

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide leadership through impactful partnerships to enhance and sustain our natural resources.

PROGRAM AREAS

- Forest Health
- Noxious Weed Control
- Urban Agriculture

OFFICE LOCATION

Denver Federal Center
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Lakewood, CO

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MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

1st Thursday of each month at
4:30 PM.

What is a conservation district?

Conservation districts (CDs) are local units of government empowered by their State constitutions to provide broad leadership on a wide array of natural resource conservation issues. Created in response to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, CDs originally focused on agriculture-related soil and water conservation, but today, they work on a wide variety of natural resource concerns relative to their local geography and land uses.



CDs in Colorado are established under Title 35 in the state statute, and are also subject to Title 32, since CDs are also special districts. With district voter approval, CDs in Colorado can assess a mill levy (but currently, most in Colorado do not).

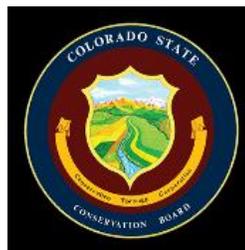
Each CD is governed by a locally elected or appointed Board of Supervisors. These unpaid Supervisors have legal responsibilities and duties and serve 4-year terms.

Who is JCD?

Jefferson Conservation District (JCD) was established in 1942, and in its early days focused mainly on agriculture issues. As ranches and farms gave way to Denver's suburbs (think Arvada, Wheat Ridge, Lakewood, Littleton), JCD shifted its attention to soil and water issues related to development. Meanwhile, foothills communities such as Evergreen and Conifer were also growing in the post-WWII era, and after the severe

Buffalo Creek (1996), Hi Meadow (2000), and Hayman (2002) wildfires, forest health and wildfire hazard took center stage in the foothills.

Since the early 2000s, JCD has significantly grown its forestry program to provide technical assistance and project management services in forest health and wildfire mitigation. JCD offers the same services for noxious weed management and also remains active in the suburbs by supporting the urban agriculture community. To deliver its programs, JCD partners with the Colorado State Conservation Board, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, as well as many other local, state, federal, and non-profit organizations.



Monthly Board meetings are open to the public and may be held in-person or virtually (online). Visit JCD's website to learn more about attending meetings.

JCD's Conservation Programs

Forestry Projects	2018	2019	2020
Acres Treated	411	323	187
Individual Projects	6	4	5
Properties Engaged	19	4	7
Contractor Hired	12	8	7
Contractor Payments	\$844,000	\$803,000	\$546,888

Variability in these metrics year to year is due to fluctuations in grant funding and contractor availability. Over the last 5 years, JCD has averaged 300 acres treated per year.



Forest Restoration

JCD's largest program is forest restoration, which involves working with private landowners to implement mechanical forest treatments designed to reduce fire hazard, improve wildlife habitat diversity, and increase native grass and wildflower abundance. Individual projects typically range from 40-250 acres in size and may occur on a single property or across multiple neighboring parcels. In partnership

with NRCS, JCD delivers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which provides technical and financial assistance to landowners wanting to implement conservation practices. Where appropriate, JCD also acquires additional grant funding and can hire/manage professional forestry contractors on behalf of the landowner.

The photo at left shows the contrast between treated and untreated forest; the tan-colored hillsides have been freshly thinned and will green up in the next 2-3 years as grasses, wildflowers and shrubs fill in.

Noxious Weed Control

Noxious weed management is another component of forest restoration. JCD assists landowners by creating weed management plans and coordinating herbicide applications conducted by professional contractors. Reducing weed infestations is important for maintaining the ecological integrity of our landscapes; weeds degrade native plant communities, which in turn diminish wildlife habitat quality, soil health, and livestock forage quality.

The photo at right shows a project that took place in July 2020 to control the noxious annual grass, cheatgrass. This treatment involved spraying the herbicide Esplanade 200 SC to combat cheatgrass seeds in the soil. This strategy removes cheatgrass from the ecosystem, letting native vegetation regain dominance on the landscape.



Noxious Weeds	2018	2019	2020
Acres Treated	600	462	467
Properties Engaged	25	17	22
Contracts Hired	2	2	2
Contractor Payments	\$101,800	\$89,600	\$82,150



Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is small-scale farming that occurs in urban/suburban areas. Crops and animal products raised on urban farms are normally sold and consumed locally and do not undergo industrial processing for long-distance distribution and preservation. JCD supports urban farmers by helping them access education and resources to begin and maintain sustainable farms. JCD also delivers NRCS financial-incentive programs for farmers wishing to incorporate conservation practices into their farming operations.

Access to farmable urban/suburban land (for purchase or lease) is a significant challenge for aspiring urban farmers. To address this issue in 2020, JCD partnered with GoFarm (a local non-profit) and Jefferson County Public Health to hire a

contractor to complete a mapping analysis of urban lands in Jefferson County. A database of properties with potentially farmable land was created, which will be used to connect farmers with residential or commercial property owners interested in leasing land to an urban farmer.



JCD continues to offer equipment rental through our partnership with GoFarm. Designed for beginner-farmers, this program provides low-cost rentals for various pieces of urban farming equipment. More information is available at www.gofarm.org



Staff and Board Updates



So Long Frank Falzone

Frank has been a Conservation Forester with JCD since April 2017. Since then, he's planned and managed several hundred acres of forest restoration projects around Conifer and Evergreen. Frank has been a great asset to JCD, instrumental in improving our forestry program delivery. Thanks to Frank's good work on the South Ridge Road projects in 2017-2019, Bill Von Vihl (a participating landowner in that project) is now a JCD board member. Frank will be greatly missed, but thankfully, for JCD, he's not going far. In March 2021, Frank will become a Soil Conservationist with NRCS, JCD's federal partner. Frank's NRCS service area will still include JCD's service area, so we look forward to continuing to work with Frank in the future.

JCD Adds New Full-Time Natural Resource Technician

In 2019, JCD established a seasonal Natural Resource Technician position to assist with forest inventory and weed mapping during the summer. Dan Walsh held that position in 2019 and 2020. Increased demand for forestry services has enabled JCD to make it a year-round position. Dan's GIS and fieldwork skills will greatly benefit the broader forest and weed management programs.



JCD Staff



Garrett Stephens
Director



Frank Falzone
Conservation
Forester
(outgoing 2021)



Mitch Yergert
Operations
Assistant



Matt McLemore
Conservation
Forester



Marena Disbro
Urban Ag & Noxious
Weeds Coordinator



Dan Walsh
Natural Resource
Technician

JCD Board



Cathy Begej,
President



Gayle Gordon,
Vice President



Don Moore,
Treasurer



Karen Berry



Lorrie Ray



Christina Burri



Bill Von Vihl



JCD welcomed three new board members in 2020, Lorrie Ray (Attorney at Employers Council), Christina Burri (Watershed Scientist at Denver Water), and Bill Von Vihl (retired Conifer Teacher and participating forest landowner). The bottom left photo shows JCD board and staff standing in front of a feller-buncher at a September field trip to an active forestry project.

Other News

JCD Landowners Named 2020 Conservationist of the Year



Every year, conservation districts from across Colorado submit their nominations for Conservationist of the Year to the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD), in the categories of Farmer, Rancher, Forestry, and/or Small Acreage (whatever land uses are relevant to the district). In 2020, JCD's submission was Jamie and Stephen Bernstein, of Conifer – and they won! The Bernsteins participated in a neighborhood forest restoration project in 2014-2015 and since then, they have been diligent about noxious weed control. They have spent countless hours surveying and hand-pulling biennial weeds as well as participating in JCD's annual summer weed spraying program in which 1-2 weed control contractors are hired by JCD to spray multiple properties across the district. In 2020, the Bernsteins employed

several tactics to control highly invasive cheatgrass using methods such as pre-emergent herbicides, soil solarization, and hand-pulling. Congratulations to Jamie and Stephen!

Karen Berry named to CACD Hall of Fame

JCD also supplied CACD with another winning nomination in 2020 – veteran JCD board member Karen Berry, to the CACD Hall of Fame. Karen was named Conservationist of the Year in 1998. She was elected to the JCD Board in May 2000, and has been re-elected five more times in 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. From 2013-2016 Karen was Secretary/Treasurer, and from 2017-2020 she was Board President.



JCD has grown substantially during Karen's tenure. Under her leadership, JCD responded to the urgent resource concerns following the Buffalo Creek (1996) and Hayman (2002) fires and developed its forestry program, which is now a critical player in Jefferson County's ongoing fire mitigation efforts. JCD began initiating forestry work between 2002 and 2004, and since then has added Urban Agriculture (2014) and Weed Management (2016). In 2000 the JCD Budget was \$134,525; in 2020, total expenditures were over \$1 million.

Karen has been instrumental in developing partnerships that have supported the District. She is currently a Board member of the Coalition for the Upper South Platte and Sustainable Wheat Ridge. She is active with the National Association of Conservation Districts as a member of the Urban Policy Committee. She has been a spokesperson at the State Capitol. Karen previously was a Board member on the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, CACD, Upper South Platte Watershed Association and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.

Karen Berry is the State Geologist and Director of the Colorado Geological Survey. She works closely with cities and counties across the state on a variety of land use and natural resource issues. She is a certified planner, and a professional geologist.

JCD Participates in new Jefferson County Wildfire Risk Reduction Task Force

Established in October 2019 by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), and led by Commissioner Leslie Dahlkemper, the Jeffco Wildfire Risk Reduction Task Force (TF) completed its first full year in 2020. The TF convenes wildfire and forestry experts and stakeholders in order to bring county-wide coordination on various wildfire mitigation issues. In year one, the TF provided recommendations to the BCC on a variety of mitigation, education, and funding topics. JCD's Garrett Stephens led the Mitigation sub-committee. The TF will continue into 2021 and beyond, as it drills down into action items related to the BCC recommendations presented in November 2020. Information on the Task Force can be found at: <https://www.jeffco.us/3910/Wildfire-Risk-Reduction-Task-Force>



Thank You Partners!

The expertise and funding JCD needs for operations and project implementation comes about through a variety of invaluable partnerships. Thank you to our Landowners and partner organizations for making this all possible.

