



# RANGE RIDER

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Spring

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## *Annual Meeting and Local Work Group a Success for 2023*

The Gunnison Conservation District hosted their 2023 Annual and Local Work Group Meeting on March 22, 2023. The event was well attended, and featured an update from the District and key partners, a presentation on beaver conflict reduction methods, and the presentation of our Conservationist of the Year Award to the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy (GRCL). GRCL was recognized for their significant accomplishments in protecting agricultural lands in the last 25+ years, including working with over 80 families to protect over 60,000 acres.

We also hosted our Local Work Group meeting and had good response rates on our survey. These survey results will be provided to the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office to direct conservation delivery and local funding priorities. In addition, the survey will guide the Gunnison Conservation District's 2024—2026 Long Range Plan. Survey results showed that top resource concerns in irrigated croplands (primarily hay meadows in Gunnison) included irrigation structures, water quantity, stream function, soil health, and noxious weed management. Top concerns in rangelands included grazing management, noxious weed management, stream function and riparian health, wildlife habitat, and long term protection of the land. Pastureland concerns included grazing management, noxious weed management, long-term protection of the land, water quantity, and stream function; forestry concerns included wildfire hazard, wildlife habitat and forest mortality, forest pest management, age class diversity, and noxious weed management. The biggest barrier to participation in NRCS programs was the lack of staff (and specifically the lack of engineers) and that concern was clearly highlighted in the materials the Gunnison Conservation District provided to the NRCS State Office. Thank you so much to all stakeholders and producers that provided these valuable inputs to the LWG survey!



GCD President Bill Ketterhagen (second from right) presents a plaque for Conservationist of the Year to the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy Board of Directors and staff.

## Upcoming Events

### Advanced Water Wise Pollinator Gardening Workshop

Last year we hosted a Water Wise Pollinator Gardening Workshop in June with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (BCR) 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 BCR 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** tentatively 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).

### Ranching for Profit Workshop

The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies will be hosting a two-day Ranching for Profit Workshop with Dallas Mount on July 18 and July 19, 2023. The location is to be determined, but likely in Montrose. Ranching for Profit is designed to help producers improve health and productivity of their land, improve the profitability of their business, and improve the quality of their lives by improving ranch management and reducing stress.

## Recent Events

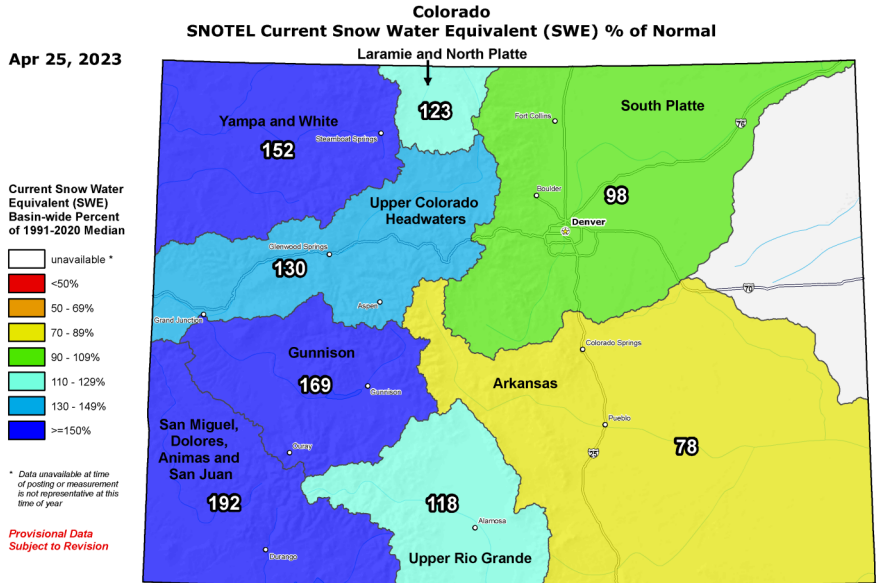
### Cheatgrass Treatment Workshop

The 2023 Cheatgrass Treatment Workshop was hosted on March 1, 2023, and had about 40 landowners in attendance. All funding (including Firebrand sandwiches for lunch), organization, and logistical support was provided by Marcella Tarantino of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, and Petar Simic of Happy Habitats Gunnison also helped organize speakers for the workshop. The GCD provided technical support, organization, and handouts. Speakers went over how to identify cheatgrass, the ecology of cheatgrass, how to avoid spreading cheatgrass, and how to treat cheatgrass infestations. Although Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and the Gunnison Conservation District hosted a cheatgrass treatment workshop in 2019, this 2023 workshop was updated with new information about advances in treatments, new technologies, and new opportunities for landowner assistance available in the Gunnison Basin. Different organizations were able to provide information on what types of assistance they offer landowners for treating noxious weeds and specifically cheatgrass.



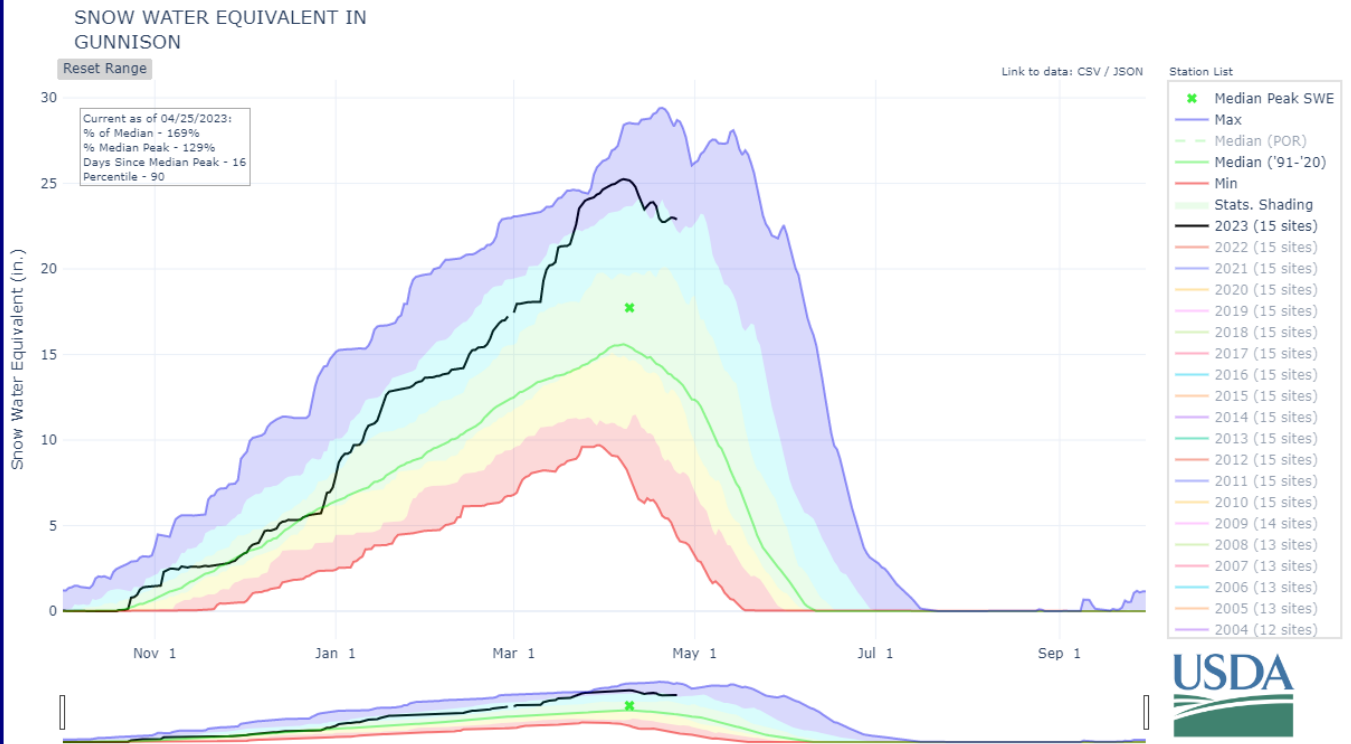
# Snow Update

The map of Snow Water Equivalent (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 April 25, the Gunnison Basin is at 169% 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 160% of the median SWE for the year, including Butte at 171% of median. The sites south of US Highway 50 in the Gunnison Basin are not faring as well but are variable. Slumgullion is at 73% of median. Data is taken from April 25, 2023.



The snow water equivalent percent of normal represents the current snow water equivalent found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day. Data based on the first reading of the day (typically 00:00).

Prepared by: USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center Portland, Oregon <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/wcc/home/>

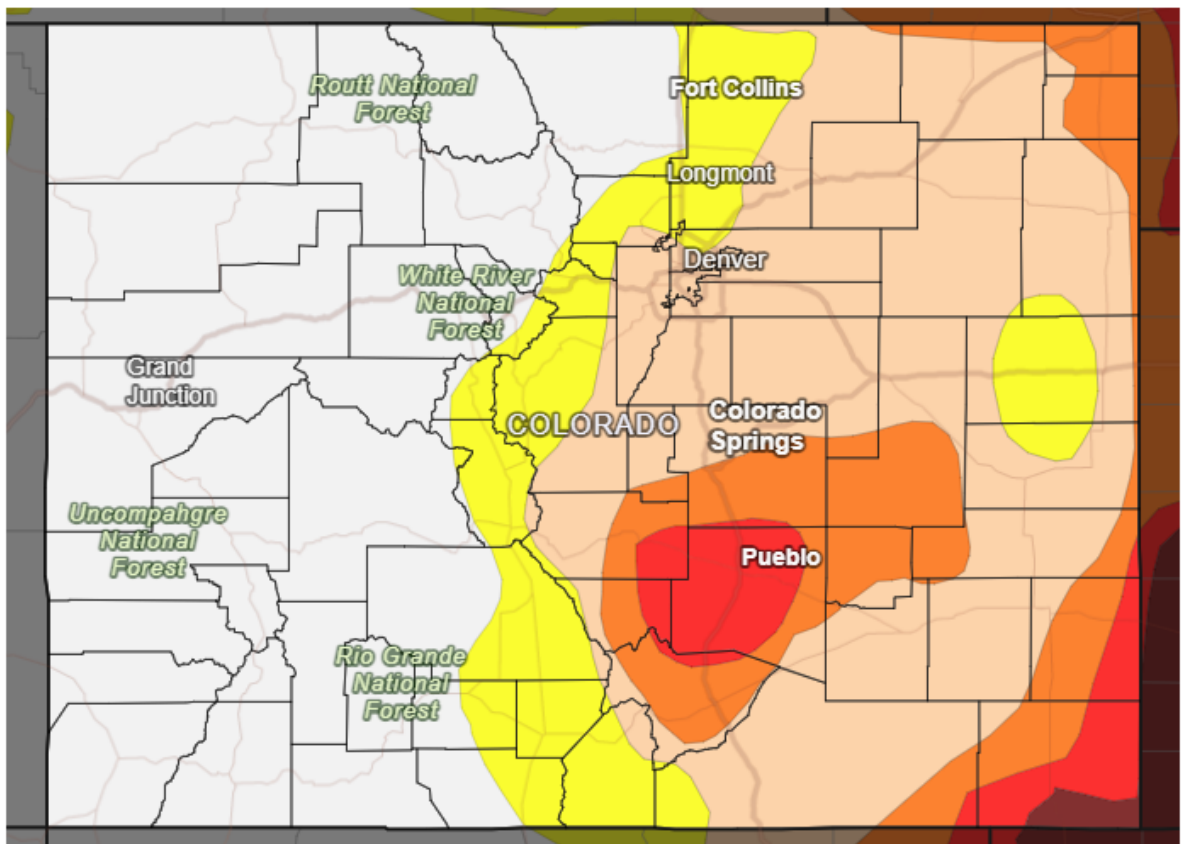


# USDA Drought Monitor

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.

Currently, 99% of Gunnison County is not currently in drought conditions, and 1% in the far eastern portion of the County is considered abnormally dry (data from April 18, 2023).

## U.S. Drought Monitor: Colorado



### Drought & Dryness Categories

Drought & Dryness Categories	% of CO
D0 – Abnormally Dry	11.9%
D1 – Moderate Drought	29.5%
D2 – Severe Drought	10.0%
D3 – Extreme Drought	4.1%
D4 – Exceptional Drought	0.4%
Total Area in Drought (D1–D4)	44.0%

Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA

Data Valid: 04/18/23

**Drought.gov**

## CALLING VOLUNTEERS!

Colorado Agriculture in the Classroom program is looking for volunteers to read “The Woolly Way: Papou and the Story of Lantern Ridge” to two classes in Gunnison. This is a Colorado Literacy Project free program for preschoolers through 5th grade students, where students will read a book, complete an activity, and discuss their connections to agriculture. The book is about a multi-generational sheep ranching family set in Meeker, Colorado. If you are interested in participating, please contact Lucee Church at [lucee@growingyourfuture.com](mailto:lucee@growingyourfuture.com) or 970-361-3281 for more information. This project is sponsored by Colorado Sheep and Wool Authority, the Bessie Minor Swift foundation, Colorado State Forest Service, the Colorado Wool Growers Association, and various other individual donors.

## PARTNER UPDATE—CSU-EXTENSION WELCOMES HANNAH CRANOR KERSTING AS NEW GUNNISON COUNTY DIRECTOR

Hannah Cranor Kersting is a third-generation cattle rancher, born and raised in Gunnison, Colorado. Hannah was an active 4-H member for 11 years. She attended school at the University of Wyoming where she majored in Agricultural Business with an emphasis in Farm and Ranch Management. After graduation, she returned to Gunnison to help with the family cattle ranch. She also started her own herd of registered Charolais cattle, from which she sells beef, replacement heifers and bulls. She completed her Digital Marketing Certificate, and as well as her Master’s in Beef Advocacy, Beef Quality Assurance, and Animal Ag Allies training since returning home to Gunnison. Hannah is passionate about agriculture and is excited to be able to serve in this new role and give back to the community. Outside of work Hannah enjoys snowmobiling, dirtbiking, CrossFit, running with her four dogs, and spending time with her husband, Lane.



## *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, 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

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**For more information visit:**

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or visit us on [Facebook](#)

