



Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

CACD

2008

Policy Book

ACTION ITEMS INCLUDED

Proudly representing and advocating for Colorado's 76 Conservation Districts

COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
(CACD)

Mission Statement

The Mission of CACD is to be the guiding force, directed by the Conservation Districts of Colorado, to educate, promote, help obtain funding, and provide information on issues and programs aimed at enhancing and protecting our natural resources.

INTRODUCTION

This booklet of policy positions of the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) is prepared for the assistance of local conservation districts (CDs) and other interested groups and individuals to become better aware of the activities and positions of CACD, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

The policy positions in this booklet represent the specific implementation of the purposes of the Association contained in its Articles of Incorporation, dated September 19, 1969, Article III.

“The objects and purposes of this Association are to assist and cooperate with Conservation Districts in the State of Colorado and other governmental or private groups, in the furtherance of the conservation and preservation of natural resources, the control of wind and water erosion and the development of sound land use”; and in particular:

1. Facilitate the exchange of information among groups in the state engaged in the conservation of natural resources.
2. To further a constructive statewide plan for conservation of soil and water resources, flood control and river basin development.
3. To conduct and assist other groups in the development of scientific and educational programs for conservation of Colorado’s resources.

The policy positions are grouped according to the responsibilities of the ten standing committees of CACD.

FIRST REVISION: January, 1980: LAST REVISION November 2008

GENERAL POLICY GOALS

CACD strongly supports efforts made towards the conservation and enhancement of Colorado's natural resources through comprehensive resource management on a watershed basis that addresses soil health, native plant communities, water quantity and quality issues, and wildlife issues.

- A. The prevention and control of non-point source pollution.
- B. Reclamation of surface-mined areas.
- C. The improvement of the management of the state's private, non-industrialized forest lands.
- D. The incorporation of conservation and environmental education in school curricula.
- E. The preservation and enhancement of prime and unique agricultural, range, horticultural and forest lands.
- F. Land use planning.
- G. Encourage a vigorous, creative, state and federal agriculture policy.

CACD supports a vigorous, creative, agricultural policy that incorporates all measures necessary to assure a quality life for forthcoming generations, both environmentally and economically, and that all policy decisions of the United States, both domestic and foreign, be continuously weighed against this, our national need: agricultural policy aimed at full and sustained production of food and fiber.

2008 CACD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lower South Platte River Watershed Brian Starkebaum, Vice-President
Gunnison-Dolores River Watershed Eric Jessen, President
Republican River Watershed Harley Ernst, Director
Lower Arkansas River Watershed J. D. Wright, Director
Upper South Platte River Watershed Robert Warner, Director
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DISTRICT OUTLOOK

Colorado offers each citizen and visitor a unique quality of life with a wide variety of productive lands, recreation, wildlife, and open space. These factors and Colorado's economy is dependent upon the natural resources found in the state and, therefore it is critical that we utilize these resources wisely.

The Colorado State Legislature created the Colorado State Soil Conservation Act in 1937 providing Colorado with the infrastructure to conserve the State's valuable natural resources. Each local Conservation District is charged with identifying and caring for the natural resources within the respective District. The Board Members of each district represent their local landowners. The local landowners are most familiar with the natural resource issues and therefore should be the people making decisions on what is best for the land, water, animals, plants, and air.

Conservation Districts work with the land owners and many partners at the local level for technical assistance in identifying the best management practices to address the resource concerns in their respective locations. While state and federal agencies are important in this partnership, flexibility in programs and agencies is critical at the local level. With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. General Policy

- A. Developmental Rights – Preservation of agricultural land, including:
 - 1. Long-range planning to encourage the continuation of agriculture as one of our major industries in Colorado.
 - 2. A land inventory to determine which land is best suited for continued agricultural use and which is suited for non-agricultural production.
 - 3. Alternative methods for compensating the agricultural landowner for a loss of property value by keeping his land in agricultural production.
 - 4. Persons in the agricultural community have a voice in the land use decisions being made around them. These citizens should be utilized by the local governmental units making land use decisions affecting farm and ranch communities.

- B. USDA Field Offices – Reasonable producer access to USDA field offices through strategic office locations. Therefore, CACD requests fair and equitable office closure guidelines to ensure producers' access.

- C. Definition of "an Agricultural Producer" – Definition of an agricultural producer as: "A person regularly engaged in the business of using land for the production of crops and/or animals which are for sale."

- D. Statutory Authority – Conservation Districts statutory authority to:
 - 1. Accept grants of money and land.
 - 2. Enter into partnerships and cooperation agreements with the United States and other state agencies and non-profit organizations to protect farmland.

- E. Special Issue Funding – Salinity program, tribal issues and other special issues be funded by a separate mechanism from the locally led EQIP process.

- F. Congressional Oversight Responsibilities – Common sense federal rules and regulations that promote the protection of natural resources without undo negative impacts to agricultural producers, private property, and consumers.
- G. Seed Germination and Purity – Support certified and weed free seed laws as stated in 2007.

II. District Policy

- A. Supervisor Workshops – District supervisor training through the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB).
- B. Encouraging Landowners to Apply for Membership as a District Cooperator – Cooperation of Conservation districts and NRCS staff to develop a workable procedure encouraging producers to sign a cooperative agreement with the local conservation district when requesting technical assistance from NRCS.
- C. District Identity – Districts to retain and/or strengthen their identity through: (1) owning and operating their own offices and equipment, (2) promoting their own conservation cost-share programs, and (3) improving district supervisors and employee identity.

III. State Association Policy

- A. Minutes of Meetings – The requirement that the CSCB and CACD send a copy of the unapproved minutes of each of their directors meetings to all Conservation Districts within 30 days of said meeting.

IV. Government Programs and Policy

- A. Cost Share – Conservation practices being implemented on a voluntary basis and not through regulation. Therefore, conservation cost share programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) are encouraged.
- B. Cooperation with F.S.A. – Enhancing effectiveness and efficiency to strengthen the conservation program between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Services Agency (FSA).
- C. Compliance plan implementation – Comprehensive compliance plan implementation and agencies judging the success or failure of compliance plan implementation as a whole not as a separate practice.
- D. Regulation Burden – Legislation to reduce the regulation burden on cooperators of the districts.
- E. Due Dates – Reasonable and appropriate notice and time frame for report due dates.
- F. Field Office Uniformity - Uniform NRCS field offices to ensure availability and delivery of all pertinent data to all applicants for the purpose of aiding in the decision making process.
- G. Annual Budget for NRCS – Strong funding for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) allowing landowners access to needed technical assistance.
- H. Conservation Compliance – District supervisor participation in the compliance appeals process.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education and outreach are critical to the conservation of Colorado's natural resources. Conservation Districts play a significant roll in providing information and education to youth and adults regarding the wise use of natural resources. With the above in mind, the following is the policy of CACD:

I. General

- A. Information Exchange - Facilitate the exchange of information among groups in the state engaged in the conservation of natural resources.
- B. Education - Promote science based natural resource and agriculture conservation education as a priority in the schools of Colorado and promote the ongoing development of curriculum supplements that meet state content standards.
- C. Education Funding - Continue to seek education funding for natural resource and agriculture conservation education.
- D. Partnering - Participate in partner education programs.
- E. Workshops - Support workshops on agriculture and natural resource stewardship and conservation.
- F. Stewardship Week - To promote the observance and participation in the Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

II. Youth Education

- A. Youth Programs - Support youth programs that promote stewardship and conservation of natural resources.
- B. Youth Board - Support the establishment of a youth board in local districts in the state.
- C. School Sites and Outdoor Classrooms - To expand the development of school sites and use of outdoor classrooms.

III. CACD Awards

- A. Earth Team - Support the Colorado Earth Team by helping NRCS and CDs recruit volunteers and provide them with meaningful work and recognition for outstanding service conservation in Colorado.
- B. Poster Contest - Support the Poster Contest in compliance with the NACD Poster Contest standards and encourage local CDs to promote the contest within their schools.
- C. Conservationist of the Year Award - Support the continuation of recognizing the Outstanding Conservationist Farmer and Rancher of the year and that District Supervisors are eligible for this award.

FINANCE

Colorado is rich with natural resources and the Conservation Districts provide the infrastructure to implement on-the-ground conservation ensuring the State's continued economic value and quality of life. Therefore, it is vital for CACD to actively engage in efforts to secure funding for the Association, Colorado State Conservation Board, individual districts, conservation programs, and other conservation efforts throughout the State.

With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. CACD Finance

- A. CACD Funding - To fund operations and activities through Conservation District dues, individual and associate memberships, sponsorships, grants, and cooperative agreements.
- B. CACD Dues - To establish annual dues for CACD. The annual dues is \$1000 per Conservation District as determined by resolution adopted by CACD.
Action Item: CACD will organize a CACD Annual Dues Committee made up of Colorado conservation district representatives and CACD Board of Directors to review the CACD Annual Dues and develop a fee structure based upon a sliding scale, flat fee or alternative recommendation for submittal to conservation districts by resolution at the 2009 CACD Annual Meeting.('08)
- C. Memberships - To aggressively pursue associate and individual memberships and sponsors.
- D. Annual Budget - CACD directors establish and distribute an annual budget to the Districts prior to the Annual Meeting.

II. District Finance

- A. District Funding - To support funding and assistance for individual Conservation Districts through such programs as membership drives, direct assistance, matching grants, conservation technician program, noxious weed control, and soil surveys.
- B. CSCB Funding - To support Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) in procurement of funds for district operations and activities.
- C. Soil Surveys - To support funding for the cooperative soil surveys each year.
- D. District Conservation Technician Program - To assist Districts in developing cash matches and encourage NRCS to continue funding for the District Conservation Technician Program.
- E. District Memberships - To assist districts in recruitment of individual memberships upon request.

III. Program and Research Funding

- A. Drought Assistance - To support drought assistance funding on a timely basis providing for conservation measures.

- B. EQIP Flexibility - To support flexibility within the EQIP Program, to allow funding for repair or replacement of failed conservation practices outside of the EQIP ranking system.
- C. 319 Funding - To support 319 funds being used for non-point source pollution, water quality and informational and educational projects.
- D. Research Stations - To support research stations such as the Great Plains Research station in Akron and the Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center in Meeker.

IV. General Funding

- A. Estate and Death Taxes - To support legislation that will exempt family qualified farms and ranches from all estate and death taxes, because these taxes often prevent the next farming and ranching generations that are Stewards of the land from continuing the tradition of good land stewardship.

V. Direct Assistance Funding

CACD will work on behalf of the individual conservation districts with CSCB to adapt the application process to include the following changes:

- Make the information presented in the application useful and in a format which can be modified or used in other marketing efforts of the districts; and
- Provide districts with sub-rating criteria; and
- Consider alternative factors to add or delete to application of direct assistance. ('08)

FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

The following is the policy of CACD:

I. Forestry

- A. Fire Management – Support the use of wildfires as a management tool for federal, state, and private lands in Colorado.
- B. Wilderness Areas - Opposes all new legislation that expands wilderness areas within the state.

II. Wildlife

- A. Habitat - Support the development and maintenance of wildlife habitat and encourage all member districts to work closely with state, federal and private wildlife agencies and organizations to develop and implement District action plans that include specific habitat goals for priority wildlife species.
- B. Wildlife and Shelterbelt Plantings - Support the establishment of a diversity of tree and shrub species in wildlife and shelterbelt plantings.
- C. Threatened & Endangered Species -
 - 1. Wolves and Gizzly Bears - Oppose the reintroduction of wolves or grizzly bears into Colorado.

2. Removal - Support landowner options in removing problem bears and lions.
3. Threatened Wildlife Species – Support conducting an adequate analysis (including an environmental and economic impact assessment) of the species status when a species is being petitioned for listing as threatened or endangered. The analysis should include the environmental and economic impacts if the species is listed and then further allowed to increase in population.
4. Recovery Implementation Program - Seek an exemption from the Colorado Recovery Implementation Program policy for the installation of conservation practices to be installed in cooperation with Conservation Districts.

III. General

- A. Wildlife Management - Support a strong effective program for the management of both economically detrimental and beneficial wildlife on private and public lands.
- B. Compensation for Big Game Damage - Support equitable compensation for damages caused by big game animals.
- C. Prairie Dogs and Other Rodents – Support the control of prairie dogs and other rodents.
- D. Weed Free Hay Program - Support local, state, and federal certified weed-free hay regulations and programs in Colorado.

LAND USE

RECLAMATION POLICY

For the purposes of the policy the word “entity or entities” will include, but is not limited to, the following:

All individuals, companies and corporations that conduct land disturbing practices in the furtherance of their enterprise objective. Such entities may include Oil and Gas Drilling, Electrical Transmission, Surface Mining Companies, and such other individuals, companies or corporations that may be required to utilize the Special Use Permitting process to conduct their activities.

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) strongly supports realistic reclamation programs that protect and conserve our private and public land and water resources during and after land disturbing activities undertaken by the entity. Such program activities include, but are not limited to:

- **Complete restoration of drilling pads and pipeline disturbance areas;**
- **Revegetation, erosion control, and adequate drainage for access areas;**
- **Control of noxious weeds and all other weeds;**
- **Use of weed-free seed and mulch;**
- **Dust abatement procedures on all sites; and**
- **Disposal of all materials not natural to the site being disturbed.**

Conservation Districts support the Mined Land Reclamation Board retaining jurisdiction over oil shale development.

CACD recognizes the regulation authority and the benefits of maintaining a cooperative working relationship with the various state government divisions such as: the Department of Natural Resources, its Divisions, and other parties.

CACD strongly promotes the concept of private landowner rights to garnish the stewardship respect of entities in making reclamation efforts and their responsibilities to that effort. To that effort the entities engaged in disturbance of private land resources are to respect private landowners use through responsible reclamation that ensures restoration to pre-disturbance conditions or other beneficial use.

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

1. Cooperators - All entities become cooperators with their local Conservation Districts and develop a conservation plan on the mined lands.
2. Soil Depths - Reclaimed mines and landfills being required to have soil cover depths sufficient to support native grasses.
3. Small Noncommercial Exemption -An exemption from the Colorado Land Reclamation Act for small noncommercial sand and gravel operations using sand and gravel deposits on their own land for their own use.
4. Bonded Reclamation Plans - Utility and energy companies be required to post bonded reclamation plans that are approved by the local Conservation District and county commissioners.
5. Bond Levels - Bonds being established at levels to cover the actual cost of reclamation by an outside consultant should the mining operator default on completing their reclamation plan and allow for the projected cost of the reclamation ten to thirty years in the future.
6. Surface Damage Negotiations - Surface owners or agents rights to negotiate for any surface damage prior to entry on private land for the purpose of seismograph, core drilling, oil and gas well drilling and production, roads, pipelines or any other work done in connection with mineral leases and utilities.
7. Revegetation - Mandatory revegetation of utility corridors following construction activities.
8. Proposed Mining Sites – A complete copy of mining site application be delivered to the local Conservation District allowing at least a 45-day review period providing Conservation Districts sufficient time to make appropriate comments.
9. Special Use Permit Plans - Requiring approved weed management, revegetation, and erosion control plans for all special use permits which will result in vegetation disturbances. CACD supports the following requirements: (1) the approval process including the county weed advisory boards and conservation districts; (2) upon completion of the special use permit, the

county weed advisory board and conservation district inspect the project within 45 days and make recommendations to the appropriate entities regarding release of bond or site responsibilities.

EROSION POLICY

The soil resource base of Colorado is diverse and complex. It consists of a wide variety of soil types that encompass highly fertile and productive soils to the more fragile and lower productive types. All soil resources need to be managed in a manner that maintains their inherent productivity for future generations.

CACD supports a strong stewardship ethic of managing the soil resource on the private and public lands of Colorado in order to ensure the health, prosperity and welfare of the State of Colorado for its people and natural resources.

CACD further supports:

- **Maintaining those lands under class VI, VII, and VIII in permanent vegetative cover;**
- **Re-vegetating marginal croplands to permanent vegetation;**
- **Controlling wind and water erosion, and providing sediment control on large and small acreage including urbanizing sites;**
- **Implementation of sound residue management and conservation tillage systems to control erosion; and**
- **Any other such conservation practices that provide soil erosion control.**

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

1. Residue Management - All organic vegetative residue, both growing and dry, to establish compliance with the conservation plan.
2. Living Snow Fence/Seeding - increase the use of living snow fences, and/or in lieu of a living snow fence, assure that bermed soil windbreaks are seeded to permanent vegetation.
3. Dust Blowing Act Amendment – Article 71 (Dust Blowing Act), Section: Method of Assessment to read: “be assessed the current cost of conservation methods applied per acre per treatment.”

DEWATERING POLICY

With the ever increasing threats to agricultural water rights and the impact that this has on drying up irrigated agriculture, CACD supports the following procedure for de-watering these lands:

- **Local Conservation Districts and NRCS assist land user in developing a conservation plan that will address the future land use.**
- **Water courts enforce compliance by withholding transfer of water unless the conservation plan is implemented.**
- **Should permanent vegetation be the choice of land use, require the use of irrigation water to establish seedlings as long as necessary to secure ground cover.**

As a result of the loss and potential loss of over-wintering feed stock created by de-watering, CACD & NACD will pursue FSA to enable over winter grazing on CRP lands via the Managed Haying and Grazing Program. This would necessitate a change in current law regarding grazing restriction on CRP's Managed Haying and Grazing Program. CACD supports the utilization of CRP acres as an alternative grazing resource for over wintering livestock herds as de-watering pressures increase and irrigated land feed stocks decline. ('07)

PUBLIC LANDS POLICY

CACD supports accountability to responsible natural resource management of State and Federal agencies having land management authority on state and federal lands. These lands often times fall within watersheds that can influence resource conditions on private lands. As an entity of State government the Colorado State Conservation Board should serve as the agent to Colorado's Conservation Districts in working with these agencies.

CACD supports a no net increase in Federal land holding within the State of Colorado.

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

- 1. Wild Horse Management – The BLM to continue managing the wild horse populations to balance their impacts upon the rangeland resource with other public land uses, while protecting the resource base. Excess horses must be removed on an annual basis, utilizing the least costly methods and programs.**

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) POLICY

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) recognizes the value of converting highly erodible and environmentally sensitive cropland to permanent vegetative cover. Conversion of such lands to permanent cover benefits not only the soil resource base, but also improves water quality, promotes bio-diversity of the landscape and provides valuable wildlife habitat for a variety of species. Over the years CRP has proven to be a source of grass for livestock producers during times of drought.

CACD strongly supports the continuance of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and recommends that it be included in future Farm Bill legislation. CACD further supports the implementation of sound conservation measures that will maintain the vegetative quantity, quality and plant diversity of the grass seedings including three (3) year grazing and five (5) year haying on CRP. CRP participants should be encouraged to properly maintain their grass stands through the use of payment incentives and an elimination of the haying and grazing rental rate reductions. CACD further supports maintenance of the land in its highest resource protective state in the event that the land is removed from the CRP program.

CRP is a valuable program that CACD will continue to support to ensure future generations have an abundance of sustainable soil, water, plant and animal resources.

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

1. Preservation of Cropland Bases on CRP Land - The preservation of bases on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land as long as the land remains in permanent vegetation.
2. Erodibility Factor - The soil rental rates based on erodibility and wildlife benefits, rather than just productivity, and that they are higher for the more erodible soils.
3. CRP Land Treatment Prior to Breakout – Chemical fallow to be used the fall before and spring of the year the CRP land will be coming out of the program.
4. CRP Cover Crop Harvest – Allowing the harvesting of CRP cover crops, according to NRCS standards, in lieu of cost-share in all future CRP sign-ups, thus reducing monetary budget outlay for new CRP contracts.
5. Set-aside Acres Required on CRP Tracts – Policy that allows the producer to designate where they will place wildlife habitat set-aside acres required on CRP tracts.
6. CRP Cover Establishment - Allowing the county committee to extend the time beyond the 36-month limit to establish conservation cover on CRP ground.
7. CRP Rental Rates for Emergency Haying/Grazing – Changing the rental rate reductions of 25% of the annual payment per acre grazed or hayed to a fee of \$5 per acre maximum reduction.
8. Transitioning CRP Contracts – The option for CRP enrollees to sell the attached bases to the CCC under a 10 year contract after 2007 in return for grazing privileges. These acres may be entered into a CRP easement-attached program of determinant years that mandates managed grazing after the CRP contract expires. All contracts will be eligible for EQIP or WHIP programs to provide water and fencing to achieve managed grazing and wildlife habitat after contract expiration.
9. CRP Grazing Research - Continued research on economical and practical methods to graze CRP lands when they are removed from the CRP. This research must be conducted on CRP lands while the lands are in the program.

LAND USE AND PERMANENT COVER / INSURANCE PROGRAMS POLICY

CACD will work with FSA at county committees, state and national levels to cooperate with local conservation districts prior to implementation of insurance, support, or subsidy programs where land use permanent cover may be impacted. ('08)

CRP Action Items:

Action Item and Policy:

CACD will work with USDA and other interested groups to continue the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with the following changes:

- To reshape the CRP rules to allow managed grazing on CRP contracts with a payment adjustment that reflects the true grazing value; and
- Erodibility of soil, family farm status, and wildlife value is given point value in CRP enrollment; and
- CRP payments be set in current enrollment date dollars. ('08)

Action Item:

- CRP Grazing – CACD will work with livestock organizations to find a compromise policy position as an alternative CRP management tool, utilizing high intensity, short duration rotational grazing and implement such policy under USDA guidance. CACD and NACD utilize the Conservation Districts for documentation.

Action Item and Policy:

- CACD will work with NACD and lobby USDA to re-affirm CRP use in emergency or planned grazing or haying situations, and reaffirm private property decisions be based on local input; and CACD will join forces to lend a voice on Capitol Hill and to federal agencies, in ensuring accountability by the USDA for its actions, as well as following its own rules. ('08)

PROPERTY RIGHTS POLICY

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) recognizes that private property rights are a critical element to a strong and vibrant agriculture economy. The private land base in Colorado provides valuable resources for multiple use that include the production of food and fiber, raw products for bio-fuels, wildlife habitat, open space and scenic viewing, etc. Without private property the resources that every Colorado citizen enjoys would not exist. CACD strongly supports the right of private landowners and managers to exercise their use of their private property. This right should be unrestricted and unencumbered by legislation and ballot initiatives. The right to own private property is a cornerstone of our society and should be preserved for future generations.

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

1. Eminent Domain - Opposing the use of eminent domain powers by/for private entities to gain control of existing private land without due compensation.

PROPERTY RELOCATION

CACD will work to ensure that natural resource impacts of railroad relocation will be mitigated as much as possible. ('08)

CONSERVATION EASEMENT POLICY

CACD supports landowners utilizing conservation easements, on a voluntary basis, as a conservation tool to protect agriculture land for production and wildlife habitat. Conservation Easements must be based on thorough, defensible appraisals of the property uses and value.

CACD supports the State and Federal tax incentives for producers as it provides them an option to the sale of land for development and keeps our country more self reliant on food, fiber and energy. CACD supports the Colorado Dept. of Agriculture as the governmental agency providing oversight to easements and the easement tax credit incentives.

CACD supports policy concerning Colorado Conservation Easements (funded with Colorado Department of Revenue tax credits) that the Colorado Conservation Easement Program be administered by the Colorado Department of Agriculture including the sale and transfer of tax credits. ('07)

WEED MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) recognizes that noxious and invasive plants are detrimental to existing cropland, grassland, forest land, and riparian ecosystems. These plants damage the value and uses of these ecosystems, decreasing economic value and increasing costs of maintaining these systems for present and future use. Noxious and invasive plants constitute a negative influence on land stewardship and healthy landscapes. Noxious and invasive plants are considered a priority resource issue to Colorado's Conservation Partnership and their conservation efforts.

CACD supports the mission and goals of the Noxious Weed Management Program found within the Division of Conservation Services to the Department of Agriculture. The Colorado State Conservation Board should work in concert with the Noxious Weed Management Program and their efforts toward noxious weed management on private, commercial, county, state and federal lands.

Colorado's Conservation Districts will work in cooperation with County Weed Control Supervisors and other entities of local government in educating and providing assistance in the control and/or eradication of noxious weeds to insure productive natural resource management.

CACD strongly supports a coordinated approach to control the arrival of noxious and invasive plants into new areas, and the control of noxious and invasive plants in existing areas. CACD supports coordinated efforts with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private landowners and groups for the control of these weed species. These efforts should target educational programs, research to improve technologies, and inventory and assessment initiatives to establish extent and location of weed species. CACD opposes any effort by state agencies in transferring their weed control responsibilities and liabilities to county governments without transferring adequate financial resources.

CACD further supports an integrated approach to control and eradicate noxious and invasive plants. This includes the utilization of mechanical, chemical, biological and cultural control methods. Maintaining healthy cropland, grassland and riparian ecosystems is vital to our agricultural economy. CACD reaffirms that sustainability of such ecosystems will require an aggressive effort to control and eradicate noxious and invasive plants.

Based on the above policy, CACD supports:

1. Weed Cost Share - Cost-sharing weed control practices as a priority issue.
2. Exotic Landscape Species – Opposing the use of exotic landscape species that may escape into the native environment.
3. Spread of Tamarisk (Salt Cedar) – Local, state, and federal efforts to develop and implement an integrated management program to control the spread of salt cedar and return existing salt cedar sites to the original native plant communities. Conservation Districts support an emphasis on actual implementation rather than a study phase of tamarisk control.

PRESCRIBED BURNING AS CONSERVATION PRACTICE POLICY

CACD supports the implementation of rangeland management practice “Prescribed Burning” as addressed in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide Standard and Specifications, and encourages the USDA-NRCS of Colorado, Colorado Department of Agriculture and other agricultural and conservation partners to provide technical and financial assistance to use this economical measure to improve agricultural land’s conditions for all natural resources related to this land use. (’08)

WEED CONTROL AND MANAGED GRAZING ON PUBLIC LANDS POLICY

Policy Item: Managed grazing is to be considered as a Best Management Practice (BMP) on public lands so private grazers can take an active role in noxious weed management.

Action Item: CACD will join forces with CSCB to notify public agencies, including, BLM, USDA-USFS, and Colorado Department of Natural Resources to restore noxious and invasive weed control as a priority on public lands, especially in areas that are experiencing energy development and to allow for expanded managed grazing on public land; and work to reinstate managed grazing as Best Management Practice on public lands so private grazers can take an active role in noxious weed management. (’08)

BIO-SOLIDS AND SOLID WASTE RECYCLING POLICY

CACD recognizes that domestic wastewater treated bio-solids (sometimes referred to as “sewage sludge”), municipal waste compost, and other bio-resource products can be successfully utilized as nutritive soil additives. Other bio-solids included in this policy are, but are not limited to: paunch wastes, composted carcasses, and solid waste recycling. All sources of bio-solids can have value if treated and applied properly.

The position of CACD is that the application and handling of all bio-solid products, without regard to the source of such products, must be accomplished in conjunction with and according to a resource management plan that addresses the following on every site (prior to permitting the application):

- **Adequate control of soil erosion and runoff**
- **Nutrient value matched to crop production to ensure no leaching beyond root zones**
- **Bio-solid testing that meets State regulations**
- **Enforcement and monitoring protocol**
- **Appropriate permitting of applicators and facility operations**

CACD supports that these plans should be on file at the local Conservation District offices having governance over natural resource planning in the work area. Stringent regulation and enforcement regarding environmental concerns, such as water quality, where bio-solids are applied should be administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and associated county health departments. Mandatory monitoring and rule enforcement regarding bio-solids application should be at the discretion of the County Commissioners with oversight by local Conservation Districts as to resource management plan compliance. No local biosolids application permits should be approved without a Conservation District authorized resource management plan.

It is the policy of CACD to:

1. Animal by-products research – Support continued research and development providing economically and environmentally sustainable solutions for the disposal and utilization of animal by-products and carcasses.

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE POLICY

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) supports a voluntary conservation program. CACD recognizes the importance of good land stewardship and applying sound conservation principles to affect changes in management strategies providing for sustainable soil, water, plant, air and animal resources. Conservation compliance is an acceptable incentive to encourage the wise use of the soil resource base. Additionally, practices that incorporate the newest technology should have the greatest incentives applied.

CACD supports NRCS and FSA implementing conservation compliance plans in a reasonable, workable and logical manner. Success of implementation of compliance plans should be evaluated by both the NRCS Field Office staff and the Conservation District Board regarding potential non-compliance situations at the field office level. CACD supports a strong partnership approach to conservation compliance and encourages Conservation Districts to maintain a high level of involvement throughout the process.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES AND RESOLUTIONS

The purpose of the Resolutions Committee is to provide a clear process for CACD to establish and implement policy and action items.

With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. Procedures

- A. A resolution proposing policy or action item from a local district is to be approved by the respective watershed and turned into the CACD Office in timely advance of the CACD Annual Meeting. The CACD Office will forward the resolutions to the Resolutions Committee for assignment to the appropriate committee.
- B. Standing Committees will meet to in advance and at the CACD Annual Meeting to provide timely review of proposed resolutions, current policy, and develop agenda for committee meetings at CACD Annual Meeting. Standing Committees may develop resolutions at this meeting which will be forwarded out to all districts along with resolutions that come through the watershed process.
- C. The Proposed policy or action item will be considered by the assigned committee at the Annual Meeting and may be recommended to the General Assembly for adoption.
- D. Emergency resolutions must be presented to the CACD Board the day before the CACD Annual Meeting. If accepted by the CACD Board, the resolution is forwarded to the Resolutions Committee for assignment to a committee.
- E. Resolutions may be developed by a committee as a result of a subject on the committee agenda.
- F. An emergency resolution presented after the assigned committee has adjourned, may be presented to the General Assembly at the discretion of the Resolutions Committee.
- G. The actions of CACD on action items will be included in a printed annual report to all districts of the Association and posted for electronic access.

II. Resolution Timeline: recommended schedule

- September 15 – Resolutions due to CACD office
- September 15 – 25 – Policy committees meet
- October 1 – Policy amendments and resolutions out to conservation districts for review
- Annual Meeting – Policy committee of the whole reviews all changes 1st day of meeting.
- Annual Meeting Business Meeting – Recommendations are considered by the General Assembly

RANGELAND

Rangeland and grasslands make up a significant portion of Colorado's private and public lands. They are a vital part of Colorado's ecosystem, economy, open space, and attraction. Colorado livestock and wildlife are dependent upon these lands.

Conservation Districts will work with landowners and managers to encourage the implementation of best management practices to ensure sustainable rangeland and grassland for the above stated purposes.

With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. General

- A. Grassland Easements –support the use of easements to protect grassland from conversion.
- B. Public Grazing –support grazing on public lands.
- C. Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) –support the GLCI program and funding for the program in Colorado.
- D. GLCI Funding – support adequate funding for GLCI programs.
- E. Cost Share Pumping Equipment –support cost sharing of permanently installed pumping equipment for livestock water development.
- F. Re-vegetation and Reclamation –support the use of native species for re-vegetation and reclamation and strongly encourage the use of native or adapted species that are produced in Colorado or from adjacent states.

RANGELAND PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT POLICY

CACD strongly supports USDA and CDA-CSCB devoting programs and funding that give consideration to the rangeland resource under eminent threat of encroaching prairie dog communities and the increasing populations of existing prairie dog communities on these landscapes in order to achieve a healthy natural resource balance in these degrading ecosystems and ensure continued viable livestock production to this inherent land use objective.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation & Development Councils have many common interests and goals. CACD will work with the RC&D League and councils to address those common interests and meet the common goals through continued and improving partnerships.

With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. General:

1. Partnership - Support a strong partnership with the Colorado League of RC&D Councils and local councils.
2. Annual Meetings - The Colorado League of RC&D Council's annual meeting, held in conjunction with the CACD Annual Meeting, will serve as a partnership forum with the Colorado League of RC&D Councils.
3. Sponsored Legislation - Inform each RC&D Council when natural resource legislation is being sponsored by CACD, so that RC&D Councils may solicit support from a wider variety of entities.
4. National RC&D - Support the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils.
5. RC&D Funding - Support continued and increased national funding of the RC&D Program.
6. Statewide RC&D Coverage - Support statewide coverage by Resource Conservation and Development Councils.
7. Renewable Energy - Support the development and utilization of renewable energy resources.

RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY

CACD supports continuing efforts in the development and utilization of renewable resources, and encourages agricultural and conservation agencies to partner in providing technical and financial assistance to conservation districts in the development, harvesting, and production of including, but not limited to, wind, bio-fuel, solar energy, and small hydro.

Action Item: CACD will jointly engage with CSCB and RC&D in the education of landowners and conservation districts on renewable energy development so that landowners and local communities receive fair value compensation for the amount of renewable energy produced on their property and in their communities.

Action Item: CACD will work with CSCB and RC&D in securing information to educate landowners and conservation districts on impacts to property and soils from renewable energy development, operation and construction of transmission lines, including wind towers, and to work with renewable energy associations, agencies and producers to develop regional and state plans specific to renewable energy production. ('08)

URBAN CONSERVATION

Urban communities across Colorado are expanding to meet the demands of growing populations. As more homes, schools, shopping centers, and roads are built; developers, planners, engineers, local officials and resource agencies must respond to these demands. They must collectively manage land development in ways that minimize negative environmental impacts created by development.

Developing areas typically have far greater erosion rates than agricultural land and are a significant source of sediment in surface water. Roofs, roads, parking lots, and compacted soil increase runoff and deliver more sediment, nutrients, hydrocarbons and other pollutants to receiving streams.

With the growing demand to address urban conservation issues, the CACD Urban Committee works with diverse partners to help Conservation Districts meet these needs. Providing conservation assistance in urban areas complements the traditional conservation services provided to agricultural lands. Fostering urban-rural coalitions for conservation will strengthen support for natural resource enhancement and agriculture throughout Colorado.

CACD will work with diverse partners, such as the Office of Smart Growth, to ensure that land development is managed in ways to protect natural resources.

WATER RESOURCES

CACD is dedicated to the development of Colorado's water resources in a sustainable and beneficial manner for the benefit of agriculture and Colorado citizens.

With the above in mind the following is the policy of CACD:

I. GENERAL

- A. Partnerships - Support work at the national, state, and local levels to build stronger partnerships and sharing of resources to address water quantity and quality issues.
- B. Funding for Water Conservation - Support collaboration between federal and state agencies to facilitate timely funding of water conservation projects.

II. WATER QUANTITY

- A. Agriculture Water - Promote protection of agricultural uses of water in federal and state legislation.
- B. Irrigation Programs – Support water development projects to control and store water for agricultural uses.
- C. Irrigation Efficiencies – Support improved irrigation efficiencies on the farm through cost-share and other programs.
- D. Local Control - Promote local control of water resources.

- E. Basin of Origin - Oppose removal of water from basin of origin without agreed upon compensation by the affected exporting basin.
- F. Well Tests –Support requiring well tests within one month of shutdown in order to reflect true pumping volume and water levels and eliminate the need to change nozzling packages in the middle of the next irrigation season when water volume and levels decline.
- G. Meeting Compact Requirements: Support agencies developing and implementing programs that help meet compact requirements while:
 1. Prioritizing programs that maintain agricultural lands for crop and livestock production over conversion to other use,
 2. Prioritizing the lease of water rights over purchase,
 3. Providing that irrigation wells taken out of production may be converted to domestic and/or livestock use.
 4. Paying incentives to producers who convert from higher to lower water use crops,
 5. Providing for a way to credit the resulting decrease in consumptive use toward the model used to assess the state’s compliance with the compact.
- H. Incentive Payments for Well Set Asides – Support incentive payments to set aside operating irrigation wells.
- I. SNOTEL –Support the NRCS Snow Survey and Water Processing Program in Colorado.

III. WATER QUALITY

The CACD recognizes water quality as a significant issue in Colorado, and as such, holds the following:

- A. Non-Point Source Pollution – Support the designation of the CSCB and the local CDs as the logical partner of state and local agencies to address non-point source issues of the watersheds of the state.
- B. Cleanup of Non-Point Source Pollution Management Funding – Support efforts for congressional funding to manage non-point source pollution.
- C. Drilling Activities for Mineral Exploration – Ensure responsibility for aquifer contamination during supply well or mineral drilling, testing, or production.
- D. Expansion of Colorado River Salinity Control –Support continued funding and expansion of the Colorado River Salinity Control efforts.
- E. Slurry pipeline – Oppose the use of slurry pipelines involving the consumptive use of potable and irrigable water.
- F. Regulations of Storm Water Discharge from Oil and Gas Operations – Support the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission in its regulation, permitting, and enforcement of storm water discharges from oil and gas operations that affect one or more acre of land.
- G. Down Stream Water Quality Protection –Support protection of down stream water quality any time existing water rights are changed.

- H. Municipal Storm Sewer System – Supports present authority giving powers to counties, similar to those of cities, to abate and correct municipal storm sewer system (MS4) discharge permit violations.
- I. Watershed Treatment –Support the development of long-term agreements to improve water quality and flood control in Watersheds.

IV. URBAN IMPACT

- A. Municipalities Water Drainage –Support conservation districts and municipalities working together to reduce the risk of floods that are the result of, or enhanced by, urban development.
- B. Stream Monitoring –Support legislation for the CDPHE to establish monitoring systems on tributary streams to assess impact from subdivision and development.
- C. Urban Water Use – Support programs and policies for the reduction of water use for landscaping purposes and for encouragement of low water use landscaping alternatives.

V. WATER RIGHTS

- A. Water Rights –Support legislation to establish that all court costs and legal fees required to prosecute or defend a suit to protect historic water rights be borne by the party desiring to change the historic rights.
- B. Colorado Water Rights –Support the State of Colorado in protecting Colorado water rights through the Prior Appropriations Doctrine.
- C. Ditch and Reservoir Rights – Support cooperation of federal and state agencies to work with water users in establishing ownership rights, management systems, and improvement projects.
- D. Monetary Damages to Water Users - Oppose the shifting of the monetary damages to the individual water users and/or water districts anytime monetary damages are assessed to the state of Colorado due to non-compliance with a water compact.
- E. Recreational In-Channel Diversions (RICD) – Support restriction of Recreational In-Channel Diversion applications as necessary to preserve future water development in river basins.
- F. Federal Water Rights - Oppose any water rights transferred to federal agencies, which will decrease historical use throughout the respective river basin.
- G. Frying Pan Arkansas Project - maintain current water distribution allocation at 51% municipal and 49% agricultural.
- H. Water Diversion - CACD supports any water diversion and subsequent water rights that may be developed or awarded to be deemed as junior to any water rights that have been developed prior to completion of any project when considering Colorado’s obligation to Colorado Compacts and will not affect present or future water development in Colorado.

Action Item: CACD supports requiring that the burden of proof to evaluate the effects of water rights due to irrigation improvements should fall with the office of the Colorado State Engineer. The engineering study should be based on the best actual, verifiable and regional data from Colorado. ('08)

Action Item: CACD will work with the Colorado legislature to ensure that cost feasibility of implementation of any rules governing consumptive use of surface water rights should be a primary consideration. When it becomes more cost effective to buy replacement water than to hire employees to enforce the regulations implemented, replacement water should be purchased by the State of Colorado rather than hiring additional staff. ('08)

Action Item: CACD, CSCB, the conservation districts of the Republican River Watershed, the Groundwater Management District of the Republican River Basin, and other vested organizations will work cooperatively to develop voluntary conservation programs and conservation measurement recommendations for irrigation use within the Republican River Basin. ('08)

VI. DAMS

- A. Dam Hazard Rating –Support legislation which provides that individuals who develop areas below existing dams, resulting in a change of the hazard rating, be responsible to pay for the cost of upgrading the dams to meet the criteria set by the state.
- B. Dam Liability - Support all efforts to protect sponsors and owners of watershed dams from liability suits involving failure of these dams.
- C. Aging Water Dams –Support legislation that increases the funding for the cost-share programs that address the need and authorizes the rehabilitation of aging watershed dams.

VII. EROSION

- A. Streambank Erosion – Support its members, all county, state and federal agencies and all other public and private water users in protecting existing waterways from man-caused streambank erosion and to mitigate natural occurring streambank erosion.
- B. EQIP Practice to Control Streambank Erosion – Support the inclusion of stream management to control streambank erosion as an EQIP practice.
- C. Water Storage Siltation – Support adequate funding and high priority to protect streams and storage structures from siltation, through land treatment and structural practices installed on the upper reaches of watersheds.

VIII. WETLANDS

- A. Delineation of Wetland – Support any restrictions placed on private ownership of land caused from the delineation of wetlands be adequately compensated for by the federal government and/or environmental groups wanting this designation.

- END 2008 CACD POLICY-

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ARS	Agricultural Research Service
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP.....	Best Management Practice
BOR.....	Bureau of Reclamation
CACD.....	Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
CCA.....	Colorado Cattlemen’s Association
CD.....	Conservation Districts
CDA.....	Colorado Department of Agriculture
CDNR.....	Colorado Department of Natural Resources
CDPHE	Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CDOW.....	Colorado Division of Wildlife
CDWR.....	Colorado Division of Water Resources
CMLRD	Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Division
CRM.....	Coordinated Resource Management
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CSCB.....	Colorado State Conservation Board
CSFS.....	Colorado State Forest Service
CSLB	Colorado State Land Board
CSU	Colorado State University
CTA	Conservation Technical Assistance
CWA.....	Clean Water Act
CWCB.....	Colorado Water Conservation Board
CWMA	Colorado Weed Management Act
CWMA	Colorado Weed Management Association
DMG.....	Division of Mineral and Geology
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP.....	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
ESA.....	Endangered Species Act
FSA	Farm Service Agency
GLCI.....	Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
HEL.....	Highly Erodible Land
IRS.....	Internal Revenue Service
MLRB	Mine Land Reclamation Board
NACD.....	National Association of Conservation Districts
NRCS.....	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWF	National Wildlife Federation
RC&D	Resource Conservation & Development
SNOTEL	Snow Telemetry Network
USDA.....	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS.....	United States Forest Service
USFWS.....	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program