



Conservation Connection

SEPT. 2023

Upcoming Events

- Sept 21 - Ag Water Issues Presentation and Discussion:
Crop, Soil, & Water Health
- Oct 5 - Ag Water Issues Presentation and Discussion:
Catch Up
- Oct 10 - One Watershed - One Community:
Appreciation Dinner
- Oct 13 - One Watershed - One Community:
Watershed Tour
- Oct 16 - MCD Board of Supervisors Meeting
- Oct 17 - Monthly River Watch Sampling



Photo by: Braden Gunem

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

Fall Water Saving Tips

Kitchen

A sink uses 4 gallons of water every 2 minutes (dishwashers use 4 gallons per cycle!)

To reduce water

- Use a dishwasher
- If handwashing use one side of the sink to wash and the other to rinse
- Scrape dishes into garbage or compost instead of using the disposal



Bathroom

Showers and toilets are two of the houses largest water users.

To reduce water

- Install a water-saving showerhead, which can cut water usage in the shower from 5-7 gallons per minute to just 3 gallons per minute.
- Check toilets for leaks & upgrade toilets to dual-flush high efficiency models.
- If its yellow let it mellow
- Turn off the water when you shave, brush your teeth, etc.

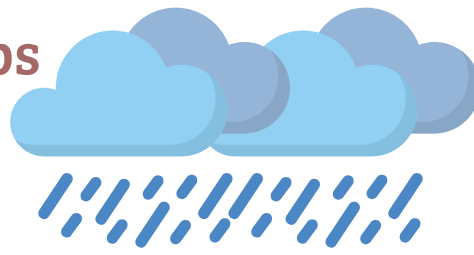


Laundry Room

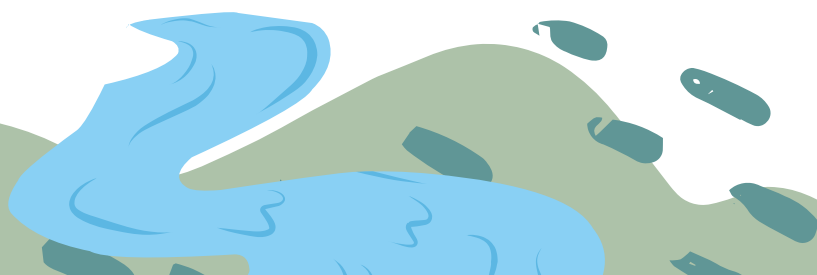
A non-high efficiency washing machine uses 19 or more gallons of water per load!

To reduce water

- Install a high efficiency washing machine they use only 7 gallons per cycle!
- Wash your clothes less, if there's no stains wait!
- Dry your clothes on a line or rack



As cool air and afternoon showers are kicking in, consider implementing water conservation tips for inside. Water usage can be reduced significantly by retrofitting high-efficiency shower heads, faucets with aerators, dual-flush or high efficiency toilets, or simply being more conscious of your water usage habits.



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)

One Watershed One Community Workshops

Our final workshop was held on July 24th-26th at the Mancos Community Center where we spent time exploring how diversity and consensus can support natural resource conservation.

Mancos River Agricultural Committee

The Mancos River Agricultural Committee hosted their second Ag Water Issues Presentation & Discussion. July's meeting focused on fire in the watershed. The next Ag Water Issues Presentation and Discussion will take place September 21 @ 6:00pm at the Mt. Lookout Grange.

Mancos River
Agricultural
Committee
Members:

Ryan Brown	Cathy Kennedy
Kasey Wallace	Ben Wolcott

MWSMP Appreciation Dinner

To celebrate the conclusion of the One Watershed One Community Workshops and the Mancos River Agricultural Committee meetings, we will be hosting an Appreciation Dinner on October 10th to honor the time and effort of those who have participated, as well as share the information we've collected for the MWSMP so far.

For more information and to register, see our [website](#).

R2Cross Training

In August, MCD staff and DCTs completed R2Cross training with Katie Birch from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Jay Skinner from Western Resource Advocates. R2Cross data will be collected and utilized by Wilson Water Group as part of the MWSMP to help model water flows in the watershed.



The Watershed Coordinator is in the process of summarizing the feedback from these events. All the relevant MWSMP documents produced can be found in this [Google Folder](#).

STAR Plus Soil Program

MCD is currently taking applications from producers to participate in the next round of funding for Star Plus. Participants will receive technical advice from Colorado Dept of Ag soil health experts. Incentive funding is provided on a yearly basis at \$75.00 an acre (up to \$5,000 per year), at a cost-share match of one to one. The payments provide a financial incentive to try new techniques to improve soil health, adhering to the 5 principles of soil health (soil armor; minimize soil disturbance; plant diversity; continual live plant/root; and livestock integration). Click [here](#) for an application.



Colorado State Conservation Board Star Plus Producer Tour



The Colorado State Conservation Board toured Mountain Roots Produce and several other District projects on September 6th, 2023 as part of their quarterly Board Meeting.

Mountain Roots Produce, located in Mancos, CO has enrolled in the STAR Plus program. As part of this program, Mountain Roots has incorporated various practices to strengthen soil armor, minimize soil disturbance, and increase plant diversity - 3 of the 5 soil health principles. To facilitate healthy soils in their row crops, Mountain Roots is incorporating cover crops into the crop rotations. They continue to experiment with cover crop seed mixes and timing for optimal results. Much of the cover crop research has been done in lower elevations with less challenging growing climates than SW Colorado. Other soil health practices implemented at Mountain Roots Produce include minimal tillage, and flower strips planted for beneficial insects and pollinators.

Challenges over the past 2 years of the program include: extreme grasshopper infestation pressure in 2022, more rain than anticipated, and delayed planting due to extended winter conditions in 2023.



Photos courtesy CSCB: The Scoop Newsletter.



STAR Plus Interview



Joe Lanier is a 4th generation rancher in Pleasant View, and Vice-President of the High Desert Conservation District Board of Supervisors. He has 160 acres enrolled in the STAR Plus program. We wanted to know more about what he's doing for soil health on his ranch.

1) How long have you been interested in soil health on your ranch, and what prompted management changes to improve your soil health?

In 2016, I was out in Missouri at a grazing school and it was there that I had an aha moment and realized we needed to focus on soil health.

2) What soil health practices do you incorporate?

- No till
- Livestock
- Cover crops



3) What has been the most difficult aspect of managing for soil health?

The biggest thing the last couple of years has just been the drought and limited water trying to plan cover crops. One thing has been to fight the urge to go get on a tractor with some tillage equipment or a sprayer to kill weeds.

4) What have you seen as the biggest benefit of managing for soil health? Do you have a soil health success story?

I feel like my soil is coming back to life. I can tell in some areas I'm infiltrating water better. My organic matter has started to increase a little bit and groundcover has also increased.

Master Land Steward Course



We are partnering with the High Desert Conservation District and natural resource experts to offer a 6-class intensive focused on YOUR land. The course is designed to help landowners make informed management decisions that will protect the resources on private lands. The lessons learned in this short course will help you reduce input costs and at the same time improve the quality of life we work so hard to maintain!

The course fee is \$150 per property - partners, land managers, renters, ranch/farm hands are all welcome to attend. This course will give landowners the tools necessary to implement cost effective management activities on the land. Utilizing local know-how and research-based information, participants will leave the course with their own customized management plan to put into place on their own property.

Registration forms are available here: <https://forms.gle/Tze8QVmoddQ3JGhz7>

River Literacy

Library lessons started back up in August and we will be holding lessons twice a month during the school year! We are passionate about increasing environmental education and awareness at a young age. It is crucial for understanding our watershed and why we need to protect our natural resources.

In these lessons, we will work with students to get hands on work 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!

Water Quality

MCD has continued to collect and analyze samples at our nine River Watch Colorado sites throughout the Valley, in addition to collaborating with Mountain Studies Institute to collect synoptic water samples at high water to investigate heavy metal mobilization during runoff. MCD staff in July collected macroinvertebrates at all our River Watch sites as an additional way to analyze water quality in the watershed.



MCD also collected a third round of eDNA samples, thanks to funding from the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund. This data will help indicate where fish and amphibians are located in the watershed.

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 contact Sensa Wolcott at: mancoscd.coordinator@gmail.com

Forestry



The MCD Forestry Program is moving forward with the planning process of our wildfire mitigation projects. Our first implementation efforts are scheduled to start this fall, with the bulk of the work beginning next spring and summer. We still have implementation cost share dollars available for private landowners near the Jackson Lake and Summit Lake areas and a wood chipper available for rent. Please reach out to the district today for more information on these new opportunities.

Tara Harris
Forestry Program Coordinator
mancoscd.forester@gmail.com



Affordable Housing



MCD is excited to see our affordable housing project take shape. This past month the stucco and roofing has been completed and we will see the addition of solar installation. Our team is also working on landscaping designs that will be a beautiful example for water conservation through drought tolerant xeriscape. 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

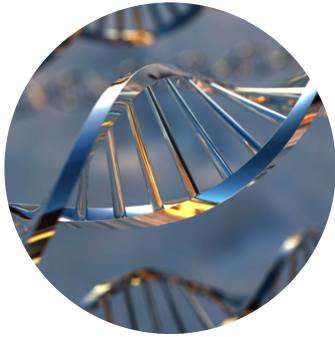
The MCD techs have been staying busy, as they are currently helping landowners by conducting site visits and assessments, engineering and designing irrigation systems, and they have also played a role in supporting the improvements of irrigation diversions in the Mancos Valley. This work ensures that 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.

Colorado Healthy River Fund



This fall, MCD finished collecting eDNA samples as part of a project funded by the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund. This grant funding allowed the District, in collaboration with Mancos High School Student Lilly Figueroa, to collect and analyze eDNA samples at a variety of sites throughout the watershed. Valuable information about fish and amphibian species was collected and is being analyzed to help MCD and its partners understand what parts of the watershed are being used by these important species. This information will help guide the Mancos Watershed Stream Management Plan and other future restoration projects.

CPW Partners in the Outdoors

MCD was selected to receive a Colorado Parks and Wildlife: Partners in the Outdoors Grant for 2023 - 2024. The goal of this grant funding is to “cultivate partnerships that advance and balance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado, promote Colorado's Outdoor Principles, and support the priority areas identified in our Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.”

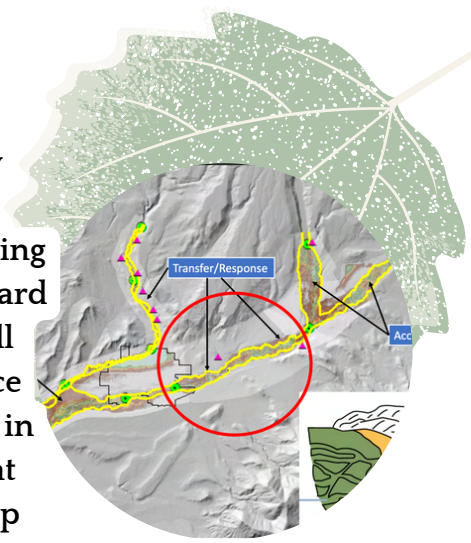
To achieve these goals in the Mancos Community, MCD will support a variety of activities that promote stewardship throughout the Mancos Watershed.

MCD has already hosted the Mancos Splash, and a River Cleanup & Environmental Stewardship Day. Both of these events were a huge success and we look forward to future quarterly stewardship activities. These activities allow MCD to share the conservation and stewardship work we have been participating in by providing hands-on opportunities for the community to engage in conservation projects to benefit our natural resources, as well as meet and collaborate with our partners in the watershed. We are excited to offer these opportunities to the Mancos Community while working alongside CPW. These events will be added to our [Events](#) webpage when they are scheduled, so check back for more information on dates and times.



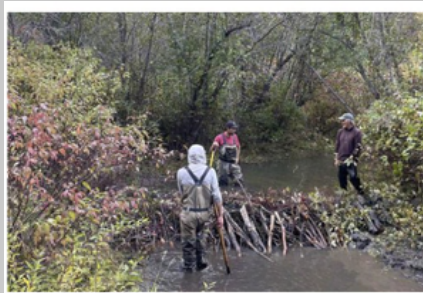
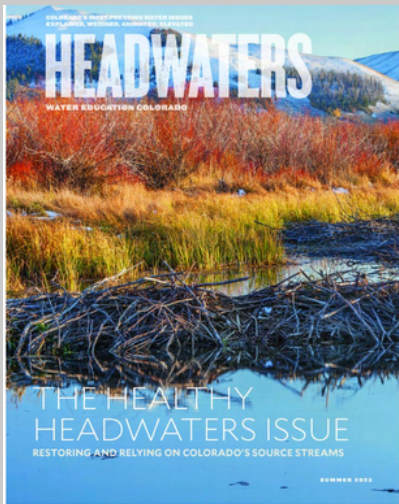
Partnering for Wildfire Planning

On August 7th, Michael Blazewicz of Round River Design presented Healthy River Corridors: Fluvial Hazard Zone Mapping as a Tool for the Mancos Community at MCD's Lunch & Learn Event. This Fluvial Hazard Zone Mapping project has been funded by grants from the Colorado State Conservation Board and Colorado Water Conservation Board. The findings from this project will provide the Mancos community with a cost-effective way to define the space streams may occupy and influence, as well as help make land use decisions in stream corridors. This information 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'. The recording of that event can be viewed [here!](#)



Media Spotlight:

Read the full article highlighting MCD's restoration efforts and the importance of beaver's in our watershed on WaterEducationColorado.Org



Busy as a Beaver

by Moe Clark

Letting the system do the work

Melissa May, executive director of the Mountain Studies Institute in Durango, is working with a research team in southwestern Colorado—alongside members from the Mancos Conservation District, private agricultural landowners, Mesa Verde National Park, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe—to utilize LTPBR methods to make the Mancos watershed more resilient to drought and wildfire.

In summer 2022, the team installed beaver-inspired structures to add more complexity to the Mancos River. To their excitement, one of the structures located on a stream along private lands near Mancos attracted the attention of nearby beavers. They had hoped that the beavers would make it their home, but the structure was washed away in this year's spring runoff.

Partner Updates



MCD continues to partner with the High Desert Conservation District in the ongoing STAR Plus soil health program and the upcoming Master Land Stewardship program held in October. The Districts have hired Erica Holm as office manager to help manage both offices. High Desert is currently running a fall evergreen sale, and will soon offer a list of spring seedlings available in April 2024.

Mancos Conservation District

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