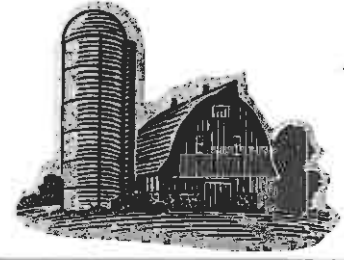


# Rocky Mountain Conservation Times

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## OCTOBER 2017

### USDA EMPLOYEES

#### NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

##### Canon City Service Center:

Rick Romano, District Conservationist  
Josh Tashiro, Rangeland Mgt. Specialist  
Jeremy Buss, Soil Conservationist  
Rob Fontaine, Civil Engineering Tech  
Cheryl Lawson, Farm Bill Clerk  
Kara Harders, Regional Specialist, Small Acreage Mgmt

##### Silver Cliff Service Center:

Beth Fortman, Soil Conservationist  
Carol Kuisle-Franta, Soil Conservation Tech

##### Salida Service Center:

William Gardiner, District Conservationist

#### FSA SERVICE AGENCY

Brent Fillmore,  
County Executive Director  
Julie McCullar,  
Program Tech

#### County FSA Committee

Tony Telck,  
Lance Tyler,  
Don Camper  
Lee Rooks  
Theresa Springer  
Vacant

#### FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 275-4465 x 3417

##### Meeting Time:

7:00 p.m. 1st Wednesday of  
each month, USDA Service  
Center, Canon City

GARY RATKOVICH, President  
LINDA STONE, Vice Pres.  
TONY TELCK, Sec/Treas.  
RICH GREEN, Member  
TOM LINZA, Member  
VACANT, Alternate Member  
DEBBIE MITCHELL, District Manager  
BRITTANY PIERCE, Farm Bill Tech  
MELANIE SCAVARDA, Outreach Tech  
[www.fremontcd.org](http://www.fremontcd.org)

#### LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 539-7331

##### Meeting Time:

6:00 p.m. 3rd Tuesday of each month,  
10544 Hwy 24 South, Leadville

RAY DAWSON, President  
BRENT GRONKE, Vice Pres.  
EDWARD SHOBER, Sec/Treas.  
ROBERT HOCKETT, Member  
MARY SCHROEDER, Member  
JOAN DAWSON, District Manager

#### CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 783-2481 X100

##### Meeting Time:

2:30 p.m. 2nd Thursday of each  
month, USDA Service Center, Silver  
Cliff, CO

ROBERT MILLER, President  
VACANT, Vice Pres.  
SHERON BERRY, Sec / Treas  
SCOTT SCHOULTZ, Member  
VACANT, Member  
CAROL KUISLE-FRANTA, District Mgr.  
DIANA COX-FINGER, Office Manager  
[custercountycd@gmail.com](mailto:custercountycd@gmail.com)  
[www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org)

#### UPPER ARKANSAS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(719) 530-3968

##### Meeting Time:

6:00 p.m. 1st Monday of each month,  
U.S. Forest Service Building, Salida

BRADY EVERETT, President  
ED BERG, Vice Pres.  
CHRISTY FITZPATRICK, Treasurer  
SANDY CRUZ, Member  
NANCY ROBERTS, Member  
DAVID HILL, Member  
SANDY GARDUNIO, District Manager  
[upperarkansascd@gmail.com](mailto:upperarkansascd@gmail.com)

The Custer County Conservation District is holding its 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner/ Meeting Thursday, November 2nd, beginning at 6 pm at the Cliff Lanes Community Room in Westcliffe. The evening's program will include the opportunity to judge the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Conservation Poster Contest entries, a brief presentation on current conservation projects in the county, and also information on how local landowners can voice natural resources concerns in Custer County. The Conservation District is pleased to have Blake Osborn as the evening's Keynote Speaker. Blake is the CSU Extension Regional Water Specialist for the Peaks & Plains Region. Blake is familiar with Custer County as he has conducted water research here. His presentation will address water quality, water management and watershed planning for the area. For information or to make reservations visit call 783-2481 Ext 100 or [www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org). Please make your reservations by Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Upper Arkansas Cooperative Weed Management Area will be holding its Annual Weed Conference at the Abbey in Canon City, on Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> from 8:45 a.m.– 3 p.m. Please contact the District Manager at [custercountycd@gmail.com](mailto:custercountycd@gmail.com) or 719-783-2481 Ext. 100.

The Fremont Conservation District will be holding a Small Acreage Management Workshop on November 4, 2017 at the 4H Building in Canon City, CO. Some of the topics covered will be: noxious and native weed identification, pasture management, soil health, end of season yard and tree management, and wildlife in urban areas. For more information, or to RSVP, please contact Debbie Mitchell at [info@fremontcd.org](mailto:info@fremontcd.org) or 719-315-3417, by October 27, 2017. We look forward to seeing you there!!

Each local Conservation District encourages landowners who have an interest in agriculture, conservation, and education and would like to serve on a local board to contact their Conservation District—information on the front of the newsletter.

# DISTRICT NEWS

## Colorado's Intricate Ditch System has Helped Agriculture in Colorado Thrive for Hundreds of Years

Many early ditches in Colorado were constructed by miners to divert stream water for their mining operations without regard for water access rights. Others were constructed by farmers who moved north from Mexico and implemented their traditional irrigation systems. One of these systems, the San Luis People's Ditch in the San Luis Valley, has been in operation since its construction in 1852 and is the oldest irrigation system in continuous use in Colorado.

Today it is no longer legal to go out and dig a diversion ditch and help yourself to water from a river or stream, even if it crosses your property. Water projects, no matter how small, involve a complex legal process of determining what water is available to appropriate, or use. That's where ditch companies can be useful in providing water access rights to their owners.

Ditch companies in Colorado purchase water rights and develop storage and delivery systems to their members, generally for irrigation purposes. Farmers or ranchers purchase stock in a ditch company and then are entitled to a certain amount of water from a ditch based on how much stock they own. They also pay annual fees that cover the use and maintenance of the ditch system, which includes the services of the ditch rider who is responsible for regular maintenance and operation of the headgates.

If you hold shares to water access rights on a ditch that runs through your property, you have a deeded right to use a certain amount of water during the irrigation season.

But if you do not own shares on a ditch that runs through your property, you cannot take or divert water from the ditch in any fashion, yet you must allow the ditch owner or representatives to access the ditch for maintenance.

<http://www.watercolorado.com/resources/ditches.shtml>

## Fremont Conservation District has started two new programs

The **Fremont Conservation District** purchased a No-Till Seed Drill in May 2017 to rent out to Fremont County residents who are within the District boundaries. Instead of turning the soil over in a field, this seed drill has front "openers" that cut a trench, followed by the double disc seed drill that places the seed at the proper depth. The following packer wheels cover and pack the soil for good seed-to-soil contact. There are three seed boxes to use with this seed drill, depending on what is being planted. Contact the Fremont Conservation District at 719-315-3417 for more information on rental prices and availability. The seed drill is being housed at D & K Supply in Penrose, but rented through the District office.

The **Fremont Conservation District** has partnered with the Florence High School FFA to start a Baling Twine Recycle program in Fremont County. The FFA students are in charge of this program and have reached out to several local businesses for recycle locations. These are: D & K Supply in Penrose, True Value Hardware on Highway 50 (serving the Florence area), Tractor Supply in Canon City, and, Twin Enviro in Penrose. Each location has bins for receiving the baling twine. When dropping off the twine, make sure it is free of debris such as trash and field scraps, no net / sisal twine and no vet needles / hooks. This service is being provided to assist in protecting wildlife and livestock, from eating the twine or getting tangled in the twine.

For more information on this program visit <http://www.twinerecycling.com>. The District office also has a brochure available with more information.

# AGENCY NEWS

## FARM SERVICE AGENCY PROGRAMS

### **Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2018 Coverage**

#### ***Secretary Allows Producers to Opt Out***

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that starting Sept. 1, 2017, dairy producers can enroll for 2018 coverage in the Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy). Secretary Sonny Perdue has utilized additional flexibility this year by providing dairy producers the option of opting out of the program for 2018.

To opt out, a producer should not sign up during the annual registration period. By opting out, a producer would not receive any MPP-Dairy benefits if payments are triggered for 2018. Full details will be included in a subsequent Federal Register Notice. The decision would be for 2018 only and is not retroactive.

The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the producer.

For more information, visit FSA online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy) or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the MPP-Dairy.

### **Eligibility for Elections for the 2017 County Committee**

Elections for USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Fremont County Committee are underway.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. The 2017 election in Fremont County will be conducted for the representative Local Administrative Area (LAA): 2, Florence, East Canon and Lincoln Park.

County committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on Nov. 6, 2017. The last day to return completed ballots to the USDA service center is Dec. 4, 2017.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections).

### **Update Your Records**

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database. If you have any unreported changes of address or zip code or an incorrect name or business name on file they need to be reported to our office. Changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, need to be reported to our office as well. Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

If you have any updates or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

### **Fremont, Custer, Chaffee, Lake, Counties Producers Urged to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Crop Sales Deadlines**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the crop deadline of December 1, 2017.

For more information on NAP, service fees, premiums and sales deadlines, contact the Fremont County FSA office at 719-315-3416 or visit the web at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap).

**\*\*\*New Phone Number: 719-315-3416\*\*\***

# FREMONT COUNTY WEED MANAGEMENT

My name is **Nick Bankston** and I recently began working as the **Weed Management Director for Fremont County**. I grew up in Wisconsin and attended UW-Madison, where I earned my degree in conservation biology. Since then I have worked in six different states and three national parks on a variety of ecological projects. I moved to Denver in 2012 when I got a job working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife monitoring aquatic invasive species throughout the state. I also worked for the City of Boulder managing invasive plants, which helped prepare me for my current position. I'm looking forward to the challenge of controlling the noxious weeds found throughout the Upper Arkansas and collaborating with other government agencies, non-profits, and private landowners to accomplish this goal. I hope to uphold the quality maintained by my predecessors at the weed management department here in Fremont County, and over the next year I hope to address the newly discovered giant reed populations while continuing to eradicate elongated mustard, Japanese knotweed, yellow starthistle, and the other noxious weeds found here. I look forward to meeting and working with everyone in the area! My contact information is: phone number 719-276-7317, cell phone number 719-429-4753, and, email [Nick.bankston@fremontco.com](mailto:Nick.bankston@fremontco.com).

For assistance with noxious weeds, contact Fremont County Weed Management, 719-276-7317; for Custer County, contact Fremont County Weed Management at 719-276-7317; and, Chaffee County Weed Department, 719-539-3455.

**USDA Rural Development (RD)** offers financial and technical assistance to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural America. As the lead Federal agency for rural development needs, RD helps rural communities grow and prosper. Check their website for the variety of programs they offer at [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov). They have more than 40 loan, grant and technical assistance programs that they offer.

The office for assistance to Custer, Chaffee and Fremont Counties is located in Alamosa, Colorado. Their phone number is 719-589-5661, extension 4. The office for assistance to Lake County is in Delta, Colorado. Their phone number is 970-874-5735, extension 4. There is also a toll free number, 1-800-670-6553, that can be called for assistance.

## NRCS PROGRAMS

**The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

**The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

**The StrikeForce Initiative** is designed to better serve persistent poverty communities and socially disadvantaged farmers through the coordination of activities among USDA agencies and the use of Community Based Organizations.

**Conservation Client Gateway** is an NRCS website that provides secure access to conservation plans, practice implementation schedules, financial applications and contracts, documents and payment information. Conservation Client Gateway is a voluntary program and an option to long distance travel to your local field office. For step-by-step instructions on getting started, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway>, or, call 970-372-4200 for additional assistance

# DISTRICT NEWS

**Lake County Conservation District** held their Annual Meeting on April 18, 2017 at the Colorado Mountain College Coronado Café in Leadville. There were 40 people in attendance. The winner of the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Poster contest was recognized and honored. A power point presentation of the Upper Arkansas River Restoration Project UARRP was presented by Greg Brunjak, Project Manager. The presentation showed what has been done last year. He explained the scope of the project. Lake County Commissioner Bruce Hix gave a presentation on some of the projects that the County Commissioners are doing and plan to do in the future. Door prizes were presented throughout the evening.

**Lake County Conservation District** awarded two scholarships to two deserving Seniors of the Lake County High School graduating class of 2017 in the amount of \$500.00 each. Ryan Osborne and Matthew Graham were the recipients.

Work has been continuing on the **Upper Arkansas River Restoration project (UARRP)**.

**The Upper Arkansas Conservation District** has a new district manager. Sandy Gardunio has taken over for Lucy Waldo. She can be contacted by email [upperarkansascd@gmail.com](mailto:upperarkansascd@gmail.com).

**UACD** held our first annual Rancher's picnic at the Chaffee Count Fair in August. It was a great success. We are looking to make this an annual event, and would like to thank everyone who participated.

**UACD** is now on Facebook! Please like the page "Upper Arkansas Conservation District" to be kept updated on future events, and happenings in the district.

**COLORADO LAND LINK A PATHWAY TO LAND ACCESS** — For more information visit [www.GuidestoneColorado.org](http://www.GuidestoneColorado.org) or, contact David Lynch, Colorado Land Link director, at [david@guidestonecolorado.org](mailto:david@guidestonecolorado.org) or by calling 719-966-2237

The **Custer County Conservation District** is looking for landowners living in Custer County that would be interested in serving on the District's Board of Supervisors. A district supervisor is a local board member elected, or appointed, to assess local conservation needs and to develop conservation programs to address these needs. A supervisor is expected to attend monthly district meetings, participate on district committees or work groups, be willing to represent the citizens of the District in regard to conservation issues, to work effectively with conservation partners. If you are interested in locally led conservation education and programs please contact the District Manager at 719-783-2481 Ext. 100.

**Fremont Conservation District** is now on Facebook! Please like the page "Fremont Conservation District" to be kept updated on future events, and happenings in the district.

**Florence High School** will be hosting a Fall Festival at the High School on November 9, 2017. This Festival starts after school around 4:00 p.m. and goes until about 7:30 pm. NRCS will have their Soil Tunnel at this event—come learn all about soil! The Soil Tunnel will emphasize the composting efforts of the FFA students, along with their other recycling and upcycling

# AGENCY NEWS

## CSU EXTENSION SMALL ACREAGE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR IN FREMONT COUNTY

**Kara Harders is a new Small Acreage Management Coordinator** in the Peaks and Plains region of Colorado, working out of the Canon City Field Office in Fremont county. This is a partnership position with Colorado State University Extension and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). She consults with small acreage landowners on land stewardship practices such as crop and range management, as well as both large and small types of livestock. She hopes to help Colorado land owners reach their property goals whether they be environmental, aesthetic, financial, or enjoyment based. Additionally, she works with conservation districts in the area to help plan and promote workshops.

Kara earned her B.S. from Colorado State in 2012 in Agricultural Education before earning a M.S. in Agricultural Education and Communications from University of Florida in Spring of 2017. Prior to this position Kara worked for a large-scale hay, crop and horse operation in North Central Colorado. In addition to all things agriculture, Kara enjoys traveling, trying to learn new languages, and being outdoors.

## 2017 Census of Agriculture

The Canon City Service Center was visited recently by Bill Meyer. Bill is the Regional Director for the USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) in Lakewood. Bill is asking for local farmers and ranchers to participate in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The Census will be mailed to you in Mid-December, but you can fill out the questionnaire online at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or by mail. This is the most comprehensive set of county agricultural data and it is done every 5 years. It is designed to be a complete count of America's Farms and Ranches and the people that operate them. If you receive a Census form in the mail, response in mandatory by federal law, it is also very important that you fill it out.

The information is used to provide stakeholders, community leaders, lawmakers and individual farm operators with the most comprehensive and accurate picture of American agriculture. Data from the Census is used to guide public policy and programs. The Census provides information on land use and ownership; operator characteristics and demographics; production practices; income and expenditures. The Census is used by producers, Congress, agri-business, policymakers, researchers, local governments, and many others for reasons such as developing farm policy and programs; shaping local government policy; determining infrastructure funding; making important agri-business decisions.

The USDA uses the information to make better decisions about farm safety net programs and policies; ensure the future of the agriculture industry in America by developing programs and priorities to help new and beginning farmers get started and stay in business; establish county-level participation in USDA programs and services using farm operation baselines; identify the number size and type of animal operations and their distribution at the county level; obtain information on population, income, education, employment, Federal funds, organic agriculture, farm characteristics, farm financial indicators, top commodities and exports for each state.

A farm is defined as any place that produced and sold, or had the potential to sell, at least \$1000 of agricultural products during the Census year (2017). Many people who do not think of themselves as a farmer actually meet the definition according to the Census. If you own horses, backyard chickens, large urban gardens, etc., you may qualify as a farmer.

If you have any questions about the Census visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or call 1-888-424-7828. Or you can call Bill Meyer at (720) 787-3150 or (800) 392-3202.

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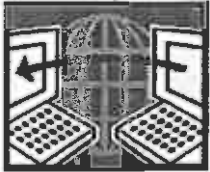
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