



# Shavano District

Winter  
News

WINTER  
2023  
VOLUME

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Conservation 3  
Help for Local  
Landowners

CRFT 3  
Application  
Period Open til  
Jan 15th

Apply Today For 4  
STAR+ Program

SCD Announces 5  
Poster Contest  
Winners

ARC and PLC 6  
Programs  
Receive 2018  
Farm Bill  
Extension

Livestock 7  
Producers in  
Montrose, Delta,  
Ouray and  
Saguache  
Counties Are  
Eligible for  
Drought  
Recovery  
Assistance

USDA Increases 7  
Minimum Annual  
Payment for CSP

Guillermo 8  
Mosqueda Joins  
Montrose NRCS

SNOTEL Report 9

Dates to 10  
Remember



## Merry Christmas From Shavano Conservation District !

Shavano Conservation District Board of Directors: Back row—(Left to Right) Carl McKinney, Steve Hale, Zak Danielson, Lanny Denham, Clifford Chiles, Front Row Roxi Stewart, Ed Atencio

## International Research Organization Tracks Success of Montrose Grain Field

The Land Institute, an international non-profit research organization, comes to the Uncompahgre Valley to test out their trademarked perennial grain, Kernza. According to the Land Institute's website, they are leading a movement to advance diverse perennial grain agriculture at a global scale. While their main headquarters are in Saline, KS, some of the Land Institute's research projects are in Sub-Saharan African countries, Yunnan, China, and they collaborate with over 170 researchers on 6 continents.

The Land Institute is following a handful of Colorado Farmers to see how their perennial grain Kernza will do at our elevation and in our climate. Kernza is an intermediate wheatgrass (a forage grass that is a very distant cousin to annual wheat) that the Land Institute has been breeding into a domesticated perennial grain. After

20 years of breeding they feel it is in the early stages of moving the grain from research onto farms and plates. Currently the grain heads are about 1/3 to 1/2 the size of annual wheat. Even so we are beginning to see it on store shelves next to white flour and can purchase beers and distilled products that use Kernza as an ingredient.

According to Hunter Doyle, Intermountain West Agronomy Specialist for The Land Institute, most of the Kernza produced has been in the mid-west and now they want to

Continued on Pg. 2...



Steve Woodis (center) shares with Farm Tour how he used no-till drill (left) to plant Kernza/Sainfoin mix.



# International Research Organization Tracks Success of Montrose Grain Field

Continued from Pg. 1...

see how it will do further west. There are 4 fields planted in the Uncompahgre Valley, 2 of which were stops on a local soil health farm tour last week on November 14, 2023.

Hunter Doyle (far left) from Land Institute tells Farm Tour visitors about soil health benefits of Kernza, a perennial grain bred and trademarked by the Land Institute



Before the Tour went out into the field to see a first-year Kernza field, tour attendees enjoyed a kernza pancake breakfast at Friendship Hall. Pancakes were paired with locally sourced pork sausage, from Winddrift Farms in Olathe, and apple cider, from Triple M Orchards, west of Olathe.

The first field visited on the tour was a first year Kernza field planted west of Montrose on Spring Creek Mesa, along with birdsfoot trefoil and clover, to capture nitrogen, using a no-till drill. During the field visit, Doyle explained that it will take an additional year for the Kernza to produce grain after it has been established. "Next year, I think the field will have a great potential as a dual crop that can be combined for food production (grain) and cut for a forage crop (hay) or grazed as a forage grass," Doyle explained. The landowner anticipates one cutting of hay for the next growing season after combining the grain. "I am excited to see what it (the Kernza) will do next year", said Doyle, "Since it is supposed to come up early in the spring and out-compete weeds".

The second stop on the field tour visited another crop that the Land Institute is also researching – sainfoin. Sainfoin is like alfalfa, has a similar feed value for

livestock, puts nitrogen back into the soil, and works well as part of a multi-species forage seed mix. The Land Institute and local farmers are working with the newest variety of sainfoin "Delaney" which was developed for multiple cuttings similar to alfalfa. There are examples of sainfoin planted in multi species hay mixes where sainfoin has persisted in the fields for thirteen years. Reduced soil disturbance increases the health of the soil, the organic matter in the soil, and causes better soil structure – which in turn increases the soil moisture holding capacity, increased water infiltration, making the field more resilient during seasons of drought. The Land Institute is also looking at sainfoin as a possible perennial counterpart to lentils. It is a legume and is being researched as a perennial pulse crop.



Chuck Peacock (center) from Soil Health Metrics holds up a 1st year forage Kernza plant to show its root structure

The third stop looked at barley planted into sweet corn. The barley will function as a cover crop now and be next year's cash crop. The corn and barley will be grazed this winter. Next spring the barley can be harvested as an early hay crop and then the field can be planted to another cash crop like pinto beans. If it is not hayed in the spring it could be grown out to mature to a grain crop next summer. The markets will drive these decisions by the farmer to market the barley as a forage crop or grain crop. From a soil





Shavano Conservation District

"A Partnership in Conservation"



Mona uses GSP to map field before starting preliminary designs.

## Conservation Help for Local Landowners

The Shavano Conservation District Engineer Technician Mona Nkoyoyo provided irrigation system designs for landowners in 2023. "Mona has provided a whole new level of services to landowners in Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel, and Gunnison Counties" said Steve Hale, President of the Shavano Conservation Board of Directors.

Mona used her engineering expertise to draw preliminary designs for gated pipe, side rolls, drip irrigation systems, and high tunnel green houses. She has also been out and about visiting landowners to survey their fields, gathering information to do a feasibility studies for NRCS EQIP projects. Surveys include determining the slope of the land, what irrigation system is currently being utilized, where the water enters the field, and locating existing irrigation structures. Making preliminary designs on projects helps to determine costs for compiling an EQIP application.

Mona has most enjoyed working directly with landowners and being able to work on projects from beginning to end—both of which are unusual in many engineering positions. She is excited to do construction inspections on projects she has designed and, upon project completion, to turn on water and see it come out of the pipe!

"I never dreamed I would be and agricultural engineer, but her I am and I love it!", Mona said.

The District Conservation Technician grant program through the Colorado State Conservation Board was developed to help landowners conserve and protect natural resources on their land for the benefit of the whole community. They help encourage and enable landowners to install practices that may or may not have immediate economic benefits but

protect and conserve water supplies, wildlife habitat, agricultural soil, and rural communities themselves.

The Shavano Conservation District promotes local involvement and provides education and support for wise use of natural resources in our community. Activities include workshops, schools education programs, and field tours. For more information call Penny Bishop at 970-964-3584.



Mona looks for the high water line in a ditch for so she can determine elevation difference needed when designing, irrigation structure, and underground pipe, raisers, and gated pipe in the field.



While doing a survey, Mona uses a controller (on the right) and a rover/base (on the left) for taking GPS locations in the field.

## CRFT Application Period Open til Jan 15th



The Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) Program provides beginning farmers and ranchers the opportunity to learn and develop their skills to become food and product providers through education, business training, mentorship, and land access. The course is a mix of classroom, hands-on, and networking sessions designed to build a strong foundation of support and resiliency.

Applications are available online at <https://valleyfoodpartnership.org/cultivating-farmers-and-ranchers-that-thrive>



## Land Institute to Give Presentations at WCSHFFF

Continued from Pg. 2...

health perspective, keeping a living root in the soil, maintaining barley and residual sweet corn crops covering the soil and incorporating livestock grazing are some of the primary principles of improving soil health.

The last stop looked at a field that sits above the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association irrigation delivery canal system. So, Kernza, sainfoin, and other alternative drought adapted grass, legume and forb species were planted. These fields, at best, only have irrigation water from early April to early July. After that they are relying on monsoon moisture and a few decent snow showers in the winter. This field may be an example of what might work if/when we have limited storage water to get us through the growing season during persistent drought episodes.

You can learn more about Kernza, sainfoin, and the Land Institute at the Western Colorado Soil Health Food and Farm Forum (WCSHFFF) on January 26-27, 2024. Tessa Peters, Director of Crop Stewardship; Laura van der Pol, Lead Scientist, Soil Ecology; and Hunter Doyle, Intermountain West Agronomy Specialist, will be giving presentations at the Forum. Peters will present a Keynote address on "Perennial Grains to Change Agriculture (and the World)". Van de Pol will

present a breakout session and discussion on "What We Know about Soil Health and Perennial Grains". And Doyle will present a breakout session and discussion on "Alternative Forages in Western Colorado". More information on the WCSHFFF can be found at [www.soilfoodforum.org](http://www.soilfoodforum.org)

Shavano Conservation District and CSU Tri-River Extension are sponsors of both the Pancake Breakfast and Farm Tour and the WCSHFFF. Bus transportation for the Farm Tour was provided by a grant from the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB), Colo Dept of Ag, which Shavano Conservation District received in a matching funds grant to carry out educational events to help local producers become more drought resilient. Farm Tours are an important opportunity for farmers and ranchers to engage in discussion on application of farming practices and techniques that promote soil health and drought resiliency.

The goal of the CSCB Matching Grants program is to help Conservation Districts in Colorado to implement private lands on-the-ground conservation projects and educational conservation activities, provide matching state funds towards the costs of such projects and activities within each district.

## Improve you Soils!

**A**pply today to become a STAR+ Producer. Enrollment period will be ending soon! Call Penny Bishop at 970-964-3582

**Advertise with the  
Shavano District News**

If you have a business that you would like to advertise in the SCD News, contact Mendy Stewart at 970-964-3582 for more information and rates.



Shavano Conservation District

"A Partnership in Conservation"

## SCD Announces Poster Contest Winners

**O**ak Grove Elementary School 5th grader Elisa Shelley and Johnson Elementary School 5th grader Kinsey Kulbeth received Champion honors in local Conservation Poster Contest hosted by Shavano Conservation District.

The Shavano Conservation District's Conservation Poster Contest is an annual event each fall for local 5th and 6th graders. The Conservation District visited schools in Montrose and Olathe in September to give presentations on the contest theme, "One Water". The 5th graders learned about farming practices that are used to grow our food and fiber, while also protecting the quality and quantity of our water sources.

Students were charged with designing a poster illustrating the watershed theme and conservation prac-



**Olathe 5th grade Poster Contest Winners: L-R Keagan Tejada, Kylee Hanson, Anica Wood, Cassidy Parker, Aliya Iverson**

tices that promote "one water" in our community. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place posters were chosen from each school that participated in the contest, and 2 Grand Champion posters were selected out of all the posters submitted within the Conservation District.

As Grand Champion winners of the local Conservation District poster contest, Shelley's and Kulbeth's posters were forwarded to the Colorado Association of Conservation District's (CACD's) annual conservation poster contest in November.

The Olathe 5th grade contest winners are: 1st place – Aliya Iverson, 2nd place – Keagan Tejada, and 3rd place – Kylee Hanson, Honorable Mentions—Anica Wood & Cassidy Parker.

The Oak Grove 5th grade contest winners are: 1st place – Xiomara Nieto Castillo, 2nd place – Anna Grace Stephens, 3rd place – Rowdy Ross, Honorable Mentions—Anna

Jennings, Ava Villeneuve, Jackson Samples, and Nevaeh Descheenie.

The Johnson 5th grade contest winners are: 1st place – Emmi Prosser, 2nd place – Yanel Lopez Aguilar, 3rd place – Gavin Rainey, and Honorable Mention—Yanelly Estrada.

Contest supplies and champion prize money were made possible through a matching funds grant Shavano Conservation District received from the Colorado State Conservation Board (Colorado Department of Agriculture). SCD was awarded the grant for Drought Resiliency Education Programs such as the 4th Grade Natural Resource Festival, non-point source pollution presentations, 9th grade Mancos Shale Soil Salinity Experiments, the 4th grade Ranch Stewardship Day, and farm tours and workshops.



**Kinsey Kulbeth, 5th grader at Johnson Elementary**



**Elise Shelley, 5th grader at Oak Grove Elementary**





# Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs Receive 2018 Farm Bill One Year Extension, Farmers Can Now Enroll for the 2024 Crop Year

**A**griculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs Receive 2018 Farm Bill One Year Extension, Farmers Can Now Enroll for the 2024 Crop Year

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2024 crop year. Producers can enroll and make election changes for the 2024 crop year starting Dec. 18, 2023. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024 (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

## 2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop

protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

## 2022 Crop Year Payments

This fall, FSA issued payments totaling more than \$267 million to agricultural producers who enrolled in the 2022 ARC-CO option and the ARC-IC option for covered commodities that triggered a pay-

ment. Payments through the PLC option did not trigger for the 2022 crop year.

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. These payments help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops. Payments for crops that may trigger for the 2023 crop year will be issued in the fall of 2024.

## Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader USDA safety net that also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election can purchase Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Cover-

Continued on Pg. 7



## Livestock Producers in Montrose, Delta, Ouray and Saguache Counties Are Eligible for Drought Recovery Assistance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Delta and Montrose Counties are now accepting applications for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for grazing losses due to drought. The deadline to apply for 2023 LFP assistance is Jan. 30, 2024.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or on federally managed land. For LFP, qualifying drought intensity levels are determined using the U.S. Drought Monitor. Producers are eligible to apply for 2023 LFP benefits for grazing losses on native pasture. Visit the FSA LFP webpage for a full list of eligible counties and pasture types.

Livestock eligible for LFP include alpacas, beef cattle, bison, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus,

equine, goats, llamas, ostriches, reindeer, or sheep that have been or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland. Recently, FSA updated LFP policy to expand program eligibility to include additional income producing grazing animals, like horses and ostrich, that contribute to the commercial viability of an agricultural operation.

Livestock used for hunting and consumption by the owner and horses and other animals that are used or intended to be used for racing and wagering remain ineligible.

Livestock producers interested in applying LFP should contact Montrose County FSA at 970-249-8407 ext. 2.

More information in USDA disaster assistance is available at [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover).

## Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs Receive 2018 Farm Bill One Year Extension, Farmers Can Now Enroll for the 2024 Crop Year

Continued from Pg. 6...

age Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

### Web-Based Decision Tools

Many universities offer web-based decision tools to help producers make informed, educated decisions

using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Producers are encouraged to use the tool of their choice to support their ARC and PLC elections.

### More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the ARC and PLC webpage or contact their local USDA Service Center. Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment online with level 2 eAuth.



## USDA Increases Minimum Annual Payment for Conservation Stewardship Program

Denver, CO - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is increasing the minimum annual payment for agricultural producers participating in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from \$1,500 to \$4,000 starting in fiscal year 2024. The increase addresses challenges faced by small scale, underserved, and urban producers and improves equity in the program by making participation more financially beneficial for smaller operations.

“Increasing the minimum payment to CSP participants regardless of the size of their operation helps to make participation worthwhile for a larger number of producers,” said Clint Evans, State Conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado. “By broadening the appeal of CSP, we can further expand implementation of Inflation Reduction Act funding for conservation programs.”

CSP offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting

additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. Examples of CSP enhancements that are suitable for being adopted by smaller scale and urban producers include: • Planting multi-species cover crops • Mulching with natural materials • Establishing pollinator habitats • Soil health crop rotation Inflation Reduction Act and CSP Currently, an unprecedented amount of funding is available for CSP through the Inflation Reduction Act and Farm Bill.

The Inflation Reduction Act provided \$19.5 billion in additional funding for NRCS’ oversubscribed programs like CSP for five years. Inflation Reduction Act funds are available to help producers adopt climate-smart practices. NRCS recently announced it increased the number of Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Mitigation Activities eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for fiscal year 2024 through CSP, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).



Guillermo, Civil Engineering Technician

## Guillermo Mosqueda Joins Montrose NRCS

Guillermo Mosqueda joined the Montrose NRCS Field Office as engineering technician in October! He has 8 years of experience from working in the Delta NRCS field office. Guillermo expressed his excitement for the change, saying, “I’ve lived in Montrose my whole life and I look forward to surveying, drafting, and designing projects in my hometown!”





## Colorado SNOTEL Snow/Precipitation Update Report

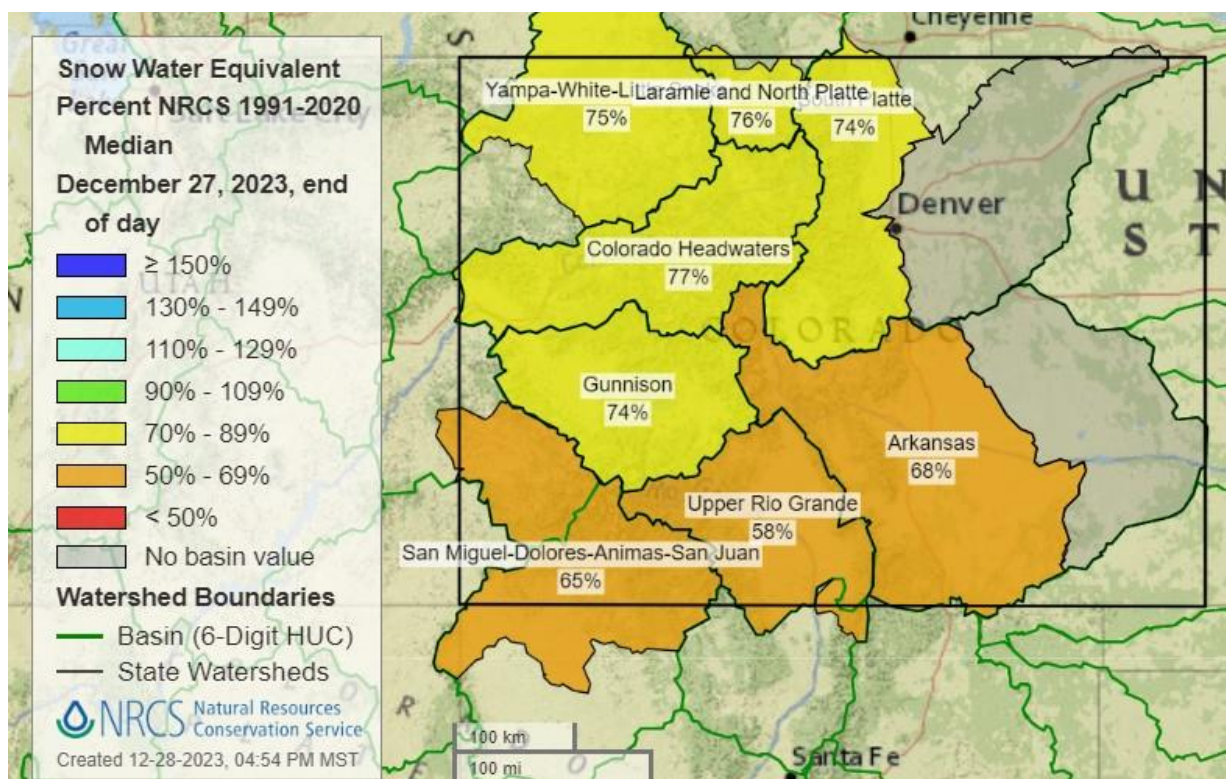
As of THURSDAY: December 28, 2023

BASIN	ELEV.	SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT			TOTAL PRECIPITATION		
Data Site Name	(Ft)			%			%
		Current	Median	Median	Current	Average	Avg
GUNNISON RIVER BASIN							
Butte	10200	5.4	5.1	106	7.9	6.6	120
Cochetopa Pass	10061	1.1	1.8	61	2.0	3.4	59
Columbine Pass	9171	5.0	6.1	82	4.3	9.0	48
Idarado	9812	2.7	5.2	52	5.9	8.2	72
Mc Clure Pass	8774	4.6	6.0	77	8.3	9.0	92
Mesa Lakes	10168	5.0	6.2	81	8.0	8.8	91
Overland Res.	9893	3.1	5.0	62	-M	7.4	*
Park Cone	9621	3.8	3.9	97	4.4	5.2	85
Park Reservoir	9987	6.6	9.4	70	9.2	11.4	81
Porphyry Creek	10788	5.2	6.0	87	7.7	6.2	124
Red Mountain Pass	11080	6.2	9.4	66	7.8	11.2	70
Sargents Mesa	11499	2.2	3.8	58	2.9	5.3	55
Schofield Pass	10653	9.0	12.2	74	11.6	12.4	94
Slumgullion	11560	3.7	6.3	59	5.0	6.6	76
Upper Taylor	10717	4.4	5.3	83	8.4	8.0	105
Wager Gulch	11132	2.7	-M	*	4.5	-M	*
Basin Index (%)				74	84		

-M = Missing data

\* = Data may not provide a valid measure of conditions.

Units = inches for the Current and Normal Snow Water Equivalent and Total Precip. values



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Call

Mendy Stewart  
at 970-964-3582

or email to  
mendy.stewart@co.nacdn.net

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Natural Resources Conservation Service.....3  
Shavano Conservation District.....3

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## MONTROSE-GUNNISON-OURAY COUNTY COMMITTEE

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**ERNIE ETCHART**, Vice Chairperson  
**CHERRI COOPER**, Regular Member  
**ANDREA INGO**, Regular Member  
**TYLER HANSON**, Regular Member



## COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE

Web Site: [csfs.colostate.edu](http://csfs.colostate.edu)

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## WEST REGION WILDFIRE COUNCIL

Phone 970-615-7300 [www.cowildfire.org](http://www.cowildfire.org)

Serving Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties

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## SHAVANO CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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# Dates to Remember

December 25, 2023	Christmas Day — Office Closed
December 31, 2023	2024 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline for Honey
January 1, 2024	New Year's Day—Office Closed
January 1, 2024	FSA Newly Elected FSA County Committee Members Take Office
January 2, 2024	Acreage Reporting Deadline for Honeybee Colonies
January 9, 2024	Shavano CD Board Meeting 6:30pm
January 15, 2024	Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apples, Grapes and Peaches
January 15, 2024	Application Deadline for CRFT Program Thru Valley Food Part.
January 15, 2024	Martin Luther King Jr. Day—Office Closed
January 25, 2024	Cultivating Farmers & Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) Program Kick-Off
January 26-27, 2024	Western Colorado Soil Health, Food and Farm Forum, Montrose
January 30, 2024	Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application & Supporting Documentation Deadline
January 31, 2024	2023 Wool LDP Applications & Supporting Documentation Deadline
February 13, 2024	Shavano CD Board Meeting 6:30pm
February 19, 2024	President's Day - Office Closed
March 1, 2024	EQIP ACT Application Deadline
March 15, 2024	2024 ARC/PLC Program Enrollment Deadline
April 9, 2024	Shavano CD Board Meeting 6:30pm
May 1, 2024	CSP ACT Application Deadline

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*Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment to attend or participate in meetings or events sponsored by the Farm Service Agency. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in one of our meetings/events/functions, please call the FSA county office and we will be happy to make any needed arrangements.*



Join us for two days of regionally-specific sessions focused on soil health, maximizing regenerative crop and livestock production, innovative marketing, financial management strategies, and labor and water issues.

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**

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## KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

**Leading Forward: Working Lands and the Future of the West**

**Lesli Allison**  
CEO, Western Landowners Alliance

**You Can Live Without Oil, But You Can't Live Without Water**

**Dr. Dwayne Beck**  
Research Manager, Dakota Lakes Farm

**Perennial Grains to Change Agriculture**

**Tessa Peters**  
Director of Crop Stewardship, the Land Institute

**Regenerative Innovations Aren't Just for the Land; Families and Communities Thrive with Them Too!**

**Joe and Jenn Wheeling**  
Owners, James Ranch Beef and Gardens

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS INCLUDE:

Water Law in a Nutshell / Agrivoltaics / Enterprise Evolution  
Agritourism & Climate Change / Irrigation Water Management  
Biochar / HM Bison / Single Strand Fencing / Successful CSAs  
Alternative Forages / Pest Management / STAR Program / Rangeland  
Alternative Funding / Operating on Leased Land / No-Till Practice  
And many more...