



RANGE RIDER

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Spring

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Events	2
Snow and Drought Updates	3
Cheatgrass Treatment Cost Share	5
Staff Directory	9

Canada Thistle Rust Fungus Treatment Pilot Program

The Gunnison Conservation District is partnering 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.

The study transects require a monitoring area of approximately 17.5 yards x 17.5 yards, and the Canada thistle patch must be at least that large (preferably 22 yards x 22 yards, so the transect can be in the middle of the patch). Two separate patches with similar attributes or one large patch separated by at least 55 yards would be required at each property. Several field inspections will be done at each site in spring 2022 to verify presence or absence of the rust fungus on the property. Participating properties must be accessed multiple times during the field season and arrangements for access should be easy.

Initial study transect setup will be demonstrated by project managers from the Colorado Department of Agriculture. Landowners are encouraged to participate. A field workshop at a site currently infected with the rust fungus will be arranged (likely in June) and interested weed managers and landowners will be invited. 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).



Photo from Invasive.org

Upcoming Events

Gunnison Sage-Grouse Summit

Please 'save the date' for the fifth Gunnison Sage-Grouse Summit. The summit will be held at Western Colorado University (with some distance participation options) **April 4 and 5, 2022**. This year's summit includes a presentation from the USFWS on the species' progress toward recovery; population trends, targets and translocation information from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and a series of workshops associated with success, roadblocks, and future ideas for recovery strategy implementation across the species' range. We will also hear research updates from a broad range of presenters on topics including but not limited to genetics, fire ecology, livestock grazing, seasonal use models, survival rates of translocated birds, conifer treatments, cheatgrass, wetland restoration and more. Management practices and perspectives from the ranching community are also a focus of sessions as well as community partnerships reaching across traditional boundaries to accelerate the species recovery.

The draft agenda and information on how to register can be found on centerforpubliclands.org/events/sagegrouse. Registration costs \$50 and includes three meals if you register before March 28. Fees are waived for landowners with sage-grouse habitat on their properties.

Gunnison Conservation District Annual Meeting

The Gunnison Conservation District will host their annual meeting on **April 19, 2022**. Doors at the Fred Field Center's "cement room" will open at 5:30, with dinner served at 6:00 pm. Please RSVP in advance to gunnisoncd2006@gmail.com, and please pay \$15 at the door. We will honor a Conservationist of the Year, and you will not want to miss this one!

Our annual meeting is 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 2023 and beyond.

Bio-Engineering Workshop

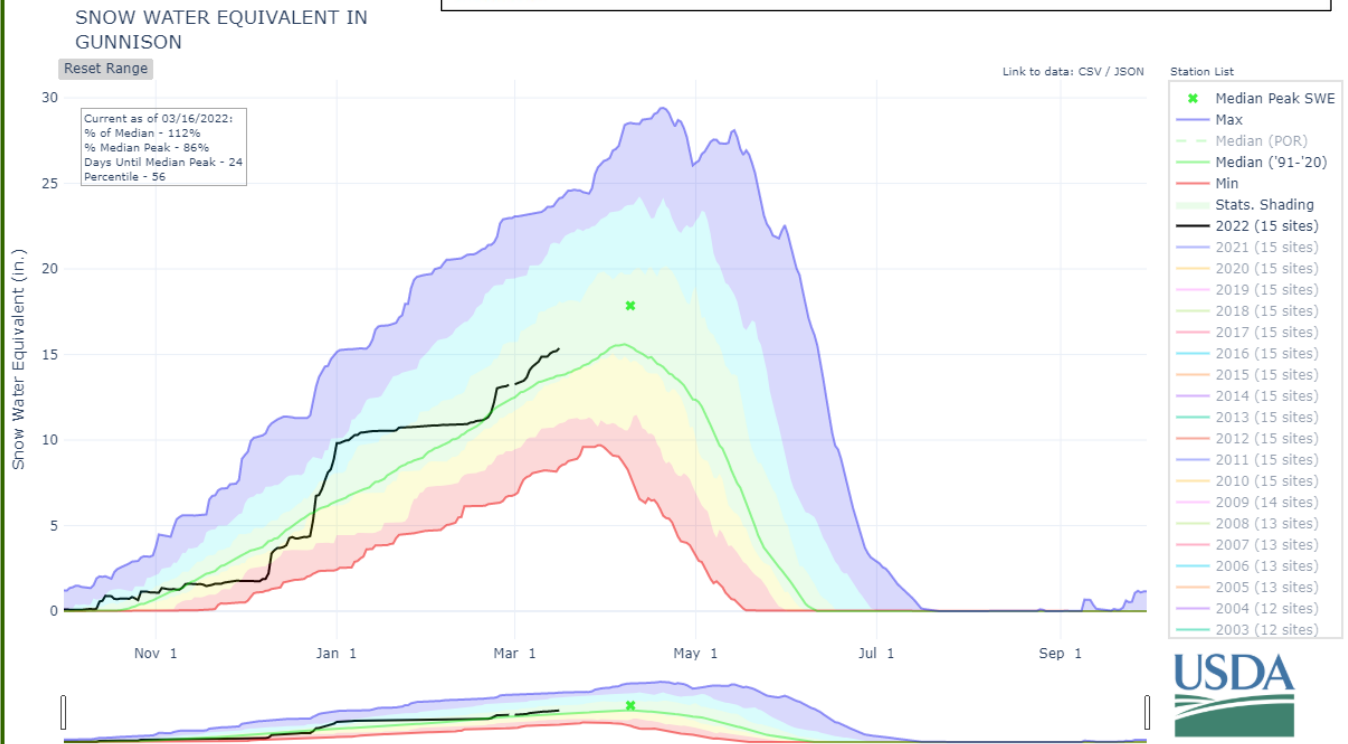
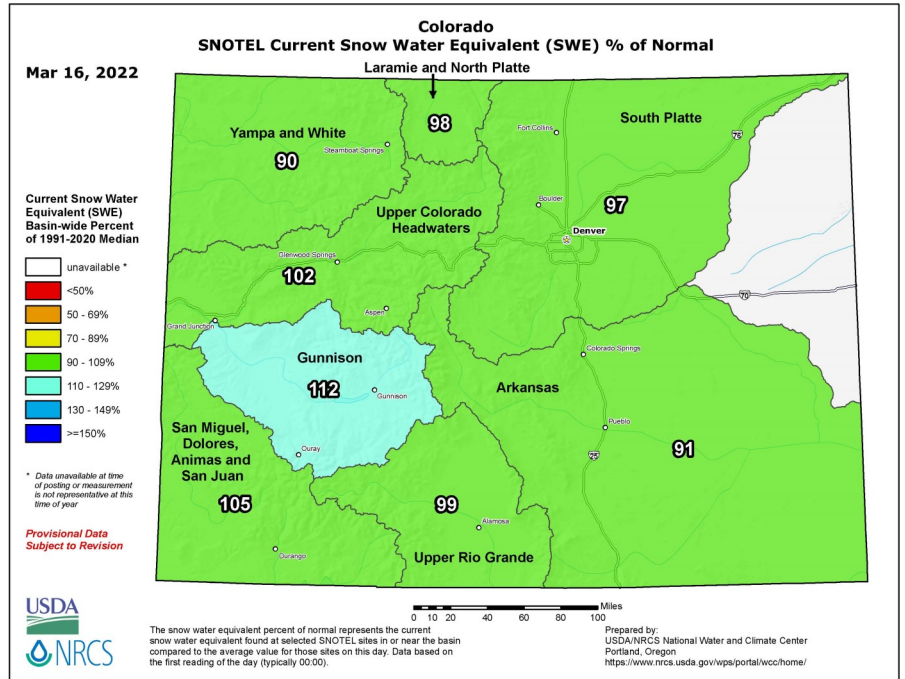
The Gunnison Conservation District will host their annual Bio-Engineering Workshop on Wednesday **April 20, 2022** at 2:00 pm. Please meet in the Tomichi Creek State Wildlife Area parking lot south of the entrance to I-Bar. At this workshop you will learn about more intensive stream restoration techniques, and learn how to collect and plant willow stakes to stabilize stream banks.

Native Plants, Pollinators, and Xeriscaping Workshop

The Gunnison Conservation District is working 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. We will host several talks about these subjects, and have a hands-on seeding session. We hope to provide workshop participants with free custom native Gunnison Basin wildflower seed mix, and coupons for discounted Gunnison Gold compost to help establish their seeds. Keep an eye out for more updates as this workshop develops!

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_sweptcnorml_update.pdf. As of March 16, the Gunnison Basin has declined to 112% of 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.html. There is a new 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 100% of the median SWE for the year, including Schofield Pass at 135% of median. The sites south of US Highway 50 in the Gunnison Basin are not faring as well and are all below 100% of median, including Slumgullion at only 86% of median. Data is taken from March 16, 2022.



USDA Drought Monitor

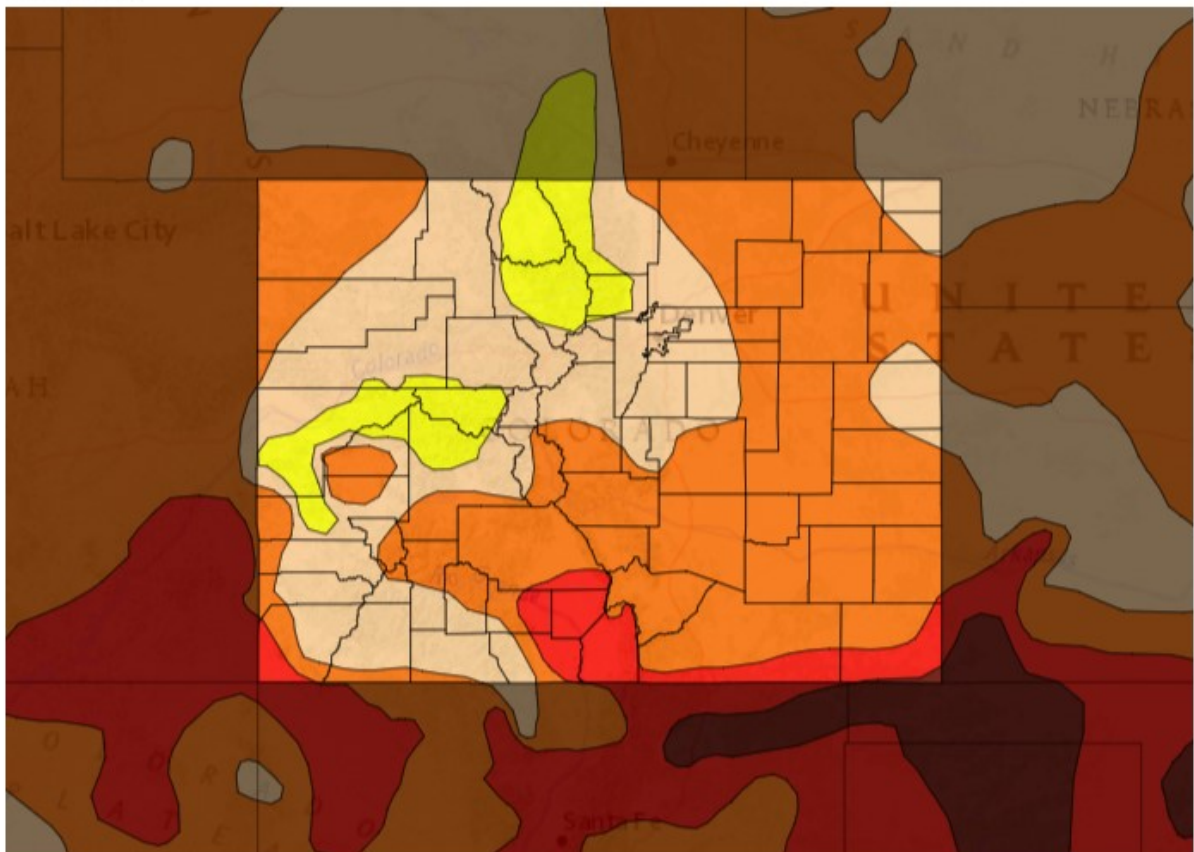
The USDA Drought Monitor can be found weekly at <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/> and a Colorado map can be found at <https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado>. The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is updated each Thursday to show location and intensity of drought across the country. This map shows drought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

Southern portions of Gunnison County 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 northern portion of Gunnison County is in D0 (Abnormally Dry) which indicates that hay production is decreased and rangeland is dry. The rest of Gunnison County 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 it is the 29th driest February on record over the past 128 years, and the 22nd driest year to date over the past 128 years, down almost 2 inches from normal.

Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for Colorado:



Current



Basemap Sources: National Geographic, Esri, Garmin, HERE, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METI, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA,

U.S. Drought Monitor for CO

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Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA
Updates Weekly - 03/08/22

Drought.gov

Cheatgrass herbicide cost share eligibility

2022 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. Other noxious weeds can be treated with Panoramic 2SL (see label for recommendations).
3. You must own or manage at least 2.5 acres of land.
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. You must be able to demonstrate the extent of your infestation if requesting multiple gallons of Panoramic 2SL.
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. You must also provide the acreage of your property, as well as the acres treated and the date treated for reporting purposes.
 - Photographs of the "before" condition are a mandatory requirement to receive the free Panoramic 2SL.
 - Photographs after treatment are optional and should be received by December 31 and can be emailed or dropped off at the office (216 North Colorado Street).
 - If you cannot provide photos, a District employee will visit the site with the landowner and/or land manager to confirm the presence of noxious weeds.
 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.

Participants must discuss equipment calibration with the Gunnison County Weed Management Program to ensure effective application.



CHEATGRASS

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For more information visit:

www.gunnisonconservationdistrict.info
or visit us on [Facebook](#)

