

Colorado State Conservation Board 2008 Matching Grants Project:
Olney Boone Conservation District: Maintaining Vegetation on Fragile Soils

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 Crowley and Pueblo counties **soil erosion can exceed 40 tons/acre per year**. Since 1985 85% of non-irrigated cropland (42,000 acres) have been enrolled in CRP enrolled and planted to grass cover. **Much of that land is soon due to expire from CRP contracts and there may be temptation to plow again** if re-enrollment is not possible or crop commodity prices are high at the time of expiration. To mitigate such temptation, the Olney Boone Conservation District **offered landowner 50% cost-share incentives to maintain the land as grass range rather than plow to crops**.

What was achieved?

- **5,000 acres of land due to expire from CRP will remain in grass cover** rather than be plowed out and become subject to high soil erosion risks.
- Three producers installed **fencing to allow rotational grazing that allows optimal grazing pattern** (high intensity, low duration followed by long rest) for range health and productivity.
- Two recycled tire **stock tanks and pipeline installed to distribute water supply for livestock and wildlife**. Stock tend to over-graze land near water sources and under-graze land further away, deteriorating range quality. Additional watering points are also often needed to implement fenced rotational grazing systems where current water facilities are inadequate to cover all rotational areas.
- **Solar panels installed to renovate existing livestock well** through renewable energy source for pumping water.



Conservation Districts assist landowners in taking good care of Colorado's natural resources. Maintaining fragile soils under the permanent vegetative cover of rangeland is a sound investment in Colorado's present and future soil resource. Olney Boone District encourages landowners do this by sharing costs of conservation practices - such as water points and fencing, that enables best rangeland management practices.