

3.8 AGRICULTURE

Current Setting: Although rural, Garfield County is not considered by many as an agricultural county when compared to other areas of the nation. Good crop land is limited; water is scarce; and federal or state lands dominate the landscape. However, throughout the last 150 plus years Garfield County has been agriculturally based in its attitudes and lifestyle. Agriculture continues to have a cultural impact out of proportion to any economic, acreage or production standards. The mindset of Garfield County's residents remains in large measure rural with an emphasis on family life. Local influences play an important part in government and social life. Like the early settlers of the County, modern-day residents still see security in agriculture and their lives take form and context from land-related influences.

Early settlers came to the County in hopes of finding suitable lands, waters and soils for agriculturally based settlements. Irrigation infrastructure and fields were some of the first improvements as each of the communities were populated. And similar to pioneer settlers, current residents prefer an agricultural approach to the land in contrast to development of large population centers or metropolitan areas. Abundant crop land with adequate water is limited, and further restricted by dominant federal ownership in the County. Agricultural interests are generally centered on livestock related activities.

Mountain streams have been diverted, and the farming community has become the dominant characteristic of the cultural landscape. In addition to farms concentrated near communities, livestock interests graze forest lands in the summer and dryer xeric lands in the winter. Concepts of stewardship have deterred overexpansion and exploitation of the land. For many of the County's citizens, agricultural interests extend beyond economics and are a vital part of their custom, culture, heritage and nature. Even as fewer families derive a significant portion of their living from agriculture, the value of land ownership and rural ways continues to reflect strong sentiments and preferences. The County's attitudes regarding use of public and private lands are increasingly disparate from urban areas of the state and country.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture indicated there were 279 farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 328 acres. Total acreage was listed as 91,533 acres. 120 or 43% of the farmers/ranchers derived their primary living from agricultural operations. The county had 19.2% of the land in farms as cropland and 67.5% as pastureland. Cattle and calves were the dominant livestock item and generated \$8,426,000 of products sold. Crops produce \$3,618,000 of sales and total production was \$12,043,000.

Need for Management Change

- 1) Regulations need to be reduced to ensure farmers and ranchers do not face undue or burdensome restrictions from state and national governments.
- 2) The social and cultural value of local farms, ranches and agriculture needs to be identified, analyzed and disclosed in NEPA analysis and land use plans developed by federal agencies.

- 3) A permanent revenue source needs to be established to fund ongoing water resource projects that support and expand agriculture. Additional water resources need to be developed to accommodate municipal growth without jeopardizing agricultural interests.
- 4) Additional water needs to be developed for agriculture and livestock interests on public and private land.
- 5) Federal and state agencies need to transfer suitable lands to private ownership for farming and ranching purposes.
- 6) The agricultural lifestyle of Garfield County needs to be preserved and enhanced.
- 7) The County's strict no net loss of private lands policy needs to be observed, especially related to farms, ranches and agricultural interests.
- 8) Federal and state agencies need to develop land in their ownership for conservation of special status species.
- 9) The use and production of federal lands for livestock grazing needs to be preserved and enhanced.
- 10) Wildlife impacts to private and public land agriculture and ranching need to be reduced. Wildlife managers need to strictly adhere to population objectives established on or before January 1, 2015.
- 11) Federal agencies need to eradicate noxious weeds in their jurisdiction and prevent seeds from moving to private lands.
- 12) Federal agencies need to restore lands occupied by invasive conifers and annual grasses to desired vegetative communities, consistent with ecologic site descriptions.

Desired Future Conditions

Garfield County Desires:

- a) To the maximum extent allowed by law, federal actions are implemented in a way to ensure farmers and ranchers do not face undue or burdensome restrictions.
- b) The social, custom, cultural and heritage value of local farms, ranches and agriculture are identified, analyzed and disclosed in NEPA analysis and land use plans developed by federal agencies.
- c) Additional water is developed for agriculture and livestock interests on public and private land.
- d) A permanent revenue source is established to fund ongoing water resource projects that

support and expand agriculture; and additional water is developed to accommodate municipal growth without jeopardizing agricultural interests.

- e) Federal and state agencies transfer suitable lands to private ownership for farming and ranching purposes.
- f) The agricultural lifestyle of Garfield County needs to be preserved and enhanced.
- g) Federal and state agencies strictly adhere to the County's No Net Loss of Private Lands policy, especially regarding farms ranches and agricultural interests.
- h) Federal and state agencies develop lands under their ownership for conservation of special status species, and, to the maximum extent allowed by law, relieve the burdens on private agricultural lands imposed by the Endangered Species Act.
- i) Utah prairie dogs are removed from private lands and relocated on suitable federal lands.
- j) The use and production of federal lands for livestock grazing is preserved and enhanced.
- k) Wildlife impacts to agriculture and ranching interests are reduced.
- l) Wildlife managers strictly adhere to population objectives established on or before January 1, 2015.
- m) Federal agencies eradicate noxious weeds in their jurisdiction which are suspected of being the seed source for private lands.
- n) Federal agencies restore lands occupied by invasive conifers and annual grasses to desired vegetative communities, consistent with ecologic site descriptions.

Findings, Policies, Goals & Objectives

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: The agricultural lifestyle of Garfield County shall be preserved and enhanced.

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: Agriculture and ranching interests are vital to the custom, culture, heritage and lifestyle of Garfield County and shall be preserved and enhanced to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Policy: Federal and state agencies shall reduce the burdens on farmers and ranchers to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Policy: The social, custom, cultural and heritage value of local farms, ranches and agriculture shall be identified, analyzed and disclosed in NEPA analysis and land use plans developed by federal agencies. Local farms and ranches constitute small businesses under the Regulatory

Flexibility Act and shall be analyzed in accordance with federal law.

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: Water is a vital resource that benefits all activities on public and private lands; and additional water needs to be developed for agriculture and livestock interests. Federal and state agencies shall develop additional water resources to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Goal & Objective: A permanent revenue source is established to fund ongoing water resource projects that support and expand agriculture.

Policy, Goal & Objective: As municipal needs increase, additional water will be developed to accommodate municipal growth without jeopardizing agricultural interests.

Policy: Garfield County supports the transfer suitable state and federal lands to private ownership for farming and ranching purposes.

Policy: Federal and state agencies shall strictly adhere to the County's No Net Loss of Private Lands policy, especially regarding farms ranches and agricultural interests.

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: Adequate state and federal lands exist to conserve and recover special status species. To the maximum extent allowed by law, federal and state agencies shall develop lands under their ownership for conservation and recovery of special status species, and shall relieve the burdens on private agricultural lands imposed by the Endangered Species Act.

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: Utah prairie dogs are not in their natural habitat on agricultural land and are not suitable for private lands. Utah prairie dogs shall be removed from private lands and relocated on suitable federal lands.

Finding, Policy, Goal & Objective: The use and production of federal lands for livestock grazing is a cultural and ethnographic resource and shall be preserved and enhanced.

Finding & Policy: Sufficient state and federal land exist for the management of wildlife. Wildlife impacts to agriculture and ranching interests shall be reduced; and wildlife managers shall strictly adhere to population objectives established on or before January 1, 2015.

Policy: Federal agencies shall eradicate noxious weeds in their jurisdiction which are suspected of being the seed source for private lands.

Policy: Federal agencies shall restore lands occupied by invasive conifers and annual grasses to desired vegetative communities, consistent with ecologic site descriptions.

Policy: Garfield County supports ongoing training resources for agricultural interests to ensure residents are fully aware of available technological advances and funding sources.

Policy: Garfield County supports active vegetative treatments on public lands and expansion of

livestock grazing AUM as forage increases.

Policy: Garfield County opposes grazing buyouts, and any other scheme to retire grazing AUMs and prohibit their proper public use by qualified grazers. When grazing AUM's are given up by a public lands livestock grazer, those AUMs shall be made available for other qualified grazers to acquire and utilize.

Policy, Goal & Objective: Consistent with ecologic site descriptions, vegetative resources shall be managed to optimize rangeland health and forage production.