

Colorado State Conservation Board 2009 Matching Grants Project:  
Kiowa Conservation District: Watershed Small Dam Maintenance

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

Kiowa Creek has 75,520 acres in its watershed, consisting of rangeland, farmland and residential land. **Forty-five small public earthen dams on private property help prevent flooding.** Without the dams, historical data indicates that an additional 2,500-3,000 acres of agricultural lands is susceptible to flood with a potential \$1.7 million in damages in today's money if flooding occurs. Similar or higher damages could be expected by the towns of Elbert and Kiowa and \$1.3 million in damages to roads and bridges. These figures are based on data from a 1935 flood which also killed 7 people. More flooding occurred in 1965.

Many of the earthen dams constructed to prevent flooding are in need of repair before they deteriorate and become at high risk of failure. The dams are often 40-50 years old and landowners are not always aware of the significance of the dams on their property, or perhaps even know what the structures are. **Kiowa Conservation district has raised funds, including Matching Grant funds, to provide education to landowners about the dams on their property and to carry out repairs where they have authority to do so.**

**What was achieved?**

- **20 dams repaired and/or had maintenance work performed by local contractors** - such as dirt moving work, outlet pipe repair and tree/shrub/debris removal.
- **Targeted dams were those with most need for repair-** one was at the headwater of Kiowa Creek and impacted protection of the entire watershed.
- **869 informational brochures and request for future funds for dam maintenance were mailed out** - four times previous such efforts involving 10 new donors and raising \$4,520 towards the district O&M fund for future dam repairs and maintenance. This fund is made up entirely of donations.
- **The Matching Grant \$25,000 award was matched by \$28,181 hard cash from the District O&M fund and \$17,773 in technical design and work certification donated** by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
- **Articles in local press and presentation at District Annual Meeting** (151 attendees) given about the Kiowa Creek watershed protection efforts. **Tour of flood control dams** conducted and 10 landowners attended.



*Small earthen dams protect against potential floods that could cause millions of dollars of damage to residential and agricultural land in the Kiowa Creek watershed. On the left, the picture shows an outlet pipe from such a dam without a positive grade and that was half under water. On the right, the picture shows water draining freely away from the dam once the outlet channel has been cleaned out.*