



Center Conservation District 3-Year Plan (2024 to 2026)

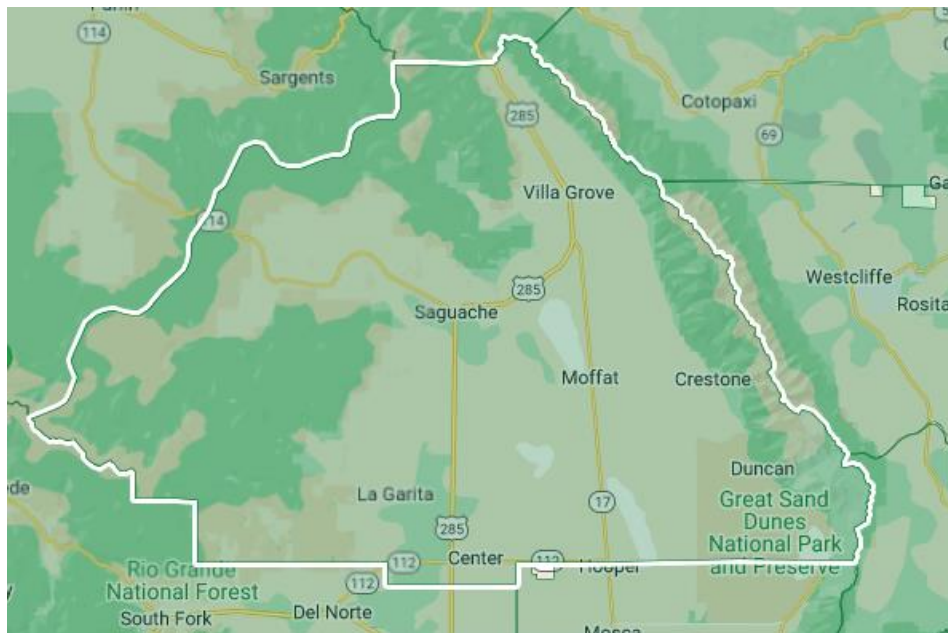
For More Information Contact:
Mattea Freel, District Manager, centercd1@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

Organization of the Center Conservation District

Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of the State of Colorado –The authorities; powers and structure are contained in Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 35, Article 70.

The Center Conservation District was organized on March 11, 1944 under Section 8 (k) of the Colorado Soil Conservation Act. The Center Conservation District is located in areas of Saguache, Alamosa, and Rio Grande counties, consisting of 1,573,370 acres.



Function of the Center Conservation District

To make available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Mission of the Center Conservation District

“The prudent use and adequate treatment of all land, water and related resources within its boundaries, to sustain the use of these resources for future generations and to restore that portion of these resources damaged through improper use.”

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Natural Resource Data

Land Ownership: 608,000 acres of private land; 965,370 acres of public land. Land Use: 87,880 acres of irrigated cropland; 10,740 acres of irrigated pasture/hay land; 666,835 acres of rangeland; 674,780 acres of woodlands; 33,135 acres of recreation, urban, and other land use.

RESOURCE PLANNING

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Center Conservation District

- Drought conditions causing decreased snowpack, river flows, and aquifer recharge.
 - Agriculture industry changes include fallowing ground, decreasing irrigated acres, increasing acres of drought-resilient alternative crops, and improving water-use efficiency in Sub-Districts within Center Conservation District borders.
 - Forested private lands have increased fire risk due to arid climate and unmanaged vegetation.
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Prioritized Natural Resource Issues & Goals

Building the Next Generation of Conservationists

- Work with local university students to create a project utilizing the Rio Grande/Center Conservation District Mini Pivot and promote drought-resiliency projects for these students on the farm
- Develop relevant management recommendations for local producers based on project findings

Noxious & Invasive Weed Species

- Continue to collaborate with Federal, State, and County Governments as well as landowners to control noxious weed species within the area
- Expand educational efforts within groups including community landowners and youth
- Expand program reach to better serve private landowners and cooperating partner groups

Soil Conservation Practices

- Implement the STAR+ program over the course of 3 years to assist 10 producers in implementing new/updated soil conservation practices
- Conduct educational workshops for local landowners to educate on best practices for soil health

Grazing Management for Soil Health – Virtual Fencing

- Implement a virtual fencing program for 10 producers or 1,500 head of cattle to improve grazing management and prevent overgrazing in the San Luis Valley
 - Educate producers about the benefits of virtual grazing with the goal of increasing practice adoption
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Natural Resource Information /Education Priorities and Goals

The Center Conservation District's long-term information/education goals include:

- Expanding Conservation Education:
 - Currently participating in Envirothon, Poster Contest, Youth Conservation Camp, etc.
 - Educational Farm Project for drought resiliency with Adams State University
 - Workshops and educational materials concerning noxious/invasive weed management, soil health practices, and grazing management via virtual fencing
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Conservation District Operational Goals & Objectives

Operational Longevity

- Recruit another board supervisor for a full board of 5 supervisors
- Maintain a full board
- Maintain staffing with a District Manager and any additional staff as seen necessary

Conservation Education

- Continue funding and providing staff for the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative
 - Encourage youth and public participation in Center Conservation District programs and activities
 - Expand forestry projects to increase natural resource education projects
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Staffing Needs

Currently, the Center Conservation District consists of four board members:

- Brian Neufeld, President
- Danny Neufeld, Vice President
- Lynne Thompson, Secretary/Treasurer
- Sherry Haugen, Supervisor

The Center Conservation District currently has one year-round part-time employee, Mattea Freel, District Manager, who works 32 hours per week. Additional staff are hired during the summer months as spray technicians for the noxious weed management program.

CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Natural Resource Priority: Building the Next Generation of Conservationists

Why is this a concern and what is the location: This concern addresses the lack of involvement on conservation boards. The Center Conservation District sees an opportunity to build relationships with young people and Adams State University to build more conservation leaders in our communities.

Three Year Goal(s): Maintaining and growing a competitive, sought-after education program and providing younger generations with firsthand conservation experience utilizing the Center & Rio Grande Conservation Districts’ Mini Pivot.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a relationship with Adams State University (ASU) and students 2. Hold a planning meeting with Center (CCD) and Rio Grande (RGCD) Conservation District boards, Colorado State University (CSU) Research Farm, Rye Resurgence Project, and ASU to determine the final project scope and scale 3. Begin the first year of the project with a cover crop and task ASU students with recording and tracking required variable data 4. Hold a joint board meeting with cooperating groups for final project scope and scale presentation as well as end-of-year findings and begin planning for year 2 	RGCD, ASU, CSU Research Farm, Rye Resurgence Project, Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Rio Grande Water Conservation District Subdistrict 1 (RGWCD Sub. 1), Rio Grande Basin Roundtable (RGBT)	350 hours of District Manager time Total year 1 project funding: \$40,500	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Next-Gen Grant: secured by ASU CWCB Water Plan Grant: pending
2nd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the project into year 2 with a drought-tolerant alternative crop or cash crop 2. Task ASU students with recording and tracking required variable data 3. Conduct a year-end joint board meeting with cooperating groups to discuss the end-of-year findings and begin planning for year 3 		330 hours of District Manager time Total year 2 project funding: \$36,000	Funding from RGWCD Sub. 1: pending

<p>3rd Year</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the project into year 3 with a drought-tolerant alternative crop or cash crop (whichever was not planted in year 2) 2. Task ASU students with recording and tracking required variable data 3. Conduct a year-end joint board meeting with cooperating groups to discuss the end-of-year and end-of-project findings 4. Perform producer outreach and education with ASU students to present project findings and implementation/management recommendations to local producers 		<p>410 hours of District Manager time</p> <p>Total year 3 project funding: \$42,500</p>	<p>Colorado State Conservation Board Matching Grant: pending for year 3 workshop</p>
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* Use of acronyms – **please spell out each acronym the first time it is used followed by the acronym. From that point on, use only the acronym.**

CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Natural Resource Priority: Noxious & Invasive Weed Species

Why is this a concern and what is the location: The control of noxious weeds is the responsibility of all landowners, municipalities, and county governments. Noxious weeds can have a detrimental impact on watershed conditions, including soil and vegetation health, as well as inflicting economic damage to agricultural lands. The Center Conservation District’s jurisdiction is mostly comprised of agricultural land with high populations of noxious weeds, making this a high priority for the Center Conservation District.

Three Year Goal(s): Continue partnerships with Saguache County and State entities to control noxious weeds, grow the Center Conservation District’s current weed management program to manage more private land, implement virtual fencing grazing management to expand current integrated pest management strategies, and expand educational programs to reach more landowners in the Center Conservation District’s jurisdiction.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with Saguache County commissioners and reach an understanding of the importance of noxious weed control within the Center Conservation District (CCD) and County 2. Meet with the State to ensure continued support of the noxious weed partnership with the CCD 3. Hire 1-2 seasonal technicians to assist with the weed control program 4. District Manager will begin seeking QS status 5. Restructure the spraying program, including updated marketing for spraying services to increase private landowner and Ditch Company coverage 6. Update integrated pest management strategy to include virtual fencing 7. Assist with List A species control near San Isabel National Forest 8. Compile data in EDDMapS platform to generate species management maps 9. Conduct an educational workshop for local landowners 	<p>Saguache County, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), San Luis Valley Weed Management Association (SLVWMA), Subdistricts of Rio Grande Water Conservation District</p>	<p>40 hours of District Manager time, 480 hours of contracted sprayer time</p> <p>Total year 1 project funding: \$180,000 (bulk of funding is implementing virtual fencing)</p>	<p>Colorado Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed Grant: pending</p> <p>Contracts for private services: pending (service-based)</p> <p>Natural Resource Conservation Service</p>

<p>2nd Year</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor and treat county roads in Saguache County as needed 2. Meet with Ditch Companies and private landowners to discuss weed control opportunities 3. Expand educational programming to the community through landowner management workshops 4. Expand District Manager participation in weed management activities after QS status is secured 5. Continue data compilation in EDDMapS platform 6. Maintain virtual fencing management programs with select producers 	<p>(RGWCD), Ditch Companies, Private Landowners</p>	<p>120 hours of District Manager time, 480 hours of contracted sprayer time</p> <p>Total year 2 project funding: \$60,000</p>	<p>Conservation Innovation Grant: pending</p> <p>Colorado State Conservation Board Matching Grant: secured for year 1 workshop (pending for years 2 and 3)</p>
<p>3rd Year</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand services for Ditch Companies, private landowners, BLM, USFS, CDOT, RGWCD, and other entities 2. Continue offering educational programming to the community via workshops 3. Continue data compilation in EDDMapS platform 4. Maintain virtual fencing management programs with select producers 		<p>120 hours of District Manager time, 480 hours of contracted sprayer time</p> <p>Total year 2 project funding: \$60,000</p>	

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CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Natural Resource Priority: Soil Conservation Practices

Why is this a concern and what is the location: Soil conservation and related practice implementation to protect soil health continues to be a primary concern within the Center Conservation District’s boundaries. Drought conditions, wind erosion, and improper management practices are all contributing factors to deteriorating soil health in the region.

Three Year Goal(s): Implement the STAR+ program for 10 producers in the Center Conservation District and continue education and outreach efforts to educate producers about desirable soil conservation practices.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure 10 producers within the Center Conservation District (CCD) for the STAR+ Program 2. Work with participating producers to complete 3-year goals and related best-practice management plans 3. Conduct soil health tests and soil moisture probe installation for participating producers 4. Assist producers with required reporting and program fund disbursement 5. Conduct an educational workshop related to soil health and conservation practices 	Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), Local Producers	300 hours of District Manager time Total project funding: \$75,000 (per year)	CDA STAR+ Program: secured Colorado State Conservation Board Matching Grant: secured for year 1 workshop (pending for years 2 and 3)
2nd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform year 2 duties for the STAR+ program, including producer check-ins, reporting, and fund disbursement 2. Continue educational workshops about soil health and conservation practices for local producers 3. Seek further programming for additional producers 			
3rd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform year 3 duties for the STAR+ program, including producer check-ins, reporting, fund disbursement, and program close-out 2. Continue educational workshops about soil health and conservation practices for local producers 3. Seek further programming for additional producers 			

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CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Natural Resource Priority: Grazing Management for Soil Health – Virtual Fencing

Why is this a concern and what is the location: With many ranchers and cattle producers within the Center Conservation District, proper grazing management is a concern to avoid negative effects on land conservation by improving soil health and water quality. Virtual fencing has been known to reduce overgrazing, assist with invasive weed species management, reduce wildlife disturbance, and reduce livestock presence in ecologically sensitive areas.

Three Year Goal(s): Implement a pilot virtual fencing program in the San Luis Valley in partnership with the Rio Grande Conservation District to encourage effective grazing management to improve soil health and reduce the negative effects of overgrazing.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enroll a minimum of 10 producers or 1,500 head of cattle in the Center (CCD) and Rio Grande (RGCD) Conservation Districts' virtual fencing program 2. Secure and distribute required program materials such as base stations, collars, and batteries to participating producers 3. Conduct a Vence workshop to educate participating producers on program application 4. Record, evaluate, and compile variable data via producer surveys, area survey photos, soil tests, and field tests with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 	RGCD, Local Ranchers/Cattle Producers, Vence, NRCS, Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference	500 hours of District Manager time Total year 1 project funding: \$653,000	NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant: pending
2nd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin year 2 of the project with producer check-ins 2. Perform a project/program demonstration at the Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference to inform local producers about virtual fencing 3. Conduct additional Vence producer workshops as needed for continuing education 4. Record, evaluate, and compile variable data via producer surveys, area survey photos, soil tests, and field tests with assistance from the NRCS 		500 hours of District Manager time Total year 2 project funding: \$79,000	

<p>3rd Year</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin year 3 of the project with producer check-ins 2. Perform a project/program demonstration at the Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference to inform local producers about virtual fencing 3. Conduct additional Vence producer workshops as needed for continuing education 4. Record, evaluate, and compile variable data via producer surveys, area survey photos, soil tests, and field tests with assistance from the NRCS 5. Perform project close-out duties and determine possibility of continuing the project past year 3 	<p>500 hours of District Manager time</p> <p>Total year 3 project funding: \$89,000</p>
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CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

District Operational Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Operational Priority: Operational Longevity

Why is this a concern: Like all Conservation Districts, the Center Conservation District would like to maintain and grow operational status in terms of sustaining a full board and staff.

Three Year Goal(s): Seek an additional board member and maintain a full board of 5 supervisors as well as a District Manager and any additional staff.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek an additional board member to secure a full board of supervisors (5) 2. Hold at least one monthly board meeting 3. Maintain Center Conservation District (CCD) staff 4. Improve partner organization/cooperating group involvement in CCD meetings and activities 5. Encourage Saguache County commissioner participation in CCD meetings and activities 	Rio Grande Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado State University Extension, Colorado State Forest Service, Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, Saguache County Commissioners	500 hours of District Manager time (per year) Total project funding: \$40,800 (per year)	Center Conservation District Funds Rio Grande Conservation District Funds (for District Manager share)
2nd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain a full board of 5 supervisors 2. Maintain monthly board meetings 3. Maintain CCD staff 4. Continue partnerships with cooperating groups 			
3rd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain a full board of 5 supervisors 2. Maintain monthly board meetings 3. Maintain CCD staff 4. Continue partnerships with cooperating groups 			

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CENTER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

District Operational Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2024 - 2026

Operational Priority: Conservation Education

Why is this a concern: Natural resource education is a vital component of the Center Conservation District’s operational goals. Soil health concerns, extended drought pressures, water export threats, and forestry management are a few natural resource concerns that the Center Conservation District would like to focus on for local youth, producers, landowners, and the general public.

Three Year Goal(s): Continue funding the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative to assist the Center Conservation District in providing education for San Luis Valley residents on the importance of natural resource conservation in the San Luis Valley.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1 st Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative (RGWCEI) with annual program funding 2. Provide staffing support for educational projects utilizing the District Manager 3. Involve youth and/or general public participation in Center Conservation District (CCD) projects 4. Expand forestry projects through a partnership with the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) 	Rio Grande Conservation District, RGWCEI, CSFS	416 hours of District Manager time (per year)	Center Conservation District Funds
2 nd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to support the RGWCEI with annual program funding 2. Continue to provide staffing support for RGWCEI 3. Expand on community-involvement projects 		Total project funding: \$2,500 (per year)	Rio Grande Conservation District Funds (for District Manager share)
3 rd Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to support the RGWCEI with annual program funding 2. Continue to provide staffing support for RGWCEI 3. Expand on community-involvement projects 			

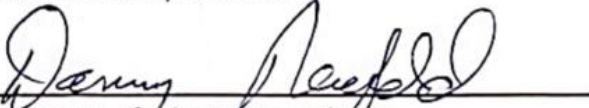
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RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

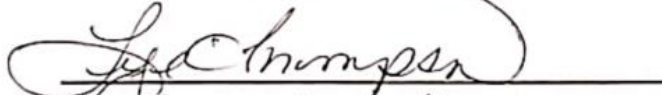
THEREFORE, Be It Resolved that this Long Range Program of the Center Conservation District be adopted as the official program of the District as of this 14th day of December, 2023.



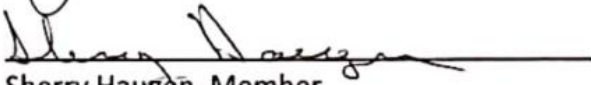
Brian Neufeld, President



Danny Neufeld, Vice President



Lynne Thompson, Secretary/Treasurer



Sherry Haugen, Member

Reviewed by the Colorado State Conservation Board

Colorado State Conservation Board, President

Nikki Brinson, Program Manager

Date