



Conservation Connection

FEBRUARY 2024

Upcoming Events

- Feb 1-29 - Photo Contest Voting Period
- Feb 9 - Love Your Watershed Paint & Sip @ Fenceline Cidery
- Feb 12 - MCD Board of Supervisors Meeting
- March to May - Stream Management Plan Public Feedback Period
- March 11 - MCD Board of Supervisors Meeting

Check out our website's [Events page](#) and our social media pages to stay up to date on what's happening in the Mancos Conservation District!

New Year, New Emails!

Contact information for our staff has changed in the New Year. Please see below for updated email addresses.

Gretchen Rank (Managing Director) - gretchen@mancoscd.org

Danny Margoles (Executive Director) - danny@mancoscd.org

Neva Connolly (District Manager) - neva@mancoscd.org

Erica Holm (Office Manager) - admin@mancoscd.org

Sensa Wolcott (Watershed Coordinator) - sensa@mancoscd.org

Tara Harris (Forestry Program Coordinator) - tara@mancoscd.org

Taylor Schultz (AmeriCorps VISTA) - taylor@mancoscd.org



Media Spotlight:

Listen to the KSJD spot highlighting Sensa Wolcott's work with the Mancos River Stream Management Plan.

Check it out [here!](#)

Meet The New MCD Staff

We're excited to have a growing team and increased capacity for conservation projects. Here is a quick introduction to our new staff members and members that are transitioning into new roles.

Gretchen Rank - Managing Director

While Gretchen Rank is not new to MCD, we are pleased to announce she is stepping up into a new role as Managing Director for the District. In this new role, she will continue to work closely with the Board of Supervisors, oversee all financial, programmatic and governmental aspects of the District and facilitate large-scale irrigation projects. She will also continue her board positions with the Southwest Basin Roundtable, the National Conservation Employees Association and the National Conservation Planning Partnership. Gretchen is excited to pass along nine years of institutional knowledge to a new executive director and support all of MCD's amazing staff in continuing to provide conservation opportunities for our community.



Danny Margoles - Executive Director

Danny is excited to be stepping into the Executive Director position with the Mancos Conservation District. In this role, Danny will manage and coordinate the District programs and will oversee day-to-day operations, including staff, projects, and program development. He will be the primary media contact and looks forward to maintaining and building on the District's many strong partnerships. Danny is excited to work with the excellent District staff and appreciates the strong support from the Managing Director. Prior to working with the District, Danny coordinated the Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative and has lived with his family in Mancos for the past six years.

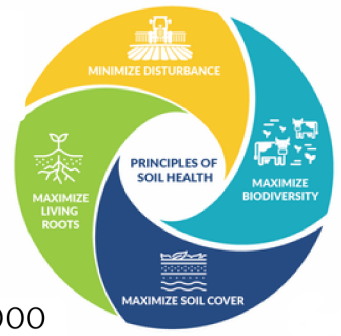


Maggie Rossino - District Conservation Technician

Maggie Rossino started at the end of 2023 as our new DCT! Maggie grew up in Georgetown, Colorado and is a born and raised Colorado native. She has a Bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Ecology and has held a lifelong passion for conservation and sustainable land management practices. Prior to joining the Mancos Conservation District, she worked at her family's garden center while pursuing her degree at Colorado State University. When not at work, you can find Maggie hiking, fishing, and generally enjoying the natural beauty of Montezuma County.



Colorado Soil Health Program



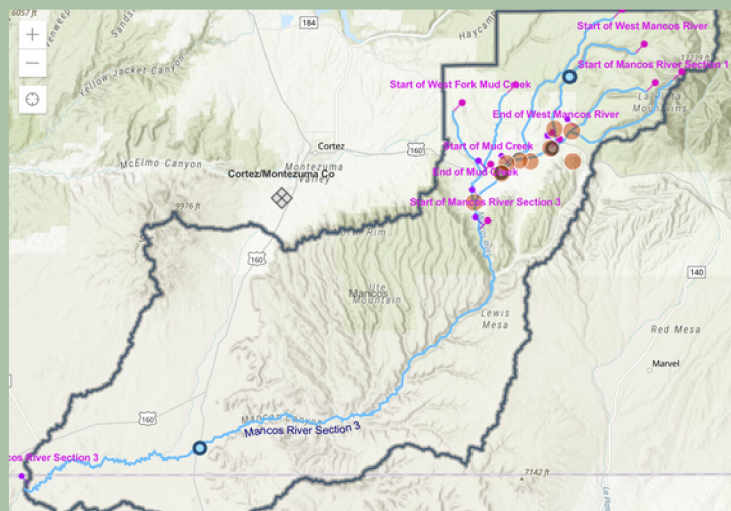
MCD is participating in the expanded Colorado Department of Agriculture soil health program. In the fall of 2023, CDA awarded MCD funding to support 13 additional producers in an expanded soil health program, spanning years 2024 through 2026. The newly enrolled MCD producers have committed a total of over 2000 acres to implement at least one new soil health practice for the next three years. This spring, the producers will take an initial soil sample and install a soil moisture meter in their STAR Plus fields to begin collecting soil health data for the next three years.

MCD's existing STAR Plus producers are wrapping up their 3rd and final year of the 2022-2024 STAR Plus program. They will receive a second soil test to compare the results to soil tests taken during year 1 of the program. Though significant soil health improvements such as increased water retention, erosion resilience, decreased nutrient loss, and increased organic matter can take many years to achieve, producers will have a snapshot of their efforts over the past three years.

The soil health program reduces risk to producers trying new soil health practices by providing financial resources and technical assistance. Over the last 2 years, implementing soil health practices were financially incentivized by the Colorado Department of Agriculture and MCD producers received payments for the first two years of the program.

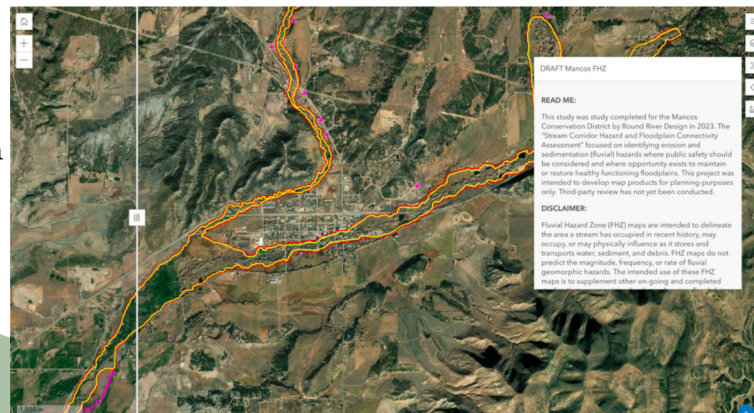
Water Quality

MCD has continued to collect and analyze samples at our nine River Watch Colorado sites throughout the Valley. We now have a Mancos Watershed River Conditions Interactive Map. Using the map, you can explore river and lake conditions in the Mancos River Watershed, including water temperature, streamflow data, fishing access sites, closures, AIS inspection stations, and more. The map is available to view [here](#).



Partnering for Wildfire Planning

MCD has been working with Round River Design to finalize the Fluvial Hazard Zone Mapping project funded by grants from the Colorado State Conservation Board and Colorado Water Conservation Board. Final reports and products will be available in February, 2024 and will give insight into pre-fire actions that our community can take to protect critical assets and infrastructure and help create a 'Wildfire Ready Watershed'.



Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan

3-Year Timeline For the 2025 Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan

GOAL
01



Feb. 28, 2024 - 1st Draft

Guided by extensive community outreach and feedback, the 1st draft of the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan will be complete.

GOAL
02



March - May 2024 - Comment Period

The MWSMP comment period is a space for constructive feedback from community members and experts

GOAL
03



September 31, 2024 - 2nd Draft

Using the feedback collected during the comment period, a revised draft of the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan will be complete

GOAL
04



Oct. - Dec. 2024 - Comment Period

The revised draft of the MWSMP will be open for comment & constructive feedback from community members and experts.

GOAL
05



March 31, 2025 - Final Draft

After 5 years, and with immense gratitude to those who provided their input and feedback, the final draft of the MWSMP will be complete and available to the public.



Learn more at:

[HTTPS://MONTEZUMACOUNTYCONSERVATIONDISTRICTS.ORG/
STREAMMANAGEMENTPLAN](https://montezumacountyconservationdistricts.org/streammanagementplan)

The summer and fall was tremendous for stakeholder engagement to gain community feedback for the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan. We are so appreciative of everyone who has engaged in the process so far.



16

OUTREACH EVENTS

33

ORGANIZATIONS
ENGAGED

340

PEOPLE REACHED

Our Watershed Coordinator, Sensa Wolcott, is currently drafting the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan which will be available for public comment between March and May.



All the relevant MWSMP documents produced can be found in this [Google Drive Folder](#).

Fun in the Classroom

River Literacy

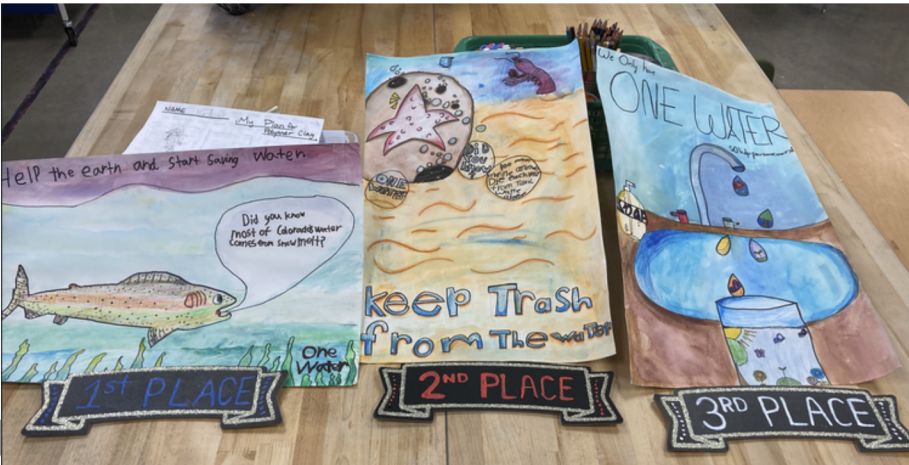
After a couple weeks off for winter break we are back at the Mancos Public Library! We are passionate about increasing environmental education and awareness at a young age. River Literacy lessons are crucial for helping students understand our watershed and why we need to protect our natural resources.

In these lessons, we work with students to get hands on with science outside of the classroom and see new components of nature they may otherwise not see. This year students will have the opportunity to learn about the importance of water, water quality, avalanches, adaptations, bioaccumulation, and the water cycle.



Reach out to the Mancos Public Library for more information if you're interested in having your child participate in their awesome Friday program!

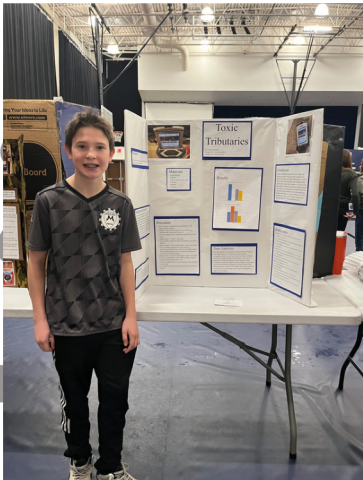
5th Grade Poster Contest



MCD worked with Mancos art teacher, Alys, and the two 5th grade classes to create conservation posters themed around "One Water". The students took several weeks to plan and create their amazing posters that were then hung at the Mancos Public Library for public voting! We crowned our top three winners and finished it off with a cupcake party to thank everyone for their hard work.

Science Fair

Sensa worked with 8th grade student, Colter Dennison, to plan his science fair project and conduct research. Sensa aided in coordinating the collection of soil samples on private property and analyzing the data with Kirsten Brown from the Department of Mining, Reclamation, and Safety. The science fair project was presented on Jan 18th.



Mancos Watershed Group

The Mancos Watershed Group (MWG) is a diverse group of partners who work collaboratively at the watershed-scale to advance and achieve economic, cultural, and ecological resilience for the watershed. The MWG includes representation from: private landowners, federal land management agencies, local municipalities, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and various interest groups.

The MWG is open to the public. For more information or if you would like to be involved contact Sensa Wolcott at: Sensa@mancoscd.org

Forestry

The MCD Forestry Program continues to progress with planning and implementation efforts for wildfire mitigation projects. One 30 acre forestry project is underway, two others (a 34 acre and a 70 acre property) are waiting on EQIP Awards, and a fourth 30+ acre project is set to begin in spring.

We still have implementation cost share dollars available for private landowners near the Jackson Lake and Summit Lake areas. If you are interested in wildfire mitigation on your property, wish to learn more about forest restoration, or need to rent our wood chipper please reach out to the District today!

Tara Harris
Forestry Program Coordinator
tara@mancoscd.org



Affordable Housing



MCD is excited to see our affordable housing project take shape. The finishing touches are going on the duplex during the next couple of months. Solar panels are going up and our team is also working on landscaping designs that will be a beautiful example for water conservation through drought tolerant landscaping. Frequent updates are given on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) about the status of building if you are interested in keeping up with the progress.

District Conservation Techs

The MCD techs have been staying busy! They are currently helping landowners by conducting site visits and assessments, engineering and designing irrigation systems, and they have also played a role in supporting the improvements of irrigation diversions in the Mancos Valley. This work ensures that agricultural producers are able to receive their allotted water efficiently, while also supporting healthy aquatic ecosystems by allowing fish to move up and down the waterways whenever the temperature or habitat dictates the needs. Many irrigation head gates are blockages, fragmenting fish habitat and causing declines across fish species.



Grant Work

All of our District projects are made possible by grant funding to continue our environmental stewardship work and better support the community. Without grants, we would be unable to provide such valuable work to our watershed, ecosystem, and community.

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Grant

The Mancos Conservation District, in partnership with the Town of Mancos, was recently awarded \$2,482,686 from the Bureau of Reclamation through the WaterSMART Program. Under the Riparian Restoration and Infrastructure Improvements to Better the Ecological Processes of the Mancos Watershed funding, partners will implement a multi-benefit project consisting of a suite of infrastructure improvements and nature-based solutions along the Mancos River. Project activities include installing three agricultural diversion structures, installing remote metering and telemetry equipment on 10 agricultural pipeline headgates, completing forest restoration and fire mitigation work on 650 upland acres and replacing invasive riparian plants with native species adjacent to the Mancos River.



NRCS Equity in Conservation Outreach Grant

The Mancos Conservation District in partnership with the High Desert Conservation District was one of 139 projects selected for the Equity in Conservation Outreach from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for our Natural Resource Outreach and Education Initiative. This funding will invest in partnerships that will improve outreach and expand access to conservation assistance and career opportunities. We will begin a three-year engagement program that encourages participation in NRCS programs, especially in underserved communities and among urban and small-scale producers. This will allow the Districts to extend outreach to producers who are beginning farmers, have limited resources, are socially disadvantaged, and/or military veterans. We will also be increasing opportunities for students to pursue careers in agriculture, natural resources and related sciences. MCD was awarded \$643,062 to provide these integral services within Montezuma County.

Forest Restoration & Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant

The Mancos Conservation District, in partnership with the Dolores Watershed Resilient Forest Collaborative, was recently awarded \$432,995 through the Colorado State Forest Service's Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant (FRWRM) program. MCD will use the funding to hire a Forestry Technician to support the Forestry Coordinator in planning, outreach, project implementation, and collaboration related to forest product utilization. The Forestry Program will be able to expand its on-the-ground wildfire mitigation efforts in Montezuma County and support local operators with the help of this initiative. Furthermore, the MCD will be able to purchase a truck and dump trailer to assist with chipping efforts for fuel removal. This valuable addition to the program will allow the MCD Forestry team to haul chipped materials off-site to further reduce wildfire risks through fuel reduction.



Board of Directors Position Open

MCD has a board member position open for landowners & land managers that live in Mancos and are interested in committing their time to valuable conservation work.

To be a board member you must:

- Own or manage land in the Mancos Conservation District boundaries
- Have an interest in conservation work including soil, watershed, & forest health
- Be able to commit a minimum of 5 hours per month for board meetings and events
- Submit a letter of intent to danny@mancoscd.org outlining why you would like to be on the board

Photo Contest Voting

Thank you to all community members who submitted to our 3rd Annual Photo Contest!
We received 17 amazing submissions.

You can view all submissions through our [website](#) and vote for your favorite.

Voting is open to the public from Feb 1st to the 29th



Moonrise
2023 1st Place
Braden Gunem



Partner Updates

HDCD is currently hiring for a new District Conservation Technician to aid in soil health programs and equipment rentals. If you are interested in applying you can view the full job description and submit your resume, cover letter, applicable transcripts/soil health experience [here](#).

MCD, HDCD, and the Montezuma and Dolores CSU Extension have partnered to bring the Colorado Master Irrigator Program to the four corners area. Over 30 producers enrolled in a four-day, 32-hour course covering topics such as irrigation water management, timing, planting, crop choices, soils, and financial management.

High Desert is running a spring seedling sale that will close on February 16th. These trees are perfect for windbreak, snowbreak, shelter break, or any landscape needs. View and purchase plants [here](#).

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