



# Upper Arkansas River Watershed

Resources at work from October 1, 2010 - September 30, 2011

**The Upper Arkansas River Watershed totals 10,025,500 acres.**

It includes all and/or parts of Chaffee, Costilla, Custer, Elbert, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Lake, Las Animas, Lincoln, Park, Pueblo, and Teller Counties.

NRCS natural resource specialists are staffed at the Canon City, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Salida, Silver Cliff, Trinidad, and Walsenburg USDA Field Service Centers, as well as at the San Miguel and Teller/WoodlandPark Conservation District Offices to assist residents.

**NRCS Vision**  
Productive Lands -  
Healthy Environment

**NRCS Mission**  
Helping People  
Help the Land

[www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov)

## The Colorado Watershed Approach

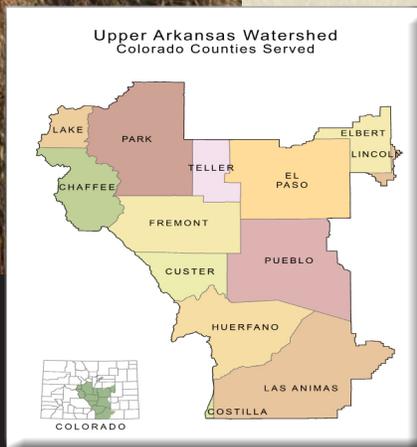
Instead of the traditional statewide approach in addressing priority resource issues like soil erosion, water quality, grazing lands, wildlife, and animal waste, NRCS looks to Colorado's ten watersheds to identify their particular local resource needs and priorities.

Watershed work groups meet annually to determine which natural resource concerns are most prevalent in their communities.

In turn, Colorado NRCS focuses its resources on addressing those concerns. Colorado's local conservation districts provide leadership in this effort to foster increased decision making at the local level.

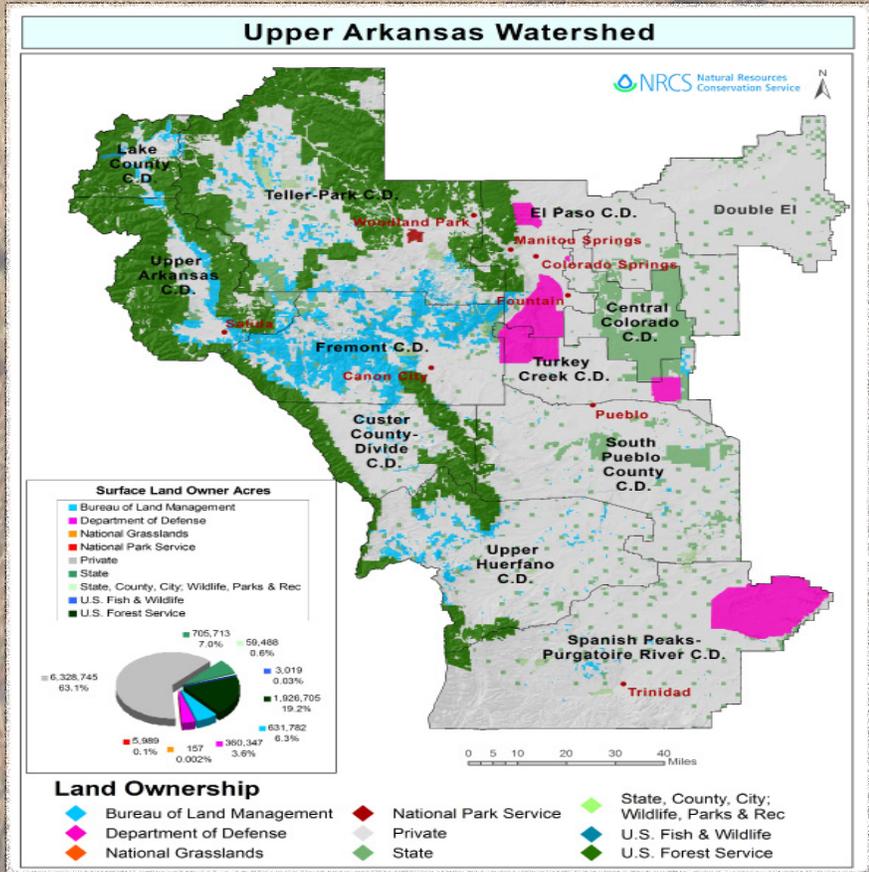
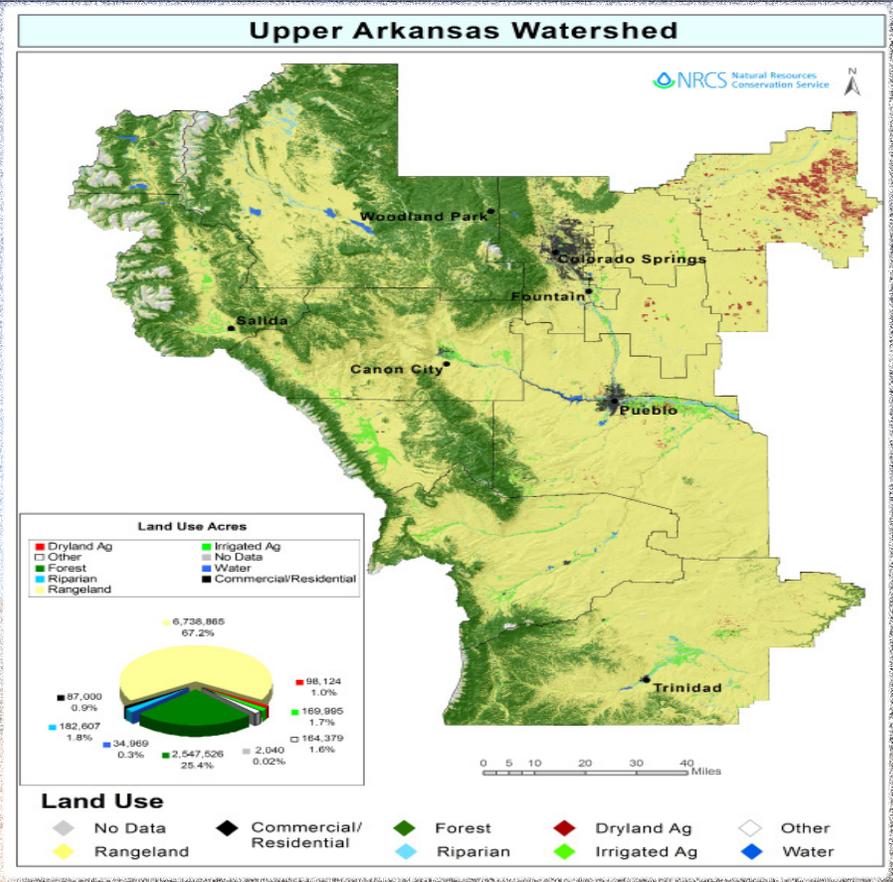
## High Priority Resource Concerns in the Upper Arkansas River Watershed

- Water Quality
- Invasive Species
- Water Quantity
- Rangeland Health
- Small Acreage Management/Parcelization



*Helping People Help the Land*

# Watershed Profile



## Fiscal Year 2011 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Summary

Upper Arkansas River	Applications Received	Contracts Approved	Dollars Approved	Acres Treated
Upper Arkansas - All Lands/Wildlife	1	1	\$24,321	32
Upper Arkansas - Cropland/Water Quality/Quantity	34	19	\$508,010	1,354
Upper Arkansas - Forestry	27	8	\$341,533	2,540
Upper Arkansas - Grazingland	41	25	\$772,843	17,339
CPP - Juniper Project	38	37	\$249,974	1,189
Organic-Certified	3	2	\$152,141	1,667
Organic-Transition	1	1	\$6,964	10
Planning-Agriculture Energy Management-Headquarters	3	3	\$3,240	82
Planning-Agriculture Energy Management-Landscape	2	2	\$2,200	383
Planning - General	14	10	\$32,186	3,004
CO Seasonal High Tunnels Pilot	9	6	\$27,882	75
<b>Totals</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>\$2,121,295</b>	<b>27,675</b>

### Farm Bill Program Activities Summary Upper Arkansas River

NRCS Program	Applications Received	Contracts Approved	Dollars Approved	Acres Treated
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	12	3	\$100,128	11,654
Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)	4	4	\$1,325,000	1,071
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP - Easements)	1	1	\$500,000	3,425

### Farm Bill Program Activities Statewide Summary

#### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

*Contracts: 789*

*Acres: 335,000*

*Financial Assistance: \$26 Million*

#### **Agricultural Water Enhancement Program**

*Contracts: 19*

*Acres: 3,461*

*Financial Assistance: \$1 Million*

#### **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**

*Contracts: 12*

*Acres: 15,656*

*Financial Assistance: \$421,303*

#### **Grasslands Reserve Program**

*Easements: 3*

*Acres: 6,185*

*Financial Assistance: \$1.2 Million*

#### **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program**

*Properties/Entities: 33*

*Acres: 9,467*

*Financial Assistance: \$8.4 Million*

#### **Wetlands Reserve Program**

*Easements: 2*

*Acres: 463*

*Financial Assistance: \$1.4 Million*

#### **Conservation Stewardship Program**

*Applications: 331*

*Acres: 800,859*

*Financial Assistance: \$7.8 Million*

**Disclaimer: All data was retrieved from Protracts and funding manager's records for easements on October 4, 2011.**

# 2011 Conservation Success:

## Restoration of the Upper Arkansas River

### Issue:

Eleven privately owned miles of the Upper Arkansas River was damaged by the mining activity and, therefore, needed restoration.

### What NRCS CO is Doing:

Over a period of many decades, the mining operations in the California Gulch area of Lake County near Leadville, Colorado, leaked mine tailings of zinc, copper, lead and other metals into the headwaters of the Arkansas River. The mine tailings in the river polluted the private and public lands through which the river flowed.

The Cooperative Conservation Project Initiative (CCPI) allowed NRCS the opportunity to assist on private lands. NRCS worked on conservation plans to restore eleven privately owned miles of the Upper Arkansas River, damaged by the mining activity. A number of federal agencies, including NRCS, the EPA, DOI's Fish & Wildlife Division, Bureau of Forestry and Bureau of Reclamation, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey, cooperated to clean up the area using funds deposited by the polluting mining companies.

To date, the cooperating agencies have plugged up the leaks from the old mines, removed the pollutants from the river, and exchanged many hundreds of tons of contaminated soil with healthy soil on private lands.



A portion of the Upper Arkansas River that was restored on Doc Smith's Ranch.

CCPI funds have been utilized to write Fish and Wildlife Management plans on approximately 1,400 acres. NRCS role with the project made it feasible for private landowners to acquire conservation plans that not only addressed the pollution problem, but also improved the acres for wildlife habitat. The plans address the loss of soil through erosion, prevent more pollution and restore a healthy environment in the river for irrigation of pasture lands and for fishing.

**Program used: CCPI**

## Natural Resource Benefits and Impacts

In 2011, conservation practices were applied by farmers and ranchers in Colorado through various NRCS programs. Conservation practices work to improve farmland, soil, water quality, air, plants, forestland, and wildlife habitat.

Through practices such as nutrient management, landowners were able to improve soil quality and plant health; and through irrigation water management, they were able to improve water quality delivery, thereby improving crop production on their working lands.

Many Farm Bill conservation practices apply to rangelands, such as prescribed grazing. Through installation of water developments, pasture division fences, wells and water pipelines, these practices focus on maintaining, enhancing, and restoring needed plant communities and habitat conditions.

Throughout fiscal year 2011, landowners worked with NRCS staff to develop a good, sound conservation plan to identify and address natural resource concerns on their land.

## Conservation Program Descriptions

### Environmental Quality Incentives

**Program (EQIP)** provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers, ranchers and owners of private, non-industrial forest land that promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible producers install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program offering cost-share incentives to landowners to voluntarily develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

### Agricultural Water Enhancement

**Program (AWEP)** A voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and

technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality.

### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program to restore former wetlands, re-establish native wetland wildlife habitat and retire marginal land from agricultural production.

### Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program

(CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities; and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

### Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is a voluntary program that helps landowners keep their productive farm and ranch land in agriculture. USDA provides matching funds to state, local, or tribal government entities and nongovernmental organizations with existing farm and ranch lands protection programs to purchase conservation easements.