

Conservation projects updated

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The Northeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council has been busy starting new projects they would like to share.

Northeast Colorado RC&D covers six and a half counties which include Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma and a portion of eastern Weld, totaling over six million acres.

There are eight conservation districts and two watersheds, Lower South Platte and Republican River, in their area. The current council consists of six members that are farmers/ranchers, business owners and professional employees. Basic support to the RC&D by USDA is primarily through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Northeast Colorado RC&D project proposals are brought to the council by an entity or individual with the endorsement of any sponsor. The projects will be reviewed for possible approval and given a priority assignment as they relate to the area plan and annual plan of work. Most of the projects are funded with grants along with in-kind donations, cash matches, sponsorship monies or other funding sources.

Three of the council's current projects are as follows:

—In-Service Training and Decision-Making Tools for Optimizing Livestock Mortality Management: The livestock industry faces many challenges today. This project addresses an issue that producers face which relates to at least four types of challenges: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, biosecurity and public perception. The issue in question is what to do with livestock mortalities.

Project objectives: 1) To provide professional development opportunities for land grant extension faculty, NRCS field staff and NRCS Technical Service Providers (TSP) in the area of livestock mortality management; 2) To develop tools for use by extension and NRCS professionals in extending mortality management information and decision-making tools to livestock producers.

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Products: 1) Decision aid spreadsheet; 2) How-to manual on mortality composting (English and Spanish); 3) Video (English and Spanish); 4) PowerPoint presentation.

—Determining Feasibility of a Mixed-Feedstock Food and Ag Waste Digester near the Fort Morgan Industrial Park: (Scope and location changed from original proposal).

The objective of this study is to examine the feasibility of developing an agricultural waste digester (anaerobic digester) using swine effluent and converting it into methane gas and/or electricity for renewable energy.

Project benefits: The potential benefits of developing an anaerobic digester include: carbon credits, reduced energy costs and potential income selling the methane gas and/or electricity.

—Utilizing Liquid Beet/Cane Molasses for Nematode Control and an Alternative Organic Nitrogen Source: This project will look at the use of liquid beet/cane molasses in conjunction with lower rates of commercial fertilizers to reduce nematodes and improve soil quality.

The molasses will be mixed with the commercial fertilizer and applied in one of two ways: strip tilled or top dressed during the growing season.

Expected benefits: Reduce the amount of commercial fertilizer used by replacing it with liquid beet/cane molasses which will also assist in nematode control and improve soil quality. By reducing the amount of commercial fertilizer use, this will lead to a reduction in the use of fossil fuel produced commercial fertilizers along with improving air quality with the use of an organic liquid beet/cane molasses.

To learn more about Northeast Colorado RC&D and its other projects, people are encouraged to attend the annual meeting scheduled for 6 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 28 at the Country Steak Out in Ft. Morgan. RSVP by calling 970-522-7440 ext. 122 or e-mailing David Colburn at David.Colburn@co.usda.gov.

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The mission of the Northeast Colorado RC&D is “Promoting Sustainability in Northeast Colorado.”