

Ecology

Backyard Conservation

An excellent resource for all of your backyard conservation needs is a booklet entitled "Backyard Conservation: Bringing Conservation from the Countryside to Your Backyard", which may be obtained at the USDA/ NRCS office. Further assistance listings are included on the back cover. The booklet includes extensive discussion of tree planting, wildlife habitat, backyard ponds, backyard wetlands, composting, mulching, nutrient management, terracing, water conservation, and pest management.

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Tracy Miller, District Conservationist
PO Box 580, 550 Worth St., Center, CO 81125
719 754-3400

The role of NRCS is to provide technical assistance to all aspects of conservation and wise use of natural resources.

NRCS is charged with providing national leadership in the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources on the nation's non-federal lands. This responsibility requires that the agency encourage landowners, operators, and land use decision-makers to protect, restore, and improve the natural resources for which they are stewards.

Our mission of service is aimed at both the individual land user and groups of land users, including local units of government.

NRCS assists individuals in making decisions and supplying conservation practices where needed.

The Nature Conservancy

San Luis Valley Program
Mike Gibson, Director
19667 Lane 6 North, Mosca, CO 81101
719 378-2356 Fax: 719 378-2016

The Nature Conservancy is an organization whose mission is to preserve the plants, animals and

natural communities that represent the natural diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Locally, this is achieved through Community Based Programs. The Program is non-confrontational, working with local partners to preserve ecological systems and viable native species through purchases of land, conservation easements, and education and outreach programs. The San Luis Valley Program includes the Mishak Lakes Preserve, the Medano-Zapata Ranch and conservation easements in Saguache County.

Saguache County Public Landfill and Recycling Center

Ellen Cox, Coordinator
San Luis Valley-Landfill Directory and Recycling
PO Box 476, Saguache, CO 81149
Questions and Concerns call: 719 655-2554
Fax: 719 655-2543

The Saguache County Public Landfill and Recycling Center is one of two EPA Certified Landfills in the San Luis Valley. The recycling facility provides services for the six-county SLV region with an active 53% success in Saguache County. That number continues to grow through the community efforts of Saguache, Crestone, Center, La Garita, and Villa Grove, which had one of the first drop sites run by local businesses.

The Saguache County Landfill and Recycling Center opened in October, 1990 after a five-year planning and siting process. The County Commissioners chose the site with an eye on future growth and knowledge of the historic trend of Saguache County residents to dispose of one's waste on the "back 40." With this in mind, the Recycling Center created a salvage lane where items can be dropped off and picked up free of charge. You can find washing machines, dryers, lawn mowers and furniture, in need of small repairs. Hard to find replacement parts, bicycle frames, building materials and aluminum doors are often available for the fixer-upper and the frugal home builder. The office of the Landfill/ Recycling Center is completely furnished, including their briefcases, from salvage lane.

A spin-off from the Adopt a Highway Program is the County Adopt a Roadway Program. Two-mile

Public Landfill , Continued -

sections of county roadways are adopted by local groups, organizations, businesses and individuals for a reasonable fee of \$25. A set of signs are erected to advertise the groups or individuals commitment to keeping our county roads trash free.

Saguache county government found that educating the public in their responsibility to teach respect and care of our environment and water was essential for the long term success of the recycling center. Saguache County frequently visits schools and civic group functions, carrying the good news of recycling, waste reduction and reuse concepts. The Landfill/Recycling Center celebrates National Earth Week, beginning April 22nd, annually. Private in-county residents can bring their waste to the site free of charge during Earth Week.

The success of the recycling program continues to grow due to the educational programs provided and the user-friendly nature of the landfill. The cost is \$2 a cubic yard (a pickup is usually measured at 3 cubic yards when full).

Recycle, and the cost is reduced. The percentage of the recycled items you bring is deducted from your total trash cost. Even those "back 40" folks can't resist a bargain like that.

Mission:

To provide the most economically and environmentally safe, county friendly facility possible for residents of the SLV. Our goal is to increase our recycling success ratio beyond the present 53% in Saguache County.

Trees: a management tool

Trees are wonderful natural appliances, especially when planted to form a windbreak or shelterbelt. With some tender loving care, they will thrive and yield many benefits for us.

Windbreaks provide protection from hot, dry summer winds and from icy, wintry winds and snow. Dwellings are more comfortable and fuel bills are reduced. By reducing wind velocity, less energy is required to heat buildings. An effective windbreak on three sides of a building can reduce annual fuel costs by as much as 30%. Summer air temperatures in tree shade can be as much as 25 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than in direct sun.

Properly located windbreaks and shelterbreaks act as extremely effective snowfences by preventing drifts from accumulating on roads and near buildings. Shrubs and trees planted close to farm buildings soften harsh architectural lines and increase privacy. Evergreens and flowering shrubs beautify the farmstead setting and add to the property value. A windbreak provides livestock with excellent protection from wind and snow. Cows produce more milk and herds hold gains better when protected from winter weather. Other environmental benefits of shelterbelts include noise abatement, evaporation reduction, and dust filtration. Tree barriers also provide cover and food for deer, small mammals, pheasants, quail and provide nesting places for small insect-eating birds, which otherwise might not frequent the area.

These greenbelts are not just beautiful, but are also fantastic silent partners for ranchers, farmers and ranchette homeowners.

Planning includes consideration of location, number of rows, selection and arrangement, density, wildlife attraction, spacing, seedling selection and ordering, and replanting. The site preparation must incorporate moisture and erosion control. Seedling care prior to planting and proper planting of the trees are critical. Care and maintenance not only includes moisture management, but also weed control, protection from sun and wind, protection from large animals, storm damage clean-up, pruning, rodent damage control, and insect and disease management.

For further details, obtain a copy of "Trees for Conservation: Planning, Planting and Care" at the USDA office in Center. See Agriculture, Additional Sources of Information - USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Services.

Waste Management & Recycling

Living in a remote, rural area, some distance from the major retail outlets common to urban and suburban life, increases awareness of the amount of paper, packaging, cans and bottles which result from our consumption patterns. Thoughtful buying and responsible recycling contribute to wise waste management in this community. Saguache County has a well organized landfill project which recycles glass, aluminum, steel, plastics and paper.

In addition, they also properly dispose of such toxic items as paints, used batteries and household chemicals. Both the landfill and the local trash service give discounts for separating trash and recycling. Please take advantage of these services and recycle. Garbage and recyclables stored outside must be adequately protected from wildlife.

Excess Packaging

When shopping, choose items which minimize packaging and/or are packaged in recycled and recyclable materials. Buy bulk items when possible. Not only does this cut down on packaging, it also cuts down on trips to the market, saves time, energy, money and decreases air pollution. Bulk buying opportunities are available through local programs and businesses.

Recycling Areas

Plan for the storage of recyclable materials when designing buildings. A series of conveniently located covered bins near a kitchen or back porch can often make the difference between an easy and frequently used recycling procedure and a bothersome and easily forgotten chore.

Composting

Building up the soil with composted organic waste can not only help a garden, but also improves the conditions for native plants. Set up a composting area near the garden plot. A wide variety of sizes and types of commercially manufactured composting bins are available, or a composting pile can be easily constructed using simple materials. Screen compost areas from the view of neighbors and protect them from deer and other wildlife.

Adapted from Manitou Foundation E&A Guidelines.

Additional Sources of Information

Colorado Tree Sales, 714 Diamond Dr., Alamosa

Gardening Information 1-888 666-3063

PLANTALK:

<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/PTLK>

Forest Service Web Site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande>



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