Sign up online for **Client Gateway**
A secure online portal for individual landowners and land managers to track payments, request assistance, sign documents and request conservation assistance anytime, anywhere.
www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway

**Helping People Help the Land**

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**
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Inside NRCS in Colorado

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides services in every county across Colorado. The Agency is committed to helping private landowners care and make healthy choices for the land and water, while using them productively. Through voluntary incentive-based programs, NRCS works directly with farmers, ranchers, forest owners and other land stewards to provide technical expertise and financial assistance to make conservation work on private lands.

For more than 80 years NRCS has worked in partnership with private landowners, local and state governments and other federal agencies to maintain healthy and productive working lands. NRCS assistance and expertise is based on an understanding that the land – the landscape as a whole – must be the focus of conservation. Using this comprehensive approach, farmers, ranchers, and forest owners are able to help the land function as a living, sustainable system which provides a high standard of living and a quality of life for today and for future generations. The NRCS does much of its work through partnerships and conservation programs associated with the Farm Bill.

Partnerships expand the reach and depth of conservation on the land. The federal, state, and nonprofit groups that comprise the Agency’s conservation partnerships have a diversity of expertise in discipline, area, and focus. As partners in conservation, these groups share their unique areas of expertise and conservation work to put more conservation on the ground.

NRCS provides conservation assistance in cooperation with each of its partners across the state through a locally-led approach. Colorado’s Department of Agriculture (CDA), the Colorado State Soil Conservation Board (CSSB), the Colorado Association of Conservation District (CADC) and the 76 local Conservation Districts (CD) are all critical partners for the Agency.
NRCS coordinates with the state’s 76 conservation districts to hold local work-group meetings in order to help identify natural resource concerns and to help guide Farm Bill program implementation at the local level.

Data generated by local work-groups is then forwarded to the State Technical Committee. State Technical Committees serve in an advisory capacity to the NRCS and other agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on the implementation of the natural resources conservation provisions of Farm Bill legislation.

Participants for both the local work-group and the State Technical Committees can include representatives from federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, American Indian Tribes, agricultural and environmental organizations, as well as agricultural producers.

FY-20 Top Five Natural Resource Concerns

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity
- Rangeland Health
- Soil Health
- Forest Health

“Listening at the local level is essential. Land-use and natural resources concerns vary from community to community as well as operation to operation. Gathering information and recommendations from the landowners we service is one of the best resources we have to establish priorities and to help address natural resource needs.”

Clint Evans
NRCS State Conservationist, CO
Top 10 Conservation Practices Installed in FY-20

Conserving natural resources on privately owned lands requires a diverse approach. A variety of options and solutions are needed to address and mitigate natural resource concerns while assisting landowners achieve their land-use goals.

Conservation practices are utilized to treat and combat natural resource concerns. FY-20 most utilized conservation practices in Colorado include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRACTICE</th>
<th>ACRES APPLIED</th>
<th>NUMBER APPLIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed Grazing</td>
<td>415,760</td>
<td>1,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Crop Rotation</td>
<td>202,322</td>
<td>1,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upland Wildlife Habitat Management</td>
<td>199,470</td>
<td>1,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Control</td>
<td>143,401</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residue and Tillage Management, No-till</td>
<td>110,357</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Activity Payment-Land Use</td>
<td>94,576</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Cover</td>
<td>93,341</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till</td>
<td>87,703</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrient Management</td>
<td>86,192</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques</td>
<td>75,205</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you know…
Livestock products account for 66% of the State’s annual $6.3 billion ag industry?

**PRESERVED Grazing**
Manage stocking rates and grazing periods to adjust the intensity, frequency, timing, duration, and distribution of grazing and/or browsing to meet the planned objectives for the plant communities, and the associated resources, including the grazing and/or browsing animals.

**Natural Resource BENEFITS**
- Improve or maintain desired species composition, structure and/or vigor of plant communities.
- Improve or maintain quantity and/or quality of forage for grazing and browsing animal’s health and productivity.
- Improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and/or quantity.
- Improve or maintain riparian and/or watershed function.
- Reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil health.
- Improve or maintain the quantity, quality, or connectivity of food and/or cover available for wildlife.
- Manage fine fuel loads to achieve desired conditions.
Natural Resources BENEFITS of Conservation Practices

- Woody Residue Treatment
  - Reduce hazardous fuels.
  - Reduce the risk of harmful insects and disease.
  - Protect/maintain air quality by reducing the risk of wildfire.
  - To improve access for management purposes.
  - Improve access to forage for livestock and wildlife.
  - Develop renewable energy systems.
  - Enhance aesthetics.
  - Reduce the risk of harm to humans and livestock.
  - Improve the soil organic matter.
  - Improve the site for natural or artificial regeneration.

- Streambank and Shoreline Protection
  - Prevent the loss of land or damage to land uses, or facilities adjacent to streambanks or constructed channels, shorelines of lakes, reservoirs, or esturaries.
  - Main the flow capacity of streams or channels.
  - Reduce the offsite or downstream effects of sediment resulting from bank erosion.
  - Improve or enhance stream corridor for fish and wildlife, aesthetics and recreation.

- Cover Crop, Residue and Tillage Management
  - Reduces wind and water erosion.
  - Increases soil organic matter.
  - Suppresses weeds.
  - Increases efficiency of soil nutrients.
  - Provides supplemental forage for livestock.
  - Provides food and escape cover for wildlife.
  - Increases plant-available moisture.

- Riparian Forest Buffers
  - Create shade to lower or maintain water temperatures to improve habitat for aquatic organisms.
  - Create or improve riparian habitat and provide a source of detritus and large woody debris.
  - Reduce excess amounts of sediment, organic material, nutrients and pesticides in surface runoff.
  - Reduce excess nutrients and other chemicals in shallow ground water flow.
  - Reduce pesticide drift entering the water body.
  - Restore riparian plant communities.
  - Increase carbon storage in plant biomass and soils.

- Irrigation Water Management
  - Improves irrigation water use efficiency.
  - Minimizes irrigation-induced soil erosion.
  - Decreases degradation of surface and groundwater resources.
  - Manages salts in the crop root zone.
  - Manages air, soil, or plant micro-climate.
  - Reduces energy use.
  - Provides water supply for such purposes as irrigation, recreation, livestock and wildlife.

HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE WORKING LANDS
Some landowners and natural resource stakeholders partner with NRCS, seeking only the Agency’s technical expertise and assistance. NRCS works with those entities through the CTA program. CTA is a Farm Bill program which helps the Agency provide land users assistance and opportunities to address concerns and problems related to the use of natural resources; i.e., help conduct resource assessments, develop practice designs, establish resource monitoring, or follow up on installed practices. One of the most popular tools the Agency provides through CTA is the development of a conservation plan.

- In FY-20, NRCS in Colorado wrote conservation technical assistance plans to treat over 623,916 acres and applied CTA on over 529,827 project acres.
NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.
The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS’ most flexible conservation program. Through EQIP, landowners receive financial and technical assistance to implement structural and management conservation practices which optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural land. NRCS offers a variety of opportunities for Colorado landowners to receive EQIP funding including targeting resource concern, customer demographics, and allocations based on the 21 NRCS resource teams located around the state.

- In FY-20, NRCS funded 527 contracts, helping address resource concerns on 236,291 acres, totaling $37.6M.
- From 2009–2020, NRCS in Colorado invested over $335M, towards 7,581 projects to treat nearly 5M acres.

FY-20 EQIP Funding Opportunities Included:
- Air Quality Initiative
- Animal Waste Management
- Beginning & Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher
- Conservation Activity Plan
- Colorado River Salinity Program
- Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Initiative
- Source Water Protection
- Ogallala TCP
- Soil Health Management TCP
- High Mountain Flood TCP
- Rio Grande Surface Water
- High Tunnels
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
- On-Farm Energy
- Organic Initiative
- WaterSMART
- Wildlife Habitat
- Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) Initiatives:
  ✓ Sage Grouse
The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help landowners conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements ACEP program, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments, private landowners, Land Trusts and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) component, NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands.

- In FY-20, NRCS funded 9 ALE and 1 WRE easements, totaling $5,100,437 and protecting over 8,000 acres.
The NRCS in Colorado celebrates its long-standing partnerships with landowners and other conservation stakeholders with goals that help protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of agricultural lands. Partnerships with organizations like the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association Land Trust (CCALT) and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) enable the NRCS to use its Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP) to help landowners limit nonagricultural that negatively affect the agricultural uses and conservation values of their land.

Salazar Family Conserves Historic Ranch

The Colorado Cattlemen’s Agriculture Land Trust (CCALT) has announced the successful conservation of the 500-acre Rancho la Luz property outside of Manassa.

This historic Conejos County ranch has been in agricultural production since the early 1800s, and with the aid of a conservation easement, it will remain undeveloped into the future. This project was made possible through a cooperative partnership between CCALT, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, and Rancho la Luz landowners John and Mary Lou Salazar.

Congressman John Salazar and the Salazar family have been avid supporters of ranchland conservation in Colorado since the early 1990s. As a fifth-generation seed-potato farmer in the San Luis Valley, John has always been intimately connected to working lands, rural communities and the rich cultural heritage of these landscapes. John’s belief in ranchland conservation came full circle in the conservation of Rancho la Luz, his own family’s property.

In the 1860s, a large portion of Rancho la Luz was settled and inhabited by Felipe Cantu, John Salazar’s great-grandfather. Over time, the property was divided up and sold as the family faced economic pressures and hardships. In 2000, John and his wife, Mary Lou, began buying back portions of the historic ranch, with the ultimate goal of conserving the property for future generations.
Today, John and Mary Lou are thrilled that the ranch and its associated water rights will remain in agricultural production and intact forever. Like many properties in the Valley, some of the water rights on Rancho la Luz were established as far back as 1857, with ditches that were originally dug by John’s ancestors.

Rancho la Luz is made up of several river bottom parcels nestled close to the San Luis Hills along the San Antonio and the Conejos Rivers. Named Rancho la Luz after John’s wife, Maria de la Luz, Rancho la Luz is defined by its natural beauty and abundant habitat for deer, elk and many other native species. Rancho la Luz is visible from the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway.

The Salazars utilize the property for grazing and to raise certified organic hay that is sold to dairies in Colorado, New Mexico and Texas.

"It has been an honor to work with John, Mary Lou, and their family on this important conservation project. The Salazar family’s commitment to Colorado and leadership in the San Luis Valley has brought attention to the important resources – natural and cultural – of this unique part of the state. Conserving Rancho la Luz builds on the conservation tradition of the Salazar family and many other farming and ranching families of the San Luis Valley who have committed to conserving their farms and ranches for the benefit of future generations of Coloradans,” said Erik Glenn, CCALT executive director.

“To have the opportunity to permanently conserve a portion of my great-grandfather’s ranch is humbling. This ranch means so much to our family and we are blessed to honor my great-grandfather’s legacy while at the same time creating opportunities for future generations of the Salazar family to continue our connection with the land and the San Luis Valley," said John Salazar.

“Helping to conserve Rancho la Luz through our Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) means helping Colorado maintain a tradition of agriculture in an area that is home to some of the State’s oldest ranches,” says Randy Randall, NRCS acting state conservationist in Colorado. “In addition, riparian areas in the active channels of the Conejos and San Antonio rivers will benefit from this easement. Through ACEP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. The Salazar Family’s Rancho la Luz property exemplifies the purpose of the ACEP program.”

“To have the opportunity to permanently conserve a portion of my great-grandfather’s ranch is humbling…”
The Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners earn payments for expanding conservation activities while maintaining agricultural production on their land. CStP also encourages the adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

- In FY-20, NRCS invested over $4.6M on 47 projects totaling over 111,000 acres.
- From 2010–2020, NRCS in Colorado invested over $230M on 2,167 projects, covering 5,605,802 acres.
The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) / Grasslands Conservation Initiative (GCI) is a new program implemented in 2019. Eligible lands are limited to cropland for which base acres have been maintained under FSA’s ARC/PLC and were planted to grass or pasture, including idle or fallow, during a specific period. Enrolled acreage must be managed consistently with a grassland conservation plan.

- In FY-20, NRCS in Colorado invested over $1M on 81 projects, totaling 11,152 acres.
The **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

- In FY-20, NRCS in Colorado invested in over $562,000 in 19 projects, totaling 2,527 acres.
- From 2015–2020, NRCS in Colorado has funded 80 projects, totaling over $3.9M on 18,871 acres.
The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) was established by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences.

**Typical Values at Risk:**
- Life and Safety
- Residential Properties
- Commercial Properties
- Transportation
- Water Infrastructure
- Utilities
- Endangered Species
- Cultural Resources

**Typical Recovery Measures:**
- Erosion & Sediment Control
- Streambank Protection
- Structure Protection
- Flood Diversions
- Debris Removal
- Dike Repairs
- Mulching & Seeding
- Building Protection
- Road Protection
# Colorado Fires EWP Response Summary (2018–2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCIDENT NAME</th>
<th>416 Fire/Flood</th>
<th>Spring Creek Fire/Flood</th>
<th>Lake Christine Fire</th>
<th>Hinsdale County Flood</th>
<th>Decker Fire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COUNTY</td>
<td>La Plata, CO</td>
<td>Huerfano &amp; Costilla</td>
<td>Pitkin, Eagle</td>
<td>Hinsdale</td>
<td>Chaffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE (ACRES)</td>
<td>54,129 burned</td>
<td>108,046 burned</td>
<td>12,556</td>
<td>9,015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY</td>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>La Veta, Walsenburg</td>
<td>Basalt</td>
<td>Lake City</td>
<td>Salida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPONSOR(S)</td>
<td>La Plata County</td>
<td>Huerfano County, Costilla County, 9 Town of La Veta, City of Walsenburg</td>
<td>Town of Basalt</td>
<td>Hinsdale County, Colorado Department of Public Safety</td>
<td>Chaffee County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EWP DOLLAR INVESTMENT</td>
<td>$1,575,923</td>
<td>$9,058,312</td>
<td>$1,041,277</td>
<td>$828,048</td>
<td>$173,112</td>
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<tr>
<td>VALUE OF PROPERTY PROTECTED</td>
<td>$11,549,785</td>
<td>$42,133,559</td>
<td>$5,609,948</td>
<td>$66,000,000</td>
<td>$5,401,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF SITES TREATED</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOMES</td>
<td>1. Debris Removed: 7,347 ft.</td>
<td>1. Debris Removed: 15,583 ft.</td>
<td>1. Protected: • # of Bldg-28 • Land-9 Ac. • Road-1.25 miles</td>
<td>1. Debris Removed: 13,175 ft.</td>
<td>1. Protected: • Land-20 • Road-1 mile • Streambanks-715 ft. • # of Utilities-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Protected: • # of Bldg-128 • Land-61 Ac. • Road-82 mile • Streambanks-3,786 ft. • # of Utilities-42</td>
<td>2. Protected: • # of Bldg-319 • Land-579 Ac. • Road-8.1 miles • Streambanks-21,135 ft. • # of Utilities-65</td>
<td>2. Non measurable benefits to the Town of Durango due to reduced erosion and sedimentation.</td>
<td>3. Non measurable benefits to the Town of Durango due to reduced erosion and sedimentation.</td>
<td>2. Installed: 300 ft of flood barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Non measurable benefits to the Town of Durango due to reduced erosion and sedimentation.</td>
<td>3. Installed: 26,023 LF. Flood Barriers/Diversions</td>
<td>3. Secured downstream areas along drainages and removed obstructions from culverts and other crossings.</td>
<td>4. Secured downstream areas along drainages and removed obstructions from culverts and other crossings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF PEOPLE BENEFITTED</td>
<td>&gt;52,514</td>
<td>&gt;9,137</td>
<td>&gt;1,715</td>
<td>&gt;824</td>
<td>&gt;8,485</td>
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