

Colorado League

San Juan RC&D Has Two New Employees

Doug Ramsey, San Juan RC&D



Priscilla Lukens and Doug Ramsey started working for the San Juan RC&D in April, and are teaching each other the ropes as they go along. Doug says, "We're having fun getting a handle on things."

Doug Ramsey has been named the new RC&D Coordinator for the **San Juan RC&D**. He was selected for the position in April.

Ramsey started working for the Natural Resources Conservation Service a little over 27 years ago in Glenwood Springs. Since the late 1970s he has worked in the southwest area of the state between Durango and Cortez as a Soil Scientist and Project Leader.

He and his wife run a sheep and hay farm in Hesperus. They have two adult children, both of whom work as wildland fire fighters which is also a passion of Ramsey's.

Also new to the San Juan RC&D is Secretary **Priscilla Lukens**. Lukens, who has a background in environmental and land use planning, most recently worked for the Colorado Department of Transportation as an Environmental Specialist. In that position she determined how a proposed highway would impact natural resources, and coordinated the mitigation measures to minimize those impacts.

The San Juan RC&D currently has twenty four active projects and seven pending funding. Funding sources have come from the EPA, USFS, BLM, Southwestern Water Conservation District, Colorado Water Conservation Board, and many others. Projects range from cleaning mine waste at the Animas River headwaters to reduce water pollution, eradicating tamarisk along the Dolores River, educating children about riparian ecosystems, community recycling and composting, GPS mapping of the irrigation canals in La Plata County, and a rideshare program.



Nellie Zion, Colorado League Chairperson

News from the League Chairperson

Since the last newsletter we had our State meeting in Colorado Springs at Glen Eyrie Conference Center. There was good representation from across the state in attendance. **Beth Ann Finlay**, from Berlin, Vermont, was this year's trainer. She has over 13 years of coordinating experience with RC&D. Topics of this year's meeting focused on

League development, getting involved, and finding a niche as council members. Many thanks to our state NRCS who sponsored the training.

We have been working very hard on marketing ourselves, getting the word out about the benefits of the program, and what we can offer as a partner to others. There is a committee devel-

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East Central Colorado RC&D Cuckoo for CoCoRaHS ...Because Every Drop Counts

Jeff Koster, East Central Colorado RC&D



The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow network is in need of volunteer weather observers. Weather observers collect, record, and report precipitation data for sites located in Colorado, Wyoming,

Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, and northern Texas.

What is a site or station? A site or station refers to the geographic location of an observer's rain gauge and hail pad. Each site has a unique name and number that describes the location. For example, site CO-LN-6 is in Colorado, Lincoln county, station 6. Hugo 0.6E refers to the station's location, 0.6 miles east of the center of the town of Hugo.

What equipment or training do I need to volunteer? Volunteers purchase a rain gauge from CoCoRaHS and receive training from a coordinator in the proper way to set up a station, collect, and report the data. Training is also available on the CoCoRaHS website.

Website? Yes, www.cocorahs.org is the project's website. Each day hundreds of volunteers login to report site precipitation data for the previous 24 hours. The information is stored in a secure database and is then used to generate different reports.

What kind of reports? There are maps created from each days' precipitation reports. You can see rainfall amounts for all over Colorado, a county, and even some towns. There are station summary reports which allow users to select a period of time to review data from an individual or a group of stations. Many other reports are also available. This data is currently being used by climatologists and scientists throughout Colorado and the US. Additionally, federal and state agencies have used the data to determine the extent of weather related disasters.

How do I become a CoCoRaHS observer? Contact any of the RC&D coordinators in Colorado for more information or inquire at www.cocorahs.org and a local CoCoRaHS coordinator will contact you.

First Bob Appel Award Honoree Named at 11th Annual Arkansas River Basin Water Forum

Mike Conlin, Director of Lake County Open Space Initiative, received the first annual *Bob Appel - Friend of the Arkansas River Award* presented at the 11th Annual Arkansas River Basin Water Forum in Trinidad. The award recognizes a person or group of people who have provided extraordinary service and leadership in the area of the Arkansas River Basin. The ability to foster cooperation and build consensus is an important aspect of the award. Conlin was recognized for bringing local, state, and federal partners together to preserve 7,600 acres of rangeland near the river's headwaters -- important for its recreational, wildlife, historical, and esthetic values. The award is in memory of Bob Appel who provided extraordinary leadership and coordination of the Arkansas River Basin Water Forum and the Southeast Colorado RC&D Council.

The **Sangre de Cristo RC&D** and **Southeast Colorado RC&D Councils** are two of many partners who sponsor the Arkansas River Basin Water Forum. The Forum has been a focal point of current water issues in the Arkansas Basin since 1995. The purpose of the Forum is to promote open dialogue among water users to create a greater understanding of water law, water use, water quality, and conservation. The two-day Forum is held each year at a different location in the basin with support from many local, state, and federal partners. For more information about the Forum log on to www.arbwf.info

Municipal Outreach Project

Steve Anthony, Colorado Big Country RC&D

Colorado Big Country RC&D (CBC) is partnering with the Colorado Weed Management Association (CWMA) on an educational outreach project designed to increase weed awareness among the municipalities of Colorado.



The project was initiated by Eagle County Weed Coordinator and CBC Board member **Stephen Elzinga**. A noxious weed information packet will be mailed to each of Colorado's 271 municipalities, and will include 10 copies of the 2006 Weed Calendar, 10 copies each of several weed brochures, and a copy of the 8th Edition of *Troublesome Weeds of the Rocky Mountain West*.

CWMA is donating the Troublesome Weed booklets, brochures, membership applications, and providing funding to offset calendar and project costs. Jefferson County Weed & Pest, Boulder County Open Space and Summit County have also volunteered to help financially with the project.

CBC will produce the calendar, donate brochures, and handle distribution. A final component of the package will be a letter from the Colorado Department of Agriculture which will serve as a polite reminder to municipalities about their obligation in regard to the Colorado Noxious Weed Act.

News from the League Chairperson

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opening a website that will link to the Western Region, Colorado councils, and National council websites.

As your State chairperson, I have been going to Town Hall meetings in the Northeast Region of the state and speaking with **Senator Wayne Allard**, and Representatives **Marilyn Musgrave** and **Bob Beauprez**. I also attended the Town Hall meeting when **President Bush** visited Denver. The message I have been getting from the legislative delegation is that they are very supportive of the continuation of RC&D in Colorado and across the nation.

As of the May 25, 2005 Legislative Update, the House Appropriations Committee passed the FY06 agriculture appropriations bill. For RC&D, the Committee provides an appropriation of \$51,360,00. The Committee has restored this account rather than accepting the proposal to de-fund the 189 Councils that have been in existence for twenty years or more -- our

voices are being heard! The Senate is expected to act on the bill in subcommittee in mid-June.

I will participate in the conservation delivery system meeting in Park City, Utah on July 20-24. We are also gearing up to attend the Western Region annual meeting in Kearney, Nebraska January 22-25, 2006. For more information about this meeting go to www.westernrcd.org.

The Colorado League has agreed to host the Western Region's 2007 annual meeting in Colorado Springs. Each Colorado council will accept a position of responsibility in their area of expertise to ensure a very productive and informative meeting. We will be working closely with our partners and sponsors.

A Sustainability Road Trip for area communities will take place July 27-28, sponsored by the Northeast RC&D and other partners. For more information, contact **Rich Mullaney** at 970.522.7440 extension 4.

Colorado League

REPUBLICAN RIVER VALLEY WORKSHOP TACKLES MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Rich Mullaney, Northeast Colorado RC&D

The Republican River Valley: Living on the Edge Workshop was held March 30-31 in McCook, Nebraska. More than 80 participants from six mid-west states attended.

The workshop focused on the values and opportunities provided from properly managed areas at the river's edge. It also provided a venue for discussion between landowners, land and water managers, agency person-

nel, educators, county and city officials, and others who have an interest in the resources of the Republican River Valley common to Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Workshop presentations included: impacts on water quantity/quality; woody weeds impact and management; agri-tourism; forest products; wildlife habitat; and landowner assistance



Salt Cedar Control demonstration at Republican River Valley Workshop.

for riparian development.

The Republican River Riparian Project Advisory Committee organized the event. The committee assists landowners to better manage the riparian area and to better understand the projects and programs impacting the river in the three states.

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Tamarisk Eradication Program Begins in Bent County

Tim Macklin, Southeast Colorado RC&D

Southeast Colorado RC&D has developed a partnership with private land owners, organizations, county, state, and federal governmental agencies in the Bent County area to begin a tamarisk eradication program.

According to **Tim Macklin**, RC&D coordinator, *"When I first got involved in tamarisk control, there were several different groups up and down the valley doing different things, but no one seemed to be talking with anyone else, or knew what was going on."*

The partnership includes Corps of Engineers, NRCS-Las Animas, NPS Bents Old Fort, Bent County Dike Board, Colorado Forest Service, Technical Translators Limited; USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife, Bent

Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy, Lower Arkansas Water Conservation District, and Southeast Colorado RC&D.

A portion of the Bent Conservation District lies within Otero County, and the Otero County

Commissioners have committed \$10,000 toward the purchase of equipment to do the job, the price of which is estimated at \$69,000. The Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District put in \$45,000 as well. Much of the funding will come from federal grants, but local funding commitments are also



Tamarisk eradication begins in Bent County

needed. The Tamarisk Coalition, Las Animas NRCS field office, and Southeast Colorado RC&D will coordinate the conservation program.

This will be an ongoing project with a goal of expanding up to Pueblo. The work should begin in earnest over the summer.

The Grand Mesa Project

Painted Sky RC&D is the fiscal agent for the Grand Mesa Water Task Force for \$67,500 per year for at least three years. The purpose of these funds is to hire a coordinator and pay for related expenses to develop the Grand Mesa Project. The Project will consist of two 25,000-acre reservoirs with hydroelectricity and water being supplied to both domestic and agricultural users. The funds are contributed annually from Delta County, the Town of Orchard City, Grand Mesa Water Conservancy District, the Town of Cedaredge, and the Orchard City Irrigation District. Painted Sky is also providing search services for grants and loans for purposes of feasibility, engineering and construction.

The Grand Mesa Project started in the 1960s, and its feasibility was studied two times

by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The present idea is to have two medium sized reservoirs. Because of the significant fall in elevation, hydroelectric generating stations within the connecting pipelines allows for a means to generate an income to pay for the project.

The Orchard City Irrigation District owns a 20 cubic foot per second water right in the Gunnison River to the south. Off-peak power from the hydroelectric plants will pump this water to an existing Bureau of Reclamation reservoir in the middle of the valley (Fruitgrowers Reservoir) to be used in the lower, southern portion of the valley. The water that would have been used to irrigate the lower portion of the valley off of Grand Mesa can now be traded and used for management of all the water in the valley.

Colorado Economic Developers Contemplate Possibilities For the Future

James Mietz, San Luis Valley RC&D

At a recent conference in Burlington, Colorado's economic developers (EDCC) considered present challenges and possibilities for the future. The four conference themes included: The Sky is The Limit, Aviation and Transportation; Education is Hot; The Future is Bright, Colorado's Energy; and The Color of Money, Tax Incentives/Policies. Conference highlights include:

Renewable energy represents 1.3% of the total energy use in Denver, and 2.7% of the Denver metro work force is based on renewables -- twice the national average. Successful passage of last November's ballot issue Amendment 37 requires that 3% of the states' energy consumption come from renewables by 2007, 6% by 2011, and 10% by 2015.

Colorado would have an advantage in attracting business if the state can keep energy costs low. It is possible through community wind generation and backing up wind generation with natural gas to realize lower energy costs. Solar as a renewable in the San Luis Valley is one of the best sources in the world. The problem in the past has been the cost of the hardware and the effectiveness of solar has not been greater than 17 percent.

It is important for economic developers, the state government, energy companies, environmentalists, consumers, the National Renewable Energy

Laboratory, and educators to form a partnership and develop a comprehensive energy strategy for the state. The economics of energy is to generate it cheaply and consume it locally. The equation for the strategy includes energy production, consumption, and the integration of energy forces.

Workforce Development in Colorado includes a network of community colleges, junior colleges, and four-year colleges that can be a strength to economic development efforts. Community colleges and four-year schools probably have the most direct impact on the workforce. Community colleges can steer their programs where there is demand for technician training such as welding, manufacturing, aquaculture, etc. Four-year schools are the training ground for future engineers and scientists. It is felt by some EDCC members that if Referendums C and D do not pass in the coming election that the engineering programs in our state schools will be negatively impacted, leaning towards elimination.

Next to Massachusetts, the State of Colorado has cut more funding for higher education than any other state. It is important to invest in our youth from kindergarten through high school and then into higher education. The result of divesting in our educational system is to have illiterate graduates and an

unskilled workforce.

The Sky Is the Limit: Aviation and Transportation.

Infrastructure is as good as the investment that we as a community or country devote to it. The Colorado Department of Transportation is \$60 - \$100 billion short for highways to be effective to serve the citizens needs by 2030. There is a need for \$60 billion in additional funds to maintain the system, and \$100 billion additional to improve the system.

Aviation issues include: high demand for commercial flights, pricing impacts on tourism, and the demand for non-scheduled flights is increasing, while more airports are closing than are being constructed. Aviation is an economic engine, but fuel prices are impacting the competitiveness of this industry. There are a few new things happening such as bus service linking Colorado Springs with Fort Collins.

In summary, Colorado is a great state to live in, and the Front Range is anticipating continued growth over the next decades. There are things that are needed to make the economy thrive and discussions presented at the workshop included some of them. It is important to have an educated work force, to have a strong infrastructure, and to have reasonably priced energy.