

**EAST CENTRAL COLORADO
RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AREA
(RC&D)**

**REVISED AREA PLAN
EAST CENTRAL COLORADO RC&D COUNCIL, Inc.
2009**

Assisted by

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Sponsors of the East Central Colorado RC&D Council, Inc.

Cooperating Federal, State, and Local agencies.

**Prepared under authority
of the Public Law 107-171
Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Hugo, Colorado

PREFACE

Mission: Provide a continuing program to encourage enrichments of the rural lifestyle for the communities and citizens of the East Central Colorado RC&D region.

Vision: Neighbors helping neighbors accomplish economic, social and environmental benefits for their communities.

The purpose of the Resource, Conservation and Development (RC&D) program is to improve utilization, development and conservation of local resources, both natural and human, thereby, creating a positive impact on the economic, social and environmental qualities in an authorized RC&D area.

The East Central Colorado RC&D Area sponsors formulated area goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving these objectives as derived from survey results and local input. Responsibility to attain these objectives and goals falls upon local sponsors, the RC&D council, local, state and federal agencies working cooperatively. The ECC RC&D encourages leadership for projects to be assumed at the local level by organizations with vested interests and working knowledge of the problems. The RC&D Council seeks to improve the coordination and communication among communities with similar goals. Coordinating efforts to make a regional impact will facilitate partnerships for the wise use of natural resources while improving economic stability in local communities.

Some technical assistance and financial assistance is received from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), for council support, however, most of the projects are completed through many combinations of cooperative efforts of private citizens, groups, businesses, grants from foundations, local, state and federal agencies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The East Central Colorado RC&D council hereby acknowledges and thanks its Executive Council volunteers, individuals from each community group that shared information, attended meetings, and completed surveys, and officials from local units of government and past project partners that contributed to the development of this area plan. We look forward to working with these groups and individuals in implementing this revised RC&D Area Plan in 2009.

Sponsors for 2008

Cheyenne County	K.C. Electric	Town of Arriba
Lincoln County	Mountain View Electric	Town of Bethune
Kit Carson County	Agate CD	Town of Burlington
El Paso County	Burlington CD	Town of Cheyenne Wells
Agate School	Cheyenne CD	Town of Flagler
Agate Mutual Telephone Assn.	Cope CD	Town of Hugo
Dynamic Dimensions	Double El CD	Town of Kiowa
Eastern Colorado Bank	El Paso CD	Town of Kit Carson
Eastern Slope Rural Tele	Flagler CD	Town of Limon

Eastern Plains Intertribal Assn.	High Plains CD	Town of Seibert
Field of Dreams Project	Prairie CD	Town of Simla
First National Bank of Hugo	Eastern Plains Players	Town of Stratton
Town of Calhan	Farm Credit of Southern Colorado	VFW Joe Will Post 6612
Lincoln	High Plains	Ellicott Fire
Community	Bank	District
Hospital		Arriba Flagler School

LOCATION AND SETTING OF THE RC&D AREA

The East Central Colorado RC&D Area originally included Elbert, Lincoln, Cheyenne, Kit Carson counties and the northeast corner of El Paso county. In 1989 the East Central Colorado RC&D Area expanded to include the entire eastern half of El Paso county as far west as Peyton Highway, bringing the total area to 6,226,160 acres. The area is bordered on the east by the Kansas line and on the west by the front range of the Rocky Mountains.

The sponsorship of the RC&D area is made up of Counties, Conservation Districts (CD), Towns, businesses, civic groups, and individuals. The entire area is included in state designated enterprise zones, having tax incentives and investment credits for new business and expansion.

The east half of the area is a typical plain, consisting of nearly level loamy land and sand hills.

The west half has scattered tablelands with many valleys and foothills. Elevation ranges from about 4,000 feet on the east border to 7,000 feet on the west. The semi-arid climate with very low humidity and abundant sunshine with a wide range in temperature makes it a very comfortable place to live. The average annual precipitation ranges from 10 to 18 inches.

Farming and ranching are the predominant economic activities of the area. Bonny Reservoir, Flagler Lake, Ramah Dam, Kinney Lake, and Karval Dam offer the only water-based recreation sites in or near the area with limited boating and fishing potential.

The area was claimed as a Spanish territory until 1706. It was purchased from France in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. As a United States possession it was part of the Kansas territory until 1861 when it joined the Colorado territory. The first settlers came to the territory in the 1860's with large droves of cattle and sheep. The building of the Union Pacific and the Rock Island railroads opened the country up to the mass western migration in the 1870's and 80's. Kit Carson, the famous scout, had a trading post in the present community that carries his name in Cheyenne county.

Total population in the area is approximately 60,000, (based on 2000 census figures) up from 30,000 in 1990, with the largest municipality being Burlington having a population of 3,678. Many of the communities are unincorporated. The fastest growing county in the area is Elbert, situated southeast of Denver. The growth for Elbert County between 1990 and 2000 was 106%. The majority of the growth was in the western part of the

county. The west part of eastern El Paso County is also experiencing growth with small acreages and subdivisions. The remaining counties in the area vary from a - 6.9% growth Cheyenne to 34.4% Lincoln.

Primary sources of income in the eastern part of the area are from agriculture and tourism. The median household income for Lincoln, Kit Carson, and Cheyenne ranges from \$29,117.00 to \$34,746.00. Retail sales per capita in these counties range from \$5,009.00 to \$13,934.00. In Elbert County the median household income is \$52,636 with retail sales per capita being only \$2,000.00. The population of the largest town in Elbert County is 1,434 with the majority of the 19,872 in the county living on small acreages or subdivisions and commuting to the city to jobs.

SUMMARY OF THE RC&D AREA PLAN

The Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) was established by the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962. The program was created on the assumption that local citizens, primarily in rural area with coordinated assistance provided by USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service could develop and implement an action oriented plan for improvement of the social, economic, and environmental qualities of their communities.

The East Central Colorado RC&D Project Area was organized in June of 1969 and was officially authorized in October 1976. The original Area Plan contains valuable resource information, including descriptions of situations and potentials for action. The original Area Plan will continue to be useful to the council as a reference.

The area plan is an attempt by local citizens, community groups, and various agencies to develop and use local leadership on a multi-county basis to address both economic and natural resource concerns. Beginning in June 2008, discussions with the council indicated the direction preferred by the council to obtain community feedback within the ECC RC&D area. Meetings with conservation districts, county commissioners, community groups, and citizens coupled with news articles, fact sheets, and a survey were designed to inform citizens of the RC&D program and to develop a data base of concerns within the area. The Executive Council then reviewed and compiled the data from the area survey, and one on one communication with citizens in each community. This database of information formed the basis of the area plan goals and objectives.

This revision provides a description of existing problems and opportunities. It outlines the broadly defined objectives along with the more specific goals and strategies to achieve a desired future condition.

The objectives, goals and strategies in this revised Area Plan were developed to deal with problems and opportunities in the following general categories:

- 1. Water Management**
- 2. Land Conservation**
- 3. Community Development**
- 4. Land Management**

DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

To gain knowledge of the problems and opportunities in the area, participants in local community organizations, conservation district boards, county commissioners, local business owners/employees and customers, were visited by council members and the coordinator in each county. An opportunity to document concerns and priorities utilizing a condensed survey format was provided directly to 270 participants. Traditional partners (Farm Service Agency and NRCS staff) in each USDA Service Center were also provided the opportunity to return the survey after reviewing an update of the ECCRCD program. News articles about ECCRCD activities were provided for distribution to the public through USDA Service Centers in each county and/or conservation district newsletters reaching over 800 rural landowners. During the previous area planning meetings in 2003, participation varied in all the communities, with as few as none to the largest meeting of twelve. For 2008, the council chose a one on one meeting approach along with a survey to facilitate instant feedback, especially given the limitations of council officer transition issues in addition to the challenges of a new coordinator. The coordinator position had been vacant for 7 months prior to the 2008 planning effort. Council participation in 2007 and early 2008 was inconsistent. The completed and returned survey percentage from 9/08-12/08 was thirty two percent.

One on one feedback and survey results indicated that the top three issues tabulated for all counties were agricultural water shortages, noxious weed alternative treatments, and renewable energy development. New business creation and retention were tied. These issues were closely followed by municipal water conservation/water quality, alternative agricultural opportunities, and economic development. A need expressed by many was 'youth retention'.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Water Management

Goal: Maintain and Improve Water Quality/Quantity

Objective: Conservation of Agricultural Water

Strategies:

- ◆ Attend, participate and monitor water issues at bi-annual watershed meetings
- ◆ Work with local, state and federal agencies on energy audit opportunities and coordinate programs with agencies, and private sector businesses
- ◆ Encourage improved irrigation systems efficiency by developing grants from CSSCB for four conservation district cost share programs

Objective: Improve Urban water Quality and Quantity

Strategies:

- ◆ Provide assistance to at least three water and/or sewer projects in the Area as needed
- ◆ Promote education on water issues and urban water conservation

2. Land Conservation

Goal: Control Erosion and Sedimentation

Objective: Partnership with Conservation Districts, Land Owners and Weed Boards

Strategies:

- ◆ Work with two CD Boards, Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Service and others to educate landowners through publication of materials for local property owners
- ◆ Conduct two workshops/tours on erosion and water quality related issues (including stormwater runoff)
- ◆ Produce and disseminate information on land conservation and weed control with two weed boards

3. Community Development

Goal: Assist Communities in Renewable Energy Development, Job Creation, Youth Retention Strategies, Historic Preservation, and Community Infrastructures

Objective: Renewable Energy Development in Rural Communities

- ◆ Explore development of renewable energy sources in small communities for infrastructure (municipal,hospital,school) for a regional impact (Flagler, Hugo, Cheyenne Wells, others)
- ◆ Develop partnerships/funding to make ideas for renewable energy turn into projects (ICAST,others)

Objective: Improve Community Facilities and Youth retention

Strategies:

- ◆ Assist three communities with parks, trails and recreation development
- ◆ Work with two local Fire departments for buildings
- ◆ Work with ten communities on grants and loans
- ◆ Work with twenty local community based organizations on program facilitation
- ◆ Work with local, state and federal agencies

Objective: Historical Preservation

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify Historical Sites/needs, nominate three for State registration
- ◆ Work with local Historical Societies and/or individuals to preserve /restore six Historic Properties
- ◆ Work with State and Federal Historical Societies on preservation issues
- ◆ Pursue three grants with foundations, corporations, state and federal Agencies or other funding sources. Provide grant research to local organizations with preservation activities.

Objective: Promote Green Technology

Strategies:

- ◆ Generate partnership for energy audit technician training
- ◆ Promote education regarding on farm wind and solar energy technology
- ◆ Explore solar/wind/biofuels demonstration projects
- ◆ Promote Green Expo/local workshops

Objective: Encourage Community and Economic Development

Strategies:

- ◆ Support/encourage planned growth efforts in two communities
- ◆ Participate with eight communities/organizations in planning efforts to develop local plans for retention of existing businesses; recruitment of new business with incentives.

- ◆ Work with two communities for grants and loans to promote economic development
- ◆ Assist child care centers, Early Childhood Council, and/or community organizations with 5 grants (research/technical assistance)

4. Land Management

Goal: Energy Conservation, Productive Land Use, Noxious Weed Management

Objective: Expand the use of alternative, specialty crops, and locally grown agriculture, agri-tourism

Strategies:

- ◆ Work with ten CD Boards, and CSU Extension Service to educate landowners on alternative/specialty crops/agritourism
- ◆ Identify, promote, assist producer organizations to expand markets for locally grown agriculture (High Plains Food COOP, others)
- ◆ Work with ten CD boards and others to develop and expand cooperative efforts to improve ag sustainability.
- ◆ Assist five producers with alternative marketing (niche markets) of traditional, alternative and specialty crops, and tourism

Objective: Promote the use of alternative energy sources to generate electricity

Strategies:

- ◆ Work with at least two conservation districts and local producers to develop on farm wind energy generation (Flagler, Double EI, others)
- ◆ Work with two communities to determine feasibility of local bio-fuel production facility or COOP.

Appendix A

Issues from community group discussion and survey results July – December 2008

Agricultural tourism, water shortages, sustainability, alternative crops
Adequate child care
Community buildings/community center
Community infrastructure - roads, water, sewer
Community renewal – main street beautification
Collaboration between communities on regional activities
Economic development - attract new businesses, create jobs
Fire station buildings
Historic preservation - buildings -Cemetery records/markers/maps
Improve youth/adult involvement in community
Noxious weed management and education
Recreation - parks - trails/paths- recreation centers, expand recycling products
Renewable energy development for sustainable communities – solar, wind, biofuels
Retain youth – ‘grow your own’ professionals, job training
Water resources future needs- quality water systems, waste water mgmt.

The top four needs and services identified that seem difficult to obtain by community organizations: (prioritized according to survey results)

- ❖ grant writing assistance**
- ❖ grant research assistance**
- ❖ fundraising assistance**
- ❖ grant administration assistance**

The East Central Colorado RC&D Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the non-discrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B) that provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof."

The East Central Colorado RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying,

a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non-procurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The East Central Colorado RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to use effectively the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

East Central Colorado RC&D Council, Inc.
Colorado

By: _____ Chairman
Penny McPherson

By: _____ Vice-Chairman
Richard Sears

Attest: _____ Secretary/Treasurer
Candace Payne

This action authorized at an official meeting of the East Central Colorado RC&D Council on January 8, 2009.

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Plan of East Central Colorado RC& D, inc. as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged by: _____, State Conservationist _____, 2009
Allen Green Date