

Colorado State Conservation Board 2008 Matching Grants Project:
Douglas County Conservation District: Forests and Noxious Weeds

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

The Douglas County Conservation District is an area that was impacted by the ravaging Hayman Fire of 2002. Areas directly impacted by the fire are still prone to soil erosion as vegetation struggles to establish, especially on steep slopes where rain washes away soil most easily. The threat of wildfire continues to be a real concern in the area. Although fire is natural part of forest ecology, historical suppression of fires in the west have led to over-dense forests which have unnaturally high "fuel loads" (i.e. trees) that cause hotter and more damaging fires than would normally occur. **The District offered cost-share to landowners willing to thin their forests in an effort to restore them to a more natural state and reduce the risk and intensity of future fires.**

The Douglas County District also wanted to promote responsible weed control for Colorado listed A and B noxious weed species. With help from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), integrated weed management plans were drawn up for landowners that **prescribed mechanical, chemical, biological, or combined methods, to most effectively treat noxious weed species. Cost-share was then offered to implement the treatments.**

What was achieved?

- **300 acres of forest thinned to restore forest health and reduce wildfire impacts** - trees chipped as nutrient mulch for the forest floor
- **117 acres of critical planting with native seed** carried out on high erosion forest sites
- **Integrated pest (weed) management plans written and implemented for 494 acres of land.**
- **Noxious weed species treated** were: leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, Canada thistle, scotch thistle, dalmation toadflax, mullein, yellow toadflax.
- Landowners involved in weed treatments to be contacted for two years to ensure they are **continuing to implement their conservation plan so that successful long term weed control is accomplished.**
- 26 landowner applications submitted to District and **funding approved for 16 landowners and 18 projects.**
- Landowners made matching **contributions of 2:1** fro cost-share dollars and over **\$16,000** of in-kind labor donated by NRCS.



Following the huge Hayman Fire of 2002, the need to thin forests to reduce unnaturally high timber and brush fuel loads became especially recognized in the District.



Noxious Weeds, such as this dalmation toadflax, spread quickly and are difficult to control. An integrated approach using appropriate different methods is generally most effective.