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Improving Weed management in southwest Colorado through interagency cooperation

Working as a team, the San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Council (San Juan RC&D), the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) and local counties are getting a handle on invasive weeds in our public forests.

In 2009 the San Juan National Forest secured American Recovery and Reconstruction Act (ARRA) funds to fund a 3 year noxious weeds mapping and treatment program. SJNF personnel identified 82,000 acres within Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata and Montezuma counties for the program. The San Juan RC&D partnered with the SJNF to provide technical training and data management to the four counties for the inventory and weed spraying crews. Each cooperating county hired new employees to staff their inventory crews, and if needed additional weed sprayers. They were also able to purchase a variety of GPS equipment, software and weed treatment equipment to complete the project



The project kicked off in May 2010 with San Juan RC&D setting up localized training and technical support for each county along with a professional training session with a licensed GPS equipment provider. Over the course of the summer each county inventoried noxious weeds in their areas and later carried out weed treatments. All of the detailed data was collected using the Tremble GPS equipment and loaded into a GIS system for processing. This data was then submitted to San Juan RC&D for review before a finalized geo-database was completed of the entire project and submitted to the SJNF in late September 2010. This data will be used in the next season (2011) and later to monitor and treat weed infestations in the project areas. Inventory, treatment and monitoring work will continue through 2012 with San Juan RC&D providing technical support in the office and the field.

The major accomplishments of this project far exceed the control of the weeds that have invaded our forest. The communities of SW Colorado benefitted from the hiring of 21 additional employees to work on this project. Many of these new employees were able to learn advanced skills with the use of GPS data collector and work with ArcMap GIS software in computer based GIS systems to manage their data. The two San Juan RC&D project managers spent the majority of their time teaching these skills in the field and the offices of the four counties that were part of this project. As this project moves forward over the next two years, these skills will be improved and one of the long term benefits will be the members of these rural communities that have acquired advanced GIS/GPS skills that they can use in our technological world.

