



2011 Annual Report

Front Range Small Acreage Program

This report contains fiscal year activity for the state of Colorado from the time period of October 2010 to September 2011.

Who We Are

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others care for the land. NRCS has six mission goals that include high quality, productive soils; clean and abundant water; healthy plant and animal communities; clean air; an adequate energy supply; and working farms and ranchlands.

Vision

Productive Lands -
Healthy Environment

Mission

Helping People Help the Land



“According to the National Agriculture Statistics Service’s 2007 Census of Agriculture, small farms account for about 48% of total farm and ranchland in the U.S. As owners of the bulk of farm property, it is imperative that small acreage landowners manage their natural resources for a sustainable agricultural future. Small acreage landowners in Colorado own 2 to 100 acres and may be lifestyle farmers who work outside the home, retired operators, or operators of a small farm or ranch.”

—Jennifer Cook, FRSAMC

The Program

A boom in small acreage properties (2-100 acres) in the Front Range has created a demand for information on managing land and raising animals.

The Colorado Small Acreage Program seeks to provide educational and one-on-one technical assistance to small acreage landowners which result in implementation of conservation practices.

Small acreage landowners are generally not traditional farmers or ranchers. Many have moved to rural areas seeking a change in lifestyle, but are faced with unexpected land management issues such as weeds, wind, and grazing management.

Through their cumulative effects, small acreage landowners have a significant impact on soil, plants, water, animals, and other natural and man-made resources.

The Partnership

In 2009, USDA-NRCS teamed up with Colorado State University Extension to hire Jennifer Cook to serve as the Front Range Small Acreage Management Coordinator.

She has developed educational resources for small acreage landowners which include:

- A Small Acreage Management website with hot topics, resources, educational videos, and event listings at www.ext.colostate.edu/sam.

- Short educational videos to teach landowners about grazing management, small-scale solar irrigation, wind power generation, and bindweed management
- Evening and weekend workshops, many in partnership with local Conservation Districts
- Webinars (online seminars accessed via a computer with internet) on an abundance of topics such as managing well and septic systems and small-scale cattle production. Webinars can be watched live or a recording can be viewed via the Small Acreage Management website
- A quarterly Sustainable Small Acreages E-Newsletter which is distributed directly to over 2,500 landowners in Colorado, plus 77 Colorado Conservation Districts, Colorado NRCS field offices, and CSU Extension employees

The Impact of the Program

As a result of targeted communications and assistance of the Small Acreage Program, small acreage landowners are increasing their knowledge and skills to sustainably manage land and animals.

In a December 2010, a survey of those who regularly receive the small acreage e-newsletter showed:

- 44.3% of participants reported they made practice change(s) as a result of the information learned from the

Colorado
State
University

Extension

USDA
NRCS

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

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FY 2011

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newsletter. Practice changes listed included seeding and cover cropping, weed management, pasture management, rotational grazing, homestead planning, manure management, and windbreak establishment/management;

- 9.4% of the participants reported having saved \$1,000 or less as a result of the education received from the newsletter; and
- 86% of participants reported they had learned much or very much about managing their small acreage property from the newsletter.

For More Information

Visit our web site at www.ext.colostate.edu/sam.



Jennifer Cook, Front Range Small Acreage Management Coordinator, visits with a small acreage landowner.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Small acreage owners are increasing their knowledge to sustainably manage land and animals as a result of the small acreage program. Program accomplishments in 2011 included:

- Increasing the number of informed small acreage owners statewide by educating owners through workshops, direct technical assistance, and innovative technology.
- Developing and growing partnerships among cooperating agencies who service small acreage owners.
- Delivering NRCS Conservation Plans, NRCS programs, and on-the-ground conservation to landowners.
- Creating self assessment tools and support systems that allow small acreage owners to pursue education and improvements on their own schedule, regardless of location.
- Providing professional development opportunities to ensure the capacity of professional staff to guide small acreage owners.
- Securing external funds to support program outreach and technology.