

Colorado State Conservation Board 2008 Matching Grants Project:  
Baca County Conservation District: Stock Water Development on CRP

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

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a federal cost-share program developed principally to encourage farmers to keep cover on fragile soils that are prone to erosion. In Baca County 58% (153,361 acres) of the CRP enrolled land expires from enrollment in 2009 and is not clear how many acres will be eligible or chosen by landowners to re-enroll. Baca County experienced some of Colorado's worst soil erosion problems in the Dust Bowl era when millions of acres of grassland were plowed up. The District is determined to apply the lessons learned from history. Water availability is critical to good pasture management and thus increased profitability of grazing systems. **Cost-share of stock water tanks helps make grazing an attractive option for CRP expired lands - keeping permanent vegetative cover on the soil, rather than plowing up for cropping and creating erosion risks.** An acre of Baca County soil can lose an average of 3 tons of topsoil per year.

**What was achieved?**

- **1,801 acres of land** due to expire from CRP in 2009 have water facilities installed and commitment to retaining permanent vegetative cover for at least 10 years.
- Estimated **5,400 tons of topsoil saved annually** by preventing conversion of CRP to cropland.
- **Four wells drilled and pumps** installed - solar panels used for pump energy source
- **3 livestock tanks** and **5,000 feet of pipeline** installed
- Landowners provided **70% matching funds**
- As another future incentive to keep lands in permanent vegetative cover, Baca County Conservation District is pursuing an agricultural carbon offset pilot program with the Colorado Department of Agriculture.



**Wellcasing being cemented in**



*Cost-sharing the development of livestock water helps make grazing a more attractive option than plowing for CRP expiring lands. If these lands are plowed out soil erosion could be a serious problem again in eastern Colorado.*