

# RANGE RIDER

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Winter

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## Canada Thistle Rust Fungus Trial Is In Progress in Gunnison

The Gunnison Conservation District has partnered with Shavano Conservation District, Delta Conservation District, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Palisade Insectary to test a Canada thistle biological control using the rust fungus *Puccinia punctiformis*. Last year we requested landowner volunteers with Canada thistle infestations for test sites, and we had 5 landowners that volunteered.

The Gunnison Conservation District is pleased to have 5 participants that volunteered for the program. Two landowners did not have large enough infestations for the full monitoring protocol, so three sites on their properties were infected with the rust fungus and will be monitored for establishment following a simpler protocol. Three other landowners did meet qualifications for the monitoring protocols, and 5 treatment sites and four control transects were established on these properties.

The scientific research project will continue for the next 3-5 years for the monitoring program. The goal is to collect and record data from protocols designed to measure stem density change at various locations over the course of the study. One transect on each property was inoculated with the teliospores from the rust fungus, and the other serves as a control with no treatment. Study transects will be monitored several times during the season over the next few years. Sites will

be categorized into land use, ecosystems, elevation, Canada thistle health, and any other relevant classification for comparison.

The Gunnison Conservation District looks forward to seeing the results and establishment success this summer.



## Upcoming Events

### Gunnison Conservation District Annual Meeting

Please save the date for the Gunnison Conservation District's Annual Meeting and Local Work Group Meeting, on **Wednesday, March 22, 2023**. Doors at the Fred Field Center's "cement room" will open at 5:30 pm, with dinner served at 6:00 pm. Please RSVP in advance to [gunnisoncd2006@gmail.com](mailto:gunnisoncd2006@gmail.com), and please pay \$15 at the door for a dinner catered from Garlic Mike's. We will honor a Conservationist of the Year and have updates from several partners.

Our annual meeting is also an opportunity for the Local Work Group to convene. This is a locally led process to provide USDA-NRCS with priority resource concerns and recommendations regarding program administration and implementation. NRCS will consider this feedback to implement financial assistance programs more effectively in Colorado, and directly tailor financial assistance program implementation in Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond. NRCS has already worked hard to incorporate some of our suggestions from our 2022 meeting, and we appreciate all of the feedback that landowners are willing to give. In addition, the GCD will be working later in 2023 on its 2024-2026 Long Range Plan, and the survey responses will help guide long range planning. If you are unable to attend in person, please keep an eye on your email for future communications about a survey online.

### Cheatgrass Treatment Workshop

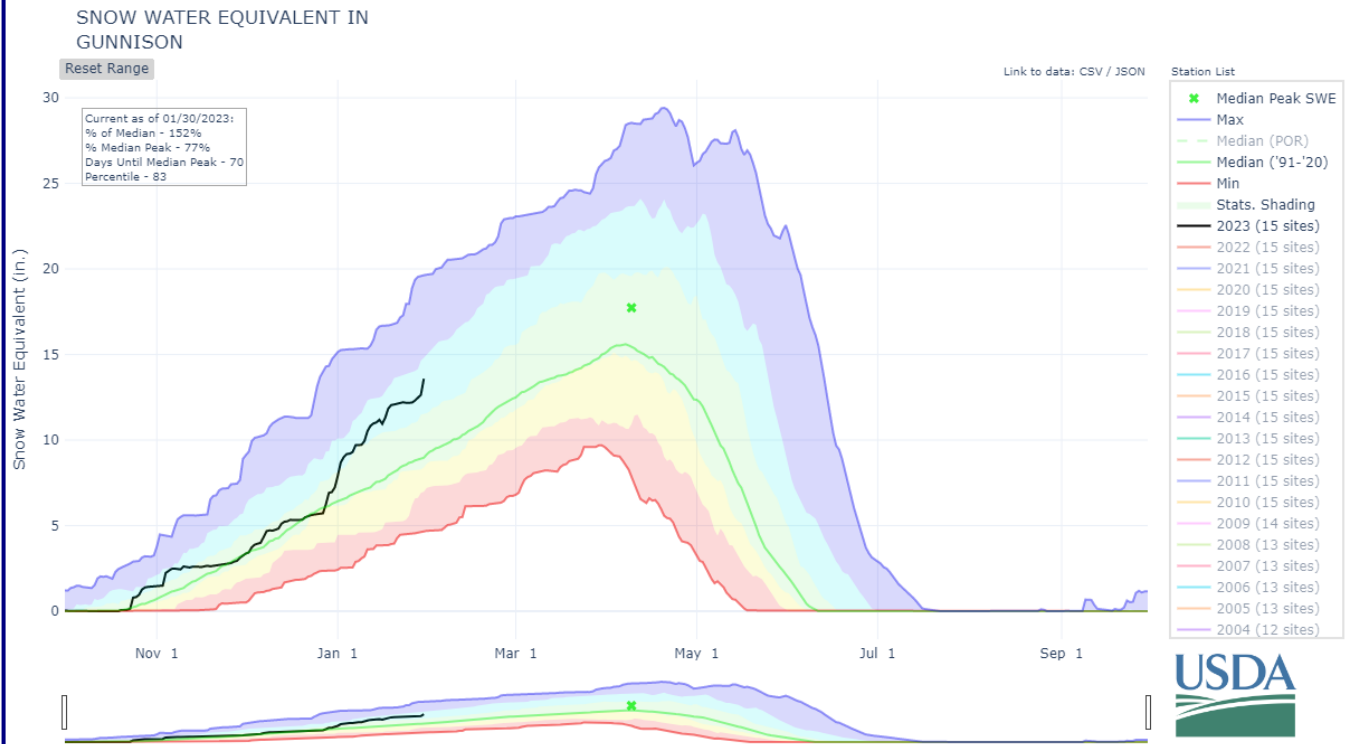
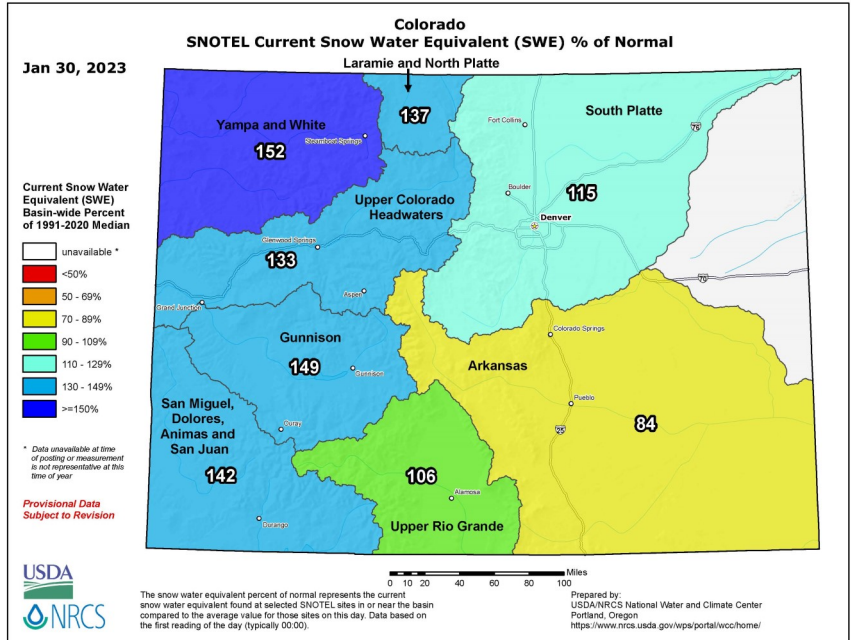
The Gunnison Conservation District, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, and Happy Habitats will be hosting a cheatgrass treatment workshop on Wednesday, **March 1, 2023** at the Fred Field Center "cement room". We will cover how to identify cheatgrass, why it is important to treat cheatgrass, different cheatgrass treatment options, and opportunities for landowner assistance. The event will be from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and will give landowners a chance to talk with local agencies that provide assistance for noxious weed treatments at the end. Please RSVP in advance to Petar Simic at [HappyHabitatsGunnison@gmail.com](mailto:HappyHabitatsGunnison@gmail.com). Lunch will be provided.

### Advanced Water Wise Pollinator Gardening Workshop

Last year we hosted a Water Wise Pollinator Gardening Workshop in June and had great feedback from people that enjoyed learning about native plants, native pollinators and how to support them, and xeriscaping. This year, we are working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to host a follow-up workshop with more detail on gardening for beneficial insects, which native plants would be good options for Gunnison, and how to design a water wise pollinator garden. This workshop will be hosted **June 9, 2023** at the new BLM building at 2500 E New York Avenue. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm and will involve a hands-on portion at the end so dress accordingly. Please RSVP in advance to [marcella.tarantino@usda.gov](mailto:marcella.tarantino@usda.gov).

# Snow Update

The map of Snow Water Equivalents (SWE) in each basin in Colorado can be found updated daily at [https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/data/water/wcs/gis/maps/co\\_swepctnormal\\_update.pdf](https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/data/water/wcs/gis/maps/co_swepctnormal_update.pdf). As of January 30, the Gunnison Basin is at 152% of the median for the SWE. The SWE graph for the Gunnison Basin can be found at [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/WCIS/AWS\\_PLOTS/basinCharts/POR/WTEQ/assocHUC6/140200\\_Gunnison.on.html](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/WCIS/AWS_PLOTS/basinCharts/POR/WTEQ/assocHUC6/140200_Gunnison.on.html). There is an interactive map feature at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/wcc/home/quicklinks/dataCharts/> if you click on the link for Snow Water Equivalent, where you can view SWEs for basins or individual station sites. If you open the interactive map, you can select several map modes, including "Station Conditions", "Basin Conditions", or both. In the "Station Conditions" map mode, you can see that north of US Highway 50 within the Gunnison Basin, most of the stations are above 130% of the median SWE for the year, including Upper Taylor at 155% of median. The sites south of US Highway 50 in the Gunnison Basin are not faring as well but all are above 100% of median, except Slumgullion at 81% of median. Data is taken from January 30, 2023.

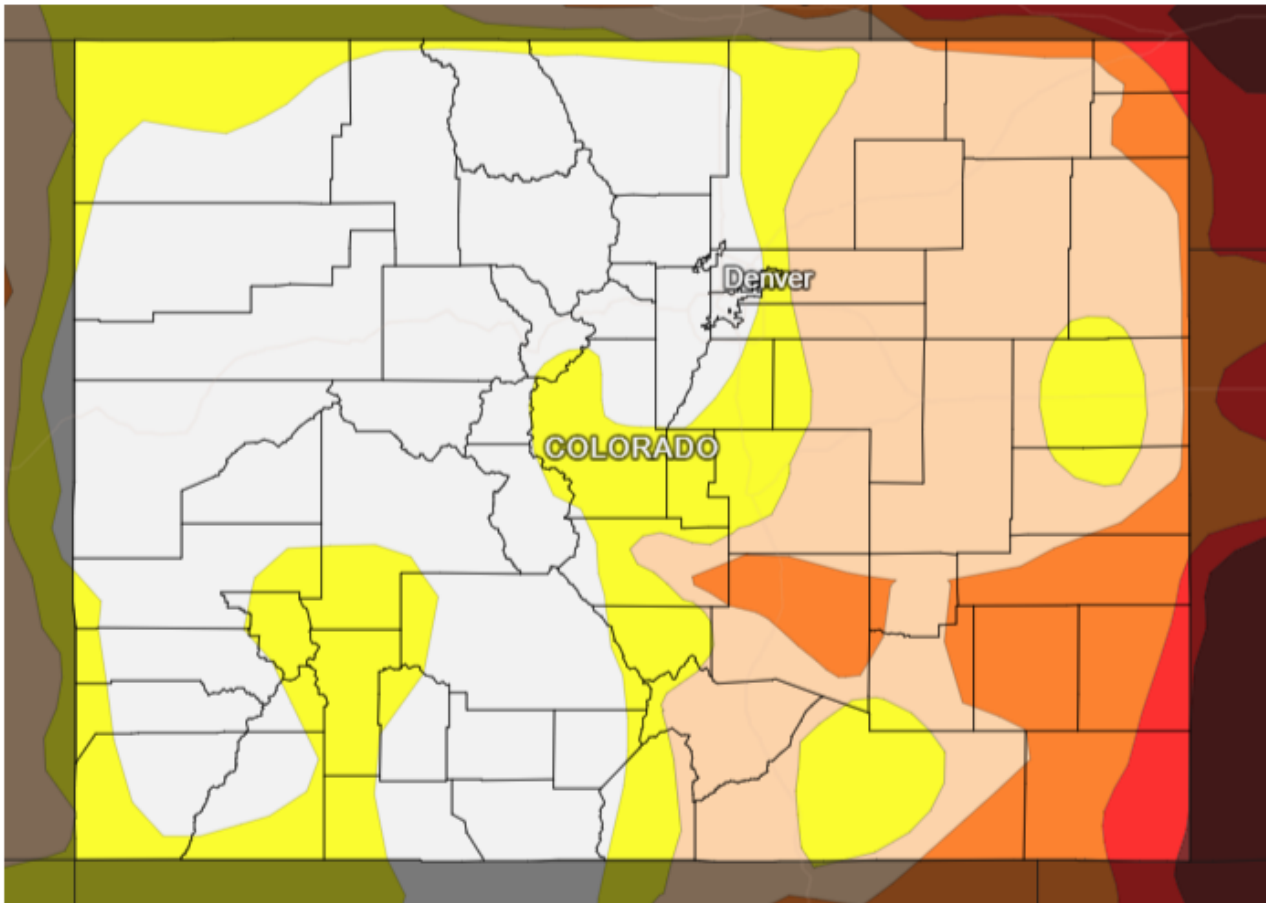


# USDA Drought Monitor

The USDA Drought Monitor can be found weekly at <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/> and a Colorado map can be found at <https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado>. The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is updated each Thursday to show location and intensity of drought across the country. This map shows drought conditions across Colorado using a five-category system, from Abnormally Dry (D0) conditions to Exceptional Drought (D4). The USDM is a joint effort of the National Drought Mitigation Center, USDA, and NOAA.

About 26% of Gunnison County in the southern portions of the County are in D0 (Abnormally Dry) which indicates hay production decreases and rangelands are dry, and irrigation begins sooner. The remainder of the County is not currently in drought conditions (data from January 24, 2023).

## Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for Colorado: Current



### U.S. Drought Monitor for CO



Abnormally Dry or Worse (D0-D4): 56.8%	Moderate Drought or Worse (D1-D4): 35.6%	Severe Drought or Worse (D2-D4): 11.2%	Extreme Drought or Worse (D3-D4): 1.9%	Exceptional Drought (D4): 0.0%
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Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA  
Updates Weekly - 01/24/23

**Drought.gov**

## Mill Creek Youth Summit

The 2022 Mill Creek Youth Summit started off with a bit of chilly weather and precipitation, but the students still had a fantastic time. About 90 Gunnison Middle School students ran up Mill Creek Road to spend Friday, September 16, 2022 with staff from nearly all Gunnison Valley land management agencies, as well as a hardworking bunch of Western Colorado University Recreation and Outdoor Education students.



The Gunnison Conservation District is grateful to our friends at the following agencies who participated: Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Gunnison Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service Gunnison Ranger District, Colorado State Forest Service, and Western Colorado University. Most of all, thank you to Gunnison Middle School students and staff for their enthusiasm and leadership.



## *Cheatgrass herbicide cost share eligibility*

### **2023 Cheatgrass Treatment Program**

#### **Purpose of the program:**

The Gunnison Conservation District has used grant funds from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) to purchase the herbicide Panoramic 2SL (generic Plateau), which will be given away for free to eligible landowners and land managers in the Gunnison Conservation District administrative boundaries on a first come first serve basis. Panoramic 2SL is a preemergent herbicide that will treat cheatgrass and other grasses and weeds (refer to herbicide label). Cheatgrass has been spreading throughout the Gunnison Basin, degrading wildlife habitat and cattle forage. The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are actively treating cheatgrass on public lands, and Gunnison County is actively treating cheatgrass in right-of-ways. The Gunnison Conservation District is providing Panoramic 2SL to private landowners as an incentive to treat cheatgrass on private land. This will help reduce the spread of cheatgrass and improve wildlife habitat and cattle forage throughout the Gunnison Basin.

#### **To be eligible for the program:**

1. You must be a landowner or land manager with property that falls within the boundaries of the Gunnison Conservation District, and you must provide proof of ownership or proof that you manage the land.  
Your land must be used for agricultural production.
2. You **must** have cheatgrass (or other noxious weeds) that can and will be treated with the herbicide Panoramic 2SL on your land/the land you manage.
4. If you own or manage 2.5 acres, you are eligible for 1 quart of Panoramic 2SL. If you own or manage 11 acres, you are eligible for 1 gallon of Panoramic 2SL. If you own or manage 27.5 acres, you are eligible for 2.5 gallons of Panoramic 2SL. You may receive up to 3 gallons of Panoramic, at the District's discretion, depending on your acreage and the extent of the cheatgrass infestation on your land.
5. You must provide the Gunnison Conservation District with photographs of the cheatgrass (and/or other noxious weeds) before treatment and optionally after treatment. If a post-treatment picture is provided, photographs may be shared with HPP.
  - Photographs of the "before" condition are a mandatory requirement to receive the free Panoramic 2SL.
  - If you cannot provide photos of the "before" condition, a District employee can visit the site with the landowner and/or land manager to confirm the presence of cheatgrass. Mapping the treatment location in EDDMapS West is encouraged.
6. The landowner and/or land manager is responsible for the correct application of Panoramic 2SL. Participants **MUST** follow all warnings and application instructions on the herbicide label.

#### **NEW OPPORTUNITY IN 2023:**

The Gunnison Conservation District has received limited funds from the Colorado Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service Disaster Mitigation Funds for cheatgrass treatment on state and private lands. We have received \$12,000 to pay a certified operator to treat cheatgrass on private landowners' lands **free of cost to the landowner**. Please contact [Aleshia.rummel@co.nacdnet.net](mailto:Aleshia.rummel@co.nacdnet.net) if you have questions or if you would like to be on the list for this treatment in spring and fall 2023. If we run out of funding, we will work with others to secure additional funding for this program for future cheatgrass treatments on private lands. This is a good opportunity for landowners to treat cheatgrass and restore their rangelands, without having to find the time during busy seasons.



CHEATGRASS

## *The GCD Partnered with Gunnison Watershed School District Classes for Native Seed*

The Gunnison Conservation District worked with Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) to donate native seed for a pollinator planting at the Gunnison Watershed School District. The GCD and UGRWCD donated to Renee Brekke's 7th grade classes and Krystal Brown's high school science classes. The high school classes planted approximately 660 feet near the football and baseball fields. The middle school had 5 classes that planted several areas around the Gunnison Middle School's Outdoor Learning Lab. The GCD's District Conservation Technician, Aleshia Rummel, was able to attend presentations by the students and learn more about how they planted the area. The students were great at explaining how they designed their garden, and how they set it up for success. The GCD is excited to see the gardens this spring.



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