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A brief review of what's happening with our air, water, land and climate

August 2009

Conservation Through Ranching in Montana

EDF is working with a coalition of ranching families in central Montana to improve stewardship of a 300,000 acre grassland landscape. Ted Toombs, our regional director for the Center for Conservation Incentives, is helping the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance design and implement on-the-ground range management strategies to protect migration corridors for elk, pronghorn antelope, sage grouse and other grassland birds. Ted is leveraging EDF's experience in federal Farm Bill conservation programs with RSA's commitment to good stewardship to improve the environment on a landscape scale.

Our effort with RSA received a big boost this summer when the U.S. Department of Agriculture approved a grant proposal, crafted by Ted, under a Farm Bill program called Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative to support the initiative. This grant will provide critical resources to support our cooperative efforts to restore and protect habitat and migration corridors in this spectacular grassland ecosystem.



Rich Phair/iStockphoto

EPA Gives Green Light to Cleaner Cars

The Environmental Protection Agency granted California's long-standing request to carry out Clean Car standards. The Agency's decision is also a green light for 13 additional state programs to cut global warming pollution from passenger vehicles including several western states such as Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington.

A new EDF report—*Saving Fuel, Saving Money, Saving Our Climate*—shows that motor vehicle drivers in states with Clean Car programs will save hundreds of dollars annually at the gas pump while reducing heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

The Agency's decision also revs up the drive to national greenhouse gas emission standards for passenger vehicles. In May, President Obama forged a breakthrough agreement with states, automakers, labor unions and environmental groups providing for development of a national clean car program based on the state standards.

Cars and light trucks are one of our nation's largest sources of greenhouse gases, accounting for about 16 percent of U.S. global warming pollution. EPA estimates the national clean car program would reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the U.S. light-duty fleet by 19 percent in 2030.

EDF and allies teamed up to win passage of the landmark California Clean Car law, worked with other states to adopt these protections, and helped successfully defend the global warming standards against a suite of legal challenges.



Dan Eckert/iStockphoto

Opportunities to “Green” Pastures and Pocketbooks

Greener Pastures in Colorado is a new Environmental Defense Fund report examining the economic opportunities for Colorado’s farmer and ranchers if Congress establishes a national cap on global warming pollution. Wind energy projects and voluntary initiatives to reduce or “offset” greenhouse emissions from agricultural practices will generate new revenue for farmers and rural communities.



Colorado is well-positioned for these new opportunities. The state already hosts 1,200 megawatts of wind power on our Eastern Plains, bringing jobs, tax revenue and royalties to landowners in these rural communities. Colorado’s largest power provider, Xcel Energy, recently solicited bids for 1,800 megawatts of new power and received proposals for 10,000 megawatts of new wind, reflecting the extensive potential for growth in Colorado’s clean energy economy.

Colorado’s experience demonstrates the potential for win-win solutions in charting a path toward national climate policy: the agricultural community could gain vital protection from the threats of a changing climate while benefiting from new economic opportunities. To view the report, please visit this link: www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=43635.

EDF Works with Mexican and U.S. Governments to Protect Wetlands

EDF helped forge an unprecedented commitment by the U.S. and Mexican federal governments to dedicate water to the largest remaining wetland in the Colorado River Delta, the Ciénega de Santa Clara. With help from ProNatura Noroeste, our partner in Mexico, we secured commitments to deliver water for the environment during a pilot test of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Yuma Desalting Plant, which, though located in Arizona, will diminish the quantity and quality of water flowing to the wetland. We are optimistic that in addition to protecting the wetland, these commitments demonstrate goodwill that will help pave the way for new binational river management agreements that will improve environmental flows throughout the Delta.



Andy Pernick/U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

New Legislation Provides Model for Protecting Western Waterways

Rocky Mountain Regional Director, Dan Grossman, called new legislation signed by Colorado Governor Bill Ritter in May “a national model for protecting the iconic and vulnerable waterways

of the West.” The bill will provide an income tax credit for landowners who donate their water to protect rivers and streams. “This law will give Colorado’s farmers and ranchers the opportunity to protect critical stream reaches and avoid the often-draconian implications of more Endangered Species Act listings,” Dan said. It also gives landowners an alternative to selling their rights to water developers, who often export the water to urban and suburban areas of the state. Next, our Rivers and Deltas team will start using this new tool in Colorado while pushing other states in the West to adopt similar incentives.



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