



# 2011 Annual Report

## Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)

*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

*“The GRP program was reauthorized by the 2008 Farm Bill and emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grasslands under threat of conversion to cropping, urban development, and other activities.”*

**GRP Program Manager**



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

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### Fiscal Year 2011 Grasslands Reserve Program Easements Statewide Activities

Number of Contracts Approved .....	3
Dollar Amount Approved.....	\$1.2 Million
Acres Enrolled .....	6,185

### The Program

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) helps landowners and operators voluntarily protect and restore grasslands, including rangeland and pastureland, and certain other lands.

The GRP helps prevent conversion of grazing lands to cropland, development, or other uses.

The GRP program priorities include protection from threat of conversion, maintaining working agricultural lands and biodiversity.

### The Benefits

Protecting and restoring grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and improves environmental quality.

### Enrollment Options

The GRP program offers several enrollment options:

### Easements:

- Permanent conservation easements; payment based on fair market value of the easement less grazing value.

### Rental Contracts:

10-, 15-, 20-, and 30-year rental contracts administered by the Farm Service Agency will provide annual payments up to 75 percent of the grazing value of the land.

### Restoration agreements:

Will be incorporated within the rental contract or easement project if restoration is deemed necessary by NRCS.

### All Enrollment Options Permit:

- Common grazing practices that maintain the viability of the grassland;
- Haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production, subject to certain restrictions during the nesting season, as determined by NRCS; and
- Fire rehabilitation and the construction of fire breaks and fences.

### For More Information

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

# 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.