



RANGE RIDER

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Summer

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John Rozman Awarded Conservationist of the Year at GCD Annual Meeting

The Gunnison Conservation District hosted their annual meeting and Local Work Group meeting on April 19, 2022. The Local Work Group is a locally led process to provide USDA-NRCS with priority resource concerns and recommendations regarding program administration and implementation. We received excellent feedback, and NRCS is already considering this feedback to implement financial assistance programs more effectively in Colorado, and directly tailor financial assistance program implementation in Fiscal Year 2023 and beyond. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend or fill out our survey online!

We also had the opportunity to recognize a **Conservationist of the Year, John Rozman**. John has served on the Gunnison Conservation District's Board of Supervisors for 41 years, including 8 years as President or Vice-President. John's ranch is about 500 acres and he has also put a conservation easement in place on a significant portion of the ranch, and he has partnered with the GCD and NRCS for several conservation projects in the last 50 years. Congratulations John, and thank you for your service to the GCD!



The GCD staff and board present John Rozman with the Conservationist of the Year award (Left to right: Aleshia Rummel, Bill Ketterhagen, Jan Coury, John Rozman, Brooke Vasquez, Caroline Czenkusch, and Hannah Cranor).

GCD Works With Landowners on Noxious Weed Treatments Through Two Free Programs

Canada Thistle Rust Fungus Trials

The Gunnison Conservation District has partnered with Shavano Conservation District, Delta Conservation District, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Palisade Insectary to test Canada thistle biological control using the rust fungus *Puccinia punctiformis*. We are looking for landowner volunteers with Canada thistle infestations for test sites.

The scientific research project requires a 3-5 year commitment from landowners to 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. The property must have a minimum but not limited to two permanent monitoring transects, treatment and control, for the duration of the study. One transect would be inoculated with the teliospores from the rust fungus, and the other would serve as a control with no treatment. Study transects would be monitored several times during the season. As sites are selected, further categorization into land use, ecosystems, elevation, Canada thistle health, and any other relevant classification will be documented for comparison.

Initial study transect setup will be demonstrated by project managers from the Colorado Department of Agriculture. If additional landowners are interested in receiving the biological control and want to monitor their properties, the protocols will be available, and spores will be provided dependent on supply. Field visits, email and phone support to property owners outside the research project to identify rust fungus may also be arranged.

If you are interested in this program, please contact District Manager Caroline Czenkusch or District Conservation Technician Aleshia Rummel (see Directory on last page of this newsletter for contact information).

Cheatgrass Treatment Program

As many of you likely already know, 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 is 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 Gunnison Conservation District is providing Panoramic 2SL to private landowners as an incentive to treat cheatgrass on private land.

Additionally, the Gunnison Conservation District will be receiving a \$12,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service Disaster Mitigation Funds, in order to pay for a contractor to treat cheatgrass on state and private lands in the Gunnison Basin. Please contact Aleshia Rummel (see Directory for contact information) if you would like to have the cheatgrass on your land treated for free. We are signing up landowners for treatments in late summer and fall for 2022 and 2023. Treatments will need to meet our reporting requirements for the grant. If landowners desire to have their cheatgrass treated and we are unable to treat all lands with the limited funds, the landowners will be placed on a wait list for other future cheatgrass treatment opportunities, which are likely to occur starting in 2023 with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Sage Grant.



CHEATGRASS

Erica



Photo from Inva-

2022 Bio-Engineering Workshop Successful

The Gunnison Conservation District hosted their annual Bio-Engineering Workshop on April 20, 2022. About 10 students from Western Colorado University visited Tomichi Creek State Wildlife Area with local aquatic biologist Dan Brauch (Colorado Parks and Wildlife) to learn about a more intensive bio-engineering technique, and engaged in a service learning project to plant willow stakes to stabilize stream banks.



Water Wise Pollinator Gardening Workshop Provided Seed and Educational Materials

The Gunnison Conservation District worked with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, The Xerces Society, and Western Colorado University to provide a workshop **June 17** for landowners interested in native plants, pollinators, and xeriscaping. About 30 landowners attended the workshop. The workshop featured two hours of talks about native plants, native pollinators (insects and hummingbirds), the importance of pollinators, best management practices for your landscaping to promote pollinators, and water wise gardening principles and benefits. The talks were followed by some insect catching at the Western Colorado University native plant garden to show local pollinator diversity and species, and then workshop participants were able to go to a local farm to learn how to successfully seed a site. With generous grants from the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District and the National Garden Club in addition to funds from Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, we were able to provide all workshop participants with two free custom native Gunnison wildflower seed mixes, stickers, gardening gloves, coupons for discounted Gunni Gold compost to help establish their seeds, pamphlets about Low Water Native Plants for Colorado Gardens and successful seeding, etc .



Annual 4th Grade Water Festival

The Gunnison Conservation District organized the annual 4th Grade Water Festival this May 20, 2022. The GCD thanks volunteer instructors from Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, CSU-Extension, the National Park Service, and the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District for their time and effort to make this event a success!



Water Trailer Receives Upgrades

The Water Trailer is an educational trailer used in many local natural resources festivals and events. This year, the trailer was scheduled to be used 5 times at the Gunnison 4th Grade Water Festival, the Montrose Natural Resources Festival, the Gunnison 2nd—5th Grade AgVenture, a 4-H camp, and the River Festival. The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District generously donated about \$650 for water trailer upgrades, including new tires, tire covers, trailer cover, chock blocks, new “sand”, and a few new toys. The GCD is very thankful for these upgrades!



USDA Drought Monitor

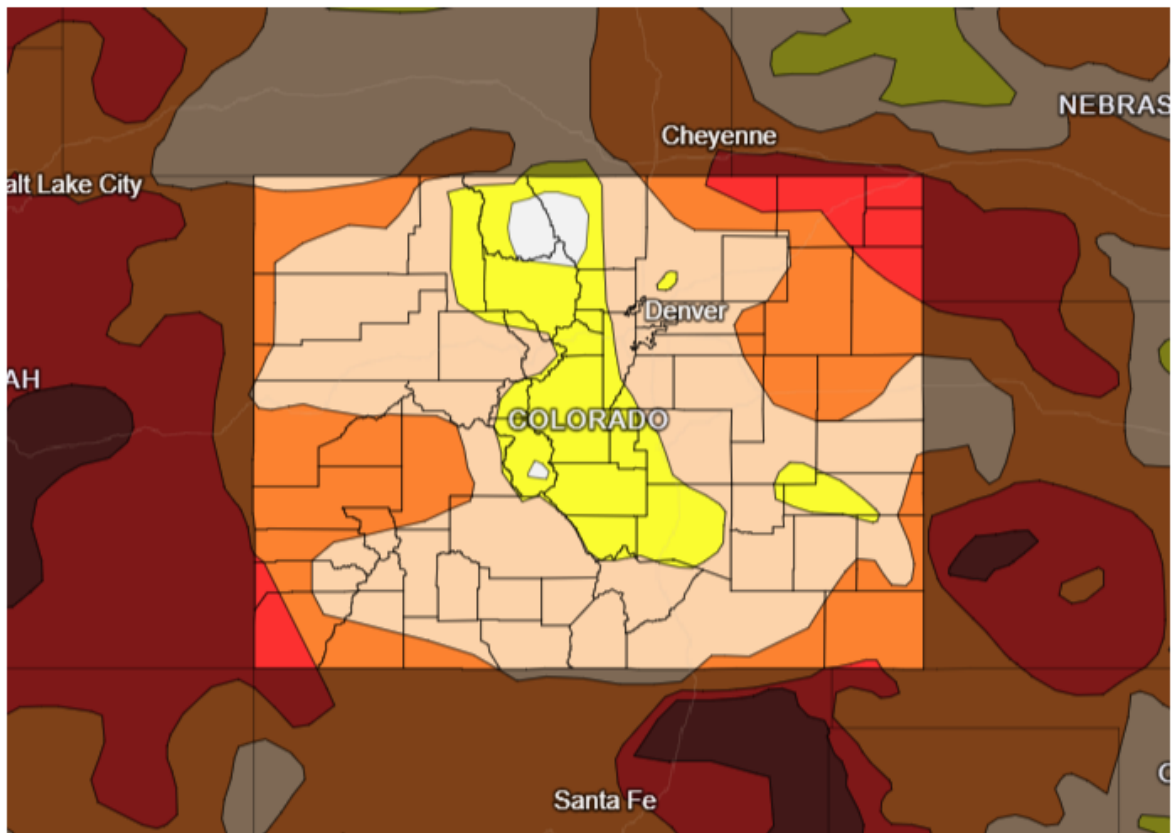
The USDA Drought Monitor can be found weekly at <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/> and a Colorado map can be found at <https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado>. The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is updated each Thursday to show location and intensity of drought across the country. This map shows drought 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.

Western portions of Gunnison County (61%) are in D2 (Severe Drought) which indicates farmers reduce planting and producers sell cattle. The fire season is extended, and snowpack, surface water levels, and river flow is low. The far eastern portion of Gunnison County (4%) is in D0 (Abnormally Dry) which indicates that hay production is decreased and rangeland is dry. The rest of Gunnison County (36%) is in D1 (Moderate Drought). This indicates rangeland growth is stunted and very little hay is available. Dryland crops suffer and wildfires increase. The drought conditions for Gunnison County indicate that June 2022 was the 29th wettest June on record over the last 128 years (up 0.4 inches from normal), but 2022 is the 19th driest year to date over the past 128 years, with 3.4 inches less precipitation than normal.

Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for Colorado:



Current



U.S. Drought Monitor for CO



Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA
Updates Weekly - 07/12/22

Drought.gov

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