



El Paso County Conservation District

Quarterly Newsletter

January, February, March 2022

Check out our website at WWW.EPCCD.org



We are managed by a board of supervisors who are concerned about conservation issues in El Paso County, Colorado. We invite you to come to a board meeting if you are interested in becoming a board member and being involved in conservation issues and conservation education in our county. The EPCCD Board meets ON THE 4TH Wednesday of every month location and time TBD. Please email us @ epcdistrict@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending.

Our board members are unpaid ELECTED officials and give of their time and effort to providing your community with a Conservation District. We appreciate every one of our board members and the part they play in our District. **Thanks for all you do EPCCD board!!!**

EPCCD has an outstanding partnership with educated soil conservationists, technicians, rangeland management specialists, biologists and engineers who are dedicated to helping landowners with conservation programs, conservation practices and other opportunities available to landowners and land users regarding soil health, water issues, high tunnels and other land concerns in El Paso County. Please call us at 719-600-4706 to find out more about the programs available.

EPCCD has college scholarships available for college age students for \$1000.00 every semester. If you are interested in a career that is agriculturally related in some way, please contact us for a scholarship application by emailing Epcdistrict@yahoo.com.

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Healthy Soil Legislation:

The below is a status of state Healthy Soils legislation, All Southwest states and most Northeast states have now passed and enacted Healthy Soils legislation.

Having Healthy Soils legislation on state dockets helps build awareness of legislators and staff of the importance of soil health and improve funding for soil health programs at state and federal levels. here are 11 states where bills have been filed thus far in 2021 that include creating a soil health program

Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, New York, North Dakota, Texas, and Utah

The legislative session deadlines have not passed in numerous states, so there could be more states; also, some legislation including soil health may have been missed and bills might be amended during the session to include soil health.

In many states, there is growing interest in watershed health and ecosystem health, which is sometimes reflected in legislation. This is leading to increased interest in Payments for Ecosystem Services.

Help and connections are needed in every state, especially in states labeled in the attached as “interest”. In the states labeled “activity”, work is under way on drafting legislation — the involvement of one more person makes the difference in legislation being filed and being moved forward.

In Colorado, [SB21-235](#), stimulus funding for the soil health program and ACRE3 — **passed June 3rd, signed into law June 15th**, [HB21-1181](#), Creation of a Voluntary Soil Health Program — **passed June 7th, signed into law June 21st**, and [HB21-1180](#), Concerning measures to increase biomass utilization throughout the state; includes improving soil health — **passed May 21st, signed into law July 7th**

Colorado: [HB21-1180](#), Concerning measures to increase biomass utilization throughout the state; includes improving soil health

Definition of HB21-1181

HB21-1181 “Concerning the Creation of a Voluntary Soil Health Program” was signed into law by Governor Jared Polis on June 21, 2021. This legislation gives Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) authority to launch a soil health program and sets up a state advisory board to oversee it. CDA also received \$2 million in state stimulus funding to launch the program in its first year. This programming includes capacity funding for conservation districts to provide technical assistance, incentive payments for producers trying out new practices for the first time, free soil health testing, education and demonstration, and soil health research to investigate the connection between water availability outcomes and soil health practices. CDA is also bringing the Saving Tomorrow’s Agricultural Resources (STAR) program to a Colorado. STAR is a practice-based rating system that can structure conversations about soil health and provide a market signal for food grown regeneratively. The act creates the voluntary Colorado Soil Health Program administered by the Department of Agriculture. The main component is a grant program for eligible entities, including agricultural producers,

Native-American tribes, nonprofit organizations, research institutions, conservation districts and acequia or ditch corporations. In addition, the department is tasked with offering soil health testing, developing a system to monitor the environmental or economic benefits of soil health, and establishing a state soil health inventory. The Commissioner of Agriculture appoints a soil health advisory committee with a minimum of a nine members representative of the state's geographic areas, political and demographic diversity, including farmers and ranchers experienced in various production systems. The advisory committee assists in the development of the soil health program and makes recommendations for implementation or improvements to the department. The committee is also authorized to solicit input regarding the program, review proposals and agreements, and approve grants. **Soil Health Definition: "Soil Health" means the continued capacity of soil to function as a living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.**



125th Anniversary Feature Story

Colorado's West Elk Mountains are home to some of the most prominent laccolithic peaks in Colorado. These dome-shaped peaks were created from violent volcanic eruptions where molten lava expanded between older sedimentary layers, causing the covering layers to heave upward.

West Elk Peak, Mount Gunnison, Mount Axtell, and Carbon Peak are all serene, awe-inspiring laccoliths. At the same time, volcanic eruptions caused West Elk Breccia (a conglomerate of ash and welded tuff) to form, which over time slowly eroded away to form elegant shapes and pinnacles. The landscape left behind is one of solitude and peace – a fitting place for Colorado's longest-tenured game warden, someone that had to stay cool under pressure.



Cliff Coghill

Marion Clifford Coghill or "Cliff" was born March 4, 1924, in Syracuse, Kansas, an area heavily impacted during the Great American Dust Bowl. At a young age, Cliff moved with his family to a ranch near Montrose, Colorado where he attended school, and later enlisted into the U.S. Army at the age of 21. Cliff served 8 months in Korea with Company B of the 20th Infantry earning several service medals and accolades. After returning home, he married Patsy McElroy in Aztec, New Mexico and the couple relocated to Gunnison, Colorado around 1950. Cliff's military background and a love for the natural world set him up well for a long career with Colorado Game and Fish, which is now Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Proudly Serving Colorado for 47 Years

For 47 years, Cliff patrolled the Gunnison backcountry and infamous West Elk Wilderness, commonly on foot or horseback. There wasn't a ridge or rock outcropping Cliff likely hadn't set track on. While Cliff made several notable law enforcement cases, he played a critical role in helping elk recover in the Gunnison area while reducing game damage to local ranchers.

During the spring seasons, Cliff woke up before the crack of dawn to count what would become North America's newest recognized species of bird, the Gunnison sage-grouse. I first met Cliff in 2007 after he'd already been retired for a decade. For years, Cliff commonly stopped by the Gunnison DOW Office to say "hello" and reminisce about the "old days" – telling stories more worthy of a good campfire. Our conversations revolved around his extensive knowledge of the sagebrush and the fact he'd seen more Gunnison sage-grouse than I likely ever would. I can only hope someday to spend a morning up Ohio Creek Valley with the sun rising over the Continental Divide, illuminating the West Elk Breccia and snow-capped peaks, with hundreds, maybe a thousand, strutting amorous sage-grouse all around – just like Cliff did.



Cliff was one of the first to speak on behalf of the grouse after his decades of observation. In 1999, the Gunnison sage-grouse hunting season was closed indefinitely and conservation efforts began to rebound populations. When Cliff wasn't working, he was active in other Gunnison community events, such as helping organize Cattlemen's Days, Colorado's longest ongoing rodeo. And when I picture Cliff, he's always wearing his favorite worn-out felt cowboy hat with that great big smile. It seems like, with all things in life that Cliff was involved, he did it for the long haul.

Cliff is also credited with the ingenious idea to safely handle trapped elk for relocation by using a large cargo net. Nuisance elk were trapped in large-baited corrals, then pushed through a squeeze-chute one by one where they jumped a 5-foot wall into the unsuspecting net. From there, elevated off the ground, biologists could ear-tag, neckband, and collect biological samples to determine overall health.

A tireless worker, Cliff was involved in several winter-feeding operations, most notable the 1978-79 project where deer were fed special dietary pellets instead of hay, likely reducing deer loss to 25% instead of upward of 60% as predicted.

Cliff Coghill Career Achievement Award

In honor of Cliff's notable wildlife career, Colorado Wildlife Employees Protective Association annually recognizes a Colorado wildlife officer who has provided 20 years or more of dedicated service to the state's wildlife resources with the Cliff Coghill Career Achievement Award. Notable recipients include Bob Davies (2013), Mike Bauman (2014), Kevin Wright (2015), Perry Will (2016), Bob Thompson (2017), Larry Rogstad (2018), Bill deVergie (2019), Dean Riggs (2020), and John Hood (2021).

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is celebrating its 125th Anniversary throughout 2022 to honor the legacy of our agency and the talented staff who make fulfilling CPW's important mission possible. For more stories like this, please visit the [Colorado Parks and Wildlife's 125th Anniversary web page!](#) written by Nathan Seward. Nathan is a Colorado Parks and Wildlife conservation biologist.

Native Grass Seed mixes and Native Wildflower mix

EPCCD has offered our own custom El Paso County Conservation District “**Native Shotgun grass seed mix**” for several years now **and we have other custom mixes** available as well. These mixes help with soil health. **Always make sure you are using a “Colorado Native” grass seed mix when choosing a native blend.** Some businesses may advertise having a native Colorado mix but research shows they often do not have any native seed in it. **Do your homework~! You will be glad you did!**

(Don’t forget we offer a discount on large grass seed purchases.)

Native Shotgun mix

Rain Gauge



EL PASO COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SHOTGUN MIX

Common name	Recommended variety	% of seed mix (USA Native mix available if known)	1000
Bouteloua, Big Native	Rain, Bison, Champ	20.0%	1.00
Little Bluestem Native	Schoenkyrium scoparium	10.0%	.10
Green Needlegrass Native	Ludwig	10.0%	.45
Wheatgrass, Western Native	Archa, Barton	20.0%	1.00
Grass, Sideoats Native	Wright, Bull, El Reno, Meer	10.0%	.45
Bouteloua Native	Blackwell, Greenwell	10%	.20
Prairie Sandreed Native	Genes, Pronghorn	10.0%	.32
Yellow Indiangrass Native	Cheyenne, Hot, Liso	10.0%	.31

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We also have CoCoRaHS approved rain gauges. Heavy duty and accurate, these are available at the office. You may be eligible for a free rain gauge. Visit our website for more information www.epccd.org or call the office at 719-600-4706 to purchase any of our products.



Harding Nursery



Thank you to our sponsors and Partners! We appreciate you.



Check out our website <http://www.epccd.org>  & sign up for our newsletter to receive news about upcoming events, workshops and projects. We share our mission & have links available for our partnering agencies and their programs to help landowners and small acreage owners with conservation practices

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