



# 2011 Annual Report

## Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

*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

*“Preserving Colorado’s prime agricultural farm and ranch lands helps to ensure a vibrant future for agriculture in our state.”*

**FRPP Program Manager**

### Fiscal Year 2011 Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Statewide Activities

Number of Contracts Approved .....	18
Dollar Amount Approved.....	\$8.4 Million
Acres Enrolled .....	9,467

### The Program

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchlands in agricultural use.

By working through existing land conservation programs, USDA partners with State, Tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value.

### The Benefits

- Landowners are compensated now for the development value of their lands while retaining fee ownership and control of the land.
- Working agricultural lands, many with soils rated as “Prime Farmland,” are protected for perpetual agricultural use.
- Rural communities and economies are made more stable as more working agriculture lands are protected and long-term agricultural use is assured.
- Supports local and regional efforts at managing growth and development and reducing unnecessary costs related to servicing growth from sprawl.

- Provides open space buffers between cities and towns, allowing them to retain their own unique identities.
- Natural landscapes and wildlife habitats are afforded protection since FRPP lands will not be converted to non-agricultural uses.

### Eligibility Requirements

To qualify, farmland must:

- Be subject to a pending offer from a State, Tribe, or local farmland protection program
- Be privately owned
- Have a conservation plan for any highly erodible land
- Be large enough to sustain agricultural production
- Be accessible to markets for what the land produces
- Have adequate infrastructure and local agricultural support services
- Be located in an area where there are other parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production

### For More Information

Visit our web site at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).



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# NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

## Protecting Sage Grouse Habitat

### Issue:

Protecting strutting grounds and other habitat for the Gunnison and Greater Sage-grouse

### What NRCS CO is Doing:

The only two places in the world the Gunnison Sage-grouse can be found are on the Western slope of Colorado and in a small portion of Southeastern Utah. Colorado, however, hosts the largest population of the species. The protection of sage-grouse habitat has been one of NRCS in Colorado's highest priorities for nearly a decade. The state hosts two species in the Sage-grouse family including the Gunnison as well as the Greater. Over the past 10 years, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CDPW) placed the sage-grouse on its "species of concern list," and as a result, NRCS strengthened its partnerships with the agency to help support efforts to conserve sage-grouse habitat. NRCS has not only partnered with CDPW, but also Partners in Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Wild Turkey Federation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), local Conservation Districts, landowners and numerous other stakeholders to map and enhance habitat as well as conserve it through easements. NRCS conservation efforts to improve habitat for sage-grouse include the use and implementation of prescribed grazing systems, range planting, brush/pinon-juniper management, cross fencing and fence marking. NRCS efforts in 2010 and 2011 alone saw the treatment of nearly 40,000 acres. **Programs used: EQIP, WHIP, FRPP, GRP**



Escape ramp installed in watering tank to assist sage grouse out of structure.



Center pivot irrigation allows producers to irrigate with a higher application efficiency and uniformity, minimizing runoff from the field or water moving below the root zone where it is unavailable for the crop.

## The Ogallala Aquifer & Colorado's Water

### Issue:

The Ogallala Initiative proves vital to Water Quality and Quantity issues in Colorado

### What NRCS CO is Doing:

Much of the High Plains region of Colorado relies on the Ogallala for water but the water in the Ogallala Aquifer is diminishing because of widespread irrigation use. NRCS in Colorado places special emphasis on land use conversion from irrigated to non-irrigated cropland, and conversion to perennial vegetation and managed for livestock. In 2011, it is estimated that Colorado awarded nearly \$800,000 in contracts for the Ogallala Initiative, resulting in resource conservation plans on approximately 5,000 acres and although this is a new initiative in the State, the plans impacted the aquifer by increasingly improving residue and reducing tillage on 1,218 acres of cropland. Also, better irrigation water management will be implemented on approximately 4,042 acres, as well as nutrient management plans on 400 which can positively impact water quality irrigation efficiency of water delivery systems has been improved on 1,949 acres. **Program used: EQIP**

## Soil Surveys and the Once Over in Colorado

### Issue:

Appropriate land use is greatly determined by the condition of its soil.

### What NRCS CO is Doing:

Colorado recently saw the completion of its initial soil survey (often referred to as the "once over"). This is a tremendous milestone not only for NRCS but also for the state as Colorado's soil survey efforts began with a Reconnaissance Soil Survey of the Cache La Poudre Valley in 1899. Since then, soil scientists have walked Colorado's landscapes digging holes and collecting information on the more than 5,000 soil map units and 1,500 unique soil types. Colorado consistently ranks in the top five states for customer downloads from Web Soil Survey. **Program used: CTA**



MLRA Soil Survey Leader examines soil for categorization and data collection.