced "Kester").



Lower North Fork Fire quickly spreads as winds of up to 80 miles per hour force the fire to escape containment.



A prescribed fire burns uphill from the Lower North Fork of the South Platte River.

Firefighters called in additional resources, but by 5:25 pm the fire had exploded in size, racing up the dry, steep ridge at tremendous speed. The fire grew from approximately 500 acres to around 3500 in less than an hour. Firefighters requested evacuations at 4:41 pm, and some residents received reverse 911 calls early enough to escape the inferno racing up the ridge. Three residents of Kuehster Road, Ann Appel and her neighbors Sam and Linda Lucas, didn't get out in time. They became the first civilian casualties of a wildland fire in Colorado in decades. Overall, 4,140 acres of forest burned in the Lower North Fork Fire before it was officially contained on April 2nd.

In addition to the human cost of the fire, three fatalities and 26 homes lost, the burn zone sits menacingly above Strontia Springs Reservoir, the final stop on the journey of drinking water from the Continental Divide to the treatment plants of Denver and Aurora.

After major fires in 1996 and 2002, the highly erosive soils of the region slid downhill in vast quantities, filling reservoirs with sediment and debris, and reducing the holding capacity of Cheesman Reservoir by one-third. Worried about a repeat in 2012, the Jefferson Conservation District and Denver Water recruited partners to survey the burn area, assess the risk of a catastrophic sedimentation event, and plan mitigation strategies.

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As soon as we entered the burn area, we noticed there were many areas within the fire perimeter that hadn't burned, and some burned areas already had green shoots of grass returning.



The area's recovery was greatly helped by two snowfalls: that of February, before the fire, which had just melted before ignition and provided a great deal of moisture to the impacted soils, and a roughly one-foot snowfall the night the fire was declared 100% contained.



Due to the amount of moisture before and after the fire, many grassroot structures survived and quickly produced new growth. The same is generally true of the burn area's aspen, which have returned in force.

We've returned to the burn area several times since the fire was extinguished, and each time we have been amazed by the speed of the recovery of grasses and aspens: the former are now knee high, and the latter up to a foot tall.

As a result of the quick and impressive post-fire recovery, it appears that our fears of mass sedimentation into our reservoirs will not be realized, certainly not on the scale of 1996 and 2002. As a consequence, our focus in aiding the recovery process has shifted. Along with the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), a local nonprofit with a vast record of post-fire rehabilitation treatments since 2002, the Conservation District is focusing on hazard tree removal for the safety of affected landowners and invasive species control.

Many burn areas in this region are quickly colonized by invasive weeds. The District is looking forward to collaborating with CUSP, Denver Water, the local landowners, and other interested partners to maximize the restorative benefits of the Lower North Fork Fire.

# NRCS Teaches Conservation at Aurora Water Festival

By Donna Goodsell, Area Administrative Coordinator  
Greeley Area Office, Area 2

**O**n May 18, 2012, the Byers Field Office, which included staff Megan Weisensee, Earth Team Volunteer; Sammie Molinaro, District Conservationist; and Jenny Folley, District Manager-West Arapahoe Conservation District, participated in the annual Aurora Water Festival held in Aurora, Colorado.

Byers, in cooperation with the Jefferson Conservation District and their riparian trailer, provided education to over one hundred 5th-grade children located in the Aurora School District.

The children participated in hands-on conservation by conducting stream bank erosion control and learned about what happens in flood situations. Sammie taught the children about the current drought situation and how to conserve water by using Xeriscaping. He also showed them some low-watering plants in Aurora that will help the current drought situation around suburban homes.

Most of the kids have never been on a farm or ranch and have limited education on soil, water, animals, and plants, so Sammie talked to them



Fifth-grade students in the Aurora Public Schools District get hands-on training on the riparian trailer at a recent water festival in Aurora.

about the roles and responsibilities of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Conservation Districts in working with landowners on addressing their resource concerns.

Megan Weisensee, Earth Team Volunteer, currently lives and works on the farm and ranch so she spoke with the children about her experiences with rural living. The kids had fun learning all about farming, ranching, and conservation through this outreach event.

## Agriculture Community Gives Back

by Sharie Prow, District Manager, Area 1

**B**ookcliff, Mount Sopris, and South Side Conservation Districts and the NRCS held their annual landowner/partner appreciation picnic on May 30, 2012. There were 99 landowners, partners, and elected officials in attendance.

This annual event is held to recognize the people we work with and all the conservation accomplishments that we have achieved.

For the last several years, Marie George, Rifle Senior Nutrition Program, has donated homemade hamburger buns with the help of her staff. The Districts "passed the can" and we were able to present Marie with over \$220 for the Senior Lunch Program.

The Districts, landowners, and partners are proud to be able to give back to our community. A big thank you to Marie and her staff!



The District presented Marie George and her staff with monies to fund the Senior Lunch Program.

# NRCS Employees Learn About Prescribed Burns and Job Approval Authority

By Josh Saunders, Rangeland Management Specialist, Area 2

Did you know that prescribed burning is the only non-engineering practice that requires job approval authority? Did you know that you have to have job approval authority just to talk to a producer about prescribed burning and put the practice in a conservation plan?

In March, sixteen employees from all over Colorado met in Holyoke to understand Prescribed Burning application as a conservation practice. Some participants were new to this type of management practice, while others have had past fire training. The training instructors for the class were Pat Shaver, Rangeland Management Specialist, Portland, OR; Rachel Murph, State Rangeland Management Specialist, Lakewood, CO; Jonas Feinstein, State Forester, Lakewood, CO; Christine Taliga, State Plant Materials Specialist, Lakewood, CO; and Doug Whisenhunt, State Prescribed Burn Specialist, North Platte, NE.

The training provided the equivalent to the policy requirement of the NEDC 16 hour course to achieve a Class I job approval authority, which delegates authority for NRCS employees to put Prescribed Burning in a conservation plan. Two of the three training days centered on the history of fire in the United States, national policy, physical characteristics of fire, fire behavior, burn plan development, equipment, and a heavy dose of fire precaution and safety.

Area 2 Multi-county Range Specialist Josh Saunders had been working with a Phillips County producer for a year on developing a prescribed burn plan on Conservation Reserve Program acres for mid-contract management. With three burn plans in place and approved, the class was able to go out on the last day of the training and gain experience of fire behavior by conducting three prescribed burns.



Front Row Left to Right: Dan Nosal, Jim Armendariz, Tim Steffens, Nathan Schmitz, Rachel Murph, Pat Shaver, Doug Whisenhunt, Lars Santana, Haxtun Fire Department Volunteer. Back Row Left to Right: Shaan Bliss, Nick Trainor, Jonas Feinstein, Josh Saunders, Steve Jaouen, Tom Nadgwick, Jerry Miller. Not Shown: Christine Taliga

The weather was perfect with wind speed, relative humidity, and temperature all fitting the required prescription. Everyone attending had multiple opportunities to work with different fire tools, experience fire behavior, and become familiar with igniting back, head, flank, and strip fires. Debriefing meetings followed each burn to review what happened and to organize for the next burn. It was an excellent opportunity to get involved, ask questions, and learn together as a team.

Prescribed burning is just one of the tools that can be used to address resource concerns such as degraded plant communities, degraded wildlife habitat, and rangeland health concerns.

Future training will provide additional learning opportunities that will address how and when to use prescribed burning in planning, fire ecology, and how to design a burn plan.



# Haxtun CD Hosts its Sixth Annual Conservation Camp

By Joe Crowder, Soil Conservationist, Area 2

**T**wenty-three students in fourth through eighth grades attended the free two-day Conservation Camp at the Holyoke Event Center, Holyoke, CO, on June 4 and 5, according to Denise Swanson, Haxtun Conservation District (CD) Manager. Paleontology, archeology, and soil health were the main themes at this event.

Jerry Miller, Farm Bill Biologist, opened the camp with the legacy and principles of conservationist Aldo Leopold. Each student received a journal and a Sand County Almanac. Camp activities and observations were recorded by the students throughout the camp.

Dr. Richard Stucky, Curator of Paleocology and Evolution at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Denver, showed a slide show of the excavation of a 1.2 million year old Mastodon discovered last year at a gravel pit in Phillips County. This set the stage for a field trip to the site. In 2011, a team of paleontologists recovered, casted, and moved the specimens to the Denver museum. At the site, the group was shown where the specimens were located and discussed how they may have lived, died, and were eventually discovered.

Camper Drew Stewart of Holyoke located a large bone-like specimen partially exposed by the recent rain. Dr. Stucky became very interested and

excited about the discovery saying that a team would return for a closer look and possible excavation. He said Drew would be listed in the log book giving him credit for the discovery.

At the end of the tour, Renee Weis, Haxtun CD board member, gave each person a “bagged and tagged” fossil specimen collected from the site during the excavation.

Earth Team Volunteer Mary Cave presented a fabulous display of Indian artifacts that she had collected over many years. She presented each student with a piece of local history to take home that included its purpose, when, and where it was found.

Holyoke’s NRCS Soil Technician Tim Becker and Soil Conservationist Joe Crowder gave a presentation on soil health and the benefits of no-till farming. The demonstration compared improved water infiltration and less water runoff of no-till soil to conventional tilled fields from the improved soil structure. NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Josh Saunders discussed the water cycle, soil types, and showed examples of sheet and rill erosion caused by water runoff.

Since its beginning in 2007, over 135 youths have attended the camp, which is held the first full week of June.



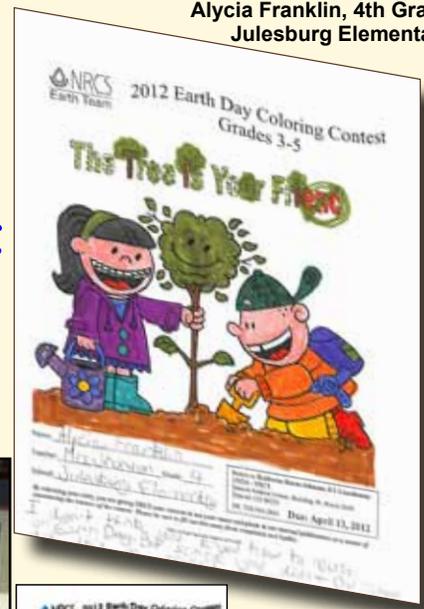
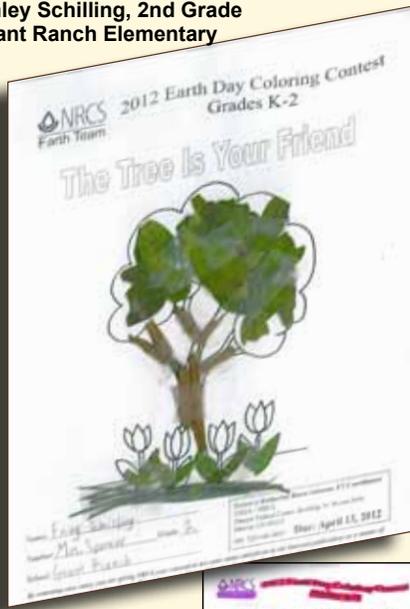
**Photo 1:** Farm Bill Biologist, Jerry Miller, left, and Rangeland Specialist, Josh Saunders, review the water cycle and its effect on the environment. **Photo 2:** Holyoke NRCS technician Tim Becker demonstrates the infiltration rates of no-till soil and conventional tilled soil. **Photo 3:** Earth Team volunteer Mary Cave shows an stone axe, one of many artifacts she displayed for the students. **Photo 4:** Dr. Richard Stucky, Denver Natural History and Science Museum Curator, tells about excavating Sandy, the 1.2 million year-old Masodon discovered in 2011.

Denver Area Overall Winner  
Finley Schilling, 2nd Grade  
Grant Ranch Elementary

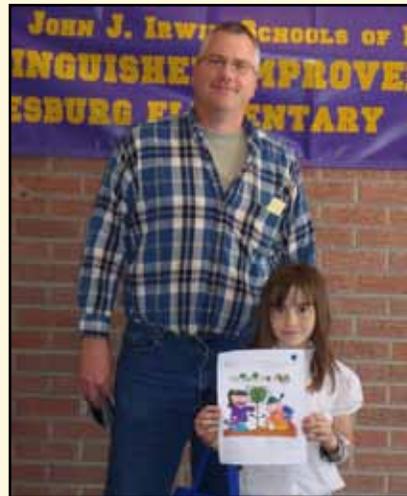
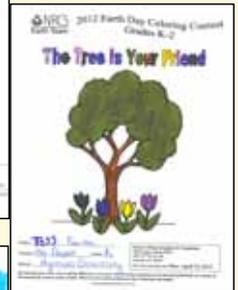
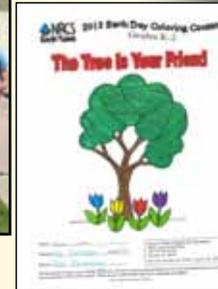
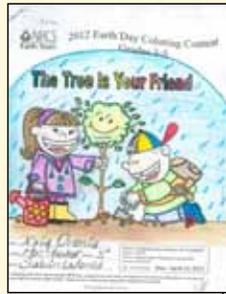
Area 2 Overall Winner  
Alycia Franklin, 4th Grade  
Julesburg Elementary



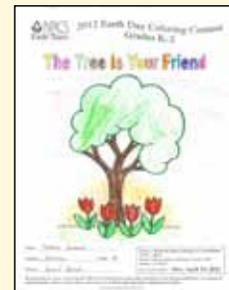
# 2012 Earth Day Coloring Contest Winners! Congratulations!



First and Second Grade Stratton Elementary School Students participate in the NRCS Earth Team Coloring Contest



NRCS District Conservationist Daniel Palic presents Alycia Franklin, 4th grader, with a prize for winning the Coloring Contest in Area 2.



Right: Amber Freouf, Earth Team Coordinator, presents Yvonne Sanchez, 1st grader, Washington School, with a prize for being the grand prize winner in Area 3's Coloring Contest.



Left: Amber Freouf, Earth Team Coordinator, presents Lupita Martinez, 2nd grader, Wiley School, with a prize for being the second place prize winner in Area 3's Coloring Contest.

# Ute Mountain Ute Youth Explore NRCS Soil Tunnel and Career Opportunities

by Christina Barnes, Area Administrative Coordinator, Area 4

**A**llen Maez, NRCS Tribal Liaison to Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Cortez Field Office, was asked to present an activity on soil to tribal youth, ages 7-12, during their spring break in April. He saw this as the perfect opportunity to utilize the Soil Tunnel/Tent for presenting the importance of soil to the kids and show its relationship to cultural plants traditionally used by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

During the presentation, the students received information on biology and soil science during the presentation. The students offered their knowledge of the underground critters, plant relationships, air, and water in the soil.

Throughout the presentation, students found they knew more than they expected (from earthworms to spiders, gophers, snakes, and larger animals). However, the smaller critters had to be explained more in detail and some of the kids were not too happy to learn that some were so small that they could have hundreds in their hand when scooping up some fertile samples. Garden plants were discussed to help students understand how plants and other organisms interact.

During his discussion on cultural plants, Allen had samples of several plants and many of the students recognized and understood uses for plants such as willow, cottonwood, juniper, pinion pine, cattail, sumac, sagebrush, and wild onion. Allen passed around a basket he made from willow for the students to see.



Ute Mountain Ute Tribe youth experience the NRCS Soil Tent during their spring break.

When Allen asked the students their thoughts on the Soil Tent, they said that it was a fun place and an educational event.

In conjunction with the Soil Tunnel event, The Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Departments held a career fair that was specific to the older students and provided details about the different career opportunities within the tribal government/community.

Representatives from Tribal Departments included Emergency Services (fire and rescue), Information Technology (IT), Recreation, Environment, Farm & Ranch Enterprise, and Education.

Allen explained that "Agricultural Careers" is more than crops and livestock and how knowledge of the natural resources could be valuable to young people when coming back to make improvements to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal community.

# NRCS SCEP Student Receives Science Fair Award

by Christina Barnes, Area Administrative Coordinator, Alamosa Area Office



**N**akayla Lestina, a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student at the Cortez Field Office, placed second in the DaVinci Award at the 54th Annual San Juan Basin Regional Science Fair in March at the La Plata County Fairgrounds in Durango.

Nakayla presented her project, “Biological Control of Diffuse Knapweed: Analyzing Two Natural Insect Enemies.” The Colorado Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) awarded Nakayla first place

in recognition of her outstanding science project that exemplified the objectives of the SWCS, including the conservation of soil, water, air, and all forms of plant and animal life that mankind may use to enjoy.

The Four Corners Women Geosciences of Durango, which is a woman-owned small business and supports women in science and entrepreneurship, awarded Nakayla a college scholarship.

The Alpine Bank in partnership with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Internship Program presented the STEM Gem Award to Nakayla in honor of her outstanding project demonstration and application of STEM skills in the workplace.

Nakayla then advanced to the 54th Annual Colorado State Science Fair held in Fort Collins in April where she placed second in the Senior Division of Animal Sciences and was selected to attend the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Pittsburg, PA in May.

## Wray Hosts its 21st Annual Water Festival



In the photo above, students learn about raising fish at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

On April 20, the Yuma County Conservation District and Wray NRCS Field Office hosted 340 fourth through sixth grade students from seven area schools for the 21st Annual Water Fest.

Staff members from the Wray, Holyoke, Yuma, Sterling, and Burlington Field Offices, the Wray Fish Hatchery, and representatives from several private and public organizations gave presentations about all things water plus energy and electrical safety.

## Lauren Mitchell Joins the NRCS Team



When Lauren Mitchell learned that she would be working with NRCS, she thought it was an exciting opportunity.

*“Not only do I get to work but my work is helping the environment, which is a big passion of mine,”* said Lauren.

Lauren has joined the Brighton Field Office as a Soil Conservation Technician.

She was born and raised in Atlanta and states that she had no idea how precious water can truly be, especially in agriculture.

Lauren said that she took many courses about water in college but admits that working out in the field is a whole different experience.

*“The NRCS saw that I had the education and they were willing to teach me how to apply my studies,”* said Lauren. *“Now, I see the bigger picture and I feel a part of the NRCS team.”*

Lauren credits much of what she is learning and the confidence she is gaining designing pipelines to her mentors Bernice Dyer, Cindy Einspahr, and Daniel Moreno.

Working one-on-one with a farmer and knowing that her daily work makes a difference in the world encourages Lauren to do her best with a high level of enthusiasm.

*“I am proud that NRCS chose me and I look forward to the work ahead of me.”*

# Students 'Make the Grade' in Wetland Delineations Course

by Katherine Burse-Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist  
State Office



From June 4 through June 7, the Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service held a wetland delineation class at the State Office for employees interested in learning more about making wetland delineations/determinations. Approximately ten students enrolled in the course that was taught by Terri Sage, State Biologist, BJ Shoup, Acting State Soil Scientist, Christine Taliga, Plant Materials Specialist, and John Andrews, State Conservation Engineer.

The course consisted of classroom instruction on the first three afternoons, followed by field trips on the three mornings. During the field trips, the class was able to apply what was learned in the classroom. The purpose of the course was to teach employees how to delineate wetlands by looking for indicators of hydric soils, wetland hydrology, and hydrophytic vegetation.

If all three wetland indicators were present in an area, the students would then establish and mark the boundary of the wetland with flagging. After that, the students would map the wetland boundary using a GPS.

At the end of the training course, the students took a final exam. A score of 80 percent or higher was required to pass the class.



Left: Brandon Miller, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, Steamboat Springs Field Office; Nathan Schmitz, Biologist, Colorado Springs Field Office; and Rachel Murph, State Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS State Office, evaluate notes prior to applying what was learned in the classroom.

Right: Greg Stoebner, Wildlife Biologist, Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife Program; Kelly Corman, Range Ecologist, Lamar Field Office; and Tom Burke, Soil Scientist, Alamosa MLRA Soil Survey Office, looks for indicators during the wetland field tour.



Left: Ruth Lewis, Wildlife Biologist, Alamosa Field Office; Marty Moses, Private Lands Biologist, Durango Field Office; BJ Shoup, Instructor and Acting State Soil Scientist; and Brandon Sanders, Rangeland Management Specialist, Meeker Field Office, examine wetland indicators in the soil.

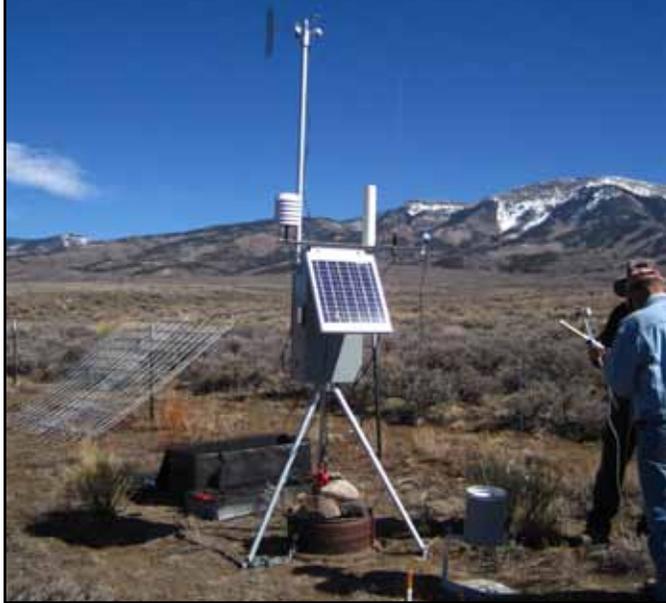


Right: Terri Sage, right, Instructor and NRCS State Biologist explains field assignment to (left to right) Corman, Stoebner, and Burke as Christine Taliga, Instructor and NRCS Plant Materials Specialist, stands by.



# Lek Monitoring at Poncho Pass Goes High Tech

by Jenny Nehring, Earth Team Volunteer  
Area 4



**P**oncha Pass in Saguache County, Colorado has one of the smallest populations of Gunnison Sage-grouse in the state. Because the population is so small, the lek season is the only time of year to reliably see Gunnison Sage-grouse at Poncha Pass. Earth Team Volunteers and biologists count the birds on the Poncha Pass lek at least once a week from March to May, making it one of the most monitored leks in the state.

This spring, lek monitoring at Poncha Pass got high tech. By coordinating efforts and equipment from the NRCS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, lek activity was monitored with a remote camera as well as acoustic monitoring equipment.

A BLM Fire Program Remote Automatic Weather System (RAWS) was temporarily installed near the lek to record



Vehicle Monitoring System on BLM roads near Poncha Pass.

hourly weather data. The RAWS data will allow us to compare weather variables to lek display activity. In addition, with help from the USGS, five vehicle monitoring systems were

put in place on the BLM roads near the lek to classify and monitor public use on roads in the area. Recreational vehicles do impact grouse activities, so monitoring the vehicle usage in this area is important.

All of the monitoring equipment was set to operate automatically on timers and was concealed and placed near the lek to minimize disturbance to grouse. Both the camera technology and the acoustic recordings confirmed grouse displaying when typical visual lek count methods failed to detect grouse.

Initial analysis of the acoustic recordings shows that grouse are displaying for longer time periods each day as well as later into the season than assumed. For example, grouse were still displaying at 3:00 a.m. on Memorial Day at Poncha Pass! Lek activity is typically assumed to be from March 15 to May 15 and these dates correspond to seasonal closures to protect grouse on leks.

The acoustic recordings also show how noise pollution from cars, trucks, and airplanes impacts the detection of the low frequency bubbles and pops produced by displaying grouse. Information gathered from these remote monitoring methods gives us a better understanding of the lek season. A better understanding of grouse display activity on leks is important for biologists and land managers when making management decisions for protection of sage-grouse.



Above: Acoustic Sound monitoring equipment with microphone.



Above: Remote camera on tripod at Poncha Pass Gunnison Sage-grouse lek.

# Happy Retirement

## Steve Park

*"I had a great and rewarding career. I will miss walking the land and exploring the soils, landforms, geology, and vegetation; and working with great people. I plan on enjoying the simpler things in life: more time with family and friends, golf, hunting, fishing, and playing with the dogs."*



## Thomas Hahn

*"Once I retired on June 1, 2012, I have worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service for exactly 36 years after reporting to duty for my first soil survey job in St. Anthony, Idaho, in 1976. This is where I learned how to correlate soils to range sites."*



### Chronology of Steve Park's NRCS Career

- Earned a BS with Honors in Soil Science in 1980 from New Mexico State University and worked as a COOP Student (SCEP) for the BLM in Socorro, NM from 1978-1980.
- Upon graduation, worked as a BLM Soil-Range Correlator on the Soil Vegetation Inventory Monitoring team and as a Resource Soil Scientist for the White Sands Resource Area. Began as a soil scientist with the Soil Conservation Service in Breckenridge, TX in 1983.
- Worked a mapping detail to Alaska in 1985 on the Kantisha Soil Survey Area best described as an "R-Rated National Geographic Adventure," involving bears, mosquitoes, helicopters, guns, and wild, crazy characters!
- Transferred to Grants, NM in 1987, where he worked on the three million acre McKinley County Area Soil Survey.
- NRCS's soils program was reorganized into MLRA Soil Survey Regions, and in 1995 he began as a Soil Data Quality Specialist for the new MO6. This marked the end of his "mapping" career. All in all, he mapped about 1.2 million acres on 8 different soil survey areas in 3 different states where he provided technical support and quality assurance to soil survey staffs in western Colorado, eastern Utah, and southwestern Wyoming.
- January 2005, he became the MLRA Team Leader for MO6 and the State Soil Scientist for Colorado. The best part of this job was working with the Colorado NRCS leadership team and the field offices, external customers, and the NCSS partners with the BLM, CSU, and the USFS. involved with developing and writing much of the current guidance in our national standards that are used today.

*(see photos of Park and Hahn on page 20)*

### Chronology of Tom Hahn's NRCS Career

- Graduated from University of Wisconsin with a BS in Soil Science in 1976.
- Began work for the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and assigned to the SCS soil survey office for Fremont County, ID. Hired by SCS as a soil scientist, which offered him more job security and potential for advancement.
- Became a Soil Survey Project Leader in Mountain Home, ID in 1979 to complete the soil survey of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. This was an excellent opportunity for him to learn the job from initial soil survey field review to publication in a short time.
- In 1983, he moved to a Project Leader position in Lewiston, ID and gained experience mapping forestland. He considers himself fortunate during this time to be able to take two surveys through final correlation to published reports.
- In 1994, he became Assistant State Soil Scientist in the Michagen state office in East Lansing. His duties were the primary soil correlator for the state and also manuscript specialist.
- In late 1995, the national soil survey reorganization came about; and he moved to Lakewood, CO to begin his Soil Data Quality Specialist duties, initially providing guidance mainly to survey crews in Colorado and in Santa Fe, NM
- In the mid to late 2000s, he worked with surveys in Wyoming, then shifted to surveys in Utah in 2010. In 2006, he became the "Senior Regional Soil Scientist" in Lakewood. This position was the first of its kind in the country, and within a few years all MOs had established this position on their staffs.



Tom Hahn, left, and Steve Park, middle, receive an award from Randy Randall during their duel retirement ceremony.

# To Say Goodbye!!

## Steve Park and Tom Hahn Farwell Ceremony...



### With Co-Workers...



### With Family...



### With Friends...

# Assistance Requested for Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park

by Allen Maez, NRCS Tribal Liaison to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Area 4



Cliff Dwelling

Allen Maez, NRCS Tribal Liaison to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, was asked by the Tribal Park Director to inspect water erosion issues at Porcupine House and Tree House.

Porcupine House is one of the important Ancient Pueblo ruins that are within the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park. Tribal Park is just next door to Mesa Verde National Park and has many ruins. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe offers tours to the public to these ruins and two of the major ancient cliff dwellings are experiencing damage due to rain runoff from the rocky mesa tops above.

Veronica Cuthair, Director of the Tribal Park (also a Ute Mountain Ute Tribal member) asked Allen Maez



Rocky Channel to Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park

to visit Porcupine House and Tree House ruins with her to see the damages occurring, as evidenced in the photos.

Allen was asked to give recommendations to Tribal Park for ruin protection without taking away from the cultural scene. Obviously this has never happened before. The ancient Pueblo citizens probably had similar occurrences to which to call their resource specialists on. There is evidence that structures were built to prevent such damage to the sites that have lost their ability to do the necessary job.

The Tribal Park crews will need to try and re-create these structures to reduce the rain runoff from the immediate rocky mesa. Allen looked for other possible runoff reduction practices. Just beyond the rocky outcrops in the natural vegetation, the trees had been thinned and the oak brush had been masticated (according to Ms. Cuthair) by the BIA for wildfire control. Those areas were probably utilizing more of the rain and keeping some from running off. This had occurred in the last two years. Allen had visited these sites in 2010 and had not witnessed such damage at the time.

Natural re-vegetation will reduce some effect but a seeding of grasses and forbs will be beneficial as well. Allen will provide a list of native species that will be good to plant and provide to Tribal Park. Also the

*continued on page 22*

*Tribal Park, continued from page 21*

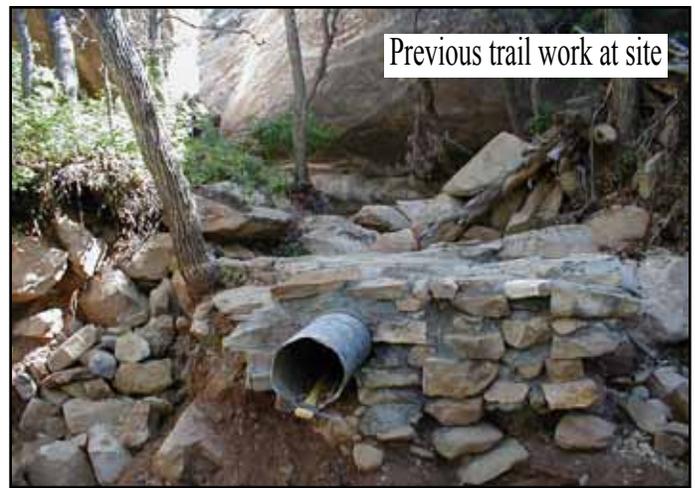
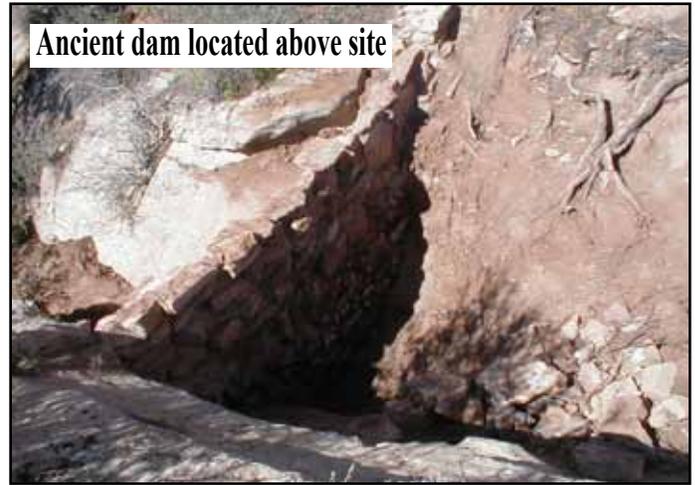
existing drainages to the sites were surveyed by Allen and additional locations for water spreading were suggested. These would be done to blend into the natural settings as much as possible.

The major damage at Porcupine House is the trail into the cliff dwelling that prevents visitors from fully viewing the site. The Tribal Park has tried to keep the sites in the same condition as discovered by visitors in the 1800s.

The concerns of Tree House are similar to that of Porcupine House; however, the runoff is directly to the walls of the cliff dwelling. As a result, the construction structures to direct the flow is a priority.

Veronica Cuthair, Tribal Park Director, and Allen are scheduled to meet on the site in the coming months to get crews to work on and further investigate the site. Plantings of native species were highly interesting to Veronica. Therefore, a potential partner will be a local supplier of native species grown and cultivated here will be a potential partner.

Hopefully these practices will reduce damages and these sites will exist for future visitors. If anyone is interested in Archeology of the Southwest, these sites are a "must" on the bucket list.



## Pueblo Service Center Educates and Celebrates

by Elizabeth Fortman  
Soil Conservationist, Area 3



Rich Rhoades, District Conservationist, demonstrates the river trailer to 4th graders.

to six groups of 4th graders during the annual Children's Water Festival held at Colorado State University-Pueblo on May 10.

Approximately 125 children learned about where our

**R**ich Rhoades, District Conservationist, Beth Fortman, Soil Conservationist, and Carl Beman (WAE), all from the Pueblo Service Center, demonstrated with the river trailer

water in the Arkansas River comes from, why water is so important to us, and how to take care of the stream banks.

The Pueblo Service Center also observed Cinco de Mayo with a Mexican flair potluck luncheon. The celebration ended with Ashley Ross' (CSCB) son breaking open a piñata filled with goodies. The Center also celebrated USDA's 150th Anniversary.



A youth breaks piñata during Cinco de Mayo Celebration.

Bent Conservation District and NRCS Field Office present:

# Kids Conservation Camp

by Cindy Schleinig,  
District Conservationist, Area 3



**Top row left to right:** Campers observe blue heron nesting colony; NRCS Lee Neve, Soil Scientist, and Victoria Turnipseed-Henderson, with campers; Campers feed an orphan calf. **Bottom row, left to right:** Lee Neve, teaches soils; Miles Martin, District Technician, demonstrates surveying equipment; and campers experience life at Bent's Fork.

**T**wenty youth, ages 10-13, experienced conservation in their local community as they participated in Kids Conservation Camp hosted by Bent Conservation District and the Las Animas Field Office.

The focus, of the three-day camp, is to provide a hands-on learning experience for youth to experience conservation and explore local natural resources with activities provided by local resource professionals.

At John Martin Reservoir, Corps of Engineers operations manager, Karen Downey, discussed the purpose of the reservoir, water safety tips and provided an activity demonstrating the amount of water in an acre-foot. Campers were able to see fossils of dinosaur tracks, dust bowl photos and learn how the dust bowl affected the local area. A tour inside the dam allowed campers to see the mechanics of the dam and equipment used to release water.

Karney Ranch was the site for the second day of conservation camp activities. Partner wildlife biologist Don Kahl showed campers a Blue Heron nesting colony. Pat and Robin Karney discussed how they implement conservation every day in their operation, the importance of ranching and the importance of caring for the land for future generations. Campers were

able to bottle feed an orphan calf. NRCS technician Nate Cranson explained how snow pack in the mountains provides irrigation water for crops grown on the plains. Soil Scientist Lee Neve demonstrated how to take a soil sample, and each camper was able to texture samples to feel the difference of the different components of the soil.

Conservation District Technician Miles Martin demonstrated surveying equipment and explained how it is used in conservation planning and implementation. Students were able to find fossils and identify grass species. Colorado CSU Extension facilitated a GPS activity where students were able to locate waypoints. Steve Keefer, with Colorado DOW, took the campers on a nature walk where they were observed many wildlife species along Gageby Creek.

The third and final day of camp included a tour of Bent's Fort led by National Parks staff in period costume and a scavenger hunt around the Fort's nature trail where campers identified several plants and found information concerning the history and purpose of Bent's Fort. The day was completed with a tour of the fish hatchery where campers were able to feed and hold a fish and learn the process involved in rearing fish for release in local lakes.

# STUDENTS POUR INTO GRAND JUNCTION'S WATER FESTIVAL

## FESTIVAL

by Lloyd "Butch" Reed  
Soil Conservationist, Area 1

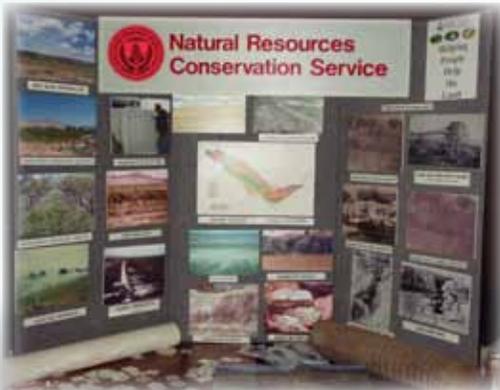


'Mud Pie' Demonstration



'River Trailer' Demonstration

Grand Junction celebrated its 19th annual water festival, which was held at Colorado Mesa University on May 14th & 15th. Approximately 1,900 fifth-grade students from all over the Grand Valley, DeBeque, and Delta areas enjoyed two days of water education and fun activities. There were 50 presenters, both indoors and outdoors, providing hands-on demonstrations and exhibitions. Each class rotated from one presentation to the next every 25 minutes for a total of 8 rotations. Sponsored by the Mesa Conservation District, this year's event certainly made a splash!



NRCS Conservation Display



Lenny Lang teaches kids all about snow at the Grand Junction Water Festival.



Here's looking at the future of water resources engineers.



Grand Valley Salinity Conservation Display

# Colorado Kids Get Outdoors with NRCS and Celebrate National Get Outdoors Day

by Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer

**H**undreds of Colorado families and kids of all ages gathered at Denver's City Park on Saturday, June 9th to celebrate and participate in the National Get Outdoors Day.

2012 marked the fifth annual free community event to inspire kids and families to get outside, get active, and get healthy.

Denver held one of about 50 National Get Outdoors Day events in the country and was selected among eight sites as a signature event recognizing its exceptional ability to introduce thousands to the great outdoors. Colorado's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was on hand encouraging participants to be water wise and know their farmer so they may know their food.

*"Of the hundreds of people who visited our booth at Get Outdoors Colorado, only two people actually knew about the Natural Resources Conservation Service,"* said Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver. *"When we told them about the connection to the dirty thirties and the dust bowl and how we used to be the Soil Conservation Service, a light went on and they made a connection. This reinforces the importance of ensuring that our urban folks understand how our agency provides assistance which impacts the natural resources enjoyed and used by all Coloradoans. Helping them to understand the significant contribution agriculture plays not only in the production of food and fiber, but in addressing resource concerns such as*

*water quality, open space, wildlife habitat, and forest health will help them understand the tie of our agency to the quality of life of all Americans, not just the private landowners we typically deal with."*



Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer, educates a kid about conservation during National Get Outdoors Day.

National Get Outdoors Day in Denver



Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver (left), and volunteer, Chanda, teach kids about conservation at the recent National Get Outdoors Day event.

featured nearly 100 exhibitors offering free activities for families and kids of all ages that highlight programs and services offered by the dozens of partner organizations of Get Outdoors Colorado. Everyone involved with this event is committed to eliminating the barriers to exploring the outdoors, getting more active, and engaging in healthy lifestyles.

*"The booth was also a good opportunity for us to share some information on how even urbanites can contribute to conservation of water resources by being water wise,"* Philipps went on to say. *"Using water carefully, especially this year when our water supply forecast is much lower than normal, will be critical as we go through the summer season. It was impressive taking children through the water cyclorama and finding that many of them (even the little ones) knew the term evaporation as well as the importance of shutting off the water while brushing their teeth. People also appeared very interested in backyard conservation and what they can do to create habitat on their property which can provide nesting, shelter, and food for wildlife and pollinators. NRCS in Colorado will continue to increase our presence in urban communities and share the message about how we help people help the land."*

For additional information about the NRCS and its conservation education programs, please contact Petra Barnes Walker, State Public Information Officer, Denver, at [petra.barneswalker@co.usda.gov](mailto:petra.barneswalker@co.usda.gov) or by visiting our website at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).



# NRCS Employees Get Back to Basic Soils for Conservation Planning

by Katherine Burse-Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist, State Office

On June 6, 2012, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soils Department conducted a two-day classroom training and a one-day field training on basic soils for conservation planning.

B.J. Shoup, Acting State Soil Scientist and Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Leader, kicked off the training by providing some background history and understanding of the NRCS Soil Survey Program. Approximately 30 attendees from Area 2 participated in the training that was held at Morgan Community College in Ft. Morgan, CO.

The goal of the program was to provide a comprehensive foundation of soil resource information to NRCS field office employees to increase awareness, content, and quality of soil resource information in conservation planning, technical assistance, and customer support.

The training was geared toward district conservationists, soil conservationists, soil conservation technicians, resource conservationists, rangeland management specialists, biologists, agricultural engineers, civil engineering technicians, and other employees who have a need for soil training and who have less than five years experience.

The field portion of the tour was conducted by Andrew Steinhart, Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Leader, Ft. Morgan, and he taught the class from a soil pit, providing soils information and allowing students to examine the soil profile.

In addition to the training in Ft. Morgan, several classes are being held throughout Colorado in locations such as Durango, Grand Junction, Pagosa Springs, and La Junta.

For more information about this course, please contact Shoup at [william.shoup@co.usda.gov](mailto:william.shoup@co.usda.gov).



Students look at a soil profile in the pit during the field training of the three-day Basic Soils for Conservation Planning course.



B.J. Shoup, Acting State Soil Scientist, instructs the Basic Soils for Conservation Planning course.



Andy Steinhart, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, Fort Morgan, instructs the Basic Soils for Conservation Planning course from the soil pit during field day.

# 2012 Trinidad Water Festival

by Levi Montoya, District Conservationist, Area 3



**O**n May 17, 2012, the Culebra Range Community Coalition hosted the First Annual Trinidad Water Festival, which was themed "Aqua es Vida" - Water is Life.

Tom Perry, President of the Culebra Range Community Coalition, organized the Trinidad Water Festival with the help of numerous sponsorships and volunteers. The purpose of the festival was to teach students the importance of water while, at the same time, having fun.

The Water Festival was held at Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC) and targeted all students in grades K-12 Trinidad, Colorado. Approximately 1,500 students participated in the event and 34 presenters demonstrated the importance of water conservation and water uses.

The Aqua es Vida Water Festival started off with a welcome from local dignitaries that included the TSJC President, Las Animas County Commissioners, City of Trinidad Council, Mayor of Trinidad, School Superintendents, and many more. Then the kids led everyone into singing the National Anthem.

The Trinidad NRCS Field Office staff and the Spanish Peaks-Purgatorie River Conservation District (CD) employees participated with two different displays that included the Riparian River Trailer located outdoors and a District/Field Office display located in a classroom. The Spanish Peaks-Purgatorie River CD also sponsored the water festival.

Staff rotated between the outdoor and classroom displays. The topics included the importance of

natural resources, specifically water, within a watershed and how they relate to and affect each other and humans within the watershed in which they live. Classes were typically divided by grade but some classes were combined and the staff found themselves discussing the same topics to both 3rd and 8th graders at the same time, which made the discussions interesting and fun.

Other presenters included the Raptor Education Foundation, CU-Science Discover Program, Mad Science of Colorado, Norwest Corp., Alliance for Climate Education, TMS MESA Team, Learn More About Climate Movie Theatre, CSU Extension Service, CoCoRaHS-Community Collaborative Rain-Hail-Snow, CU-Contemporary Dance Works, Q'inti Calli-Traditional Healing Arts & Educations, Aztec Dancers, The Water Station, History Colorado, Finding Water-History and Science of Dowsing, Water Wizards, Water Related Arts and Poetry Room, Pioneer Natural Resources, Trinidad High School Science Class, River Watch Colorado, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, US Army Corps of Engineers, Trout Unlimited-Purgatorie River Anglers, Earth Mountain Education Farm, CRCC/PVF/BNI CFS, The Nature Conservancy, City of Trinidad Water Department and Fire Department, Las Animas County Wildland Fire Fighters, Water Buffalo, Trinidad State Park, and Colorado Water 2012.

The future goal of the festival is to make this an annual multi-day event to include all schools located in Las Animas County, the general public, and additional stakeholders. Overall the festival was an excellent activity for students and the feedback was positive.

# Northwestern Colorado Wildlife Partnership Tour



Chris Yarbrough (RMEF SGI-SWAT) and Noah Bates (RMBO SGI-SWAT) looking over SGI solar system



On May 22-23 a tour of wildlife

partnership projects was organized to demonstrate

successful projects between partner agencies and organizations, such as the NRCS, USFWS-Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Three Sage Grouse Initiative projects in Moffat County, a Native Cutthroat Trout habitat restoration project in Rio Blanco County, and a Wetland/Riparian restoration project in Routt County were showcased as part of the tour.



Chris Yarbrough (RMEF SGI-SWAT) checking out the wildlife escape ramp



Reviewing Sage Grouse Initiative project map with landowner and ranch manager



Project partners with landowner and ranch manager overlooking Sage Grouse Initiative project



Yarbrough (RMEF SGI-SWAT), Noah Bates (RMBO SGI-SWAT), and Bill Noonan (USFWS-PFW) looking over SGI solar system



High tinsel wildlife friendly fence



Bob Timberman, US Fish and Wildlife Service-Partnership for Wildlife, Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist; and Brandon Miller, NRCS Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, going over plan map



Project partners looking over Native Cutthroat Trout project in Rio Blanco County

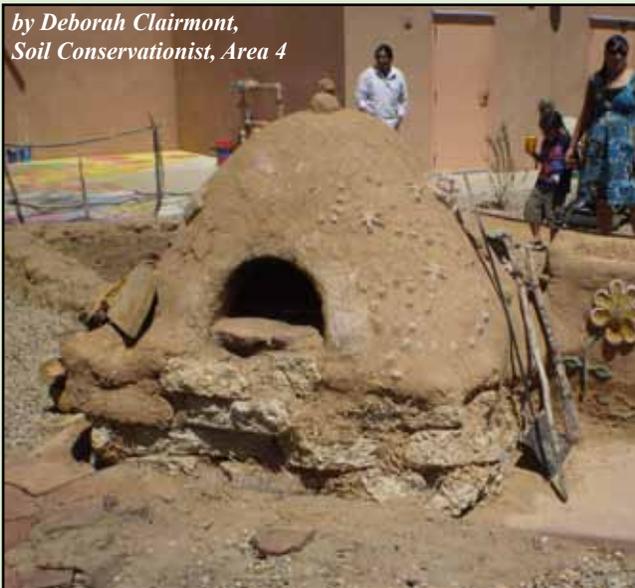


Bob Timberman (USFWS-PFW) and Phyllis looking over a log vane structure used for the Native Cutthroat Trout habitat restoration project in Rio Blanco County



# The Art of Change: Climate Justice and Indigenous Solutions

by Deborah Clairmont,  
Soil Conservationist, Area 4



IAIA conference participants examine a traditional style cob oven and bench.

Tribal college students from the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), the College of Contemporary Native Arts, and the Land Grant Institution, discussed and explored solutions to climate change through topics like ‘Culture and Stories’, ‘Creative Communications’, ‘Skills and Technology,’ and ‘Tools for Change.’

Featured Keynote Speaker and farmer Winona LaDuke, Program Director of Honor the Earth and Founder of White Earth Land Recovery Project, and presenters Grandmother Flordemayo, Council Member of International Indigenous Thirteen Grandmothers, and Tom Goldtooth, Director of Indigenous Environmental Network, explained their views on climate change, how it affects the world, and solutions on how to help promote sustainable agriculture.

Jonah Hill, a member of the Rabbit/Tobacco Clan from Kykotsmovi, Arizona, a Board Member of the Arizona Ethno-Botanical Research Association, and a member of the Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture Group taught one of several workshops entitled “Cob Building.”

Participants learned how to use a mixture of sand, clay, and straw as fundamental ancient techniques in building livable adobe type structures, homes, and

art. Jonah demonstrated this by mixing the correct portions of soil, water, and straw. The participants were able to build a bench on the IAIA campus and see the benefits of using natural materials.

Another notable speaker was David S. Melton, President/CEO of Sacred Power Corporation, Albuquerque, NM. David shared his success with creating energy efficient and environmentally friendly Housing and Urban Development housing, which reduces energy, uses solar and other recycled materials, and reduces the environmental footprint.

Rose B. Simpson, from the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribe in New Mexico, is on the Board of Directors of Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute. She is also a working artist with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Ceramics from the Rhode Island School of Design 2011. In her workshop, she expressed ‘The Conscious Creative,’ which explained how our choices in the creative process include science through inspiration and how it affects all of nature and connects us to our spiritual culture and traditions.

There were many highlights of the IAIA conference, one being the Bon Appetit food service. It focused on a Sustainable Future through the usage of healthy food choices and featured a regular ‘Low Carbon Diet’ menu for students. Another highlight is this school’s efforts in recycling, not only with the students’ art but with every aspect of the college. Thomas M. Antonio, Ph. D., IAIA Science Coordinator, is currently working with the NRCS in New Mexico on this project to help educate students on the science of soil health.

Finally the main highlight was the students’ display of Recycled Art which expressed their views on climate change, bringing a visual expression of how important our Mother Earth is.

The IAIA students and conference participants demonstrated how this school operates to engage the perspectives of indigenous people to create new trails and establishes new frontiers that support New Mexico and its people as a part of its Land-Grant function.

# Arbor Day a 'Big Hit' with 4th Graders in Sedgwick County



Farm Bill Biologist Jerry Miller with 4th grade Julesburg Elementary Students.

*By Daniel Palic, District Conservationist, Area 2*

Colorado's state Arbor Day was celebrated on April 20th. Jerry Miller, Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever, Colorado Game and Parks, and NRCS presented the program to 4th grade students at Julesburg and Platte Valley Elementary.

The students learned the economic, social, and environmental benefits of trees. At the end of the presentation students received Certificate and a Colorado Blue Spruce of their own to

plant and care for. They also received a mixed bag of produce specifically from trees.

*"The project was made possible because the Sedgwick County Conservation District covered the cost of the trees, there was no cost to the students, teachers, school or taxpayer," said Daniel Palic, NRCS District Conservationist, Holyoke, CO. "It's a wonderful way to show support for the community, education and the environment."*

Stephanie Dickmeyer and Farm Bill Biologist Jerry Miller with 4th grade Platte Valley Elementary Students.



# Senator Bennet Meets with Agricultural Producers in Trinidad

by Levi Montoya, District Conservationist, Area 3

**S**enator Michael F. Bennet, United States Senator for Colorado, and three of his aides attended a Town Hall Meeting held at the Trinidad Service Center on Friday, April 13, 2012.

The meeting was specifically called for discussion on the topics of the 2008 Farm Bill and the new upcoming 2013 Farm Bill. There were approximately 20 agricultural producers from Huerfano and Las Animas counties in attendance who represented ranching and farming production. These producers are currently receiving or have received technical and/or financial assistance from NRCS or the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

There were also representatives from the FSA-Las Animas County Committee, the FSA-Huerfano County Committee, the Spanish Peaks/Purgatorie River Conservation District, the Branson/Trinchera Conservation District, Colorado Cattlemen's Association, and the Colorado Farm Bureau. USDA employees that attended by request included Berni Barela, FSA County Executive Director; Anthony Arnold, District Conservationist, Walsenburg Field Office; and Levi Montoya, District Conservationist, Trinidad Field Office.

The meeting began with Berni Barela welcoming Senator Bennet to Trinidad. Senator Bennet thanked the producers and then opened up with discussion on the Farm Bill and any issues or concerns that the group had.



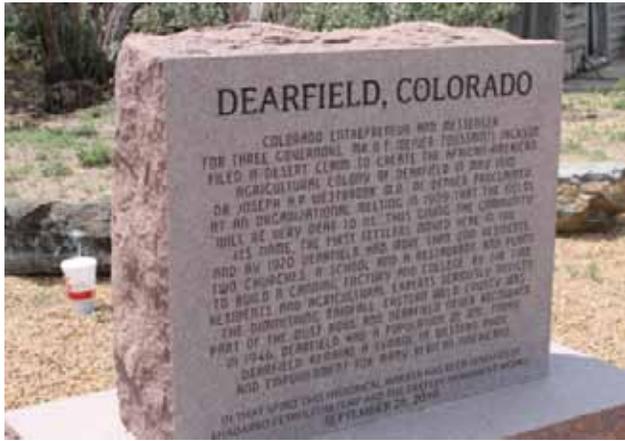
Senator Michael Bennet talks to agricultural producers on topics such as the Farm Bill.

Some of the topics discussed included:

- Current drought conditions and amount of wind erosion occurring on native rangeland, what federal programs are available, and how to get the word out to producers.
- Current spending of the Federal government and budget cuts affecting USDA programs that directly affect agricultural producers.
- Staff reduction and administration cuts in both the NRCS and FSA offices.
- Current NRCS and FSA programs that are used in getting conservation on the ground and sustaining agriculture products and services at the local level.
- Invasive woody species such as Sal Cedar needs to be addressed locally with financial assistance through NRCS, state grants, and other funding opportunities.

# Cultural Resources Management (CRM) Workshop Tour to Dearfield, Colorado

by Katherine Burse-Johnson  
Public Affairs Specialist



Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees are required to take cultural resources training to learn about federal historic preservation laws and NRCS policies and procedures regarding cultural resources, including archaeological sites, historic buildings and structures, and traditional cultural places and properties.

A portion of this training includes visits to archaeological and historic sites to help employees learn to appreciate our state's historic sites and properties. Recently, approximately 15 employees signed up to take the training that was presented by Marsha Sims, NRCS State Archeologist and Social Science Coordinator.

The training was held from May 15-17 in Fort Morgan, CO. During one of the two planned field trips, the group had the opportunity to visit Dearfield, CO, a small town located in Weld County, to learn about its history and tour its historic buildings and structures.

Dearfield is a Colorado Registered Historic Landmark and an abandoned town where a majority of blacks settled back in the early 1900s. It sits just 30 miles east of Greeley and has a monument that is constructed next to one of the remaining buildings and contains information about the history of the site.

Two instructors from the University of Northern Colorado gave the participants a guided tour of Dearfield. Upon completion of the tour, NRCS Geologist Al Albin spoke with the group about the geology of the area.



# CSU Veterans Connect with NRCS



by Todd Boldt, District Conservationist  
Ft. Collins Field Office, Area 2

John Fusaro, Range Conservationist, Andy Piszkin, Soil Conservation Technician, and Todd Boldt, District Conservationist, all from the Fort Collins Field Office attended the Veterans Connect career fair at Colorado State University (CSU) on April 24, 2012.

John Fusaro initiated local NRCS involvement when he dropped off some NRCS information at the veterans support group at CSU. A follow-up phone call by CSU put the Fort Collins Field Office on the path to attending the event. CSU has over 750 veterans attending school with quite a few working to attain degrees in Natural Resources or Agricultural majors.

Ft. Collins Field Office staff shared information on “Who We Are and What We Do,” which described agency conservation efforts, the types of careers available, and tips for applying for jobs online.

All NRCS information was copied to a disk and handed to each interested veteran as they stopped by the booth. The field office is also organizing a 2012 summer field day for CSU veterans/students. The purpose of the day will be to introduce the veterans to NRCS conservation planning methods, resource inventory techniques and engineering survey and design principles.

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# TECHNO TIPS

## **NEW!** State and Area Office VTC Meeting Technology

**Attend interactive statewide meetings and training from our NRCS State and Area offices.**

Video Teleconferencing (VTC) is a communication technology that allows users at two or more different locations to interact by creating a face-to-face meeting environment. VTC systems transmit audio, video, and data streams during the session.

The NRCS State and Area offices have adopted this new technology, known as Cisco TelePresence systems. Also called Tandberg systems, VTC systems and meetings incorporate video cameras with audio and the ability to share presentations via your computer.

This typically involves communication between three or more users who are in at least two locations, rather than one-on-one communication, and it often includes multiple people at each location.

When using video conferencing, participants can see and hear each other in real time or close to it, allowing natural face-to-face conversations and visual elements that are not possible with voice-only communications technology.



Illustration from Tandberg C20 guide ([www.tandberg.com](http://www.tandberg.com))

Interactive meetings using VTC focus attention on the connection and person that is currently presenting and speaking, switching the primary view between offices to follow the flow of the discussion. The systems are fairly easy to learn and are being used for a variety of meetings and presentations by both managers and specialist groups.

The obvious advantage to this new technology is it allows meetings or conferences to be held without the need for all of the participants to travel to a single location, so it saves time and money.

Meetings can be organized fairly quickly if the systems and rooms they are housed in are available. It is an effective and efficient way to reach a larger audience for information and discussion.

VTC systems also exist in other USDA agency offices, such as the U.S. Forest Service. The Colorado NRCS Technology Team is investigating agreements to cooperatively share these resources to reach even more of our office locations around the state with this meeting capability.

To learn more about VTC systems or to schedule a meeting, please contact your State and/or Area Administrative Coordinators.

# Have You Seen This Bird?



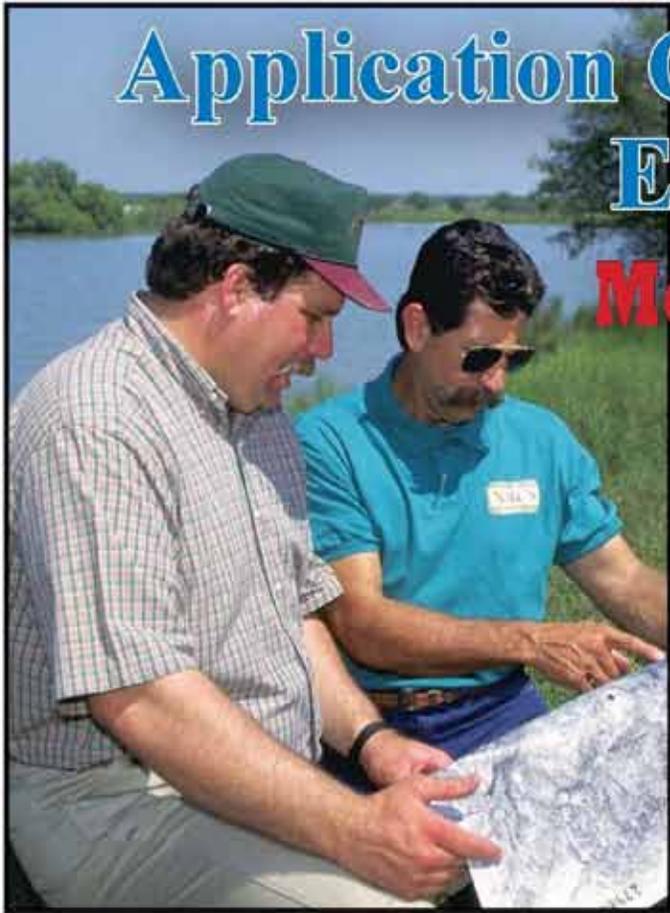
## Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

- Small, sparrow-sized bird
- Stands about 5.75 inches in total length
- Weighs about 0.4 ounces
- Has a greenish-brown back, a white throat, and an olive breast with two white-wing bars
- Can be identified through a distinct "fitz-bew" song
- Neotropical migrant songbird that winters in southern Mexico, Central America, and northern South America and breeds in North America
- Arrives here early May to early June; heads south from late August-September
- Has been on the endangered species list since 1995

For more information on how to improve the southwestern willow flycatcher habitat, please contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service agency.



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# Application Cutoff Date for EQIP Signup is: **Monday, July 2, 2012**

## Need Help Managing Your Natural Resources?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is now accepting applications for fiscal year 2013 funding in its **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**.

Producers! Don't miss your opportunity to participate in this program! **Sign up TODAY!**

- \* Easy to apply \*
- \* Countless benefits \*
- \* Trained staff \*



Visit your local NRCS office today to become fully "EQIPed!"

For more information on EQIP visit [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov)

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