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## Conservation Education on the Range

Carol A. Sirko

The education of children about conservation of natural resources has been an important goal of the Colorado Association of Soil Conservation Districts (CASCD) since 1950. CASCD is a not-for-profit, scientific and education organization which represents Colorado's 80 local soil conservation districts. A major policy goal of the group today is the promotion of conservation education. In the early '80s, the Association decided that, to have a lasting effect on conservation education, the educators must be enlightened.

Western State College in Gunnison was selected to provide a widely diverse setting for outdoor learning. Graduate credit is offered for those who enroll in the workshop. The first workshop took place in the summer of 1981.

Striving to focus on a new theme each year, the workshop has featured such topics as water quality, soil conservation, and forestry. In 1989, it focused on rangelands and



*Successful classroom activities are presented by educators for educators.*

the unique conservation problems on grasslands. Gunnison, Colorado, with its surrounding forests, Bureau of Land Management holdings, and privately owned ranches, provided the ideal surroundings to demonstrate these unique conditions. "Rangeland . . . Its Many Uses" was a new topic to most of the 73 attendees in 1989. Resource personnel from the USDA Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado and U.S. Forest Services, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife made presentations on wildlife management, recreation, ranching, and riparian management topics, including a tour of some well-managed range-

lands. Local rancher Ted Bemis discussed his system for planned grazing and rotation of pastures.

The workshop is all-inclusive in its three days. Participants hear from various specialists including landowners, consultants and specialists from government agencies. Displays from various agencies and handouts are available to the participants for use as curriculum supplements or catalysts in new areas of conservation. During the field trip on the second day, the participants see conservation practices, problems and solutions and get hands-on experience. Learning is doing. In the morning of the third day, it's peer to peer

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The Colorado Association of Soil Conservation Districts' Conservation Education Workshop for teachers, at Western State College in Gunnison, is a cooperative effort among state, federal, local and not-for-profit agencies. It has offered the challenge and thrill of hands-on learning and Graduate credit for 9 years. Of the statewide attendees, about two-thirds have been elementary educators.

session during teacher presentations. Successful and award-winning programs at all educational levels are depicted by educators, for educators. These presenters know what works in the classroom, and they have successful methods to share. During the final hours, participants are given time to finish writing a lesson plan.

The theme of the workshop is varied from year to year. If educators wish to attend in consecutive years, there is always new material for use in the classroom. Since participants range from teachers and administrators to those who are not affiliated with a school, the particulars of the workshop are not limited to classroom-type information. Various active and retired professionals are called upon to share their expertise. Each presenter keeps the discourse broadly applicable to give participants a diverse background in the different facets of conservation. A steering committee begins to plan the next workshop the very day the current one ends. Part of this planning involves participant evaluations, and on the final day all are asked to eval-



*Participants in the 8th Annual Conservation Education Workshop visit a riparian area near Gunnison, Colorado.*

uate their workshop experience. The steering committee reviews the evaluations, so that the following year's workshop can be most meaningful to the participants.

All of the agencies involved in this workshop provide an example of cooperation. The educators learn that no

one agency has all the resources or answers to their questions. In addition, they learn where to go for teaching materials and resource people. The assistance of local, federal, state and not-for-profit agencies makes the Conservation Education Workshop a continued success.

## Moving?

If you are changing your address, notifying the post office is not sufficient to keep your journal coming on time. Please send your new address and the label with your old address to the Society for Range Management, 1839 York Street, Denver, Colorado 80206, USA.