

Yuma Conservation District Annual Report 2007

Board of Supervisors

President Milton (Bud) Mekelburg, Vice-President Marylu Smith, Secretary-Treasurer Ross Tuell, Brian Cunningham, John Deering

Mission

The Yuma Conservation District was formed by landowners in 1958 under the authority of the State Soil Conservation Act to protect natural resources and maintain productive agricultural lands in western Yuma County.

Organization

The District is governed by a board of elected officials. The district holds public meetings of landowners, land users, agency representatives and other interested citizens who recommend natural resource priorities and key conservation practices for the Annual Plan of Work and Long Range Plan. Members of the board of supervisors advocate for natural resource concerns on the local, watershed, and state level. The district hires employees to carry out the day-to-day management of the district and to develop programs and funding to implement the Plan of Work. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary conservation partner.

Natural Resource Priorities – Annual Plan of Work

Water Quality and Water Quantity – The district encourage activities that reduce water consumption while maintaining productive agricultural lands; develops programs that help producers transition from high water use to lower water use crops or raise traditional crops with less water; facilitates the application of existing water conservation research; supports incentives for the development and application of innovative practices; increases producer access to Farm Bill and other cost share programs to get conservation practices on the ground; distributes information through public meetings, a web site, newsletters and articles. It also monitors Republican River Compact Compliance and Ogallala Aquifer issues and advocates for maintaining productive agricultural lands.

Soil Conservation – The district increases producer access to Farm Bill and other programs to get conservation practices on the ground; supports programs that provide options for CRP lands with expiring contracts; supports local efforts to eradicate noxious weeds; and provides information and education. The district also sells grass seed for CRP, rangeland, and farmstead use.

Rangeland Conservation – The district provides support for rangeland workshops and tours; pays cost share funds for livestock wells (contingent on funding); works with the local pest control district; and provides information and education.

Agro-forestry – The district sells seedling trees to establish windbreaks and wildlife habitat; advocates for windbreak renovation; and provides information and education.

Programs that Address the Priorities in the Annual Plan of Work

Republican River Basin PATHWAYS Project

Engages producers on 6,000 pilot farm acres in an innovative, comprehensive, regional strategy to reduce irrigation water consumption by moving some irrigated land from high water use crops to lower water use crops and cropping systems as well as raising traditional crops with less water. Resulting innovations can be replicated throughout the Republican River Basin. This will reduce water use from the Ogallala Aquifer and sustain agricultural lands in spite of the Republican River Compact. Total project cost: \$996,000 with a \$498,000 Federal NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant. It runs from October 1, 2005 – September 30, 2008 and the district will request an extension through 2009.

Pathways 2 Market Project

Provides a series of informational meetings and networking opportunities for community members who will participate in a strategic planning process at the end of the year to determine whether to form a producers' marketing co-op to facilitate growing lower water use and value added crops and provide new economic opportunities. Funded from February 2007 - 2008 with a \$20,000 grant from the Laura Jane Musser Fund for Environmental Stewardship Program.

Water and Nutrient Management 319 Project

Producers implemented Best Management Practices on 45,000 acres during 2002 – 2006. In 2007, a Final Report was submitted to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The program reduced the application of nutrients and pesticides to irrigated lands, saved water and energy, and reduced awareness of the connection between management practices and ground water quality in the Ogallala Aquifer. The final report is published on the district website: www.yumaconservation.org.

Farm Bill Conservation Technician

Producers have more access to conservation programs through the addition of a full-time employee who assists them in planning and implementing Farm Bill and other conservation programs. On October 30, 2007 the district was notified that it will receive funding for 2008, which will be the sixth year of this program. Funds: USDA/NRCS, State of Colorado Department of Agriculture Conservation Services Division, Yuma Conservation District provides 25% cash match.

NRCS Local Presence

The district provides office space for NRCS employees so producers have local access to technical assistance for Farm Bill conservation programs.

Direct Assistance Grant

Provides funding for board and staff expenses to carry out locally led conservation activities and to represent local issues on the watershed and state level. Funded by State of Colorado Conservation Services grant.

Local Conservation Cost Share Program – Matching Grant

The district wants to re-establish a popular and successful cost share program using matching grant funds for local priorities. These funds were eliminated from the state budget in the past and

restored in 2006. The State Conservation Board implemented a competitive process for grants and in 2007 we applied for \$10,000 for (1) well tests for producers using Power Consumption Coefficient (PCC) method of measuring actual irrigation water use, (2) stock wells for better livestock distribution to protect rangeland, and (3) windbreaks for energy savings around farms, wildlife habitat, living snow fence, and living barns.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Republican River Watershed Tour. Annual legislative tours are an opportunity to keep legislative and agency representatives informed about local resource issues and the importance of district programs. This year the district co-hosted the tour with the Washington County Conservation District and presented information on the importance of sustaining an irrigated agricultural economy while saving water.

District Web Site. The new web site www.yumaconservation.org continues to expand with program reports and presentations. Use this resource to check up on program sign-up opportunities and technical information throughout the year along with handy links to Yuma weather, crop weather information, Department of Agriculture, NRCS Conservation Services, district newsletters, and the Colorado Conservator newspaper.

Seminars, Workshops, Public Presentations. The district provided presentations on water issues, lower water use crops and co-sponsored rangeland workshops in 2007.

Newsletter, News Articles, Special Mailings. Cooperators and the general public have information on Farm Bill and other conservation program sign-up opportunities and deadlines, conservation practice articles, and event information. Articles on district programs appear in local, regional, and statewide publications, including the *Western Farmer Stockman*, the *Colorado Conservator*, the *Colorado Nonpoint Newsletter*, and local papers.

Student Programs. The district provides natural resource conservation as well as agricultural information and education in the schools. Programs in 2007 included sixth grade conservation poster contest; seventh and eighth graders participated in the Marvin Salvador Memorial Conservation Science Fair Awards; a high school senior receives the Ted Tuell Memorial *Outstanding in the Field* Scholarship.

COLLABORATION

Y-W Well Testing Association. This is an Intergovernmental Association of three conservation districts (Yuma, Cope, and Washington County) that provides irrigation water management and well testing toward reducing water and energy use.

Republican River Watershed Association. The Republican River Watershed Association consists of eight conservation districts. The association identifies natural resources issues for the area and serves as the conduit between local district resource issues and concerns and state and national agencies and resources.

FINANCIAL REPORT

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/ Savings	184,934.22
Grant Receivables	78,259.40

Fixed Assets	<u>108,965.00</u>
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TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>372,158.62</u></u>
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LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

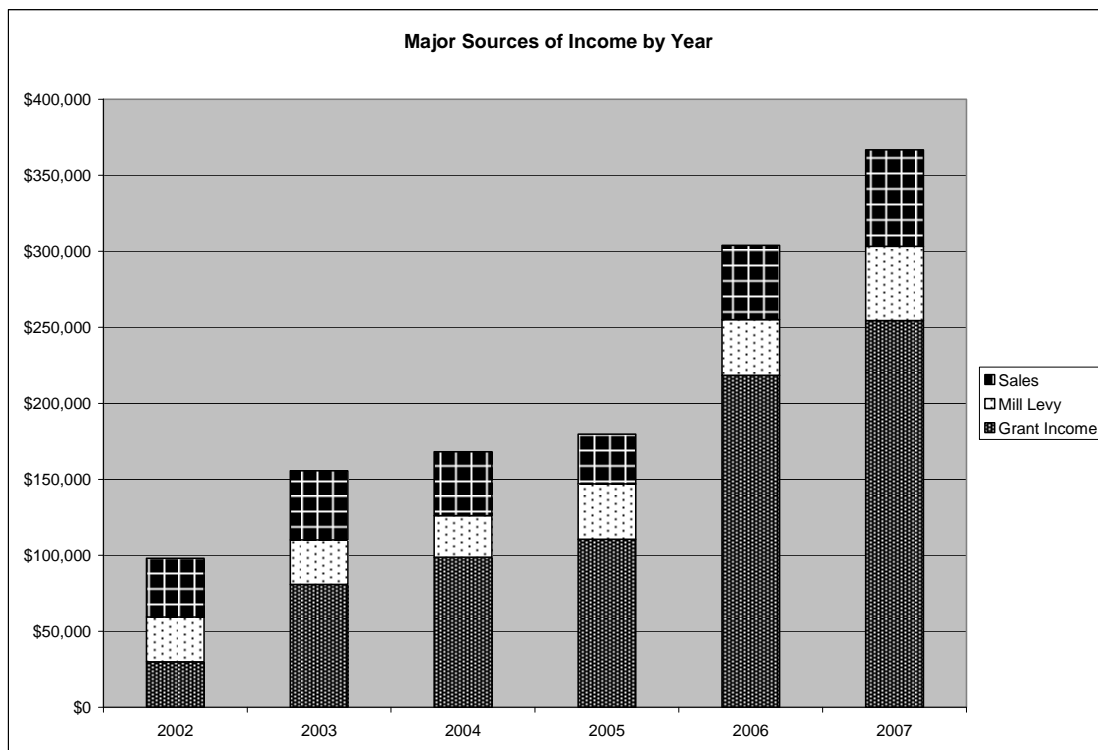
Current Liabilities	43,925.15
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Equity	<u>328,233.47</u>
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TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u><u>372,158.62</u></u>
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LEVERAGING LOCAL DOLLARS

The district has been successful at leveraging local dollars – mill levy and sales income - by applying for federal, state and private funds. This chart shows the major sources of funds - grants, mill levy, and sales – from 2002 through 2007.

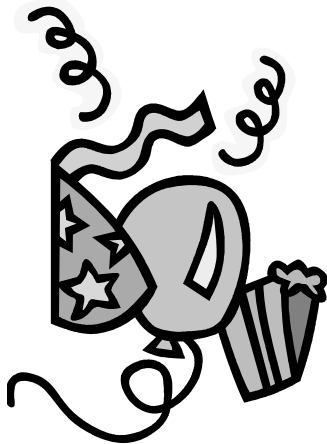


EMPLOYEES

Lynda Harper, District Manager; Bethleen McCall, District Conservation Technician; Brian Starkebaum, Republican River Basin Pathways Project Director; Jo Sears, Assistant to the Pathways Project Director. Consultants: Sallie Harper, Pathways Projects; Katie Haerr, Pathways 2 Market Project Coordinator.

CONSERVATION AND OTHER PARTNERS

Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, Colorado State Conservation Board, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State University, Colorado State University Golden Plains Area Cooperative Extension, Colorado Division of Wildlife, FFA, Farm Services Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Irrigation Research Farm, Republican River Watershed Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Northeast Colorado RC&D, National Association of Conservation Districts, Pheasants Forever, Rural Communities Resource Center, WY Groundwater Management District, Yuma County Economic Development Corporation, Yuma County Pest Control District, Yuma Young Farmers Association



2008 – YUMA CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY!

The district is gearing up for a big **50th Anniversary Dinner Celebration** after the first of the year. We pulled out all the archives, lists of board members, cooperators of the year and other major awards and accomplishments since it all started in 1958. The event will feature a dinner and entertainment.