

# Rocky Mountain Conservation Times



USDA Service Center • 248 Dozier Ave. • Canon City, CO 81212

## OCTOBER 2023

### CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

Custer County Conservation District is holding their annual meeting October 12, 2023, beginning at 5:30 PM in the All Aboard Westcliffe Heritage building at 110 Rosita Ave., Westcliffe, CO. Reservations are required and must be made on the district's website, [www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org) and click on the "Store" tab. The keynote speaker for the evening will be the Assistant State Engineer, division 2, Colorado Water Resources. The title of her talk is "Nonconforming Ponds". RSVP for this event, by October 6, 2023. We look forward to seeing you!!



#### FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT (719) 315-3417

**Meeting Time:**

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

JOHN DANIELS, President  
BART ADAMS, Vice Pres.  
TIM MORSE, Sec/Treasurer  
JAMIE GRISENTI, Supervisor  
KATHLEEN DRENCKHAHN, Supervisor  
JERAMY MCNEELY, Alternate Supervisor  
DEBBIE MITCHELL, District Manager  
MIA CORY, Outreach Technician  
STEVE STULTZ, District Conservation Technician

[www.fremontcd.org](http://www.fremontcd.org) / also on Facebook

#### CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT (719) 371-0725

**Meeting Time:**

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

ROBERT MILLER, President  
SHERON BERRY, Vice Pres.  
BEAU BANNING, Secretary  
RYDER BECKER, Treasurer  
JOE BARNES, Member at Large  
VACANT, District Manager / ROBERT MILLER, Acting District Manager

[custercountycd@gmail.com](mailto:custercountycd@gmail.com)  
[www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.custercountyconservationdistrict.org)

#### TELLER—PARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT 719-472-3671

**Meeting Time:**

10 a.m. 2nd Wednesday of each month, USDA Service Center, Woodland Park (in person)

LAURIE GLAETH, President  
JOHN VANCE, Vice President  
REBECCA PRUITT, Sec / Treasurer  
WENDY DILLENSCHNEIDER, Supervisor  
GREG LIVERMAN, Supervisor  
MARISA NEUZIL, District Manager

[www.tellerparkcd.org](http://www.tellerparkcd.org) / also on Facebook

#### LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT (719) 486-0537

**Meeting Time:**

6:00 p.m. 3rd Tuesday of each month, at the Lake County Courthouse

For more information:  
[www.lakecountycd.com](http://www.lakecountycd.com)

#### UPPER ARKANSAS CONSERVATION DISTRICT (719) 626-3182

**Meeting Time:**

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

[upperarkansascd@gmail.com](mailto:upperarkansascd@gmail.com)  
Also on Facebook

## USDA EMPLOYEES

#### NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE *Canon City Service Center:*

Greg Langer, Resource Team Lead  
Josh Tashiro, Natural Resource Specialist  
Victoria "Dixie" Crowe, Rangeland Mgt. Specialist  
Kari Moore, Soil Conservationist  
Rob Fontaine, Civil Engineering Tech  
Carol Kuisle-Franta, Program Support Specialist  
Bonface Manono, Mtn Region Extension Regional Specialist

#### *Silver Cliff Service Center:*

Beth Fortman, Soil Conservationist  
Rob Bidner, Forester  
Carol Kuisle-Franta, Program Support Specialist

#### *Salida Service Center:*

Joni Burr, Resource Conservationist

#### *Woodland Park Service Center:*

Chris Smith, Soil Conservationist  
Joslyn Martin, Soil Conservationist  
Kyle Deschenes, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

#### FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Megan Colletti, County Executive Director  
Jacob Rideout, Program Technician

#### *County FSA Committee*

Lee Rooks, Chairman  
Lance Tyler, Vice Chairman  
Mannie Colon  
Webb Smith  
Jessica Oldendorf

*FSA Direct Telephone Number*  
719-315-3492

**ALL SERVICE CENTERS  
ARE OPEN—SEE  
CONTACT INFORMATION  
ON BACK PAGE**

# FARM SERVICE AGENCY NEWS

## Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

NAP provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including excessive wind and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing).

To receive payment, you had to purchase NAP coverage for 2023 crops and file a notice of loss the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.

For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your Fremont County USDA Service Center at 719-315-3492 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap).



## Apply for Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Custer and Fremont County are eligible to apply for the 2023 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on native pasture and improved pasture.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2024, for 2023 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact your Fremont County USDA Service Center at 719-315-3492 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

## **SILVER CLIFF FIELD OFFICE**

**Rob Bidner** is the new forester for the NRCS in the Silver Cliff office as of August of 2023. Rob has a Bachelors of Science in Biology from Central Michigan University (CMU) and a Masters of Science in Ecology from Utah State University (USU) where he studied aspen forests on private lands in Southern Utah. Rob has had various field and laboratory jobs including working on Americorps crews, working as a technician at USU, working as a technician at a cattle ranch in Fremont County, teaching the laboratory portion for applied ecology classes, and managing crews in private forestry here in Custer County. I am excited to begin my position with the NRCS so that I can help implement practices that improve the forest health in Southern Colorado and to help landowners achieve their goals for there property. My contact number is 719-735-3011 or [Robert.Bidner@usda.gov](mailto:Robert.Bidner@usda.gov).

# NRCS NEWS

## 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.

**Conservation Planning First** are plans that are developed by technical experts, using state of the art technology and help landowners assess and inventory their resources and make decisions to enable them to reach their land-use, natural resource and often times bottom line goals through increased productivity of farms, ranches and forestlands.

An NRCS conservation plan includes: 1. Operator/landowner objectives, 2. Aerial photographs or a diagram of the fields, 3. Soils map and soil descriptions, 4. Resources inventory data which can include forage or crop production potential or potential livestock carry capacity, 5. List of treatment decisions, 6. Location and schedule for applying conservation practices and systems, and 7. Plan of operation and maintenance of conservation practices and systems.

**Farmers.gov** is the website committed to delivering USDA services to America's farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to the pandemic. Some USDA offices are beginning to reopen to limited visitors by appointment only. Service Center staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Learn more at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## FREMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Fremont Conservation District will be hosting a Soil Health Workshop on October 27, 2023 at the Abbey Events Center. This workshop will cover soil health and all that is associated with it; noxious weeds; livestock and grasses, pastures and forages; and, perennial plants / cover crops. Doors will open at 8 a.m., with sessions beginning at 8:30 and will go through the afternoon until 4 p.m.—lunch will be served!! There is no charge for this workshop BUT registration is required!! Find the registration form on our website at [www.fremontcd.org](http://www.fremontcd.org). RSVP by October 20, 2023!!!



The Upper Ark Cooperative Weed Management Area (UACWMA) held a Weed Walk at Pathfinder Park on September 12, 2023. We had 27 folks attend with a weed walk down by the Arkansas River. There was also a presentation on noxious weeds and soil health that was presented by Kayla Malone, Chaffee County Weed Manager. We hope everyone who attended learned something about noxious weeds and enjoyed the beautiful summer day!!!

**For assistance with noxious weeds**, contact Fremont County Weed Management, 719-276-7317, for Fremont and Custer counties. For Chaffee and Lake counties, contact Chaffee County Weed Department, 719-539-3455. For Teller and Park counties, contact the Teller-Park Conservation District, 719-472-3671. For more information on noxious weeds in the State of Colorado, check the Colorado Weed Management Association website at [www.cwma.org](http://www.cwma.org).

# SMALL ACREAGE MANAGEMENT

## How to integrate mowing into your weed management plan

Mowing can offer a cheap mechanical weed management option that suppresses weed growth with minimal soil disturbance. If integrated with other weed management options, it can discourage undesirable plant succession by preventing them from producing seeds. However, this is not possible for plants propagated by vegetative structures such as rhizomes, stolons, tubers, and bulbs.

### How does mowing affect plant growth?

When plants are mowed, they lose their leaves, the plant organs that manufacture food. This not only impacts on the plant shoot vigor, but also affects plant growth, delaying flowering and seed production. Further, mowing alters the surrounding soil conditions (soil moisture, temperature, and light), making it either conducive or unconducive for undesired plant species. Here, some plants may regrow while others die at different rates, a strategy that can be used to manipulate a plant community to favor a desired plant.

### Factors to consider during mowing.

Targeted mowing can be used as a weed management strategy to encourage desired plants while suppressing unwanted plant species. Here, you target mowing when the undesired plant is susceptible, for example before flowering stage to prevent seed production. In cases where mowing produces vegetative structures, you should mow frequently to ensure death of the produced structures and inhibit seed development.

#### 1. Time of mowing

Timing is critical, for example, you should mow before viable seeds form and should precede anthesis, pollination and fertilization. Note that, some viable seeds can form after the plant has been mowed, such as in musk thistle, therefore you should properly dispose of the cut flowering plants. You should avoid mowing when seeds have already set to prevent weed reinfestation, increase and dispersal. You should also clean your mower to prevent transporting weed seeds on mower parts.

#### 2. Mowing height

Since blades must be low enough to cut off developing seed heads, ensure that your initial mowing is higher than subsequent mowing. This will prevent mowing misses in case later forming seeds develop so close to the ground. An example is the new stems that sprout below the cut in horseweed that may be managed by cutting high at the initial mowing and lower at the next mowing.

#### 3. Perennial weeds

Perennial weeds are often managed by herbicides and/or tillage. However, herbicide dependence encourages the development and spread of herbicide-resistant weeds while tillage increases the risk of soil erosion and on-farm energy use. The ability of perennial weeds to store food reserves in their underground storage organs enhances their resilience and allows them to regrow after disturbance. In this case, mowing that destroys underground storage by eliminating their ability to translocate photosynthetic resources should be targeted. Here, you should mow after tillage has weakened or destroyed the underground storage organs and made the weeds susceptible. For example, mowing Canada thistle just before flowering at its "bud to bloom" stage after destroying the underground storage roots through tillage will destroy young shoots before replenishing storage reserves. Regrowth after cutting will drain the stored food reserves making it possible for repeated mowing to result in killing the perennial weed stand. These activities can also be timed to coincide with herbicide application.

#### 4. Mowing and cover cropping

Cover crop mulch can be used to suppress weeds within crop rows. However, this strategy can be inadequate in the between row area when residue biomass is inadequate, or the crop is not planted at narrow row spacing. In such cases, mowing can contribute to weed suppression in a fast-growing crop where a cover crop restricts weed establishment but speeds up mulch decomposition process thereby reducing its effectiveness. An example has been demonstrated where mowing suppresses Canada thistle shoot density in a sudan grass-cowpea mixture compared to a fallow treatment.

#### 5. Integrating mowing with herbicides

If properly timed, mowing can suppress weeds within rows that escape herbicide treatment especially when it enhances crop competitiveness with weeds e.g., mowing close to the soil surface before using crop canopy closure. This strategy can also reduce the amount of herbicide sprayed.

# SMALL ACREAGE MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 4

## Advantages of mowing

1. Unlike herbicide application or cultivation, mowing may be used repeatedly.
2. It can be used to suppress overgrown weeds to be managed with herbicides or cultivation.
3. It has fewer off-site environmental impacts.
4. Can be used during windy conditions (speed and direction) that inhibit herbicide efficacy.
5. Conducive in highly populated urban and suburban housing areas.
6. Effective in areas where cultivation will damage root systems or cause soil erosion.
7. Compatible with other soil and plant conservation measures.

## Disadvantages of mowing

1. It is challenging to use mowing in managing weed species of varying heights persisting in the same area.
2. Mowing can favor weeds that develop and reproduce below the mowing height.
3. Mowing works better in integrated or more holistic approaches.
4. Does not kill weeds, only reduces aboveground competition.
5. Does not work in weeds that form rosettes or mats and/or grow close to the ground.
6. Wheel traffic occurring during mowing can compact some soils.
7. It can be noisy and, in some cases, can raise dust.

## References

Fernando, M., & Shrestha, A. (2023). The Potential of Cover Crops for Weed Management: A Sole Tool or Component of an Integrated Weed Management System? *Plants* 2023, 12, 752.

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Majewski, C., & Warren, N. D. (2023). Integrated Weed Management for Pastures and Hayfields.

Martinelli, R., Alcántara-de la Cruz, R., Monquero, P. A., & de Azevedo, F. A. (2022). Ecological Mowing with Residual Herbicides: A Viable Weed Management Tool for Citrus Orchards.

Monteiro, A., & Santos, S. (2022). Sustainable approach to weed management: The role of precision weed management. *Agronomy*, 12(1), 118.

Weaver, S. E. (2001). The biology of Canadian weeds. 115. *Conyza canadensis* L. Cronquist. *Canadian Journal of Plant Science* 81:867-875.

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Local  
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**Bonface Manono**, Mountain Region Extension Regional Specialist (Small Acreage Management), was raised in a small-scale farming family in Kenya that depended on agriculture for its food. This gave him an opportunity to taste home grown food at an early age and an interest in agricultural production. His PhD project focused on pasture irrigation and effluent (cow dung mixed with water) spreading in the Canterbury region of New Zealand and organic farming in New Zealand's North Island dairy farms from the University of Otago, New Zealand. He also has a master's degree in Waste Management with Environmental Management from the University of the West of Scotland, in the United Kingdom.

Bonface's interests are in soil-plant-water-environment interactions. As a small acreage management specialist, Bonface's role is to share research-based knowledge with small scale landowners and managers to help them manage their land for increased viability, sustainability, and resilience. He is collaborating with Drought Advisors to help develop effective drought management options for landowners.

For assistance with your small acreage, please contact me at 719-315-3491 or [Bonface.Manono@colostate.edu](mailto:Bonface.Manono@colostate.edu).

## **CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Beginning January 1, 2024, the Custer County Conservation District will begin a pilot project in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Water Resources. Funding for this project is through a Water Plan Grant awarded and administered by the Colorado Water Conservation Board. The focus of the pilot project is to develop methods and alternatives for bringing nonconforming Ponds in the Arkansas River drainage into compliance with Colorado Water Law. Specifically, the pilot project recognizes that many of these non-conforming ponds were constructed multiple owners ago and the current owner may or may not have the resources to bring the pond into compliance. Additionally, the Conservation District has technical resources that are available to assist pond owners where the pond's architecture is more than just a storage vessel and/or its use goes beyond visual aesthetics.

Under the umbrella of the same grant, the district will also be doing a literature search into how to prepare our irrigation infrastructure for the after effects of a potential wildfire in the Grape Creek watershed. The Grape Creek drainage is somewhat unique in that the distance from source to first diversion structure averages 2.2 miles with the entire distance surrounded by disease-decimated stands of spruce and pine.



## **TELLER—PARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Teller-Park Conservation District has had a productive year of managing resources for our Teller and Park County producers. We have once again been able to offer cost-share for noxious weed management as well as grass seed purchases through the help of matching grants through the Colorado State Conservation Board. This allows our landowners to not only voluntarily comply with state mandates regarding invasive species but also allows them to get some good vegetation on the ground. We were able to subsidize an additional 40 acres of rangeland restoration through this grant.

Teller-Park Conservation District continues to be available for invasive species education and have worked with several HOAs and land trusts this year. Please reach out to our office if you are interested in noxious weed identification and/or management workshops.

Our district was selected to participate in the STAR Plus Soil Health Grant which will assist up to ten landowners make rangeland soil improvements. This program will be led through a partnership between Colorado Department of Agriculture, participating Colorado Conservation Districts, and Colorado State University extension agents. Healthy soil is the key to successful land stewardship.

Our Stream Trailer has been refurbished and we look forward to starting our water education program in 2024. Water is such a valuable resource here in Colorado and we are excited to reach out to our community with stream demonstrations. We support Camp Rocky and were able to purchase a swine at our annual Teller County Fair. We look forward to supporting the Park County 4-H participants next year as well. Our local Woodland Park Envirothon students took first and second place in the state-wide competition and were sent on to the national competition. We are extremely proud of their hard work and continued excellence and are pleased to sponsor these teams.

We continue to partner with many organizations throughout our area regarding resource concerns. These include the Upper Arkansas Cooperative Weed Management Area, NRCS, CSU Extension, County Board of Commissioners, Park County Road and Bridge, United States Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Woodland Park Harvest Center, and Colorado Weed Management Association. Our District Manager, Marisa Neuzil, is the President-elect of Colorado Weed Management Association. Collaboration is the key to success!

Please feel free to reach out with any resource concerns at **719-472-3671** or [www.tellerparkcd.org](http://www.tellerparkcd.org).

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The office for assistance to Custer, Chaffee, Fremont, Park and Teller 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.

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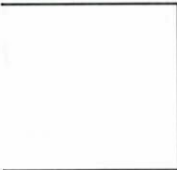


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Serving Park and Teller Counties

**CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARDS**

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. Landowners are also encouraged to participate in meetings and workshops being held by the Conservation Districts. Most of these workshops and meetings are free to attend and loaded with information on conservation practices and concerns.

**No-Till Drill for Rent in Fremont County**

Have you ever been interested in no-till seeding or would like to rent one locally? **Fremont Conservation District** now owns and rents out Great Plains No-Till Drill for anyone interested and within Fremont Conservation District boundaries (Fremont County only). The No-Till Drill offers 3 different seed boxes for different variety of seed mixes and can be calibrated to preference. It can be towed behind most pickup trucks and can operate with a minimum 40 HP tractor. Rental can be a minimum of one day and a maximum of five days. For information on how to rent the No-Till Drill or more about the implement, please call the Fremont Conservation District at 719-315-3417. Call today to reserve your dates!

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