



# Routt County Conservation District

## 3-Year Plan (2020 to 2023)

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### Overview

#### Organization of the Routt County Conservation District

The Routt County Conservation District (RCCD) is a tax exempt, special purpose district authorized by, and organized under, Colorado Revised Statutes Section 35-70-101 et seq. (the “Colorado Soil Conservation Act” or the “Act”).

#### History

The West Routt County Conservation District was formed on December 7, 1942. A few years later the East Routt Soil Conservation District was formed on June 23, 1947. The two districts were merged in 1972 and renamed the Routt County Conservation District. The RCCD covers most of Routt County.

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#### Function of the Routt County Conservation District

RCCD was formed for the purpose of providing landowners with education and assistance in connection with conservation-related activities, including without limitation land stewardship, soil health, and water. The district partners with NRCS to identify local resource needs.

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#### Mission of the Routt County Conservation District

To encourage stewardship of our natural resources which will ensure the preservation and sustainability of working landscapes through education, financial and technical assistance

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#### Trends Impacting Conservation in the Routt County Conservation District

Lands within the District have experienced multi-year droughts in recent years. Additionally, significant growth in the County has been experienced. Impacts have been widespread extending to ag production; soil health issues; rangeland issues; needs for water management re-focus; watershed and forest health concerns; and others.

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#### Natural Resource Data:

- Routt County covers 2,368 square miles in Northwest Colorado.
  - Land Use: Rangeland = 730,000 acres, non-irrigated cropland/pasture = 86,000 acres, irrigated lands = 63,000 acres, woodlands = 535,000 acres, recreation = 47,000 acres & other = 55,000 acres.
  - Land Ownership: federal = 775,000 acres, state and county = 69,000 acres and private = 672,000 acres.
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#### Natural Resource Priorities & Goals:

The top three categories of focus for 2020-2023 have been identified as:

- Soil Health
- Water-related

- Rangeland and Forestry

The District will assist landowners and local government agencies by providing programs and services related to the above resource categories.

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**Natural Resource Information /Education Priorities and Goals:**

RCCD will host an Annual Landowners Meeting as well as Local Working Group meeting to discuss resource issues and seek input from landowners in the County. Education and outreach will include resources provided on the RCCD website as well as field days on pertinent topics.

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**Staffing Needs:**

Currently RCCD has no employees. Until such time that sustainable funding sources can be established, this will likely remain the case. In the meantime, RCCD plans to partner with like organizations to fulfill its goals and objectives, as well as seek funding opportunities going forward.

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**Conservation District Operational Goals & Objectives:**

1. Develop a professional grade website to use as a communication, education and resource tool.
2. Develop a communications plan to engage a larger group of landowners in our district.
3. Continually visit what value the district can provide.
4. Develop lasting partnerships with conservation-minded agencies and entities.

# ROUTT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2020 – 2023

**Natural Resource Issue: SOIL HEALTH**

**Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:** Soil Health is a pillar of Conservation Districts. A Soil Health initiative in Routt County is consistent with the Colorado Department of Agriculture state wide initiative to help gardeners, farmers and ranchers build drought resiliency, improve water quality, sequester carbon and reduce soil erosion through cost effective and sensible soil management practices.

**Three Year Goal(s):** Define effective and efficient ways to support land owners and Ag producers in good soil health practices. Develop framework for feedback from producers in gardening, farming and ranching with technical service providers and others invested in agriculture and the health of our soils to build a program that will benefit Routt County Agriculture and Water Quality.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Create and distribute a brochure (also for use on the RCCD &amp; other agency websites) that explains why soil health determination is an important &amp; valuable practice for Land Owners and Ag Producers</li> <li>B. Include information that identifies entities working in the soil health arena, who to contact- how &amp; when</li> <li>C. Develop the framework and procedure to follow when committing to soil health testing</li> <li>D. Confirm framework for interpreting test results</li> <li>E. Verify how to follow-up with a Soil Health Management &amp; Best Practices Implementation Plan, as influenced by test results</li> <li>F. Promote Colorado’s Soil Health Initiative- with education “field day workshops” that include NRCS “rain simulator” at Annual Land Owner’s Meeting, CAA Ag Week Events, YWG Roundtable, Hay Day, CSU Ext, &amp; other NRCS events</li> </ul>	CDA, NRCS, CSU Ext, CAA, YWG Round Table, UYWG, Farmer’s Union, CCA, RC Gov’t	Board Member time in cooperation with supporting agency support, TBD	NRCS, Bootstrap, City of SS, CSU Ext, YVCF Grant, CAA Grant, Farmer’s Union, UYWG Grant  TBD
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Promote and pursue continued Soil Health Education</li> <li>B. Based on input from Annual Meetings, Ag Week Events, and Producer inquiries, assist Land Owners in testing their soil health</li> <li>C. Assist Land Owners with interpreting test results</li> <li>D. Initiate development of an updated Base-line Soil Health Map</li> </ul>	CDA, NRCS, CSU Ext, CAA, YWG Round Table, UYWG, Farmer’s Union, CCA, RC Gov’t	Board Member time in cooperation with supporting agency support, TBD	NRCS, Bootstrap, City of SS, CSU Ext, YVCF Grant, CAA Grant, Farmer’s Union,

	<p>for Rout County</p> <p>E. Promote value and methodology that defines follow-up Soil Health Management Plan</p> <p>F. Assist Land Owners to implement their updated Soil Health Management Plan</p> <p>G. Share test results with WYG Round Table, UYWG</p>			<p>UYRWG Grant</p> <p>TBD</p>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Year</b>	<p>A. Promote and pursue continued Soil Health Education;</p> <p>B. Based on input from Annual Meetings, Ag Week Events, and Producer inquiries, assist Land Owners in testing their soil health</p> <p>C. Assist Land Owners with interpreting test results</p> <p>D. Further develop &amp; update RC Soil Health Map;</p> <p>E. Promote value and methodology that defines follow-up Soil Health Management Plan</p> <p>F. Assist Land Owners to implement their updated Soil Health Management Plan</p> <p>G. Share test results with WYG Round Table, UYWG</p>	<p>CDA, NRCS, CSU Ext, CAA, YWG Round Table, UYWG, Farmer's Union, CCA, RC Gov't</p>	<p>Board Member time in cooperation with supporting agency support,</p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>NRCS, Bootstrap, City of SS, CSU Ext, YVCF Grant, CAA Grant, Farmer's Union, UYRWG Grant</p> <p>TBD</p>

# ROUTT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2020 – 2023

**Natural Resource Issue:** RANGELAND HEALTH and FORESTRY

**Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:** Rangeland, Pastureland, and Forestry make up a large portion of Routt County’s agricultural land. Ensuring that these lands remain healthy is vital to conservation in Routt County.

**Three Year Goal(s):** To develop a strategy to improve and maintain rangelands and forests in the conservation district through collaboration, education and conservation assistance.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Based on lessons learned from the Elkhead Creek Restoration project and other information, partner with NRCS and others to provide education on grazing best practices</li> <li>B. Participate in the Wildfire Mitigation Council to help develop a collaborative and strategic approach to treat forestry related resource concerns</li> <li>C. Develop additional educational components and support for landowners including a summary of financial resources available (e.g. NRCS programs)</li> </ul>	Colorado State Forest Service, Routt County, Trout Unlimited, CSU Extension, NRCS, CAA, USFS, BLM, Upper Yampa Watershed Group	40hrs	Bootstrap; NRCS funds; outside funds as available TBD
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Build on education to promote healthy rangeland and forestry practices</li> <li>B. Seek input from Landowners and Local Working Group meetings</li> <li>C. Develop an approach to help promote healthy forests in the district</li> </ul>	NRCS, Colorado State Forest Service, Wildfire Mitigation Council	80hrs \$ for LWG meeting	CSCB; NRCS funds; outside funds as available; fundraiser; sponsors
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Continue to implement the developed strategy to promote healthy forests and rangeland</li> </ul>	NRCS, Colorado State Forest Service, Wildfire Mitigation Council		CSCB; NRCS funds; outside funds as available

# ROUTT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

Long Range Plan for: 2020 – 2023

**Natural Resource Issue: WATER QUALITY and QUANTITY**

**Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:** There has been much activity on the water “front” in the Yampa Valley in recent years including healthy watershed implementation initiatives by the Upper Yampa River Watershed Group (UYWG) of its 2016 Watershed Plan; implementation of the Basin Implementation Plan by the Y/W/G Basin Roundtable (BRT); establishment of a large endowment to benefit the Yampa River titled the Yampa Water Fund; efforts to improve diversion infrastructure amplified by a first ever call on the Yampa to name a few. In the past, RCCD has been active in water issues and fills a distinctive niche due to its ability to work with land owners and ag producers as well as being part of a statewide network of conservation districts.

**Three Year Goal(s):** Work with land owners and ag producers to help them navigate the myriad of regulatory mandates; the multitude of water programs and agencies; and the potential sources of funding available to them to meet their water-related goals. Partner with other local, state and federal agencies and entities to maximize the value to landowners.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	A. Create and distribute a brochure (also for use on the RCCD and other agency websites) that identifies entities working in the water arena, who to contact when, and contact information B. Expand website resources and an email distribution list to provide needed information on current issues C. Develop new and nurture existing partnerships with water-related entities and personnel. Partner on a workshop regarding pertinent regulations. Collaborate with local NRCS staff D. Attend local and regional water-related meetings E. Participate in the County initiative to update its Master Plan E. Solicit input at the Annual Landowners meeting Feb. 27, 2020	NRCS; Community Ag Alliance; UY Watershed Group; CSU Extension Office; Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District; Y/W/G Basin Roundtable & IWMP; Y/W/Rio Grande Watershed Assn.; Routt County Government	Board member time;  TBD	Bootstrap; NRCS funds; sponsors; outside funds as available  TBD
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	A. Based upon the findings of the UYR Watershed Group’s current Nutrient and Sediment Loading Analysis, work with landowners to address/ mitigate impacts as a result of increased loading B. Develop projects based on input from Landowners Meetings C. Continue to attend/participate in local and regional water mtgs	UY Watershed Group  (see list above)	TBD	CSCB; NRCS funds; outside funds as available; fundraiser
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	A. Identify additional water concerns through the Annual Landowners meeting and other input to develop pertinent programs/projects for year 3. Nurture partnerships	TBD	TBD	CSCB; NRCS funds; outside funds as available

**ACRONYMS:**

RCCD Routt County Conservation District  
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service  
UYWG Upper Yampa River Watershed Group  
UYWCD Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District  
CSCB Colorado State Conservation Board  
CAA Community Ag Alliance  
Y/W/G BRT Yampa White Green Basin Roundtable  
LWG Local Working Group  
USFS U.S. Forest Service  
CSU Colorado State University  
CDA Colorado Department of Agriculture  
City of SS Steamboat Springs  
RC Gov't Routt County Government