

February 17, 2016

Three Colorado Projects Win Farm Bill Conservation Grants

Washington, DC - Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet today announced that three projects in Colorado have been selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to receive a total of \$5.4 million through the agency's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has proposed funding for the Agate Prairie Conservation Legacy project in Agate, Colo., the Colorado Dairy and Irrigation Efficiency Program, and the Greater Outcomes for Greater Sage-Grouse initiative.

"Much of Colorado's economy depends on the conservation of our farms and ranches in addition to the landscapes that serve our tourism industry," **Bennet said**. "Each of these projects is crucial to supporting these local economies, while preserving the heritage that makes our state such a tremendous place to live."

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust has been awarded \$2.4 million in RCPP funding for the Agate Prairie Conservation Legacy project. The funding will be used to protect rangeland in and around the Town of Agate, which is comprised of native prairie grasslands that provide essential habitat for several threatened species and species of special significance, including the burrowing owl, swift fox, and mountain plover.

"The three ranches that comprise the Agate Prairie Conservation Legacy project possess abundant conservation value," **said Erik L. Glenn, Executive Director of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust**. "They do so because of the land and stewardship ethic that defines the ranching families that have managed these ranches for generations. The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust is proud to partner with these families on this important grassland conservation project."

The Colorado Energy Office (CEO) is heading up the Colorado Dairy and Irrigation Efficiency Program, which is slated to receive \$1.1 million in RCPP funding. CEO, along with multiple partners, is working to overcome barriers to investment in energy efficiency. This funding will be used to help provide an estimated 60 percent of the cost improvements for 48 of the 160 participating producers. CEO will provide participating producers with on-farm energy audits and assist them in selecting and implementing cost-effective improvements that reduce energy use, water, environmental impacts, and producer operating

costs.

The Partners for Western Conservation have been awarded \$1.9 million for its Greater Outcomes for Greater Sage-Grouse initiative in Colorado and Nevada. This funding will be used to invest in habitat improvements on private lands to help boost the health of sage grouse populations in the two states.

Bennet, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, helped craft the conservation title of the 2014 Farm Bill (<http://www.bennet.senate.gov/?p=release&id=1658>), including the creation of the RCPP. Click here (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>) to learn more about the RCPP.

###