

Colorado State Conservation Board 2009 Matching Grants Project:
Douglas County Conservation District: Leafy Spurge Control in Bayou Gulch

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

Leafy spurge is a noxious weed on the Colorado Noxious Weed B-list. It is an attractive plant that can wreak havoc on agricultural land - in places where it has reached economically uncontrollable levels it has decreased agricultural land values. The plant has root extending to 30 feet, can produce 130,000 seeds from one plant and contains a caustic milky sap when damaged.

The district identified Bayou Gulch as an area where leafy spurge had begun to infest and in such an early stage that eradication was a possibility. Bayou Gulch is a tributary to Cherry Creek where patches of leafy spurge are emerging. Removing or reducing upstream seed sources could help protect this important watercourse from increasing encroachment of leafy spurge. Riparian areas are of high wildlife and recreational value and infestations of noxious weeds tend to devalue them considerably by replacing native vegetation.

What was achieved?

- 29 Landowners with leafy spurge infestations on land along Bayou Gulch identified through the county assessors office and sent information about participating in the leafy spurge control effort.
- 11 landowners expressed interest and **mapping and treatment plans drawn up** for their infestations
- 10 landowners signed treatment plans and 8 began implementation through **mechanical and chemical treatment methods**.
- 70 acres of leafy spurge treated
- Landowners provided with **educational information** from the Douglas County Weed Inspector and other partners about leafy spurge growth characteristic and treatment options ranging from mechanical and chemical to biological control agents.
- Landowners provided **66% matching funds for weed treatments and over \$9,000 of in-kind donations** from district, county, state and federal partners
- **All landowners participating in 2009 efforts have enrolled for 2010 leafy spurge treatment and all landowners in the affected area will be re-contacted in 2010 to encourage participation.**



Early in the year the yellow-green blooms of leafy spurge reveal the extent of its encroachment in a Douglas County pasture. Left untreated, leafy spurge can overtake vast swaths of land to the extent that it becomes unusable for agriculture and completely destroys native wildlife habitat.