

2022

Aqui para  
Español



# AGRICULTURE PROGRAM REPORT

LAND IMPROVEMENT

STEWARDSHIP



LOCAL FOOD

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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# PROGRAM SUMMARY



**14** | producers currently hold county agricultural leases



**780** | acres of county-owned agricultural land leased



**>28** | cfs of irrigation water managed by lease holders during peak season



**1** | public lease bid process

**8** | ag leases renewed or extended



**\$50,000** | in partnership funds to support agricultural irrigation improvements

# MONITORING



## Soil and Environment

Agricultural soils were monitored by laboratory testing, which will be an annual monitoring point.

Next year, we will begin monitoring soil moisture on several fields to begin studying irrigation efficiency with different applications.

This photo shows Aspen Global Change Institute’s Soil Moisture and Weather Station located at Glassier Open Space, which is similar to the soil moisture stations which will be installed in 2023.



## Pasture

Agricultural pastures were assessed for forage growth, weed pressure, variation, and estimated yield (on grazing pastures).

These measurements will be compared annually to track the health and trajectory of pastures.

This photo shows a falling plate meter, which was used to assess forage growth, density, and variability in grazed pastures.



*Photo: Dick Filby*

## Wildlife

Leases that have critical habitat, such as winter grazing, require accommodations for wildlife during key periods of the year.

Several properties have critical winter grazing habitat, which the producers will leave standing forage in the field to provide a food source for wildlife.

This picture is of a Bobolink taken at Glassier Open Space, which is a rare bird species for our area. With the help from the Audubon Society and the agricultural producer, haying was delayed in the ground nesting area to allow for fledging.



# LAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS



## Emma Open Space

Agrivoltaics pairs solar panels with agriculture.

The panels are designed to allow some light through and creates a suitable microclimate underneath.

Currently, mushrooms are being cultivated underneath, which will hopefully help produce food, while building the soil.

## Lazy Glen Open Space

A 1,200 ft. irrigation pipeline was installed.

This pipeline provides more efficient irrigation from the river to vegetable and flower production throughout the property.

Currently, we are working on filtration to allow for micro-irrigation, which will increase its use for food production.



## Glassier Open Space

With the help from Mountain Temp Services, over 4 tons of old agricultural debris was removed from Glassier Open Space.

This site, which had been filled with rusting agricultural equipment and old slash piles, is now being used for pasture.



## Rotational Grazing

Grazed agricultural leases implement rotational grazing as a strategy to reduce over-grazing.

This practice allows for paddocks in the field to rest and regrow, which increases forage health.

This photo from Thompson Creek Open Space shows an electric fence separating two paddocks.



## Mixed Use

The Redstone Magical Moments Summer Concert Series uses an agriculturally grazed field for hosting these free concerts.

This mixed use of agricultural land with community reduces the need for large turf fields.



## Irrigation

Agriculture producers and county staff work together to reduce irrigation water waste by implementing systems appropriate for the property and use.

Our philosophy is choosing the right irrigation system for the right use and location, which results in different irrigation systems for different properties.



# PUBLIC BID PROCESS

## Wheatley Open Space



### The Awarded Proposal

Wheatley Tract II LLC was awarded the Wheatley Open Space agricultural lease (pending BOCC approval in January 2023). This proposal includes utilizing this agricultural land to produce alfalfa/grass pasture for grazing and haying. Livestock will be rotationally grazed through the property and standing forage in the fall will be required for wildlife winter grazing. The producer has expertise managing large-scale agricultural operations.

### September - October

Wheatley Agricultural Lease RFP was advertised and open for public proposals. Following the OST Agricultural Lease Policy and Process, each applicant was required to attend a site visit.

There were two site visits during the month with five total parties present. Of the five parties, three submitted a proposal.

### November - December

The Selection Committee made a unanimous decision on the most suitable proposal based on the scoring criteria in the Agriculture Lease Policy and Process.

The awarded applicant was contacted to discuss general lease terms and the applicants who were not awarded the lease were contacted to inform them on the decision.

### October - November

The Selection Committee, comprised on three Pitkin County OST staff and one Aspen Valley Land Trust staff, independently reviewed and scored the proposals in accordance with the RFP and Policy standards.

After scoring, the Selection Committee decided to interview applicants for a better understanding of their proposals.

All three applicants were interviewed by the Selection Committee.

### December – January

The Selection Committee submitted a Memorandum to the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Board (OSTB) detailing the selection process and recommendation.

The OSTB approved the Selection Committee's recommendation for a 5-year lease to Wheatley Tract 2 LLC.

The final approval will be granted by the BOCC in January.

Part of the Pitkin County Agriculture Program now includes Colorado State University Extension services offered to all producers in the county. All county-based services are free, however there may be laboratory fees for samples that need to be sent to the university or other labs. Below are some of the services that were provided this past year.

## Plant Diagnostics



A local gardener was having some trouble with their cherry trees and had us pay them a visit. Looking at samples collected under the microscope uncovered that the trees were suffering from two-spotted spider mite damage.

We provided resources and treatment options for this pest.

## Insect and Plant Identification



Fall brings beautiful colors, cool weather, and... spiders. An Aspen resident gave us a call about a brown recluse-looking spider found in their home. Luckily for us, brown recluses aren't known to be in our area, but we do have look-alikes. This look-alike turns out to be a harmless funnel weaver spider.

## On-Farm Support



Every farm, ranch or garden is different, so for complex issues, we often recommend scheduling a site visit. This past year, we worked with producers on productivity issues, irrigation issues, soil testing, plant pest diagnostics, and, in this picture, greenhouse drainage issues.



# PRODUCTIVITY REPORT



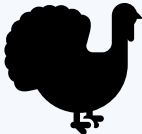
**780** acres of leased agricultural land



**90** cattle



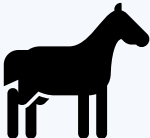
**25** sheep



**75** turkeys



**700** meat chickens



**12** horses



**>30** tons of produce<sup>1</sup>



**>470** tons of baled hay<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> yields are based on producer reporting, site measurements, and local yield reports, they are estimates based on information available.

# COMING UP IN 2023



We look forward to continuing to grow our county agricultural program, to better support our producers and local food system. Below are a few of the upcoming projects in 2023 that we're looking forward to sharing with our community.



## Drought Research at Shippee Open Space

Learning more about the impacts of drought on our local pastures will help producers manage any future water shortages. We are working with the Roaring Fork Conservancy and Colorado State University to begin multi-year research on Shippee Open Space to better understand impacts that water shortages can have on our local producers.

One of the main goals of this research will be to provide useful resource guides to help folks navigate shortages in the future.

## Center Pivot at Glassier Open Space

Glassier Open Space Lease B includes ~80 acres of pasture, which has historically been flood irrigated. However, due to topography of the site, flood irrigation only effectively irrigates ~50% of the pasture. After assessing different improvement options, the site is best suited for a center pivot irrigation system.

We are working with the Colorado River District to install a center pivot in 2023, which will help improve the pasture. This system will also provide a demonstration for any producer interested in learning more about this type of irrigation system, as well as research into impacts of irrigation changes such as this one.



*Photo: Reinke Irrigation*