

Colorado State Conservation Board 2007 Matching Grants Project: San Juan Conservation District: Conservation Helping Hand

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

San Juan Conservation District is located in Archuleta County. The District had identified water management and rangeland/forest health as key conservation issues in the District. Similarly to several other Districts, it also faced the issue of increasing small acreage landowners who had little experience or knowledge in natural resource management. **The District designed a two-pronged method to address its educational and on-the-ground conservation needs. Two workshops were held followed by opportunities for cost-share assistance for conservation practice and planning implementation.** One workshop addressed irrigation water, livestock husbandry and land stewardship on small acreages. The second covered water management.

What was achieved?

- **March 2007 workshop** addressed irrigation water, livestock husbandry and land stewardship on small acreages for rangeland health and productivity. 20 landowners attended.
- **August 2007 workshop** introduced landowners to drop structures and pipe extensions for ditch erosion control. They were also able to see a gated pipeline in operation. Discussed the effects of excessive irrigation on plant species and soils and application techniques for polyacrylamide (PAM) used to help reduce ditch and pond leakage. Use of atmometers, tensiometers, and water mark sensors demonstrated to optimize the volume, frequency and application rate of irrigation water for increased water efficiency. Water Commissioner Bob Formwalt, discussed water measuring devices, water accounting, water decrees, and abandonments. 20 landowners attended.
- Two landowners **installed gated pipe** for water use efficiency gains from 35/40% to 60%
- One landowner **installed K-line** for water use efficiency gains from 35/40% to 70%
- Five landowners **installed diversion structures** to increase irrigation system efficiency by 15% and reduce sediment/erosion in the creek.
- Two landowners **thinned 12 acres of forest** for improved wildlife habitat and decreased wildfire risks.



Thinning trees and removing ladder fuels reduces crown and abnormally hot fires risk, improves forest health for disease resistance, and can create defensible space and improved wildlife habitat.



Simple ditch diversions to decrease sediment and erosion in creeks and improve water use efficiency by 15%.