

Colorado State Forest Service

La Junta District 2010 Annual Report

The CSFS has a new mission statement!

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) mission is to achieve stewardship of Colorado's diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.

2010 Highlights from the La Junta District

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is proud to be a part of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University (CSU). The CSFS also provides staffing to the Division of Forestry within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

The CSFS La Junta District serves Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers counties in southeast Colorado as one of 17 districts located throughout Colorado. The CSFS State Office is headquartered on CSU's foothills campus in Fort Collins.

More information about the CSFS and the La Junta District is available at the CSFS website: www.ColoradoForests.CO. Click on "Your Local Forester," and the "La Junta District."

The 2009 La Junta District Annual Report: http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/WEB_LaJuntaAR_09.pdf

WE MOVED! Visit us at our new office location on the Otero Junior College campus!

We would like to extend to you our personal invitation to attend the grand opening of our new Colorado State Forest Service La Junta District Office on the Otero Junior College campus in La Junta. Our grand opening ceremony will be on June 16th and 17th. More details will be forthcoming.

We are very proud to be a part of the CSU family, La Junta and Otero Junior College, and we hope you will be able to join us for our grand opening!

Sincerely,

Donna, Shelly & Teradette
The CSFS La Junta District



The new CSFS La Junta District building.

Proudly Serving Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero & Prowers Counties

Colorado State Forest Service Broke Ground on New La Junta District Office in March 2010

The Colorado State Forest Service and Otero Junior College hosted a groundbreaking ceremony on March 2, 2010 to mark the start of construction on the new CSFS La Junta District office building. The La Junta District serves seven counties: Crowley, Otero, Bent, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Prowers and Baca.

CSFS South Area Forester Mike Harvey and OJC President Jim Rizzuto participated in the ceremony. The groundbreaking took place on the construction site at 1904 San Juan Ave., just north of the new dormitory buildings on the OJC campus.

“The Colorado State Forest Service plays an important role in southeastern Colorado, and we as an institution look forward to partnering with them in program or service development for the people served by this facility,” said Rizzuto.

OJC graduate Connie Ryan, who works for a Pueblo contractor, served as the principal architect on the planning for the new CSFS building.

The district outgrew its previous office space at the La Junta National Guard armory, said La Junta District Forester Donna Davis. Her district temporarily leased space on Santa Fe Avenue in downtown La Junta until the new building was complete.

OJC leased the half-acre of undeveloped land to the CSFS for 35 years under an Interagency Lease Agreement between the Colorado Community College System and Colorado State University, the parent organization of the CSFS. A private contractor chosen through a bidding process commenced construction on March 3. Construction was completed last September.

“President Rizzuto and the OJC staff have offered the Colorado State Forest Service such a supportive and warm welcome to their campus,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the CSFS. “This location and

the campus partnership will greatly support the CSFS mission for the seven-county district, and should enhance the college’s already outstanding presence in southeastern Colorado.”

The CSFS assists rural landowners in southeast Colorado by providing outreach and technical assistance. In spring 2010, the agency continued to help landowners near Ordway reforest by planting trees in areas affected by the 2008 Ordway/Crowley County wildfire. And for over a decade, the CSFS has been instrumental in the removal of invasive tamarisk along the Arkansas River and its tributaries.



The CSFS La Junta District Forester, Donna Davis explains the construction plans for the CSFS La Junta District building to the CSFS South Area Forester Mike Harvey and Otero Junior College President Jim Rizzuto.



Left to right: Tracey Abel, CSU Construction Project Manager; Travis Lafever, Building by Designs; Jim Rizzuto, OJC President; Mike Harvey, CSFS South Area Forester and Connie Ryan, Principle Architect for the project stand at the building site.

Tackling Tamarisk on the Purgatoire: Project History 2004 - 2010

One of the main goals of Tackling Tamarisk on the Purgatoire (TTP) is to financially and technically assist private agricultural producers and other land owners with restoration of their lands through the removal of tamarisk and Russian-olive.



Purgatoire River Watershed, highlighted in red.

Project Background

The purpose of TTP is to improve and restore riparian and associated areas of the Purgatoire Watershed through the removal and control of the invasive plants tamarisk and Russian-olive. Desired outcomes include:

- improvement of water resources and native riparian plant and wildlife communities;
- protection of communities from wildfire and flooding;
- enhancement of agricultural production; and
- improvement of hunting and recreational access and opportunities.

Active project partners include: private landowners,

Branson-Trinchera Conservation District, Spanish Peaks-Purgatoire River Conservation District, CSFS, The Nature Conservancy, Colorado State Land Board, Colorado State Parks, Colorado Water Conservation Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Trinidad Community Foundation, City of Trinidad, Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District and others.

The Purgatoire River and its tributaries exhibit amazingly intact native riparian vegetation and extraordinary biological diversity, all while supporting a vibrant human community and robust agricultural heritage. However, tamarisk and Russian-olive have been encroaching into this watershed for the past 50 years. Currently, the infestation is very manageable within most of the watershed. Thus removing it will cost substantially less now than in the future, and will generally not require extensive revegetation efforts. The growing interest and continued support for these efforts within the partnership and the local community have provided a timely opportunity to deal with tamarisk and Russian-olive in a proactive manner within one of the most significant natural drainages of eastern Colorado, yielding the greatest dollar-for-dollar impact.

On-The-Ground Project Implementation

About 650 acres have been treated within the Purgatoire Watershed since 2005.

Upper End of Watershed, Trinidad State Park and Reservoir: Approximately 150 acres of cut-stump treatments. The park continues to monitor and treat re-growth on an annual basis. Colorado State Parks has self-funded most of the removal efforts with help from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Challenge Cost Share grant program in 2007.

Purgatoire Mainstem, NRCS EQIP Invasives Program: Approximately 50 acres treated on private lands. Demonstration areas have been established along the Purgatoire River near the base of Trinidad Reservoir and the Town of Hoehne. Control near

Hoehne has mostly consisted of trackhoe and loader removal by private landowners, with an intensive revegetation component. Below Trinidad Reservoir, efforts have mostly consisted of cut-stump treatments by private landowners.

Chacuaco Drainage (Largest Tributary to the Purgatoire): Approximately 400 acres treated on private lands since 2008. Most of this work has involved cut-stump treatments, along with some trackhoe work at the confluence. Work will continue in the Chacuaco drainage until all initial treatments are complete, hopefully by 2013. The majority of funding for this project has come from by the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Wetlands grant program, with partnership match coming from the Colorado State Land Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy and private landowners.

Purgatoire Mainstem, Trinidad River Walk: Approximately 50 acres treated in 2010 along the Trinidad River Walk. This stretch of the Purgatoire is heavily infested with large Russian-olive trees. The treatment method currently being used is the cut-stump method. The majority of funding for this project has been provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District, with match from partners listed above, as well as the Trinidad Community Foundation providing substantial in-kind match with their annual volunteer river clean-up efforts.

Biocontrol: Tamarisk leaf beetles were initially released in the Purgatoire River Watershed in 2009 by the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), with an additional release in 2010. Project partners are working with the CDA to establish the leaf beetles within the watershed as part of an integrated management approach.

Project Monitoring and Research

Currently, TTP project partners are developing more intensive monitoring protocols for all projects implemented within the Purgatoire River Watershed. These protocols will address effectiveness of control,

water quality/quantity, soil quality and vegetation response. Intensive monitoring began in the fall of 2010, conducted by a Denver University team led by Dr. Anna Sher. User-friendly monitoring protocols will be developed by 2013 for use by private landowners and land managers. Funding for this research is being provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and The Nature Conservancy, and the project was recently awarded additional funding through the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) program.

Colorado State University's College of Bioagricultural Sciences and Pest Management is also conducting research on the mainstem of the Purgatoire focused on using fire and tamarisk leaf beetles as part of an integrated approach to controlling tamarisk. This research is being led by graduate student Cameron Douglas, with oversight from Dr. Scott Nissen. Funding for this research also is provided by the NRCS CIG program.



Trinidad River Walk before and after Russian-olive removal. Photos by Dick Loudon.

Colorado State Forest Service Qualifies Southeast Colorado Firefighters to Work with Air Tankers

The Colorado State Forest Service and La Junta Fire Department together hosted a safety training workshop in June to qualify area firefighters to work with single-engine wildfire suppression aircraft.

The crew for a CSFS single-engine air tanker (SEAT), headed by SEAT Manager Clinton Bellinger, led the training workshop at the La Junta Municipal Airport, which included CSFS pilot Charlie Miller making a demonstration water drop in a field north of the airport. Approximately 30 firefighters from the La Junta, Ordway, Holly and Prowers County Rural fire departments are now qualified to safely load a SEAT with water or flame retardant after receiving their Interagency SEAT Loader Data Card, also known as a “Blue Card.”

“We’re excited to train La Junta and surrounding area firefighters in safe aircraft operations, and to give our fire departments first-hand information about Colorado State Forest Service SEAT aircraft and their potential use in wildfire situations,” said Donna Davis, La Junta District forester for the CSFS. Davis coordinated the workshop and served as one of the instructors.

Blue Card training prepares firefighters to communicate via radio with SEAT pilots and crews, safely maneuver around aircraft on the ground and properly refill an aircraft’s water tanks. The training Tuesday also focused on air support tactics for fire situations specific to southeast Colorado, such as community interface and riparian or prairie fires.

“Air drops when life, property and other values are at risk are important tools to have in the fire suppression tool kit,” Davis said. “An air drop during initial attack may potentially keep a small fire small – allowing responders to maintain a handle on the situation. A drop can also allow a little more time for resources to arrive at a fire.”

Davis said that keeping a fire smaller using SEATs can help keep overall suppression costs down and free up resources for other fires in a jurisdiction.

The CSFS generally has two full-time SEATs, which are moved around the state each fire season with changing conditions, and can bring on SEATs from other parts of the country when fire activity increases. SEATs can drop up to 800 gallons of water, foam or retardant onto wildfires while flying 100 mph just 60 feet over the terrain. La Junta Municipal Airport has an agreement with the CSFS for potential SEAT use at the airport during an emergency.

“Thank you to the La Junta Fire Department and the City of La Junta for hosting the event. If a SEAT is ever needed in southeastern Colorado, the firefighters are ready to support this asset,” Davis said.



CSFS pilot Charlie Miller and SEAT manager Clinton Bellinger teach the safety training workshop.

Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants: Supporting Rural Fire Departments

Wildfires can occur almost any time in Colorado, so it’s important to have trained firefighters and equipment available throughout the year. In the United States, 75 percent of the 35,000 local fire agencies are volunteer. These volunteer organizations are the first responders on approximately 80 percent of wildfires.

In addition, volunteer fire departments provide wildfire protection and emergency response services

to residents in rural areas with populations of 10,000 or less. What does that mean for Colorado?

Each year, federal funds are available through Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grants administered by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The grants allow fire departments to buy fire equipment, pay for training or training materials, or cover the cost of department organization. VFA funds are granted on a 50/50 matching basis. In order to help volunteer fire departments, which often are strapped for funds, only departments in rural areas may apply for these funds. In 2008, 150 fire departments in Colorado were awarded grant funding; in 2009, 126 departments received grants. The average grant awarded is \$3,000. They can range from \$100 to \$10,000.

The CSFS La Junta District serves Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, and Prowers counties in southeastern Colorado. In 2008-2009, eleven fire departments in the area served by the CSFS La Junta District were awarded funding totaling more than \$35,000. In 2010, the following departments received funding totaling \$48,711.

- Campo Volunteer Fire Department - \$1740.50
- Cheyenne Wells Fire Protection District - \$8502.50
- Granada Volunteer Fire Department - \$1859.50
- Holly Volunteer Fire Department - \$9402.50
- La Junta Fire Department - \$4,938.00
- Prowers County Rural Fire Department - \$8,438.50
- Springfield Volunteer Fire Department - \$3,268.00
- Sugar City Volunteer Fire Department - \$561.50
- Walsh Volunteer Fire Department - \$10,000

“The great thing about VFA grants is that they help smaller fire departments with limited budgets. Even a \$500 grant request will double their spending power. Many of the smaller departments are funded by donations and fund raisers,” said Donna Davis, CSFS La Junta District Forester.

Each fire department can use the funding for equipment, training or organizational costs. Holly Volunteer Fire Protection District used the funding to purchase a wildland slip-on unit for a smaller fire engine. Slip-on units have a water tank, pump, hose reel and storage for tools and appliances. The Granada Volunteer Fire Department used its funding to

purchase personal protective gear – Nomex coveralls for their volunteer firefighters.

The majority of the communities on the CSFS La Junta District have populations of 500 or less. This means many fire department volunteers wear several different hats within their community. Having a simple 2-page grant application goes a long way to helping these folks make application.

Memorandum of Understanding Addresses SEAT use at La Junta Airport

The first ever Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CSFS, the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado Office and the La Junta Airport concerning the use of the airport for Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) Operations during wildland firefighting efforts was signed this past year. The purpose of the MOU is to provide procedures and guidance for coordination and cooperation between the signing parties.

The overall objective is to provide a base of operations for SEATs to conduct aerial firefighting operations in order to enhance federal, state and local wildland fire suppression capabilities – if requested and as the need arises in the future.

Hiring agreements already in place will allow for quicker response in the event of a wildfire emergency.

Cheyenne and Prowers Counties Added to the Regional Annual Wildfire Operating Plan

The purpose of the Annual Wildfire Operating Plan (AWOP) is to set forth standard operating procedures, agreed policies and clear responsibilities to implement cooperative wildfire protection on all lands in Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers counties. Signatures to the agreement include each county’s sheriff and commissioner chairman, along with the Colorado State Forest Service and all federal

partners with lands in the agreement. These partners include the Pike San Isabel National Forest and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands, U.S. Forest Service; the Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site and the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, both National Park Service; and the Bureau of Land Management.

The AWOP online at www.ColoradoForests.CO (click on "Your Local Forester", then "La Junta District", then "Fire Programs"). Note the appendix, which includes several useful additional references including: existing county fire restriction and closure ordinances; jurisdictional maps; and additional fire agreements between the various entities within the AWOP.

More Trees Provided to 2008 Ordway Fire Victims

In 2009, over 350 trees were planted in Crowley County for Ordway Fire victims through the Reforest Ordway project. This project was funded by the Colorado Tree Coalition's (CTC) disaster grant program called Reforest Colorado. Additional fire victims came forward in 2010 who were interested in replacing trees that had burned on their properties in the 2008 Ordway Fire, and the Reforest Ordway Committee came together once again to assist with their request.

The committee members (Colorado State Forest Service, Crowley County CSU Extension, Crowley County, West Otero-Timpas Conservation District and the Ordway Tree Board) sought additional funding from the Colorado Tree Coalition's Reforest Colorado program. The CTC awarded another \$1,300, along with \$200 granted by the La Junta Wal-Mart. With these funds, a total of 35 trees were planted on eight properties and at the Crowley County Fairgrounds, which also suffered tree loss during the 2008 Ordway Fire. Participants were awarded trees on a first-come, first-serve basis. Project participants were required to attend a tree planting, care and maintenance workshop led by the CSFS. Participants were also required to sign a planting and maintenance agreement, to plant their own trees, and to allow site inspections by the CSFS

and CSU Extension.

Volunteers donated time to help plant trees at the Crowley County Fairgrounds this year, including the Cheraw Boy Scouts, Ordway Tree Board and the CSFS. However, Crowley County crews and Commissioners and CSU Extension (Kim Baltazar) took on most of the heavy lifting with the tree planting.

Participants expressed their gratitude to the committee for the opportunity to plant trees on their property. The committee hopes that with the required training and with participants signing a tree care maintenance agreement that most of the trees will survive and grow into valuable mature trees—a great asset for the Crowley County community!

Community Forests Highly Valued on Southeast Colorado Plains

Trees within our southeastern Colorado communities are highly valued. Because no towns in the region house a forestry department, they depend upon the Colorado State Forest Service for technical assistance and support of their community forestry programs. Local tree boards serve many communities and work closely with the CSFS to help manage their community tree resources. One of the most important venues for this support is the Eastern Colorado Community Forestry Conference (ECCFC).



Cheraw Boy Scouts and Ordway Tree Board members celebrate Arbor Day in Ordway by volunteering their time to plant trees.

The ECCFC requires a vast amount of prior planning and preparation, and it takes an army of people to produce a successful event. The 2010 ECCFC was held in Springfield and was hosted by the CSFS La Junta District, Town of Springfield, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Tree Board and Baca County CSU Extension. It was sponsored by the CSFS, Colorado Tree Coalition and the Baca County Conservation District. Over 50 people attended the workshop, including participants from Kansas and Oklahoma. The workshop focused on tree biology, planting, pruning, tree selection, tree care and maintenance, and insect and disease problems in trees. Presenters included current and retired CSFS personnel, most of whom are certified arborists through the International Society of Arboriculture.

The 2010 ECCFC again proved to be very successful and provided attendees with useful and practical information to improve their community forests. Many thanks go to the planning committee and those who assisted with implementing and hosting the workshop: Kathy Self (Springfield Tree Board), Jodi Ricker (Town of Springfield and Springfield Chamber of Commerce), Deborah Lester (CSU Extension), Robbie Feuerstein (CSU Extension), Keith Wood (CSFS), Teradette Wilson (CSFS), Shandra Frazee (Baca County Conservation District) and Brian Wait (Baca County Conservation District).

As always, the ECCFC would not be possible without the support of the Colorado Tree Coalition. CTC's involvement makes these events top-notch. Special thanks to CTC once again for their continued support!

Tree Care Supplies Available

The CSFS La Junta District sells the following tree care supplies:

- Rabbit guards;
- Bamboo stakes;
- Fertilizer tablets;
- Root polymer;
- Weed barrier;
- Staples; and
- Cedar shingles.

In 2010, the district had 21 customers and sold 571 rabbit guards, 790 bamboo stakes, 1,100 fertilizer tablets, 20 pounds of root polymer, 35 weed barrier squares, 765 staples and 2 bundles of cedar shingles. For a complete description of the products and a list of prices, please stop by the new La Junta District office to pick up a brochure, or call to receive one by mail.

2010 La Junta District Insect and Disease Report

Causal Agents

Major

- Walnut twig borer/thousand cankers disease was the most problematic in Crowley County and the Rocky Ford area due to the high concentration of walnut trees.
- Elm leaf beetle in the La Junta area was very heavy this year.
- Elm flea weevil continues to be on the scene and numbers are increasing across the district.
- European elm scale and elm bark beetles continued to be major insect issues in elm within the district.
- Lilac-ash borer continues to be a major insect issue with ash trees.
- A prolonged, cool spring caused stress to many trees in 2010.
- Hail and excessive wind in early spring caused significant stress to trees, especially young trees.
- Other stress-causing agents for trees included weed trimmers, trunk girdling and improper watering, planting and pruning.



Black walnut dieback from thousand cankers disease.



Elm leaf beetle eggs and signs of larvae feeding.

Minor

- Fire blight was visible on some ornamental fruit trees.
- Aphids in early spring were very prolific on some plants, especially on cottonwoods.
- Chlorosis of ornamental pear and silver maple is very common every year—these trees are not very well suited to heavy clay/alkaline soils.
- Needle and branch death on ponderosa pines occurred in the district but was determined to be caused by abiotic factors, with exception of some spider mite damage. However, spider mites were probably not the cause of the visible damage.
- Misapplied herbicide is an issue each year that causes stress to trees.



Symptoms of chlorosis in tree leaves.

Summary of Insect and Disease Activities

- There were no signs of Dutch elm disease for the City of La Junta this year.
- English elms continue to be heavily infested by European elm scale and have suffered extensive dieback over the past 8 years; especially those trees not properly cared for (i.e. watered improperly).
- The district distributed elm leaf beetle articles via the La Junta Tribune-Democrat to inform homeowners of the elm leaf beetle life cycle and options for control.
- Most tree problems stemmed from poor tree care and poor planting practices.

In Closing...

We would like to thank our many customers and cooperators. It is a pleasure to serve and work with you. If you have questions or need assistance with forestry-related issues, please contact us.

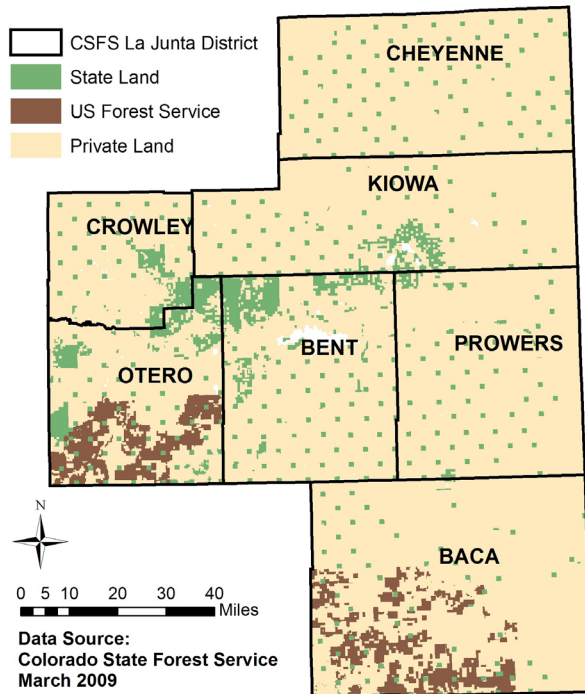
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