

Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)

NRCS and USFWS Reach Historic Agreement to Extend Wildlife Conservation Efforts on Working Agricultural Lands



On September 17, 2012, NRCS and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced an agreement providing long-term regulatory predictability for up to 27 years to ranchers participating in NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) initiative. This is a partnership between NRCS, FWS, agriculture groups, state wildlife agencies, and *most importantly*, ranchers.

WLFW uses a voluntary and proactive approach with ranchers through Farm Bill programs to benefit high-priority habitat for Greater Sage-grouse and six other species of wildlife that are at-risk or candidate/listed under the Endangered Species Act while helping their operations remain viable and productive. WLFW offers peace of mind to ranchers that as long as they maintain proven conservation practices on their land that benefit the species, they can rest assured that they will remain compliant with Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulatory responsibilities through the year 2040.

How does it work?

NRCS staff, Mark Volt and NRCS's partner rangeland/wildlife specialist, Noah Bates with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory will visit the land to provide an initial habitat assessment and work with landowners to develop a conservation plan that fits his or her needs and desires. The conservation plan identifies a core set of proven conservation practices that will benefit the species. As long as a landowner maintains those practices, he/she will have predictability that even if that species is listed, or becomes endangered, they will remain in compliance with the ESA and continue to use their working lands. NRCS sets aside financial assistance to implement the recommended conservation practices and has already dedicated \$33 million at the launch of WLFW in March 2012. The practices that benefit sage-grouse in Middle Park typically involve developing an overall grazing management plan and improvements that help facilitate the landowners grazing management strategies such as cross fencing and water improvements (spring tanks, pipeline) to improve distribution and utilization while also allowing plants adequate periods of rest and residual cover for wildlife. There are also many other practices available to landowners that directly enhance or restore habitat for sage-grouse and big game species, such as wetland restoration/enhancement, seeding of haylands and pastures, seeding of erosive areas, rangeland restoration, and removal of old fencing to name a few. For more information on how this program can benefit your enterprise contact your local NRCS Kremmling Field Office 970-724-3456.

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Middle Park Conservation District

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CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND STOCK GROWERS TO HOLD ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

The public is invited to attend the Annual Dinner Meeting of the Middle Park Conservation District and the Middle Park Stock Growers on February 23, 2013 in Kremmling, at the Moose Café. The District is required by the State to give an annual report to its constituents, so that will be on the agenda. The District will also be presenting Tim Bock with the Conservationist of the Year Award. For dinner, participants will be able to choose between prime rib or salmon with all the fixings to go with it. The cost per plate is \$38.00. Entertainment will be provided by the "Lynch Mob". Everyone is invited to attend, even if you are not a stock grower, and enjoy a relaxing evening of social time with your neighbors and western music, plus a delicious dinner. The evening gets started at 5:30. Reservations must be made and paid for in advance. There will be no refunds once reservations are made. Call 724-3456 or mail your checks to PO Box 265, Kremmling 80459. You may also call Sandy Baker at 970-531-2483 to make your reservation. We hope to see you there!

Middle Park Conservation District

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Board of Supervisors

John Kossler, President
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Mark Volt
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Monthly Board of Supervisors meeting held first Tuesday of every month at 6 pm. The Public is invited to all Board of Supervisors Meetings.

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COST-SHARE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Landowners who need to replace, up-grade or install irrigation structures can apply for cost-share money available from the Conservation District. The District has \$12,000 with which to fund projects that are eligible. Landowners would have to provide 50% to match the funds they receive. Our office has applications or you can download a copy from our website at www.middleparkcd.com. Applications must be received by May 1 and then our Board of Supervisor will pick which ones will receive funding. Examples of eligible projects are division boxes, gated pipe, checks and turnouts or pipe lines. The projects must be completed by November of 2013. Projects must meet the following criteria:

1. **Projects must be irrigation and soil erosion control.**
2. **New or replacement of old structures are examples of projects.**
3. **The target audience is production agriculture and smaller landowners with water rights.**
4. **Landowners will pay 50% and MPCD will pay 50%. MPCD will pay up to \$3,000 for any one project. Our 50% must go toward materials.**
5. **Deadline for application will be May 1.**
6. **All specs must meet NRCS approval.**



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TREE SEEDLING SALES PROGRAM UP AND RUNNING

Middle Park Conservation District sent out order blanks for tree seedling sales in November. Anyone who has not received an order form can call the District office at 724-3456. 45 different species of shrubs and trees are available from the Colorado State Forest Service Nursery. Some come as bare root seedlings and others are in either two inch or 1 inch pots. Some species are sold in lots of 25 while others come in lots of 30 or 50. Everyone is encouraged to order early in order to get the trees they're interested in. Some species sell out by February 1.

If anyone needs information on what species are most appropriate for their property they can call the District office with questions. Customers should think about how much work they want to put into planting trees next spring, since the more they order the more trees they will have to plant. No care at all produces perhaps a 50% success rate, whereas proper watering and care for the first two to three years results in as high as a 90% success rate. However, the trees are not guaranteed by the District or by the Nursery.



SNOWPACK OFF TO A SLOW START

Even though manual snow courses don't start until the end of January, automated Snotel sites are showing below average snowpack in Middle Park and around the state. Middle Park is averaging around 65% of normal. Other river basins in the state are: Upper Colo. River 62%, Gunnison 67%, South Platte 58%, Laramie & North Platte 68%, Yampa & White 72%, Arkansas 56%, Upper Rio Grande 64%, and San Miguel, Dolores, Animas, San Juan 68%. Percent of normal is based on the average snowpack from 1970-2000 for any given date. Manual snow course readings are taken during the last week of each month between January and May. Automated Snotel readings are taken continuously all year long. Monthly reports will be posted in the Middle Park Times/Sky Hi News, The Grand Gazette or can be found on our web site at www.middleparkcd.com. Snotel reports can be accessed any time at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/snow. If you have questions on how and where snow readings are taken, call the NRCS office at 724-3456 or stop by at 106 South 2nd. St. in Kremmling.



WANTED: Landowners who want to participate in an aerial clover seeding project

The Conservation District is looking for landowners who would like to take advantage of the opportunity for free clover seeding in their hay meadows this spring. The clover seed will be aerially distributed along sagebrush-hay meadow interfaces in a 120-foot swath along the edges of the hay meadows. A mix of alsike and mammoth red clover will be used. Landowners must give their written permission to take advantage of the seeding. The timing will depend on snow cover and moisture between now and April 15-June 15.

Funding for the project will be supplied by Middle Park Habitat Partnership Program, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, US Fish & Wildlife Partners and possibly by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Mule Deer Foundation. The project is anticipated to cost approximately \$35,000 and is similar to the 2007 seeding project.

The purpose of the clover seeding is to enhance the quality of hay meadows, improve sage grouse habitat by providing more forbs, improve elk and deer habitat and improve soil quantity because of the introduction of more legumes.

To sign up, please call our office at 724-3456 or send in your letter with a signature, indicating your permission to do the seeding on your land.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital and familial status. (Not all prohibited basis apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C. or call 1-800-245-634 or (202) 720-1127. USDA is an equal opportunity employer.