

BLMer Wins National Turkey Federation Award

Glenda Torres, a Natural Resource Specialist in BLM Colorado's Royal Gorge Field Office fuels program, recently won the National Wild Turkey Federation's "Making Tracks" Award for her outstanding work on the Trail Gulch Habitat Enhancement and Fuels Reduction project.



Glenda Torres accepted the National Wild Turkey Federation's "Making Tracks" Award for her habitat improvement and fuels reduction work in the Royal Gorge Field Office.

Glenda has engaged numerous partners and secured substantial funding for the project, which thinned dense forest to create a mosaic of vegetation in different successional states, ages, and sizes throughout the landscape. By thinning dense stands of trees that have little or no understory, the project will increase shrub vegetation and improve forage conditions for cattle and wildlife, especially deer, elk,

bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and turkey. Glenda and partners conducted treatments mostly in encroaching pinyon juniper forests in order to maintain openings and favor ponderosa pine.

The project also improved and repaired existing water developments. The Trail Gulch area had minimal permanent, reliable watering locations, and most were holding ponds that were dry most of the summer. To address this issue, Glenda and her partners restored three windmills installed in the 1960s and a 250-foot deep well drilled in the 1990s, which needed maintenance and repair to become functional again. Now these structures once again permanently provide water. The BLM Royal Gorge Field Office also recently installed three guzzlers as a joint effort with Colorado Parks and Wildlife.





Trail Gulch before and after: Hydroaxe treatments greatly reduced the density of trees in the area, allowing for greater diversity of vegetation and creating better conditions for wildlife.



Windmill before and after: In addition to fuels projects, Glenda ensured that all of the water developments in the project area are now fully functional, providing permanent water sources.

Over the last six years, wildlife habitat and fuels treatment projects have been very successful at Trail Gulch, having treated 1,235 acres with hydroaxe equipment, thinned and piled 133 acres, and treated nearly 200 acres with prescribed fire. Next, Royal Gorge will conduct prescribed broadcast burning in areas that have been treated.

Glenda assembled \$152,750 for the Trail Gulch project from a variety of sources. Supporters include the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Habitat Partnership Program: Colorado State Council and Arkansas River Council, Mule Deer Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Front Range District Board of Grazing Advisors, the Trail Canyon Allotment Permittee and the High Park Ranch Subdivision. Glenda didn't accept the award without first recognizing the support she received from these partners as well as many of her co-workers, especially Range Management Specialist Christine Cloninger.

Glenda conducted the Trail Gulch work while also actively overseeing other large-scale project work. She maintains a rigorous monitoring and evaluation program that helps promote the value of her work. In fact, when Glenda presented this project to the Habitat Partnership Program State Council, the committee said that the monitoring photos and supporting data were the most convincing factor in her presentation to fund the project. Just knowing the potential out there was enough to win their support!

Story by Kyle Sullivan, Public Affairs Specialist