



Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program Monitoring and Evaluation Report, Fiscal Year 2025

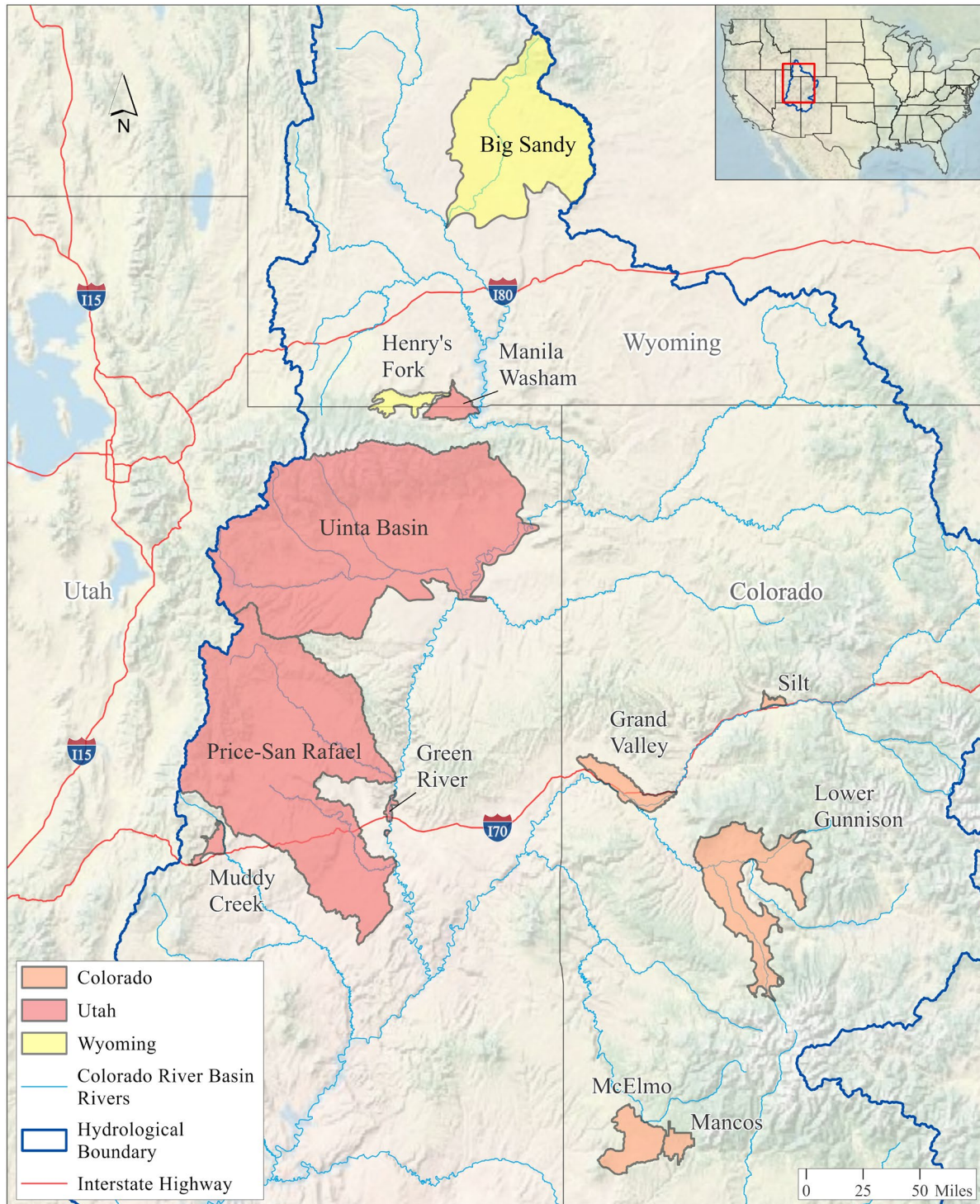


Figure 1: NRCS Upper Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Units Map

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Salinity Control Program Overview

It is estimated that in the 1960s, more than two-thirds of Colorado River diversions were used for agricultural irrigation. Widespread flood-irrigation practices led to excessive deep percolation, dissolving salts from naturally saline soils in the Upper Colorado River Basin. This saline groundwater ultimately returned to the Colorado River, increasing salinity levels and creating economic, operational, and water-quality challenges for agricultural, municipal, and industrial users in the Lower Basin and in Mexico. The overarching objective of the Salinity Control Program is to reduce salt loading to the Colorado River to protect water quality for these downstream uses.

Growing national attention to water-quality protection led to the Water Quality Act of 1965, which established nationwide water-quality standards and was later strengthened by the 1972 Federal Water Pollution Control Act. In response to increasing salinity and its impacts on downstream users, the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (SCA) (Public Law 93-320) was passed in 1974. Title I addresses U.S. obligations to Mexico under Minute 242, while Title II established the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program led by the Secretary of the Interior and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, with USDA directed to support the effort under its existing authorities.

The SCA has been amended several times. The 1984 amendment established USDA's on-farm program, including the "voluntary replacement of incidental fish and wildlife values foregone" resulting from irrigation improvements within project units. Since 1996, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)—has implemented the program through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). More recent legislation, including the 2018 Farm Bill, authorized NRCS to collaborate directly with Water Management Entities (WMEs) through EQIP to support off-farm and near-farm conveyance improvements.

Through the SCA, NRCS facilitates twelve Salinity Control Units across the Upper Colorado River Basin—five in Colorado, five in Utah, and two in Wyoming (see Figure 1). These Units serve as NRCS-designated areas for implementing irrigation improvements that reduce deep percolation, minimize ditch seepage, and decrease salt loading to the Colorado River. In 2010, the Colorado River Salinity Control Forum recommended expanding the program to fund small irrigation-improvement projects in catchments outside the established Units. These efforts, known as Out-of-Project Units (Tier 2 projects), are funded based on their predicted annual salinity-control benefits, calculated using U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) SPATially Referenced Regression On Watershed (SPARROW) water-quality analysis.

Project Achievement Summary

Through the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, NRCS has treated approximately 374,900 acres, achieving 87% of the overall goal across all twelve salinity control units in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. NRCS currently manages ten open project areas, having treated 318,462 acres toward a target of 370,806 acres, representing 86% completion of active-unit goals. Notably, the Grand Valley Unit in Colorado and the Big Sandy River Unit in Wyoming are no longer active and are now considered complete.

These figures do not include Tier II and other on-farm projects that are not associated with the SCP and have been funded through different EQIP fund pools or other programs.

Having outlined the overall progress of NRCS's Salinity Program, the following sections of this report will discuss each salinity unit in detail.

NRCS Colorado

NRCS Colorado has treated 103,469 acres toward a goal of 144,750 acres, achieving 73% of its target across four active project areas. The Grand Valley Unit (shown in the figures below) has met its treatment goal and is now designated as complete. All remaining units have exceeded 62% of their acreage-treatment goals, and three of the four have achieved more than 65% of their salt-removal targets. (See Figure 2: Colorado - Acres Treated and Figure 3: Colorado - Salt Removal)

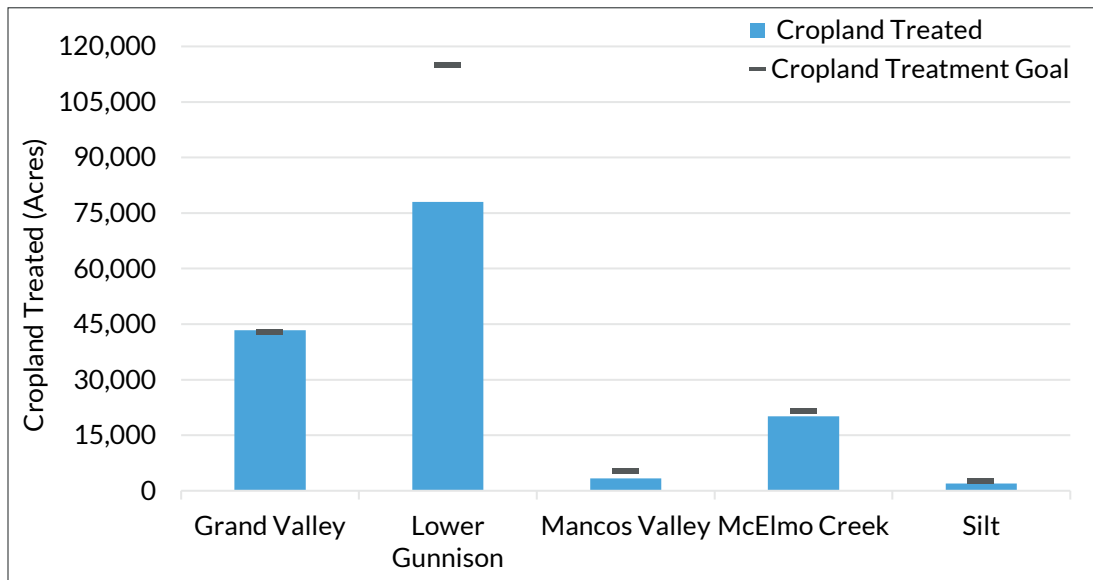


Figure 2: Colorado - Acres Treated Through FY 2025

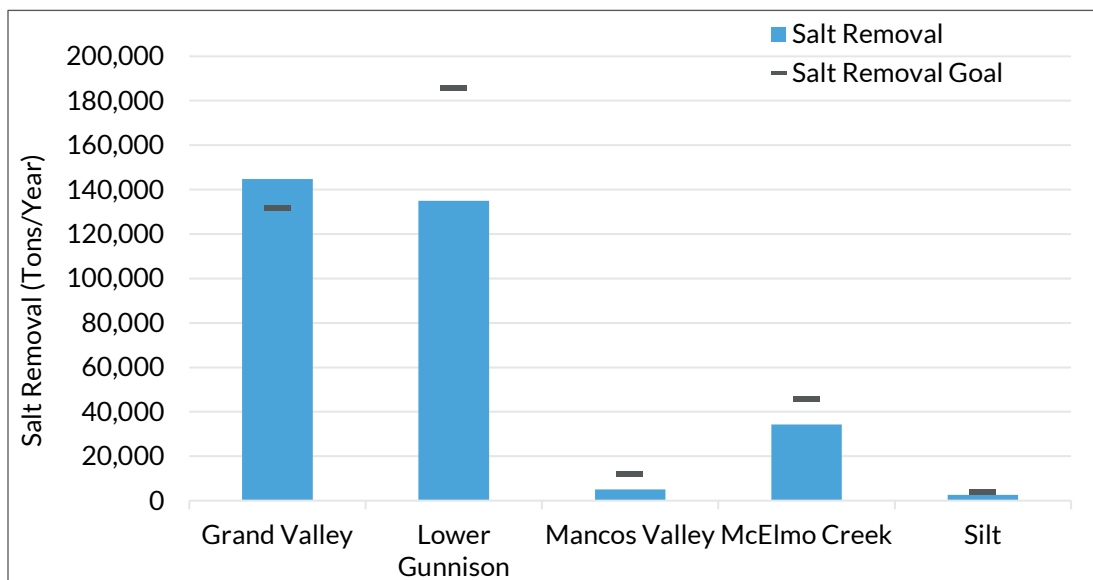


Figure 3: Colorado - Salt Removal Through FY 2025 (On-Farm and Off/Near-Farm combined)

NRCS Utah

NRCS Utah has treated 214,237 acres toward a goal of 214,480 acres, reaching 100% of its target across all five project areas. Two units—the Price-San Rafael (115%) and Uinta Basin (103%)—have exceeded their acreage-treatment goals. The Uinta Basin Unit has also surpassed its salt-removal target, achieving 117% of projected reductions. (See Figure 4: Utah - Acres Treated and Figure 5: Utah - Salt Removal)

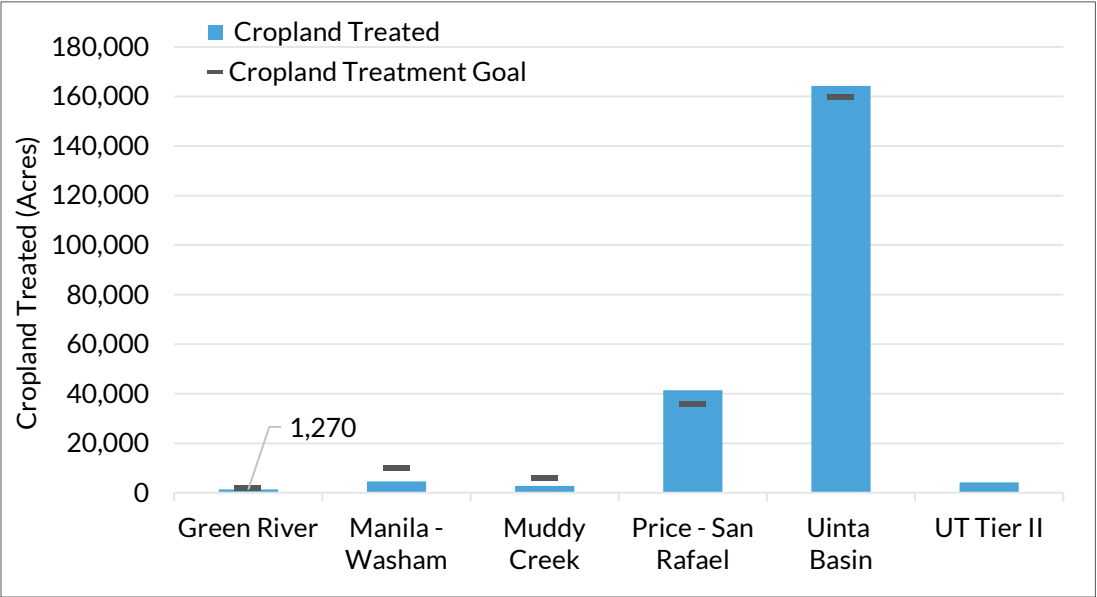


Figure 4: Utah - Acres Treated Through FY 2025

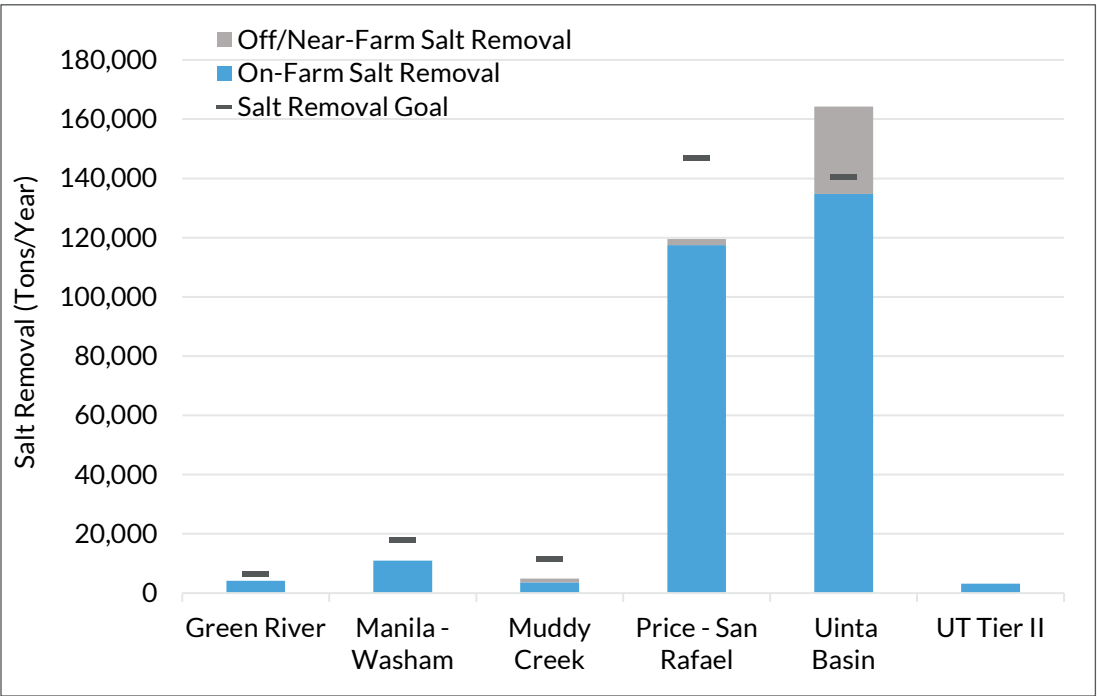


Figure 5: Utah - Salt Removal Through FY 2025 (On-Farm and Off/Near-Farm)

NRCS Wyoming

NRCS Wyoming has treated 13,779 acres in Wyoming toward a goal of 29,796 acres, achieving 46% of its target across two project areas. The Big Sandy River Unit has exceeded its salt-removal goal (111%) and, as of 2020, is no longer receiving applications for salinity control. The Henry's Fork Unit reports low acreage-treatment and salt-removal progress, likely due to limited producer participation. Between 2019 and 2025, the unit awarded 12 contracts, of which 2 were canceled, averaging two contracts awarded per year. (See Figure 6: Wyoming – Acres Treated and Figure 7: Wyoming – Salt Removal)

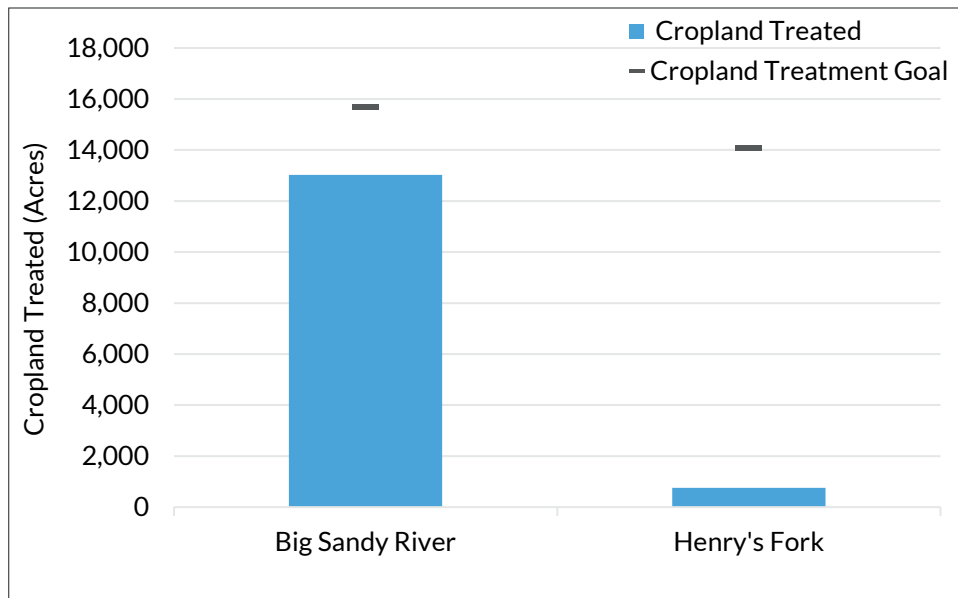


Figure 6: Wyoming - Acres Treated Through FY 2025

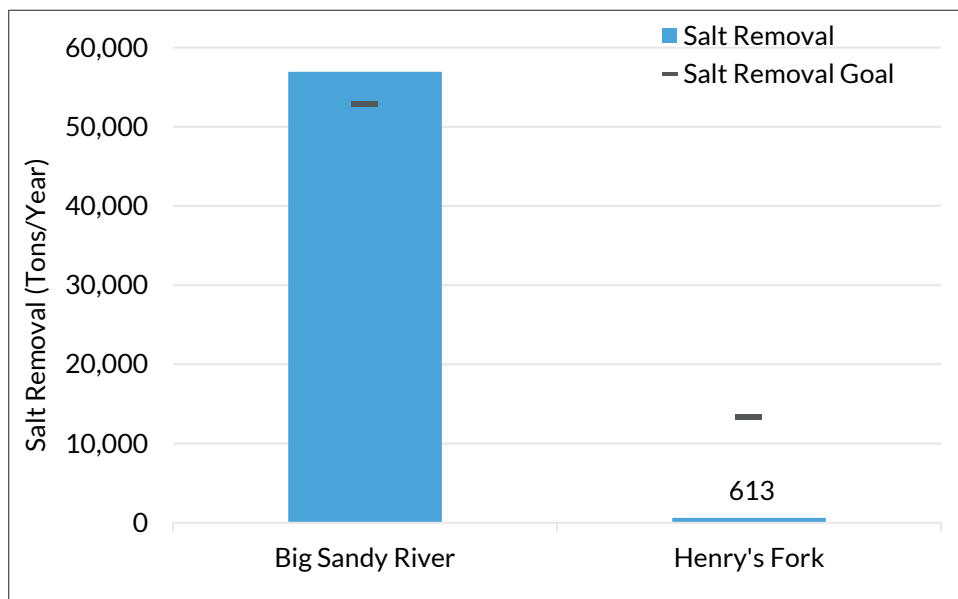


Figure 7: Wyoming - Salt Removal Through FY 2025 (On-Farm and Off/Near-Farm combined)

Applications and Contracts

In FY 2025, NRCS Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming received 286 new applications for the Salinity Control Program and obligated 90 contracts. These totals include applications received and contracts awarded across all active project areas but exclude the completed Grand Valley (CO) and Big Sandy River (WY) Units.

For application and contract totals by active unit, refer to Table 1: Salinity Applications and Contracting, FY 2025.

Table 1: Salinity Applications and Contracting, FY 2025

Project Unit	New Applications*	Contracts Obligated*	Contract Costs	Acres
Lower Gunnison	27	15	\$1,367,385	406
Wildlife	4	2	\$7,347	30
WME	0	0	\$ -	0
Mancos Valley	1	1	\$50,220	35
McElmo Creek	18	16	\$584,489	337
Silt	1	1	\$13,710	8
CO Tier II*	56	9	\$658,352	514
Colorado Total	107	44	\$2,681,503	1,329
Green River	1	1	\$37,492	7
Manila-Washam	5	0	\$ -	0
Muddy Creek	2	1	\$50,329	31
Price-San Rafael	29	12	\$1,978,359	819
Wildlife	1	1	\$12,816	2
WME	1	1	\$445,432	0
Uinta Basin	135	28	\$2,549,216	563
Wildlife	4	1	\$497	0.3
UT Tier II*	1	1	\$16,368	0.3
Utah Total	179	46	\$5,090,509	1,422
Henrys Fork	0	0	\$ -	0
Wildlife	0	0	\$ -	0
WY Tier II*	0	0	\$ -	0
Wyoming Total	0	0	\$ -	0
Grand Total	286	90	\$7,772,012	2,751

* Projects outside of salinity units; Applications received during the fiscal year; Contracts obligated under the EQIP program during the fiscal year

Wildlife Habitat Replacement

The Salinity Control Act amendment of 1984 (PL 98-569) mandates implementation of “measures to replace incidental fish and wildlife values foregone” resulting from irrigation improvements within project units. In 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) approved a policy change allowing wildlife-habitat replacement due to salinity-control impacts, establishing a target of 2% of total acres treated to be replaced concurrently and proportionally with salinity-control activities.

NRCS is committed to promoting the restoration of wildlife habitats and will continue to monitor and assess both the extent and quality of these habitats. Cumulative habitat-replacement data are provided in Table 2: Salinity Wildlife Habitat Replacement. For additional details regarding habitat mitigation in Wyoming, see the Wyoming Salinity Unit Progress Reports section of this report.

Table 2: Salinity Wildlife Habitat Replacement through FY 2025

Project Unit*	Current Status (%)	Habitat Replacement Goal* (Acres)	Cumulative Habitat Applied (Acres)	Habitat Surplus/ Deficit (Acres)	Habitat in Active Contracts (Acres)
Grand Valley	105%	1,206	1,261	55	0
Lower Gunnison	188%	1,560	2,932	1,372	447
Mancos Valley	160%	67	107	40	0
McElmo Creek	72%	403	289	-114	2
Silt	64%	39	25	-14	0
Colorado Total	-	3,275	4,614	1,339	449
Green River	51%	25	13	-12	25
Manila-Washam	37%	91	34	-57	0
Muddy Creek	0%	54	0	-54	0
Price-San Rafael	422%	829	3,497	2,668	2
Uinta Basin	662%	3,285	21,762	18,476	227
Utah Total	-	4,285	25,306	21,021	254
Grand Total	-	7,560	29,920	22,360	703

* Colorado and Utah Habitat Replacement Goal = 2% of the cumulative acres treated; Tier 2 projects are not required to provide offsetting wildlife habitat

Economic Impacts

The regional economic impacts of the salinity program have been studied and reported in previous salinity reports. These reports indicate that salinity programs provide economic benefits, including increased crop yields, reduced salinity damages, and lower maintenance costs. In many respects, it is assumed that the salinity program will impact the region similarly to how it has in the past.

Colorado Salinity Unit Progress Reports

Grand Valley Unit

Background

Implementation in this unit has been underway since 1979, and NRCS considers the salt control measures of the project to be successfully completed as planned. A status report compiled in 2010, based on field visits and observations, indicated that at least 12,000 irrigated acres are no longer in agricultural production. Of the remaining 44,700 acres still in production, 42,435 acres (or 95 percent) have received varying levels of treatment. While this unit is designated as complete, additional implementation continues at a reduced rate.

The Grand Valley Unit has a current habitat replacement goal of 1,206 acres. Currently, 1,261 acres of habitat mitigation have been applied and maintained, with a significant portion located on Colorado State Parks and Wildlife land. Since the on-farm irrigation improvement project is essentially complete, the project area is expected to meet or exceed the total habitat replacement goal when all current active habitat contracts are completed.

Current Year

The Grand Valley Unit is a completed project with no new salinity contracts awarded in FY 2025. See Figure 8 for acres treated per fiscal year for the Grand Valley Unit from 1980 – 2020.

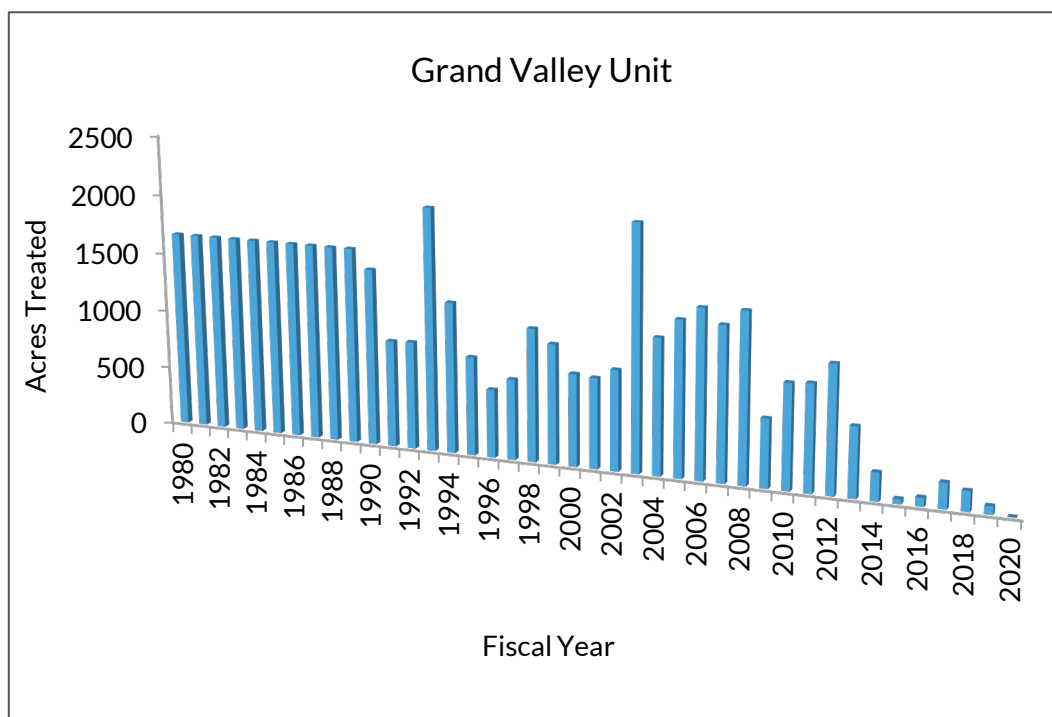


Figure 8: Grand Valley Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2020

Lower Gunnison Unit

Background

The Lower Gunnison Salinity Control Unit was established by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) followed by a Record of Decision (ROD) in 1989. This unit encompasses irrigated farmland in the Gunnison and Uncompahgre River valleys. In 2010, it was expanded to include the upper headwaters of the Uncompahgre River. Implementation continues in Delta, Montrose, and Ouray Counties. The Mancos Formation underlies the central and southern parts of the basin and is the principal source of salt loading.

The original project goal was to treat 135,000 acres of irrigated cropland. However, extensive urban, suburban, and small residential developments in the project area have reduced the eligible treatment areas for NRCS farm-oriented financial assistance programs to the current level of 115,000 acres. Despite this reduction, the reported tons of salt loading are tracking ahead of the acres treated, and it is still anticipated that the original goal of a 186,000-ton per year salinity reduction will be achieved.

The wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Lower Gunnison Unit have exceeded the concurrent requirements for irrigated acres treated to date. This trend is expected to continue, as there are sufficient additional acres under active contracts to support ongoing habitat restoration.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Colorado treated 884 acres within the Lower Gunnison Unit, controlling 749 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$237 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has treated 78,022 acres (68% of the project goal), controlling 134,965 tons of salt annually with approximately 37,000 acres (32% of the project goal) remaining to be treated. See Figure 9 for acres treated per fiscal year within the Lower Gunnison Unit.

In FY 2025, 99 acres of wildlife habitat replacements were implemented in the Lower Gunnison Unit. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has implemented 2,932 acres of wildlife habitat replacement, exceeding the required goal of 1,560 acres (188% of the goal).

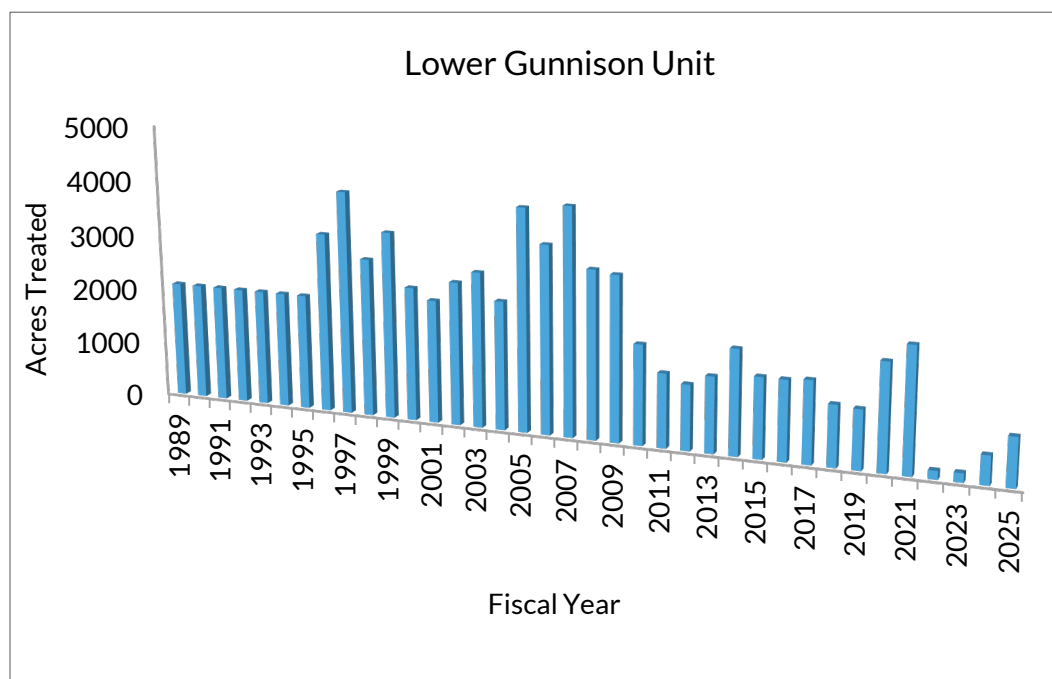


Figure 9: Lower Gunnison Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

McElmo Creek Unit

Background

Established in 1989, the McElmo Creek Unit is in the southwest corner of Colorado and encompasses 29,100 acres of irrigated land, of which 21,550 acres can be treated for salinity control. Water diverted for irrigation of cropland and pasture deep percolates through saline soil formations, dissolving and transporting salts to the river system. These salts originate from dissolved solids in Cretaceous marine deposits, with Mancos shale— a marine formation with a very high salt content— underlining much of the valley. This salinity unit lies within the McElmo Creek watershed, which drains into the San Juan River.

The McElmo Creek Unit is currently facing challenges in concurrent habitat replacement due to a field analysis assessing the status of habitat projects. This review revealed a decrease in the number of acres confirmed as applied and maintained compared to previous reports. Some smaller projects were not maintained, and earlier projects could not be verified through administrative records for compliance with replacement habitat standards. The reported acreage now reflects only those wildlife habitat replacement projects that are actively maintained and can be tracked. Further analysis may reveal that additional previously reported acres are still being upheld as suitable salinity habitat replacement projects.

Current Year

During FY 2025, NRCS Colorado treated 629 acres within the McElmo Creek Unit, controlling 343 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$300 per ton. Cumulatively, through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has treated 20,130 acres (93% of the project goal), controlling 34,301 tons of salt annually with approximately 1,400 acres (7% of the project goal) remaining to be treated. See Figure 10 for acres treated per fiscal year for the McElmo Creek Unit.

In FY 2025, 2 acres of wildlife habitat replacement were implemented within the McElmo Creek Unit. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has implemented 289 acres (72%) of the 403-acre goal required to be concurrent and proportional.

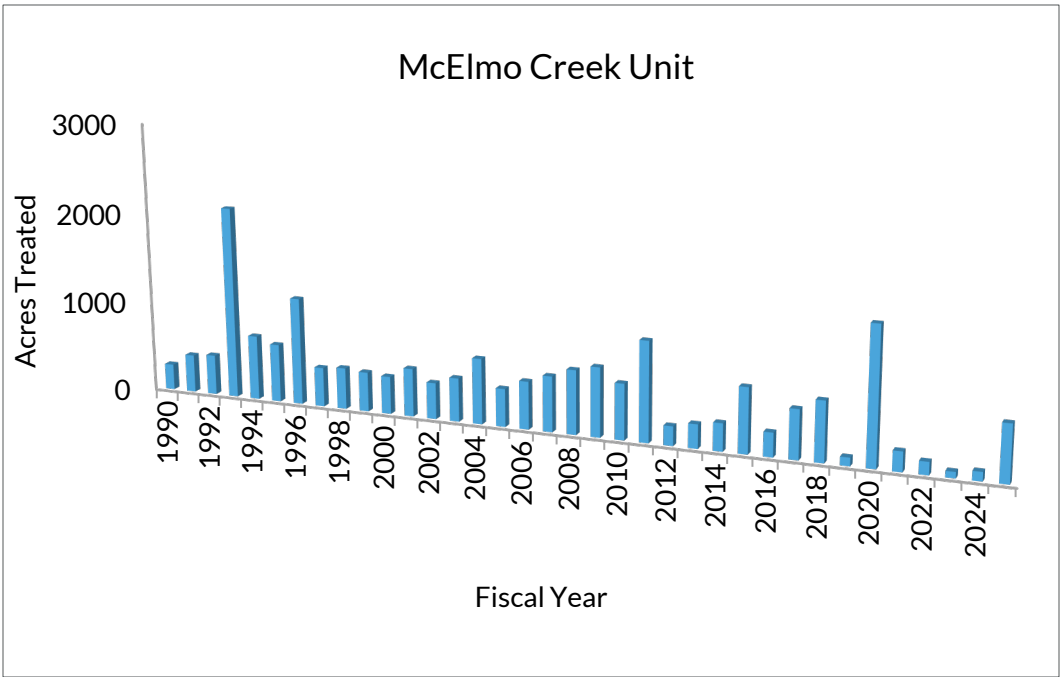


Figure 10: McElmo Creek Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Mancos Valley Unit

Background

The Mancos Valley Unit, located in the southwest corner of Colorado, was initiated and approved for funding and implementation by NRCS in 2004. Approximately 5,400 acres can be irrigated in the Mancos Valley with a salt reduction goal of 11,940 tons. Water diverted for irrigation of cropland and pasture deep percolates through saline soil formations, dissolving and transporting salts to the Colorado River system. These salts originate from dissolved solids in Cretaceous marine deposits, with Mancos shale— a marine formation with a very high salt content— underlining much of the valley. The reduction of salt loads is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation.

The project significantly exceeds its concurrent habitat replacement goals and is anticipated to have sufficient salinity replacement habitat projects in place to meet full project implementation objectives if all acres are eventually treated. Moreover, the proximity of this project to the McElmo Creek Unit could provide mutual benefits for the replacement of habitat values in both areas if needed in the future.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Colorado treated 36 acres within the Mancos Valley Unit, controlling 35 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$246 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has treated 3,354 acres (62% of the project goal), controlling 4,974 tons of salt annually with approximately 2,000 acres (38% of the project goal) remaining to be treated. See Figure 11 for acres treated per fiscal year within the Mancos Valley Unit.

NRCS Colorado did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres within the Mancos Valley Unit in FY 2025. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado continues to exceed the concurrent and proportional requirement, with 107 total replacement acres implemented— 160% of the 67-acre goal—for the Mancos Valley Unit.

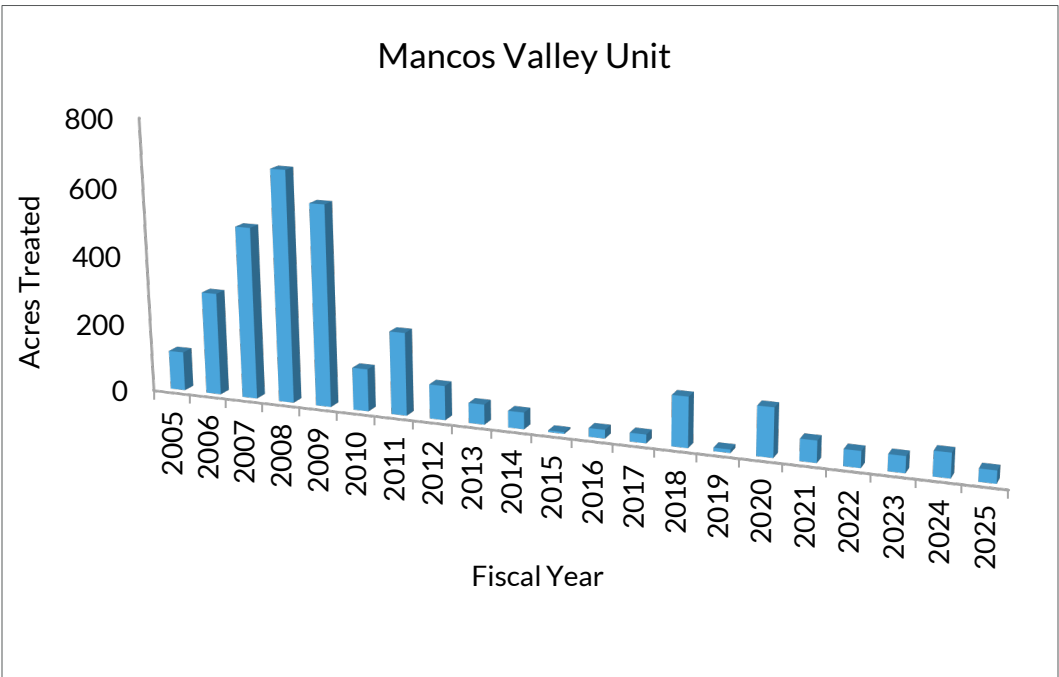


Figure 11: Mancos Valley Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Silt Unit

Background

The Silt Project, authorized in 2006, is situated in Garfield County along the northern side of the Colorado River, approximately two miles east of Silt and Rifle, Colorado. This area encompasses around 2,800 acres that can be irrigated, with a salinity reduction target of 3,990 tons. The valley is primarily underlain by the Wasatch Formation and Mancos shale, both marine formations known for their high salt content, which are the main sources of salt entering the river. Salt loading in the river results from the seepage and deep percolation of irrigation water through these salt-laden soils and shale layers.

The project is on track to achieve its concurrent habitat replacement goal and is expected to have sufficient salinity replacement habitat projects in place to fulfill the overall implementation objectives.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Colorado treated 10 acres within the Silt Unit, controlling 1.2 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$2,141 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has treated 1,963 acres, which accounts for 70% of the project's goal, successfully controlling 2,610 tons of salt annually with approximately 840 acres remaining to be treated, representing 30% of the project goal. See Figure 12 for acres treated per fiscal year within the Silt Unit.

In FY 2025, NRCS Colorado did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Silt Unit. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Colorado has implemented 25 acres, achieving 64% of the 39-acre requirement to remain concurrent and proportional.

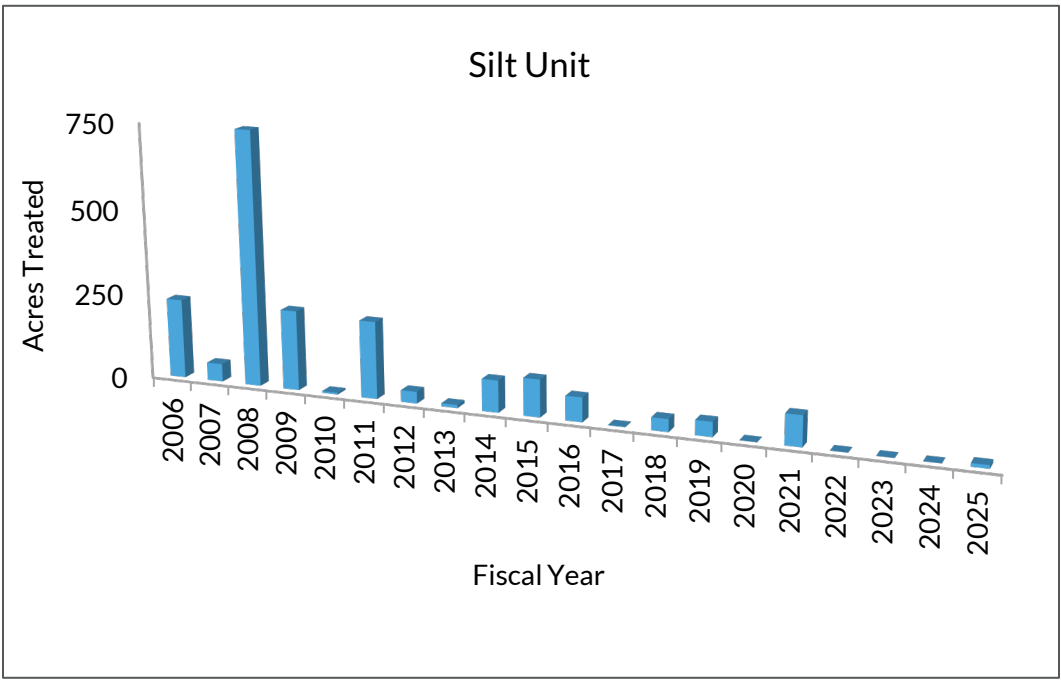


Figure 12: Silt Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Utah Salinity Unit Progress Reports

Green River Unit

Background

The Green River Salinity Control Unit was established in 2009 through an Environmental Assessment (EA) that resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The first NRCS projects were funded in 2010. This unit spans the Green River and the boundary between Emery and Grand Counties, covering 4,000 agricultural acres irrigated with diverted water from the Green River. Excess irrigation water in this area percolates deeply through Cretaceous marine deposits, dissolving and transporting salts into the river system. The reduction of salt loads is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation. The EA anticipated that approximately 2,080 acres are eligible for irrigation, with a salinity reduction target of 6,540 tons/year at a cost of \$115/ton.

The project is progressing toward its concurrent habitat replacement goal and is anticipated to have enough salinity replacement habitat projects established to meet overall implementation objectives.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah implemented 58 irrigation acres within the Green River Unit, controlling 184 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$84 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has treated 1,270 acres, which represents 61% of the project goal, successfully controlling 4,127 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$62 per ton (amortized 2025 dollars). Approximately 800 acres, or 39% of the project goal remains to be treated. Refer to figure 13 for acres treated by fiscal year within the Green River Unit.

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Green River Unit. Cumulatively, through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has achieved 13 of the 25 acres required for concurrent and proportional implementation, representing 51% of the goal.

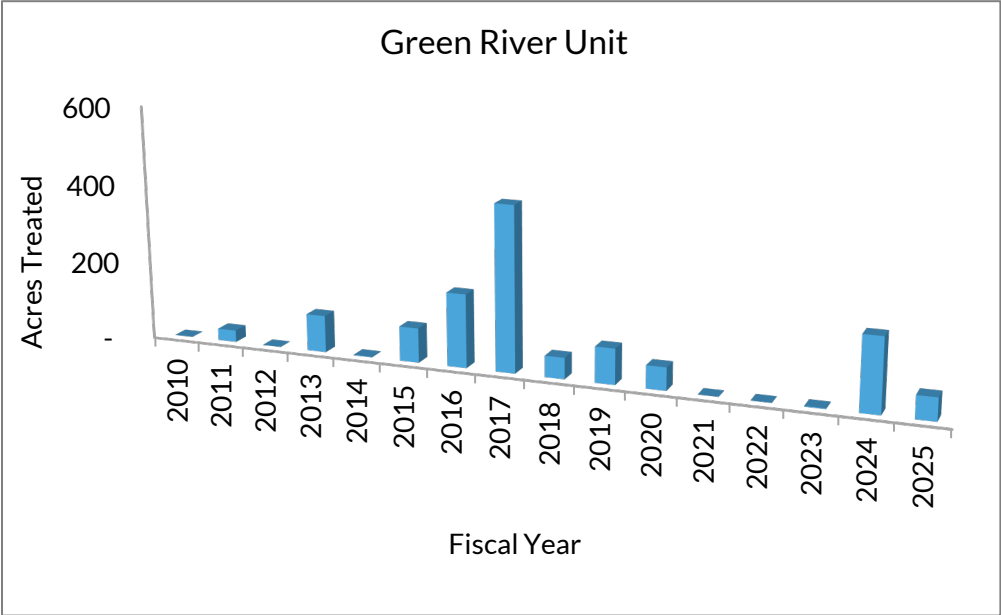


Figure 13: Green River Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Manila-Washam Unit

Background

Established by a 2006 EA with a FONSI, the Manila-Washam Salinity Control Unit is located on the north slope of the Uinta Mountains, encompassing 11,100 agricultural acres irrigated with water diverted from tributaries to Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Daggett County, Utah. Excess irrigation water deep percolates through Tertiary Lacustrine deposits in the south and Cretaceous marine Mancos Shale deposits in the north, dissolving and transporting salts to the river system. The reduction of salt loads is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation. The EA anticipated 7,780 acres that can be treated, with a salinity reduction target of 18,000 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$98/ton.

While the Manila-Washam Unit is short of meeting the 2% target for wildlife habitat restoration, NRCS Utah continues to promote the need for habitat replacement requirements and will continue outreach efforts to meet these goals.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah treated 73 acres within the Manila-Washam Unit, controlling 175 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$34/ton. Cumulatively, through FY 2024, NRCS has treated 4,475 acres (58% of the project goal), controlling 10,783 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$53.94 per ton (in 2025 dollars). Approximately 3,200 acres (62% of the project goal) remain to be treated. For details on acres treated by fiscal year, please refer to Figure 14.

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Manila-Washam Unit. Cumulatively, through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has completed 34 of the 91 acres required for concurrent and proportional implementation, representing 37% of the overall goal.

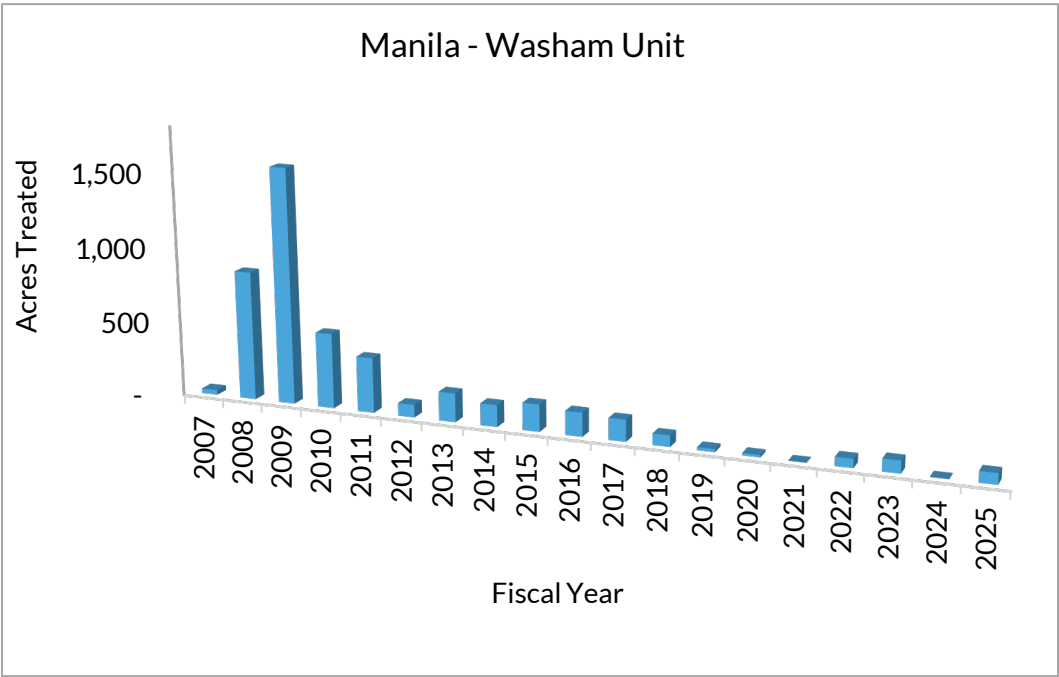


Figure 14: Manila-Washam Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Muddy Creek Unit

Background

The Muddy Creek Salinity Control Unit was established by a 2004 EA with a FONSI. It is in the southern portion of Emery County, Utah, with the first NRCS projects funded in FY 2010. Excess irrigation water percolates through Cretaceous marine Mancos Shale deposits, carrying salts into the river system. Reducing salt loads is accomplished by enhancing irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation. This unit aims to treat 6,050 agricultural acres, irrigated with water diverted from Muddy Creek and its tributaries, with the goal to control 11,677 tons/year at a cost of \$153/ton.

Although the Muddy Creek Unit has not yet met the 2% target for wildlife habitat restoration, NRCS remains committed to promoting habitat replacement requirements within these units and will continue outreach efforts to achieve these goals.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah treated 154 acres within the Muddy Creek Unit, resulting in the control of an additional 164 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$181 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has treated 2,723 acres, which represents 45% of the project goal, effectively managing 4,881 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$194 per ton (amortized 2025 dollars). Approximately 3,300 acres, or 55% of the project goal, remain to be treated. Refer to Figure 15 which shows the acres treated by fiscal year within the Muddy Creek Unit.

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Muddy Creek Unit. As a result, the total habitat replaced through FY 2025 remains at 0 acres, compared to the required goal of 54 acres for concurrent and proportional implementation.

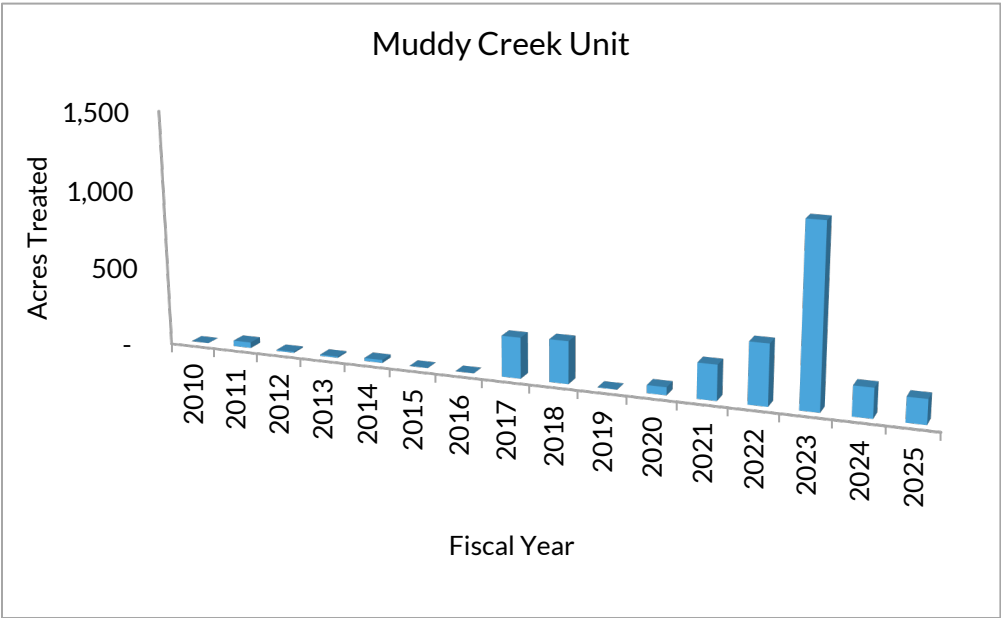


Figure 15: Muddy Creek Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Price-San Rafael Unit

Background

Established in 1993 through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Price-San Rafael Unit, located in east-central Utah, encompasses 66,450 acres of irrigated agricultural land. Excess irrigation water percolates through Cretaceous marine Mancos Shale deposits, transporting salts into the river system. Reducing salt loads is accomplished by enhancing irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation. The first NRCS salinity control projects were funded in fiscal year 1996. The Unit aims to treat 36,050 acres irrigated from the tributaries of the Price and San Rafael Rivers in Carbon and Emery Counties, with a goal of controlling 146,900 tons/year at a cost of \$65/ton.

The wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Price-San Rafael Unit have exceeded concurrent requirements with the irrigated acres treated. This trend is expected to continue, as there are sufficient additional acres under active contracts to support ongoing habitat restoration.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah treated 316 acres within the Price-San Rafael Unit, controlling 290 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$275 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has treated 41,426 acres (115% of the project goal), managing 119,550 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$77 per ton (amortized 2025 dollars). The Price-San Rafael Unit has exceeded its treatment goal by 5,376 acres. Although staff have refocused efforts on the Muddy Creek Unit, NRCS Utah will continue to fund initial treatments in the Price-San Rafael Unit. Refer to Figure 16 for acres treated by fiscal year.

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah did not implement any new wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Price-San Rafael Unit. Cumulatively, NRCS Utah has replaced 3,497 acres through FY 2025—exceeding the required goal of 829 acres by 2,668 acres (a 422% increase). Although this goal has been surpassed, NRCS Utah will continue to support wildlife habitat replacement efforts within the unit.

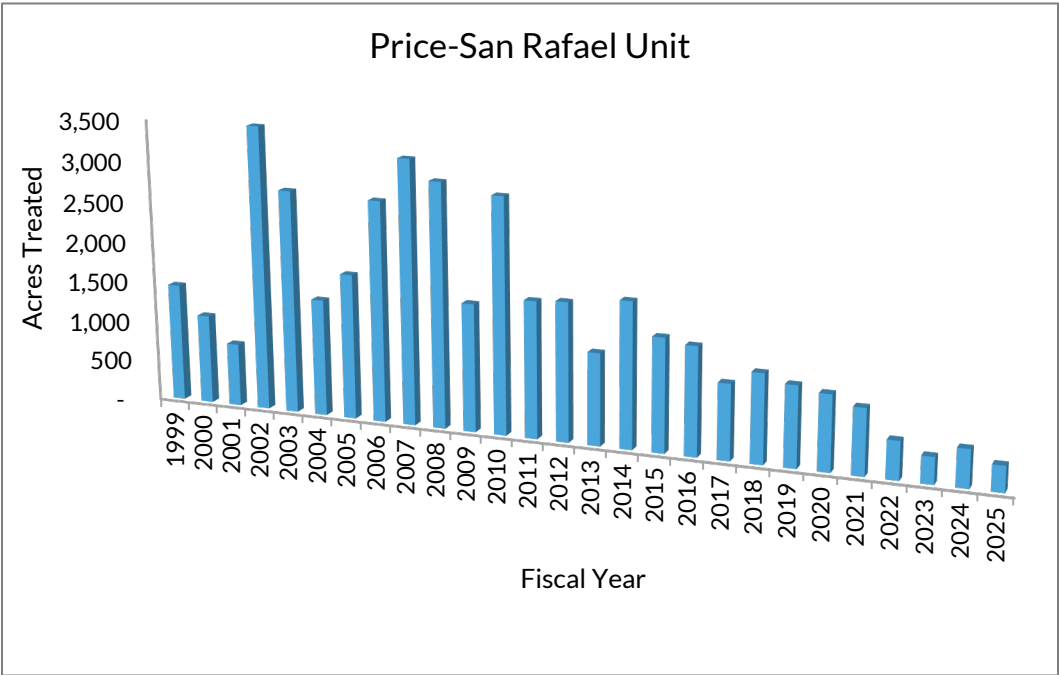


Figure 16: Price-San Rafael Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Uinta Basin Unit

Background

As one of the four named salinity control projects requiring expedited planning reports for irrigation source control within the 1974 SCA, the Uinta Basin Salinity Control Unit was established by an EIS in 1982 following multiple studies. USDA funding for salinity control projects began in 1980 with existing grant programs. Located in northeastern Utah, the Unit encompasses 225,000 irrigated agricultural acres sourced from tributaries of the Duchesne and Green Rivers. Initially, the treatment goal was to manage 122,200 acres and control 76,600 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$199/ton (amortized 2020 dollars). The program's initial success led to a shift in preferred treatment methods from improved flood irrigation to more efficient sprinkler systems. By 1991, the treatment goal was increased to 160,000 acres, equivalent to 70% of the total irrigated acres with a goal of controlling 140,500 tons of salt annually. Salt load reduction is achieved by enhancing irrigation efficiency and minimizing deep percolation.

The wildlife habitat replacement acres in the Uinta Basin Unit have exceeded concurrent requirements in relation to the treated irrigated acres. This positive trend is expected to persist due to additional acres under active contracts, which support ongoing habitat restoration efforts.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Utah treated 378 acres within the Uinta Basin Unit, reducing an estimated 201 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$388 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS Utah has treated 164,270 acres—103% of the project goal—resulting in an annual salt reduction of 164,240 tons at a cost of \$203 per ton (amortized 2025 dollars). Although the Unit has surpassed its acreage goal by 4,270 acres, NRCS Utah continues to support salinity control efforts in this area. Refer to Figure 17 for acres treated by fiscal year; FY 1988 had the highest implementation at 16,675 acres, while all other years totaled fewer than 10,000 acres.

In FY 2025, 2 acres of wildlife habitat replacement were implemented in the Uinta Basin Unit. Cumulatively, habitat replacement through FY 2025 totals 21,756 acres—far exceeding the required 3,285 acres for concurrent and proportional implementation (a 662% increase). Although this goal has been surpassed, NRCS Utah will continue to support wildlife habitat replacement efforts within the unit.

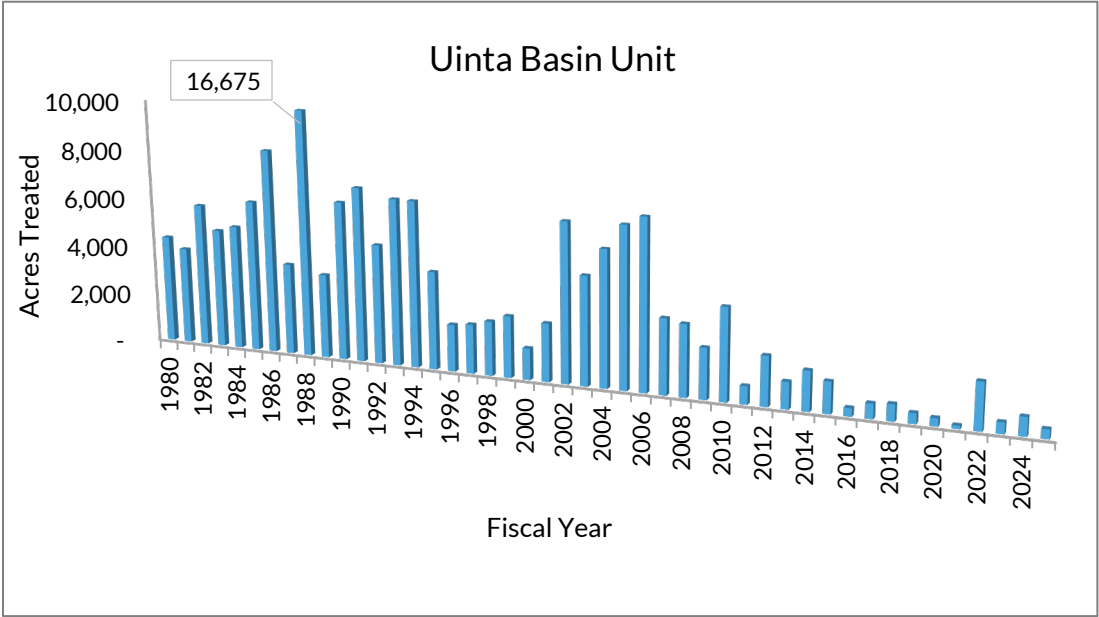


Figure 17: Uinta Basin Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Wyoming Salinity Unit Progress Reports

Big Sandy River Unit

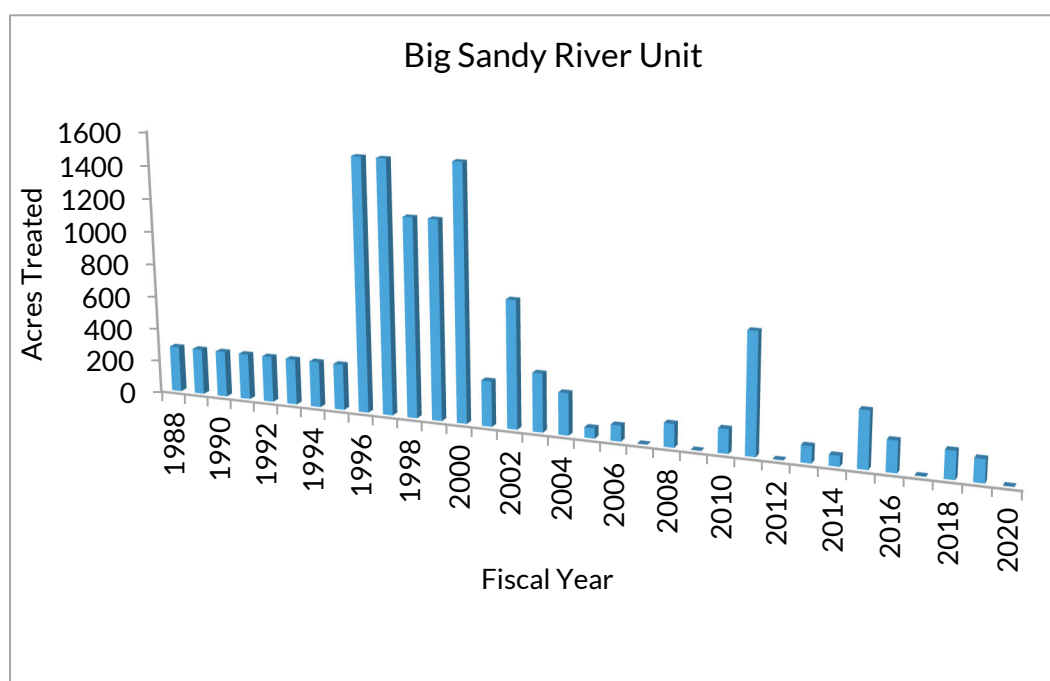
Background

The Big Sandy River Salinity Unit was established in 1987 with a treatment goal of 15,700 acres for improved irrigation systems and a salt load reduction of 52,900 tons per year. Located in southwestern Wyoming, about 30 miles north of Green River, approximately 13,000 acres (83%) of the planned area have been treated. The salt control goal has been exceeded by about 5,900 tons, totaling 56,934 tons (108%).

Salinity Control Units must implement wildlife habitat improvement projects to offset the habitat values lost due to reduced return and surface flows. For the Big Sandy River Unit, NRCS has found that wildlife habitat has not been negatively impacted as much as projected in the EIS. Additionally, the 2019 Big Sandy River Progress Report indicates that habitat replacement initiatives have compensated for affected wildlife habitat and added 10.77 acres of wetland through voluntary programs. With the transition from flood irrigation to sprinklers nearly complete, no further habitat replacement projects are expected for the Big Sandy River Salinity Project.

Current Year

The Big Sandy River Unit has not received applications from landowners in this area since 2020. This is primarily due to a lack of interest in the program among producers. Those interested in the Salinity Control Program have already applied and received assistance, leaving the remaining acres controlled by producers who are not interested in participating. For more details, refer to Figure 18, which shows the acres treated per fiscal year from 1988 to 2020 within the Big Sandy River Unit.



Henry's Fork Unit

Background

The Henry's Fork Project was established by an EIS followed by a ROD in June of 2013, with NRCS salinity projects beginning in 2016. The project area encompasses 20,709 acres of privately owned irrigated land and is primarily located in southwestern Wyoming with some land in northeastern Utah. Annually, approximately 70,790 acre-feet of water is diverted in the Henry's Fork drainage for irrigation purposes. According to the EIS, the treatment goal of 70% of the project area, or 14,096 acres, will reduce deep percolation by 40% and decrease annual salt loading into the Colorado River system by an estimated 6,540 tons.

At the start of the project, field investigations estimated that approximately 5,631 of the 20,709 irrigated acres are either natural or artificial wetlands. Given the significant value of wetlands, wetland assessments are conducted, as needed, before and after irrigation system installation to monitor potential changes in wetland functional values.

The compensatory value of habitat enhancements is determined by comparing baseline conditions to improved habitat values. The difference in habitat values between them is counted towards compensation. Compensatory value also takes into consideration whether enhancements improve habitat values similar to those foregone. The Montana Wetland Assessment Method is used for site scale monitoring and mitigation calculations.

Current Year

In FY 2025, NRCS Wyoming treated 194 acres within the Henry's Fork Unit, controlling 165 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$155 per ton. Cumulatively through FY 2025, NRCS has treated 756 acres (5% of the project goal), controlling 613 tons of salt annually at a cost of \$212 per ton (amortized 2025 dollars). Approximately 13,340 acres (95% of the project goal) remain to be treated. Refer to Figure 19 for annual acres treated within the Henry's Fork Unit (acres treated have been updated from prior year reports).

In FY 2025, NRCS Wyoming did not conduct new wetland assessments or habitat-value calculations within the Henry's Fork Unit. Cumulatively, NRCS has assessed 851 irrigated acres prior to conservation practice implementation. Of these, 462 acres (54%) exhibited wetland characteristics, providing a combined 1,607 wetland habitat values. NRCS continues to conduct follow-up wetland assessments to identify mitigation needs. To date, no habitat values have been lost as a result of irrigation improvements, and habitat replacement projects currently provide a surplus of 289.7 habitat values.

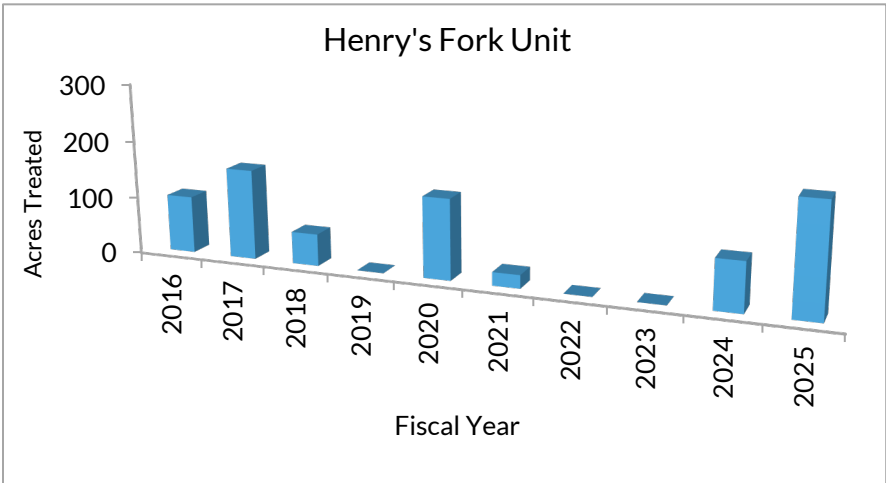


Figure 19: Henry's Fork Unit Salinity Treatment (Acres) Through FY 2025

Contact Information

This report is limited in scope. For additional information on the Colorado River Salinity Control Program visit:

Natural Resources Conservation Service website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives>

Bureau Reclamation website: www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/

Colorado River Salinity Control Forum website: <http://coloradoriversalinity.org/>

For additional Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) reports, please visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/colorado-river-basin-salinity-project>.

You may also search online using the phrase “USDA Monitoring & Evaluation Reports for Salinity Projects.”

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Colorado NRCS offices within the Salinity Area are in the following communities: Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction, Delta, Montrose, and Cortez, CO. Other offices may be involved in the Out of Project Area contracts.

Utah NRCS offices within the Salinity Area are in the following communities: Roosevelt, Vernal, Price, and Castle Dale, UT. Other offices may be involved in the Out of Project Area contracts.

Wyoming NRCS offices within the Salinity Area are in the following communities: Lyman and Rock Springs, WY.

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