

Colorado State Conservation Board 2009 Matching Grants Project:
San Luis Valley Conservation District Association: Conservation Education Program

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

The five conservation districts that make up the San Luis Valley (SLV) Conservation District Association have a strong commitment to conservation education. They fund an **Education Specialist** to implement a far-reaching educational program that **influences a broad spectrum of area youth**- youth who will be many of the SLV future farmers, ranchers, conservation planners and decision makers. The **education specialist also provides teachers with materials and training to integrate conservation into the Colorado Content Standards for education in their curriculums** through topics such as soil, water, range and wetlands. In 2007 the Conservation Education Program received an award for excellence from the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education. The education specialist position does not yet have ongoing secure funding sources. **CSCB Matching Grant funds were use to further the efforts to encourage and enable teachers to integrate conservation and agriculture into their curriculum .**

What was achieved?

- **10-day Teacher Workshop** held in June at Trinchera Ranch, east of Fort Garland, for **60 teachers from across the state** focusing on water conservation, sustainability and the Colorado Content Standards. Emphasis on how to utilize "hands-on" learning experiences in an outdoor environment for teaching.
- **"Ready to Go" conservation curriculum piloted in 14 schools** using hand-on, ready to go lessons in an easy format usable even by novice teachers for students grades 5 through 12. Total of 1,854 students and teachers involved. **Curriculum based on linking scientific concepts to sound natural resource management decision-making.**
- Pilot program based on 2008 student learning being utilized to **assess if participation in the outdoor learning program results in higher test scores.**
- **Many other activities undertaken by the Education Specialist** - 1,218 students involved in groundwater modeling, 142 students participated in Project Learning for identifying long-term solutions to real-world problems, 8,013 youth and adults exposed to River Trailer as model of watershed water flow, several tours and events held that connected with over 5,000 youth and adults.



An understanding of science and using real-world outdoor situations are two of the key tenets that the San Luis Valley Conservation Education Specialist has used in bringing natural resource management into the schools curriculum. Pilot programs are underway and higher Colorado Content Standard test scores are anticipated.