Welcome to the STAC!

Thanks to all who are able to join us today! We'll get started in just a minute.

Please keep cameras off and microphones muted unless you are speaking to ensure meeting bandwidth stability for all.

Feel free to use the raise hand and other emote features at anytime during the presentations. You can also use the chat feature at anytime to ask questions or provide feedback.

If you need any tech support, please reach out to Sean Forehand: <u>sean.forehand@usda.gov</u> or 970-623-9254 at any time.



The meeting is being recorded.





State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

September 12, 2024

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



Introductions: Name, Organization Favorite Plant



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Today's Agenda

8:00 am Welcome and Introductions

- 8:15 am NRCS Update & Agenda Changes- Liz With, NRCS Assistant State Con. for Partnerships
- 8:35 am NRCS Programs Update Renee Koch, NRCS Acting Assistant State Con. for Programs
- 9:55 am Break
- 10:00 am Farm Service Agency Updates- Corey Pelton, FSA Farm Program Chief & Hunter Cleveland, FSA Agricultural Program Specialist
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Updates
 - Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) & Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
- 10:30 am Partner Updates (approximately 10 minutes each)
 - Colorado State Conservation Board—Rakel Sanchez
 - Colorado Parks and Wildlife—Ray Aberle
 - Colorado State Forestry- Christina Burri
- 11:00 am Wildlife Subcommittee Report- Ray Aberle, CPW Subcommittee Chair
- 11:10 am Easements Subcommittee Report
- 11:20 am Source Water Protection Subcommittee Report Robert Murphy, CDPHE Subcommittee Chair
- 11:30 am Urban Ag Subcommittee Report
- 11:40 am Forestry Subcommittee Report- Christina Burri, CSFS Subcommittee Chair
- 11:50 am Open Discussion- All
- 12:00 pm Closing Remarks- Liz With, NRCS Assistant State Con. for Partnerships





Colorado NRCS Updates

Liz With Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships





Financial Assistance Programs Updates



Renee Koch

Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



United States Department of Agriculture







In 2024

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Act Now

CSP Minimum Annual Payment Increase

Specialized "targeted" Projects

Irrigation Pilot projects

Wild Flood and Wetland Wildlife Habitat Project

Natural Resources Conservation Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



Act Now Process

How it works

- Allows NRCS to preapprove applications that meet a state-determined minimum ranking score – a.k.a the "threshold" score as they are submitted.
- Allows States to designate existing or develop ranking pools to follow the Act Now process.
- States also establish the portion of their allocation to use in Act Now ranking pools.
- States establish the threshold score.
- Applications below the threshold may be funded in ranking order if applications above the threshold have been funded, or the ranking deadline has been met.
- Other aspects of general or program-specific policy still apply to Act Now.

Natural Resources Conservation Service





CSP Minimum Annual Payment Policy 🍛 < Change



Natural Resources Conservation Service



nrcs.usda.gov/



Payment Schedule Rates

Recommendation: Keep at the maximum level of 75% Regular and 90% Historically Underserved

Natural Resources Conservation Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



Amber Freouf



Help determine State Priority Resource Concerns



Aid in determining State Priority Conservation Practices

What do we achieve by hosting these meetings?



Identify barriers producer face in implementing Conservation Programs



Pinpoint outreach needs

Recognize training needs for NRCS staff, partners, and producers

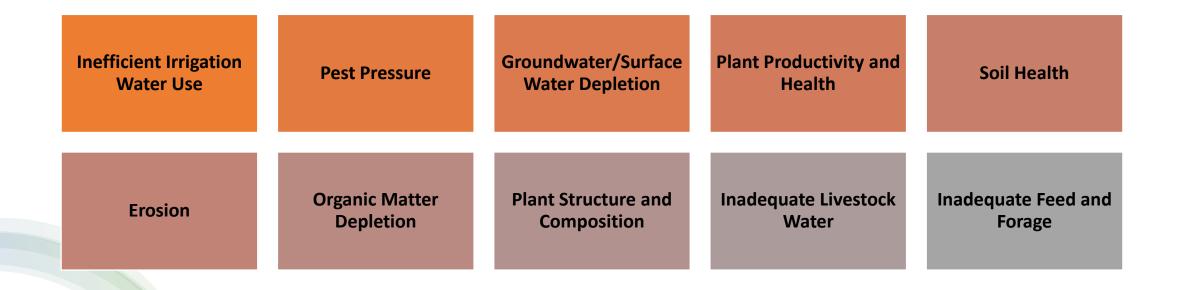
Participation Level

+

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- 75 conservation districts statewide were asked to provide feedback
 - 46 districts provided feedback back

Top Producer Resource Concerns: Statewide Ag Land (Cropland, Range, Pasture)



Top Resource Concerns Statewide: Forestry

Wildfire Mitigation

Pest Pressure

Plant Productivity and Health

Threat of Land Conversion

Erosion Wind and Water

Colorado State Priority Resource Concern Considerations for FY24

Ag Land	NIPF
Degraded Plant Condition	Wind and Water Erosion
Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss	Degraded Plant Condition
Field Pesticide Loss	Fire Management
Livestock Production Limitations	Pest Pressure
Soil Quality Limitations	Soil Quality Limitations
Source Water Depletion	Source Water Depletion
Pest Pressure	Terrestrial Habitat
Wind & Water Erosion	Weather Resistance

Practices Colorado Producers Report Work Well

- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 382 Fence
- 614 Tank
- 516 Livestock Pipeline
- 533 Pump
- 642 Well
- 550 Range Planting
- 315 Herbaceous 430 Irrigation Pipeline Weed Control
- 595 Pest Management

- 590 Nutrient Management
 - 340 Cover Crop
- 329 No Till
- 345 Reduced Till
- 328 Conservation **Crop Rotation**
- 442 Center Pivot
- 443 Gated Pipe

• 587 Structure for

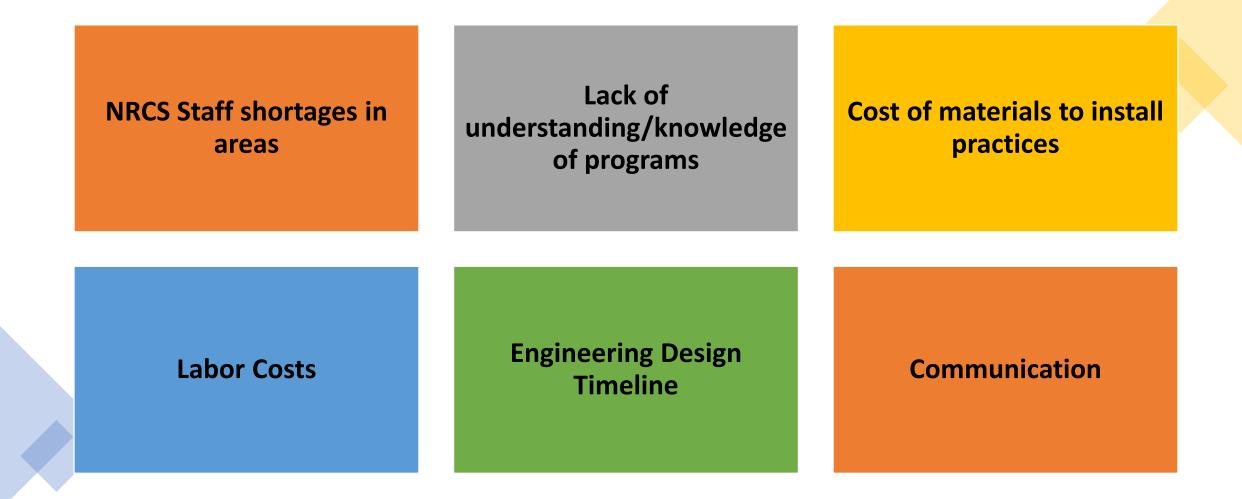
Water Control

- 449 Irrigation Water Management
- 600 Terraces •
- 666 Forest Stand Improvement
- 384 Woody Residue
- Treatment

Practices That Don't Work Well According to Colorado Producers

- 340 Cover crop
- 329 No Till
- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 550 Range Planting
- 315 Herbaceous Weed Control
- NOTE: Drought, chemical resistant weeds, and costs were noted reasons why these do not work. Drought was the most common response.

Barriers Producers Identified in Conservation Programs



C S Ū 60 € N bC

- Virtual Fencing
- Use of Drones for cropland and rangeland monitoring
- Drone Technology for seeding, spraying, scouting
- Satellite imagery for monitoring
- Biochar
- Carbon sequestration credits
- Lazer weed sprayers
- Hydroponics

Other Producer Comments about Conservation Program Delivery



More outreach and success stories



More education on practices

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Quicker Turnarounds



More clarification on requirements program processes

Thank you



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2024 Conservation Stewardship Program Updates

Amber Freouf

FY24 Accomplishments

Increase in participation across the state

ACT NOW process used for all fund pools

FY24 Renewals

• \$280,466.00 obligated across 4 contracts

FY24 Farm Bill Funds

• Expected to obligate \$11,560,000 across 116 contracts

FY24 IRA Funds

• Expected to obligate \$8,118,000 across 55 contacts

Potential FY25 Fund pools

IRA Signup Fund	
Pools	
Area 1 Ag Land	
Area 2 Ag Land	
Area 3 Ag Land	
BFR Ag Land	
SDFR Ag Land	
Urban	
Source Water	
Protection	
Non-Industrial Private	
Forest Land (NIPF)	

General Signup Fund		
<u>Pools</u>		
Area 1 Ag Land		
Area 2 Ag Land		
Area 3 Ag Land		
BFR Ag Land		
SDFR Ag Land		
Organic/Transition to		
Urban		
Source Water		
Protection		
Sage Grouse Initiative		
SGI – Greater		
Sage Grouse Initiative		
SGI- Gunnison		
Non-Industrial Private		
Forest Land (NIPF)		

Poll Question: Should the Fiscal Year 2025 Colorado State Priority Concerns be reflected based from Local Work Group Meeting results and todays discussion?

Ag Land (Cropland, Rangeland, Pastureland)	NIPF (Non-Industrial Private Forest Land)
Degraded Plant Condition	Wind and Water Erosion
Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss	Degraded Plant Condition
Field Pesticide Loss	Fire Management
Livestock Production Limitations	Pest Pressure
Soil Quality Limitations	Soil Quality Limitations
Source Water Depletion	Source Water Depletion
Pest Pressure	Terrestrial Habitat
Wind & Water Erosion	Weather Resilience

Thank you



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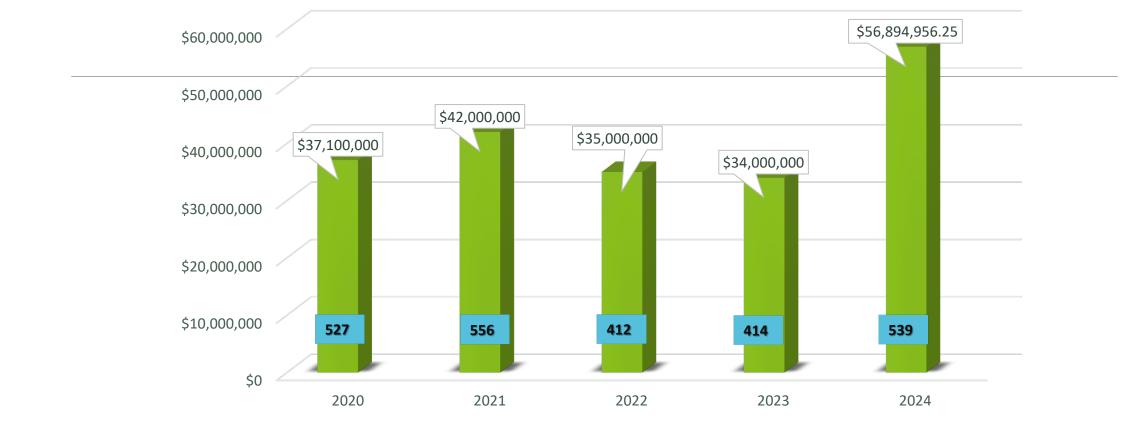


STAC

SEPTEMBER 12, 2024



2020-2024 EQIP in Colorado



■ Funding ■ Contracts



FY 24 EQIP Summary Report

Farm Bill Funds	Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Funds
\$28,864,768.28	\$28,030,187.97
356 Contracts	183 contracts
94,605 acres	113,456.4 acres





SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

STAC RECOMMENDATIONS



FY 25 Source Water Protection Policy

Identify high priority areas for the protection of source waters for drinking water

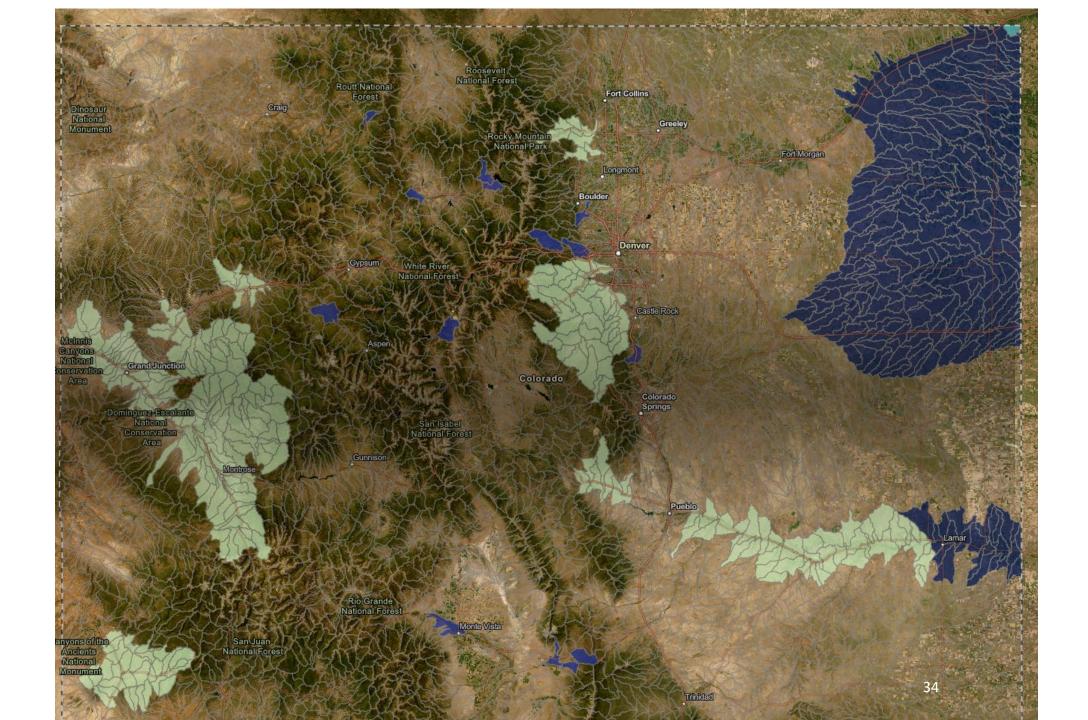
AND

Identify practices that address water quality and quantity concerns

AND

Offer producers increased incentives and higher payment rates in high priority areas





FY 25 Source Water Protection Practice Recommendations

- 315 Herbaceous Weed Control
- 327 Conservation Cover
- 328 Conservation Crop Rotation
- 329 Residue and Tillage Mgmt No Till
- 340 Cover Crop
- 351 Well Decommissioning
- 384 Woody Residue Treatment
- 391 Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393 Filter Strip

- 449 Irrigation Water Management
- 512 Forage and Biomass Planting
- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 550 Range Planting
- 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- 590 Nutrient Management
- 595 Pest Management Conservation System
- 666 Forest Stand Improvement



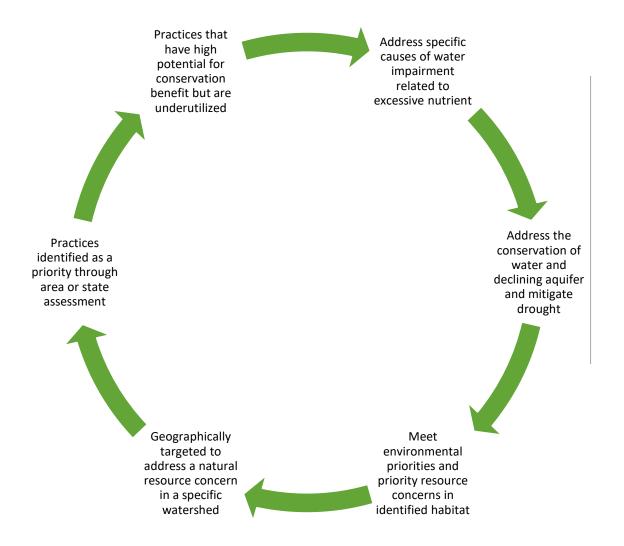


HIGH PRIORITY PRACTICES

STAC RECOMMENDATIONS



May Designate up to 10 Practices that ...



FY 25 High Priority Practice Policy

FY 25 High Priority Practice Recommendations

- 340 -- Cover Crop
- 327 -- Conservation Cover
- 449 Irrigation Water Management
- 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- 612 Tree and Shrub Planting

- 395 Stream Habitat Improvement & Management
- 315 Herbaceous Weed Control
- 528 Prescribed Grazing
- 590 Nutrient Management
- 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management





CONSERVATION INCENTIVES CONTRACTS

STAC RECOMMENDATIONS



EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC)

Address at least 1 Priority Resource Concern

Minimum 5 year contract

\$200,000 Contract Limit

Implementation Payment

Annual Payment

Steppingstone between EQIP and CSP



FY 25 EQIP CIC High Priority Areas Recommendations

Grazing land Resilience to Drought

- -Climate Smart Core Practice -528 Primary Practice
- -Statewide
- -Land Uses -Forest, Pasture, Range

FY 25 EQIP CIC Resource Concern Recommendations

- Degraded Plant Condition
- Livestock Production Limitation
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Weather Resilience



Colorado 2024 EQIP Farm Bill Funding Opportunities

- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher
- Beginning and Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher
- Wildlife Habitat
- SGI Greater and Gunnison Sage Grouse
- Lesser Prairie Chicken
- o Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
- On-Farm Energy
- Joint Chief's The Southern Front Range
- NWQI Limestone-Graveyard Creek
- National Air Quality Initiative
- Water Management Entities
- o Urban Ag
- Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)
- o WaterSMART

- Organic Transition
- Ute Tribal Conservation Projects
- o Animal Waste
- o Forest Health
- Salinity Colorado River Basin
- Salinity Wildlife
- High Tunnel ACT NOW
- Conservation Planning Activity
- Design and Implementation Activities
- Ogallala Aquifer Project
- Resource Team Locally Led Projects
- Pilot Irrigation Project
- Lateral 46 Ditch Project



Colorado 2024 EQIP Inflation Reduction Act Funding Opportunities

IRA ACT NOW Forestry

IRA ACT NOW Soil Health

IRA ACT NOW Wildlife

IRA ACT NOW Climate Smart Mitigation

IRA ACT NOW Climate Smart Mitigation Beginning Farmer/Rancher

IRA ACT NOW Climate Smart Mitigation Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher

IRA ACT NOW Wild Flood and Wetland Wildlife Habitat

IRA ACT NOW CIC Grazing land Resilience to Drought

DISCUSSION FOR 2025 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

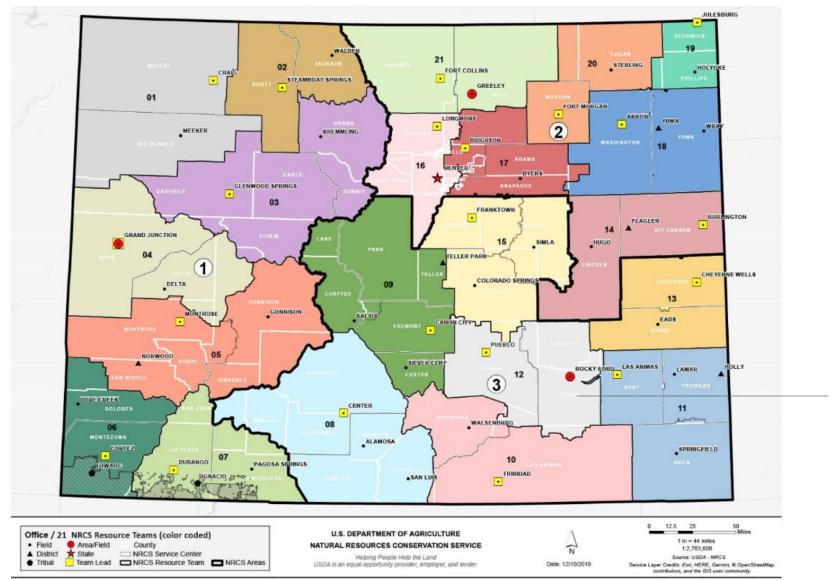
Resource Team Fund Pools

VS.

Watershed Fund Pools

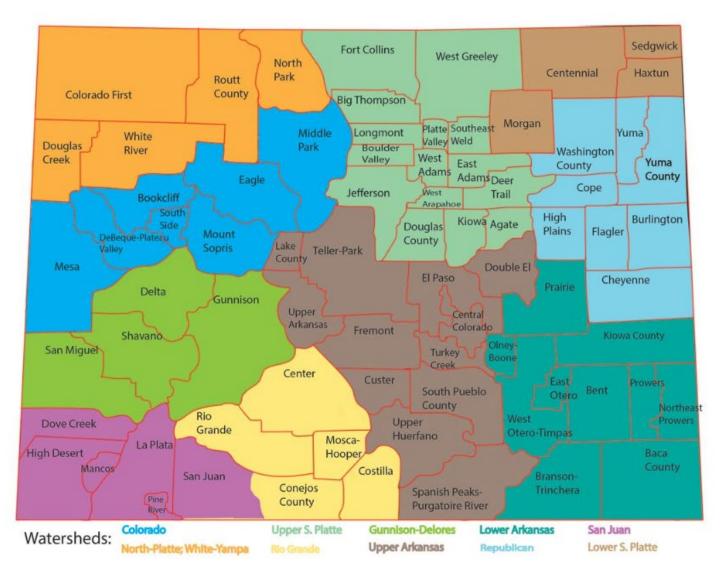


Colorado NRCS Offices



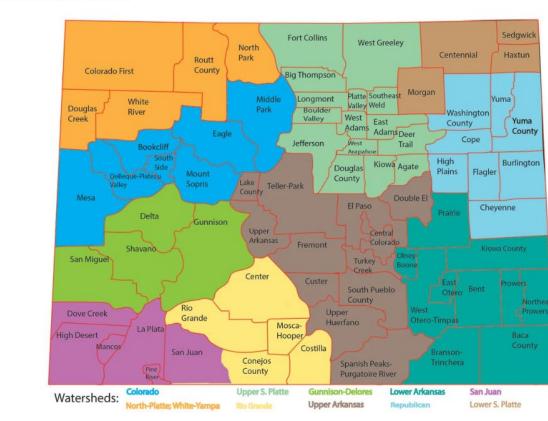


Watershed Associations



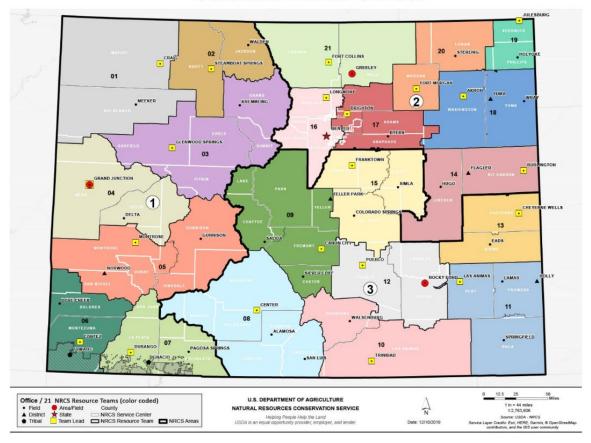






Watershed Associations

Colorado NRCS Offices



Why Change?

WATERSHEDS

- Larger initial allocation potential to fund more applications
- LWG feedback with more input
- Ten Ranking Pools
- Distribute workload across larger area

RESOURCE TEAMS

- Smaller allocation potentially only fund one application
- LWG feedback at district level
- Twenty –one Ranking Pools
- Offers additional flexibility in workload management





Questions

NRCS IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER, LENDER AND PROVIDER.



REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

RCPP Coordinator marissa.markus@usda.gov



RCPP PURPOSE

- Vision to provide the opportunity for NRCS to work with partners that encourage innovation, high-performing solutions, accelerate conservation mission, and demonstrate the value of voluntary, private lands conservation
- NRCS and partners co-invest in conservation activities to address resource concerns at a regional scale
- NRCS and partners utilize land management and easement activities to address resource concerns

FY 24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



\$1,530,683 FA obligated in Land Management (LM) producer contracts/supplemental agreement



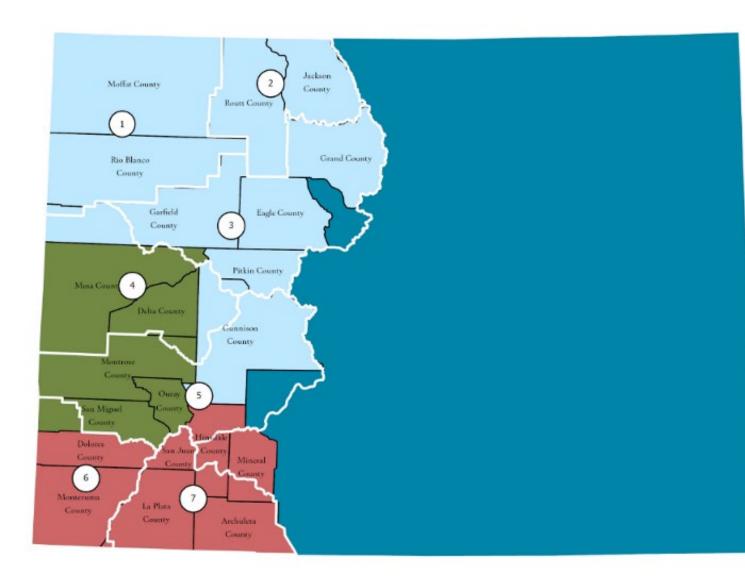


\$482,000 FA obligated in Supplemental Agreement



12 Proposals under the FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Requested Project Cost: \$193,247,215.00



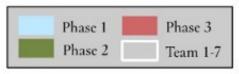
STEWARDING THE WORKING WILD IN MT, OR, AND CO: NON-LETHAL PREDATOR RISK MANAGEMENT ON AGRICULTURE OPERATIONS

FA: \$2,500,000, \$0 obligated LM TA: \$927,926.80, \$407,565.11 obligated

Partner Contribution: \$6,301,260.00

Addressing livestock production limitation, terrestrial habitat, field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss

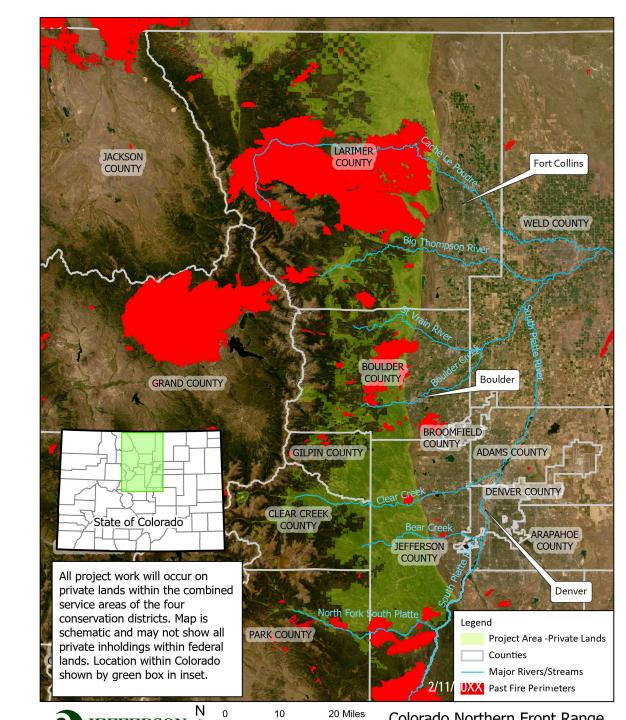
Participating Counties - Colorado

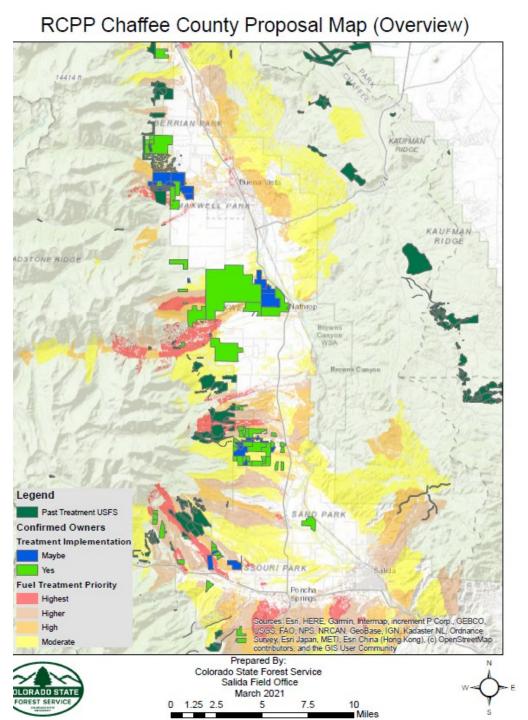


JEFFERSON CD COLORADO NORTHERN FRONT RANGE

FA: \$10,839,375.00, \$0 obligated LM TA: \$1,650,000, \$603,750 obligated Partner Contribution: \$4,487,500.00

Addressing inadequate habitat, insufficient water/drought, water quality degradation





UPPER ARKANSAS FOREST FUND

FA: \$4,000,000, \$190,000 obligated LM

TA: \$1,049,714.34, \$265,801.54 obligated

Partner Contribution: \$9,560,024.00

Addressing degraded plant condition, soil quality degradation

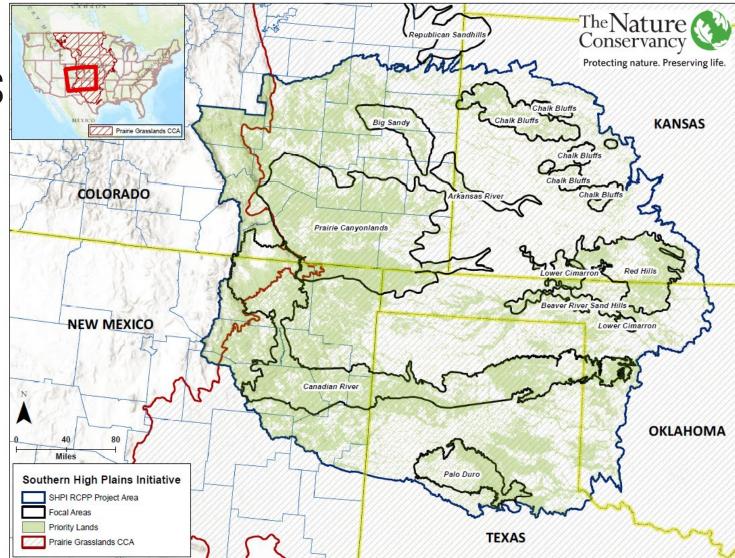
ESTABLISHMENT OF GRASSLAND STRONGHOLDS ACROSS THE SOUTHERN HIGH PLAINS

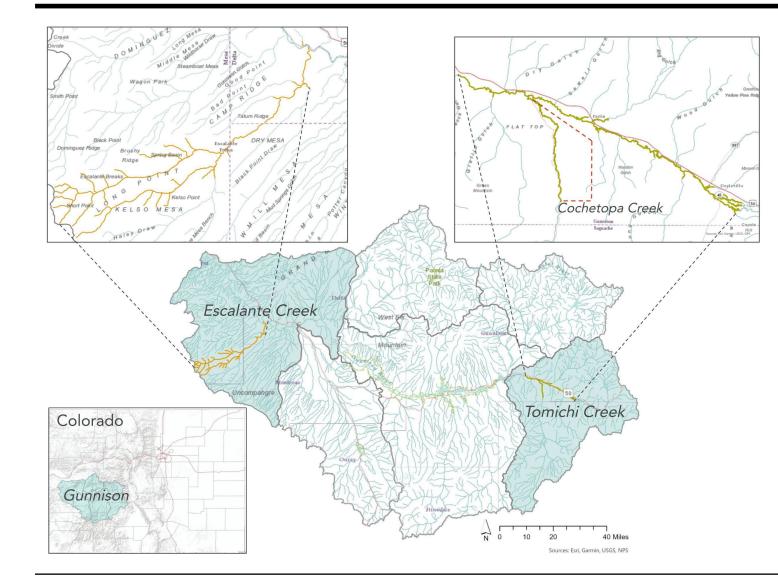
FA: \$3,000,000, \$0 Obligated EHE

TA: \$300,000, \$202,000 Obligated

Partner Contribution:\$10,200,000.00

Addressing terrestrial habitat, long term protection of land





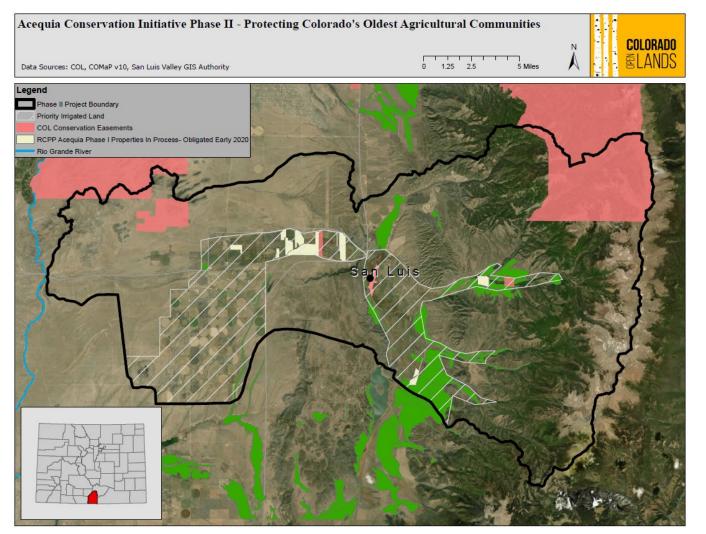
GUNNISON RIVER DROUGHT RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION

FA: \$576,615.14, \$292,301.55 obligated LM

TA: \$246,297.86, \$183,600 obligated

Partner Contribution: \$830,677.00

Addressing water quality degradation, inadequate habitat, insufficient water



THE ACEQUIA CONSERVATION INITIATIVE – PHASE II

FA: \$1,607,000, \$340,683 Obligated LM, \$237,538 Obligated EHE

TA \$0

Partner Contribution: \$2,187,000.00

Addressing Aquatic habitat, Soil quality limitations, Terrestrial habitat, Weather resilience, Wind and water erosion

UPPER RIO GRANDE PARTNERSHIP TO PARA

FA: \$5,898,364.10, \$1,190,000 obligated in LM, \$0 Obligated in EHE

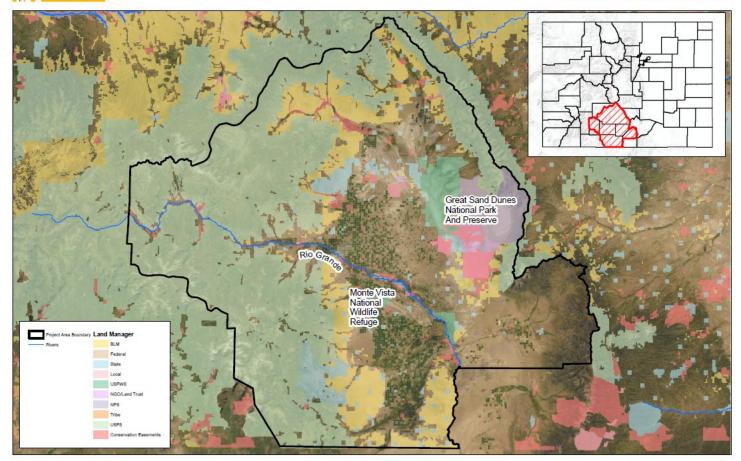
TA: \$160,000, \$49,200 obligated

Partner Contribution: \$6,058,500.00

Addressing Aquatic habitat; Source water depletion; Terrestrial habitat; Weather resilience



UPPER RIO GRANDE PARTNERSHIP TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURE AND RESTORE AQUIFERS San Luis Valley, Colorado



Preparer: Colorado Open Lands Date: 11/24/20 Data Source: ESRI, COMap20190306, RGWCD, Trinchera, CWCB Public Access should not be inferred from this map. This map is not a survey and should not be construed as one.

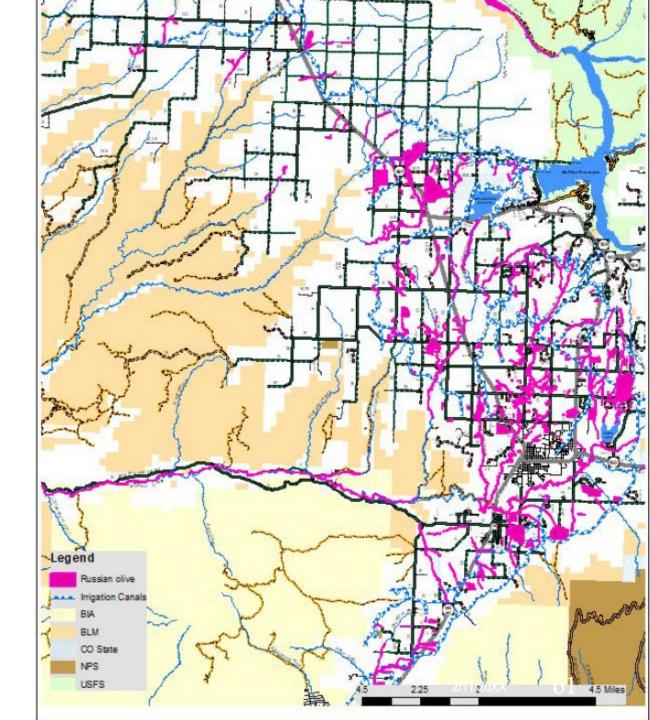
MONTEZUMA COUNTY PHREATOPHYTE PROJECT

FA: \$250,000, Obligated \$243,028 LM

TA: \$0

Partner Contribution: \$458,440

Addressing aquatic habitat, terrestrial habitat, pest pressure



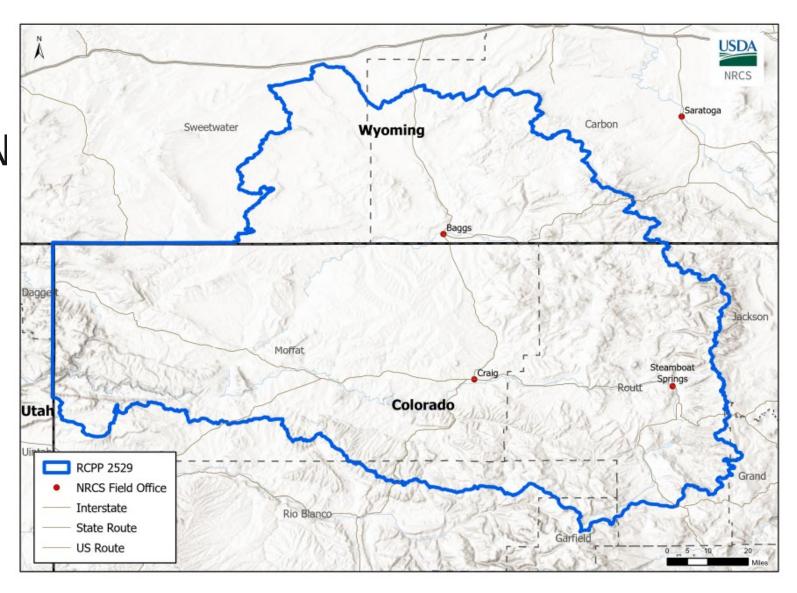
UPPER COLORADO RIVER - YAMPA & LITTLE SNAKE BASIN

FA: \$1,765,772.66, Obligated \$687,952.88 LM Obligated \$0 EHE

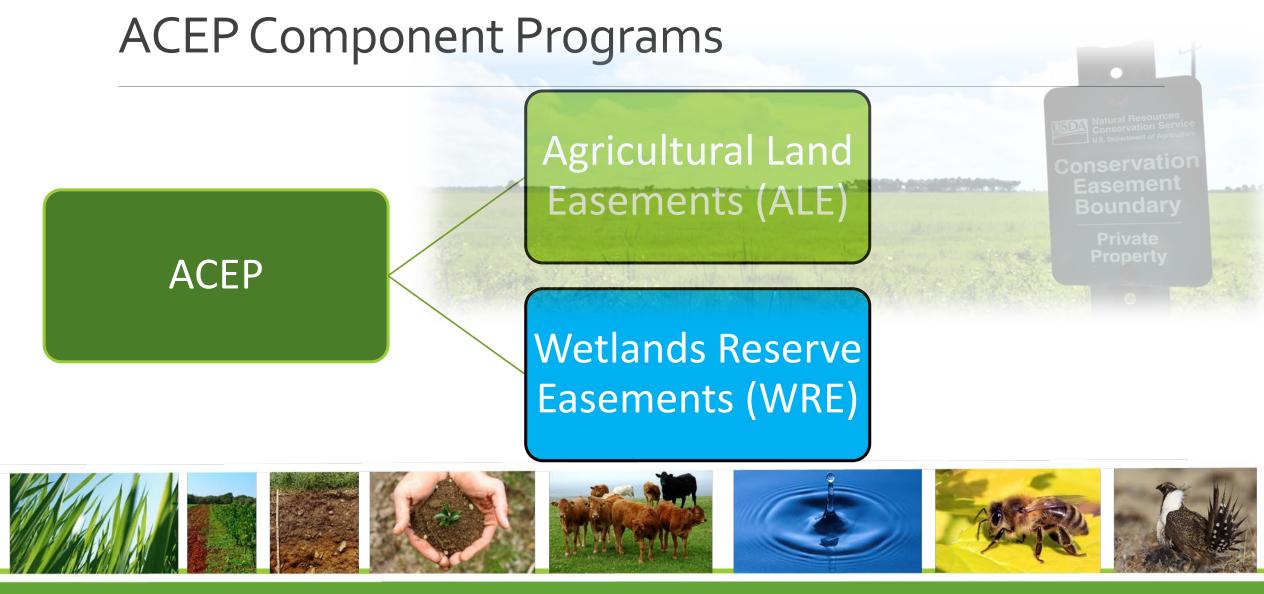
TA: \$50,000, \$0 Obligated

Partner Contribution: \$7,489,249.95

Addressing Aquatic habitat, Concentrated erosion, Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss, Livestock production limitation, Terrestrial habitat, Weather resilience



THANK YOU



STAC Role in ACEP

ACEP regulation and policy requires or allows input from STAC on:

- WRE valuation Geographic Area Rate Cap "GARC"
- Ranking criteria and prioritization
- Wetland Restoration Criteria and Guidance (WRCG) technical document
- Other technical issues as defined in regulation and policy

Subcommittee provides tailored recommendations to the STAC, and polls for acceptance of a final recommendation to the State Conservationist.



Fiscal Year 2024 Accomplishment

Closings		Grassland of Special Significance – Sage Grouse		General		RCPP		Total	
Acres		8,844 ac.		2, 318.13 ac.		2,613.9 ac.		13,775.78 ac	
Federal Share		\$9,075,000		\$1,488,900		\$712,736		\$11,276,636	
New Obligations	Grassland of Special Significance – Sage Grouse		General		RCPP		Modifications to existing enrollments		Total
Acres	8,357.8 ac.		5,215.85 ac.		275.53 ac.				13,849.18 ac.
Federal	\$4,873,750		\$3,515,000		\$237,538		\$2,225,987		\$10,852,275

Share





Inflation Reduction Act – Agricultural Land Easement Program (IRA-ACEP)

Application Batching Dates for FY2025

- October 4, 2024
- December 20, 2024

Colorado NRCS Announces NEW 2025 IRA-ACEP Application Batching Dates | Natural Resources Conservation Service (usda.gov)

Fund Pool and Rankings

IRA-ACEP

- WRE
- ALE

ACEP-ALE

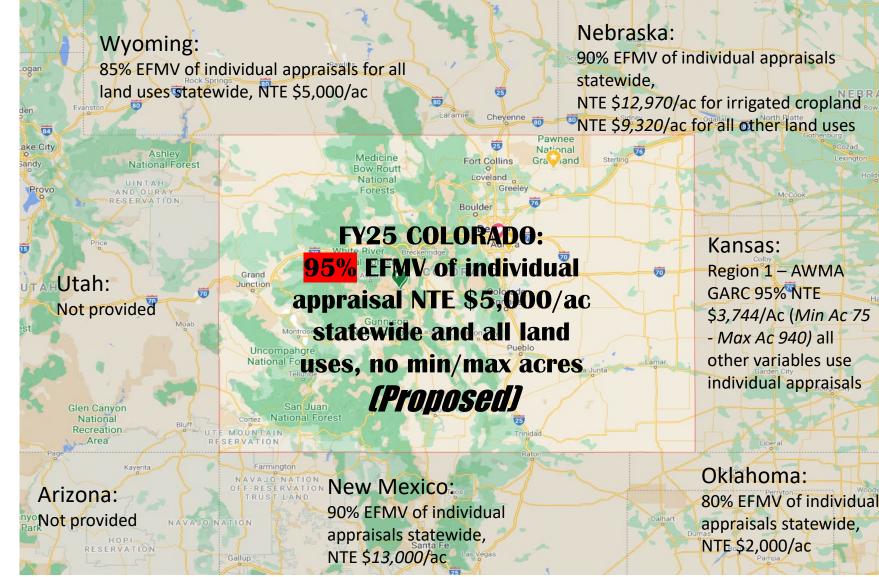
- General
- Grasslands of Special Significance Non-Sage Grouse
- Grasslands of Special Significance Greater Sage Grouse
- Grasslands of Special Significance Gunnison Sage Grouse

FY2025 GARC

•Recommendation from the prior STAC meeting, was just generally, to increase the GARC rate.

•FY24 GARC – 95% EFMV of Individual appraisals, Not to Exceed \$5,000/acre.

FY24 GARCs - WRE



Vote: Y/N

Recommend the proposed rate of 95% EFMV of Individual appraisals, Not to Exceed \$5,000/ac.



Partner Updates

Rakel Sanchez, Colorado State Conservation Board Ray Aberle, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Christina Burri, Colorado State Forest Service





STAC Subcommittee Reports & Recommendations



Wildlife Subcommittee Presentation to the STAC



Guiding Principles of the Wildlife Subcommittee:

- Targeted to geography and practice.
- Aware of and engaged with local producers, economies and recognize their interests.
- Advisory to the full State Technical Committee on wildlife opportunities and needs.
- Recognize the need and role of diverse partners to support USDA in delivering the outcomes desired by this sub-committee.

PLAYA Conservation: Evaluation and Opportunities

- 1. Playa Lakes Joint Venture Meeting was held in CO.
- Growing interest in playa conservation. Informational training: Friday, October 4th.
- 3. Wildlife Subcommittee reviewed playa definitions and provided comments to NRCS Easements Team.

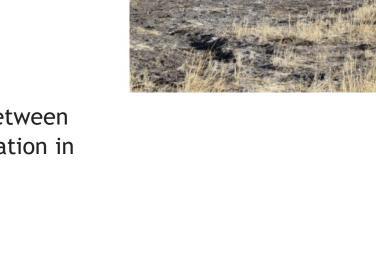


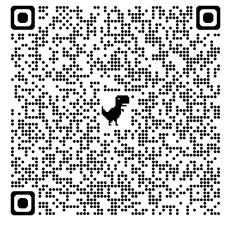
Fund Pool was Developed in for fiscal 2024 and implemented in SLV.

Conversations about improving this fund pool have been happening between the wildlife subcommittee and NRCS Programs to improve implementation in 2025.

https://iwjv.org/flood-irrigation/

EQIP-IRA: Wild flood and Wetland Wildlife





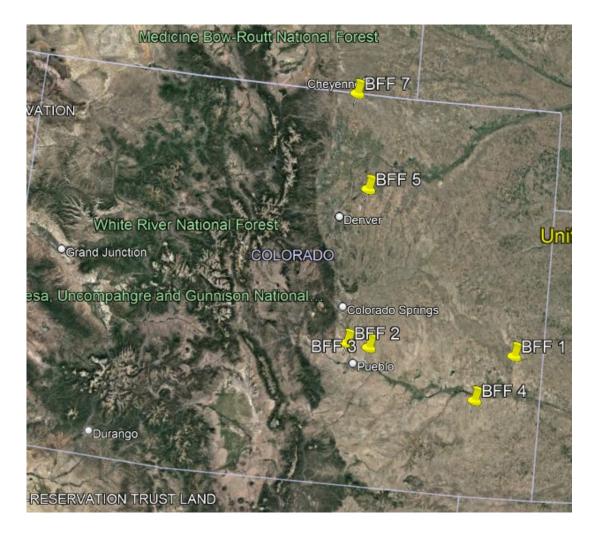




Black-Footed Ferret Restoration Efforts

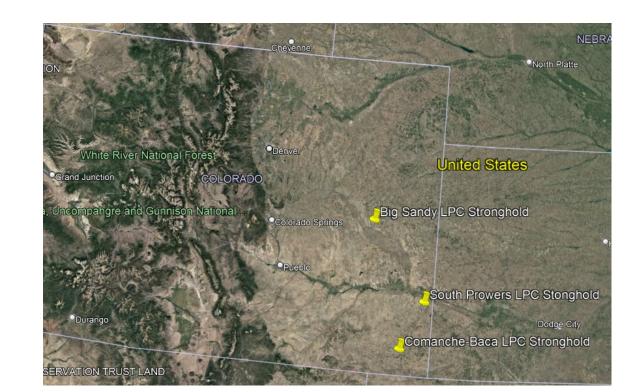
Colorado has sites with documented BFF occupancy.

- NRCS has been a critical partner in these efforts through Technical Assistance, Planning and Funding through the EQIP program.
- CPW underwent a BFF program leadership transition last Fall.



Lesser Prairie-Chicken Conservation

- 1. Overview: State of Chickens in the State of Colorado
- 2. FSA Biological Opinion
- 3. USDA Programs to Support
- 4. CPW Strategy





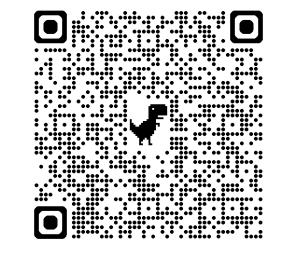
RCPP - Awarded:

Stewarding the Working Wild in MT, OR, and CO: Non-lethal Predator Risk Management on Agriculture Operations

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative, and other contributing partners will provide a holistic approach to incentivize producers to implement solutions that benefit land, livestock, and wildlife. This project will support the biologically diverse working lands that produce food and fiber, sustaining both rural and urban communities; enhance ecosystem services including clean water, biodiversity, and carbon storage; and maintain connected lands that provide essential habitat and migratory corridors.

Area of Delivery: West-Slope of Colorado

Lead Partner: Heart of the Rockies, Western Landowners Alliance





CPW Statewide Habitat and Connectivity Plan

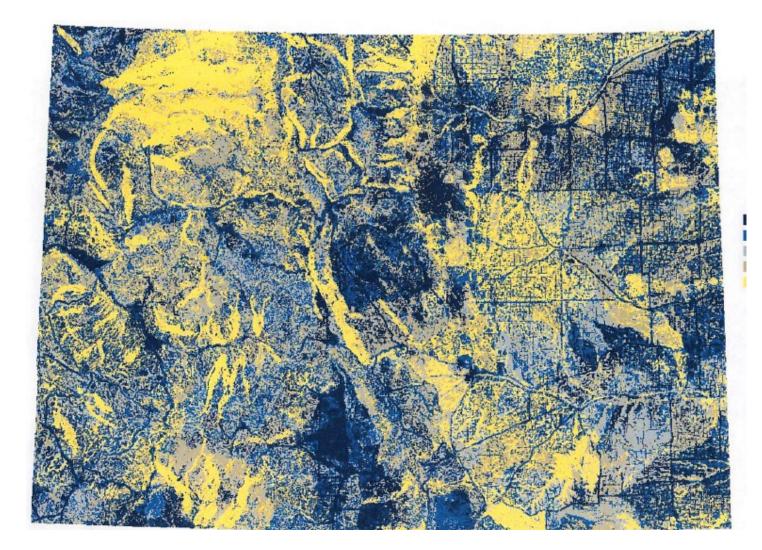
Goal include identifying key locations for CPW to focus habitat efforts.

Colorado Natural Heritage Program support.

Plan completion, late 2024.

Incorporates:

- Climate
- Vegetation Condition
- Intact and Resilient Landscapes
- Collar and Biological Data
- Focal Species: Large Ungulates, Grouse, Native Fishes



Easement Subcommittee



NR(

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FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

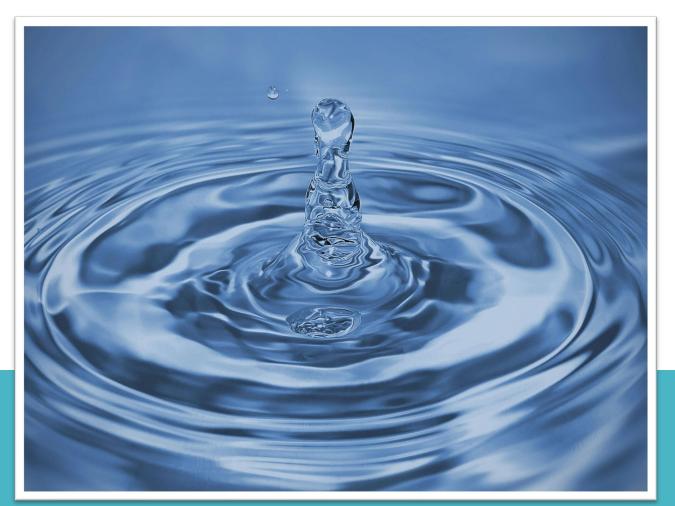


Interested in serving on the ACEP-ALE subcommittee?



Source Water Protection (SWP)

Robert Murphy, CDPHE





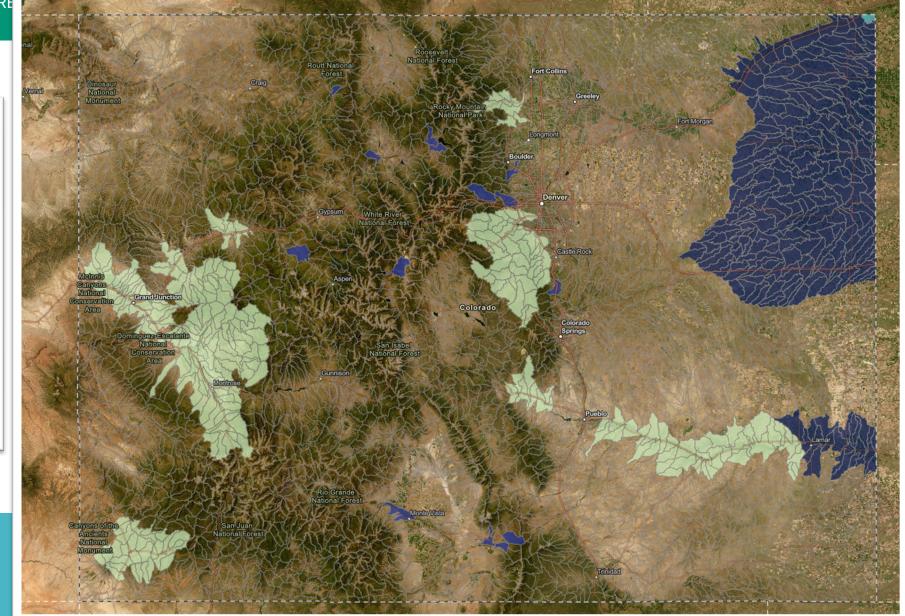
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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE





Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

Nikki Brinson, CSCB & Abbey Grey, CACD



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Forestry Subcommittee

Christina Burri, CSFS





FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



Forestry Priorities: Ranking Questions

2024 Act Now

Section: Resource Questions*

Question	Answer Choices	Points
1. Have management unit boundaries been identified and filed confirmed to be operable and accessible	YES	80
	NO	0
2. If Forest Stand Improvement (666) designed to address the Structure and Composition resource concern by enhancing degraded ecosystem function?	YES	80
	NO	0
3. Will Ponderosa Pine be a dominant or co-dominant species in post-treatment conditions?	YES	20
	NO	0
Tie-breaker 4. What is the score on the Gray Index for the Composite Map Theme on the Colorado Forest Action Plan?	80-100	20
	60-79	18
	50-59	16
	<49	10



Open Discussion

All partners are welcome to share additional thoughts.





Closing Remarks

Thank you all so much for your time and thoughts!



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION