

Colorado State Conservation Board 2009 Matching Grants Project:
East Adams and Deer Trail Conservation Districts: Landowner Cost-Share Program

What natural resource problem(s) did the project address?

East Adams and Deer Trail Conservation Districts are located just east of Denver. Pooling their resources to maximize the number of landowners they reach, **the districts identified priorities in their Annual Plans of Work for which they could offer cost-share for landowners to install conservation practices - particularly for rangeland health.** Preference was given to producers that obtained at least 51% of their income from agriculture and depend on the land for their main livelihood. Overgrazing reduces grass vigor and productivity and facilitates soil erosion and weed infestation - 4-7 tons of soil per acre per year can be lost from wind erosion and 3-4 tons per acre from water erosion. Blowing soil also reduces air quality and sediment run off reduces water quality and disrupts water delivery systems. Undergrazing wastes valuable feed resources and can diminish the value of wildlife habitat since many prairie grasses evolved with grazing pressure as part of their ecology. Without grazing, these grasses cannot compete with other species and biodiversity is lost. **Overgrazing or undergrazing is not simply a product of the number of animals, but about how they are distributed across location and time. Access to water and fencing to control when and for how long an area is grazed are critical to optimizing grazing management.**

What was achieved?

- **Total of 13,405 acres of land positively impacted** by installed conservation practices
- **5,272 linear feet of tree windbreaks installed** reducing soil erosion by 30%, providing shelter for livestock and wildlife and reducing energy use by 30% around homesteads by mitigating weather effects.
- **Six stock watering tanks installed** to serve 1,520 acres - improving livestock grazing distribution to reduce over or under-grazing of land which can lead to soil erosion, weed infestation, reduced grass health and diversity.
- **4,551 linear feet of cross-fencing installed on 290 acres.** This allows more managed grazing so that a 10% livestock stocking rate increase is possible - improving both rangeland productivity and it's benefit to wildlife.
- **34 acres of native grasses seeded and 30 acres of introduced grasses.** Reseeding of eroded areas is necessary to stop the erosion when natural re-vegetation is not likely to occur or when weeds or other undesirable species are likely to colonize the bare ground.
- **37 landowner applications received and 22 funded**



Livestock tend to overgraze areas with plants they prefer or which are near their water source, and undergraze other areas. This leads to degradation of the land through soil erosion, weed infestation, and reduced plant diversity and productivity.

*Provision of widespread stock watering facilities and **cross-fencing (pictured)** allows for more managed grazing and resting of areas as needed for healthy plant growth and diversity. Higher stocking rates are possible while taking better care of the grass - a win-win situation!*