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Attachment H

**COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

Executive Director's Office

Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor

Harris D. Sherman, DNR Executive Director

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DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES

SB 09-158

**CONCERNING ANALYSIS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES OF
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED ON PRIVATE LANDS**

Background

Between 2009 and 2013, over two million acres of federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts will expire in Colorado. These contracts reward farmers and ranchers for temporarily retiring marginal lands from agricultural production. Farmers and ranchers will have little opportunity to re-enroll their land in the CRP, due to an overall nationwide reduction in the acreage that will be included in the program.

If a large portion of these expiring CRP acres go back into cropland, Colorado will lose many of the conservation benefits accrued over the lifetimes of the contracts. However, if some of the expiring CRP lands were kept in grass and managed as grazing land, either permanently or temporarily, many of the conservation benefits accrued over the lifetime of the contracts could be kept or even enhanced during this time period.

It may be difficult or impossible to replace the entire federal CRP contract funding currently available to implement private land conservation in Colorado. However, other funding sources could be captured and directed to achieve similar goals.

Purpose of SB 09-158

SB 09-158 authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to analyze private land conservation programs currently available to Colorado landowners in order to determine how these programs can continue to work on their behalf and on behalf of Colorado's natural resources.

Bill Sponsor:

Senator Jim Isgar

For more information, please contact:

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SB 09-158 would:

- 1) Direct the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare a report to the Joint Ag Committees by February 1, 2010 regarding how the benefits of federal programs that provide monetary compensation to landowners who set aside lands or comply with conservation practices can be maintained or expanded.
- 2) Protect the confidentiality of information controlled or compiled by DNR so that data regarding individual landowners or parcels would not be subject to Colorado Open Records Act inquiries.
- 3) Authorize the Commissioner of Agriculture to assemble a task force, composed of persons representing the interests of the Colorado agriculture industry, for the purpose of consulting with DNR regarding a Colorado-based landowner incentive program.
- 4) Authorize expenditure of up to \$50,000 from the Species Conservation Trust Fund for purposes of conducting the analysis.