

# Colorado River Watershed

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

**The Colorado River Watershed totals 7,097,000 acres.**

NRCS natural resource specialists are staffed at the Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction, and Kremmling USDA Field Service Centers to provide technical assistance to watershed 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.

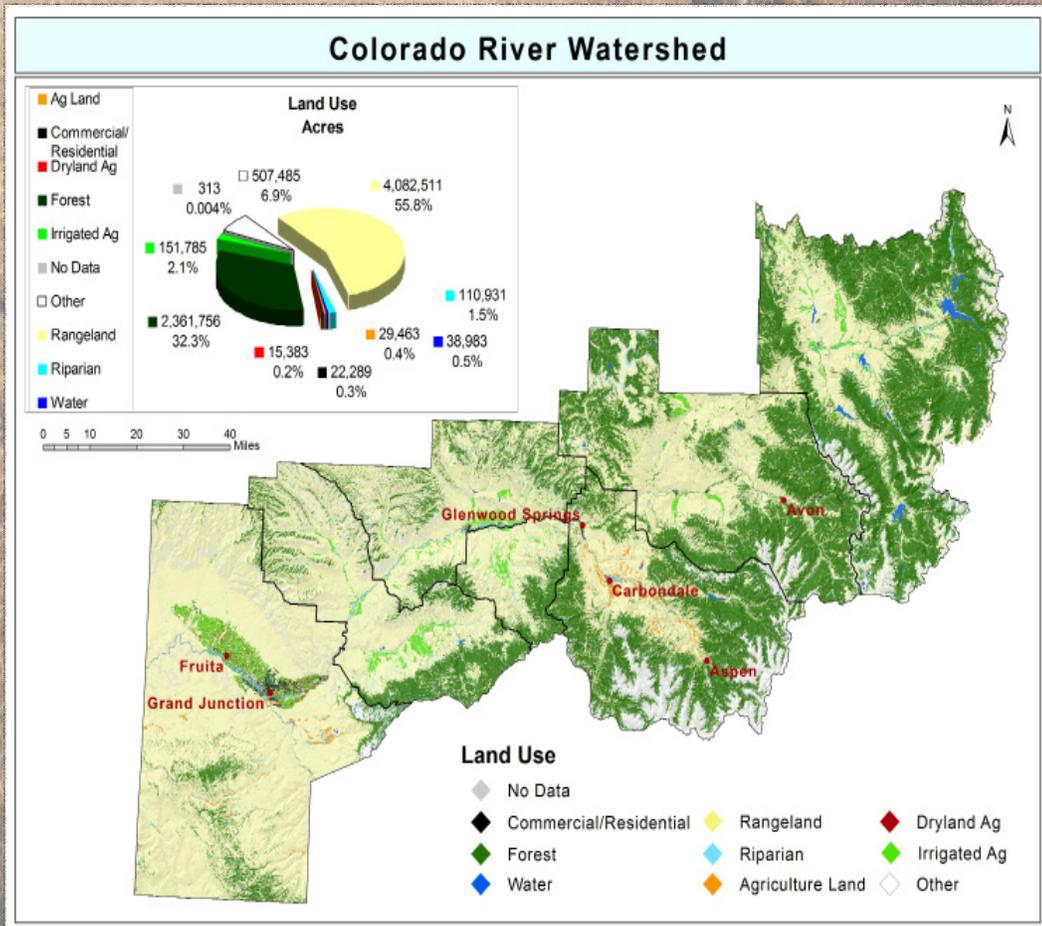
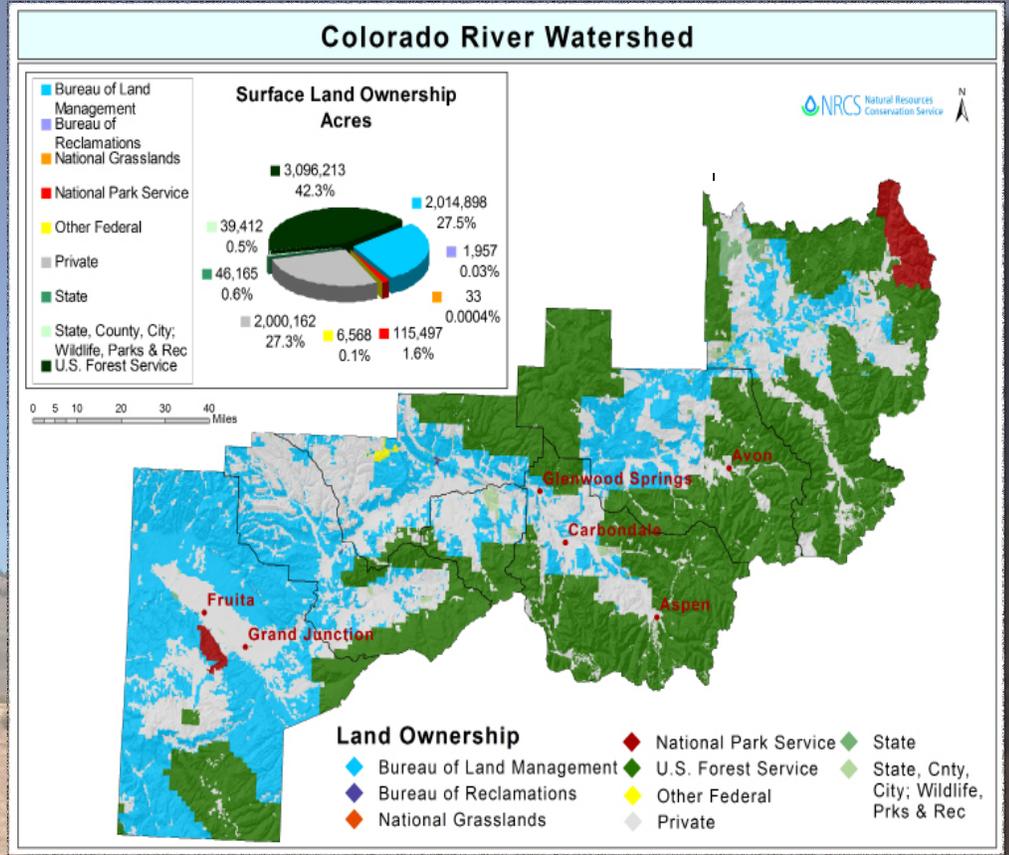
## High Priority Resource Concerns in the Colorado River Watershed

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



*Helping People  
Help the Land*

# Watershed Profile



## Fiscal Year 2011 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Summary

Colorado River	Applications Received	Contracts Approved	Dollars Approved	Acres Treated
Colorado River - Cropland/Water Quality/Quantity	25	9	\$358,473	245
Colorado River - Grazingland	6	3	\$181,500	1,614
Salinity - Grand Valley	21	18	1,166,153	785
Salinity - Greater Colorado River Basin	10	8	\$556,293	372
Salinity - Plateau Valley Pilot	4	3	\$81,191	68
Salinity - Silt	5	2	\$23,082	25
Salinity - Wildlife	2	1	\$81,856	65
CO Seasonal Tunnels Pilot	4	3	\$21,504	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>\$2,470,053</b>	<b>3,177</b>

### Farm Bill Program Activities Summary Colorado River

NRCS Program	Applications Received	Contracts Approved	Dollars Approved	Acres Treated
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	5	1	\$20,227	2,132
Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)	3	3	\$413,337	55
Farm and Ranchland Protection Program-Sage Grouse	1	1	\$150,000	185

### 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:

## Getting Salinity Under Control

### Issue:

2012 will see the official closing of the NRCS portion of the Grand Valley Salinity Control Project

### What NRCS CO is Doing:

2012 will witness one of the most significant milestones in the history of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, which was established in 1974.

As a result of high salinity levels, the Act was passed out of concern for the economic dangers to users of the Colorado River water, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and Mexico.

High levels of salinity in water can reduce crop yields, limit the choice of crops that can be grown and, at higher concentrations over long periods, can kill trees and make the land unsuitable for agricultural purposes.

To date, NRCS' financial and technical assistance has been used to install irrigation improvements treating nearly 41,000 of the 47,600 acres in irrigated agricultural production. Improvements include the installation of pipelines, and lining of irrigation ditches and small laterals, as well as improvements to the delivery method and timing of irrigation water.



Salt-affected soils are visible on rangeland in Colorado. Salts dissolved from the soil accumulate at the soil surface and are deposited on the ground and at the base of the fence post.

After a strong partnership and collaboration between NRCS, private landowners, the Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado's State Conservation Board, and numerous local Conservation Districts, 2012 will see the official closing of the NRCS portion of the Grand Valley Salinity Control Project. **Programs used EQIP, WHIP, FRPP, GRP**

## 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.