

THE RURAL LIVING GUIDEBOOK

ROUTT COUNTY, COLORADO

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Rural Living Guidebook was created to provide information to new landowners about how to properly manage their land. In Routt County and across Colorado, more and more people are moving to rural properties. This project promotes proper land stewardship practices and lists resources for success. Topics such as noxious weeds, water rights, soils, forest management, and raising livestock were just a few of the essential chapters that were covered. The last Rural Living Guidebook for Routt County was published in 2008, so an updated version that addresses current issues and information was needed to adapt to ever changing land use needs. While this specific guidebook focused on Routt County, it serves as a template for other counties to add their own resources. The main challenge of this project was consolidating information about complex topics that could be their own book.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

- Create a more user-friendly design that is easy to read and engage with.
- Develop a template that can be revised by other counties across Colorado with information specific to their areas.
- Influence active land stewardship on private land.

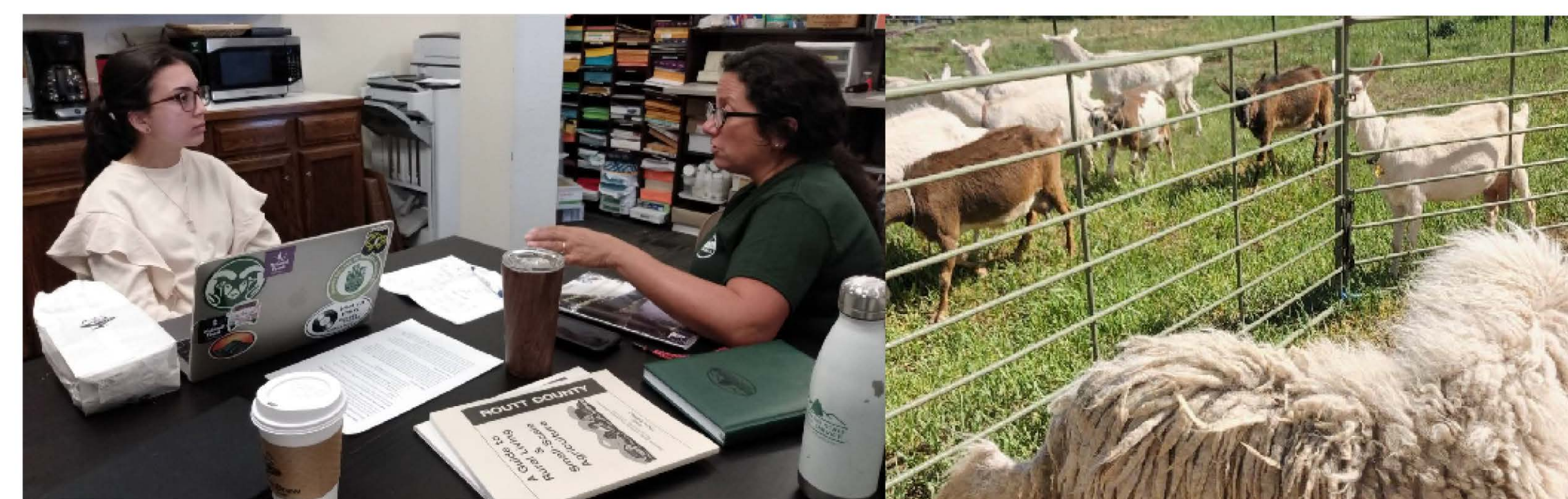
APPLICATION TO MY EDUCATION

I am currently majoring in Forest and Rangeland Stewardship and will be graduating this December. I have taken courses explaining natural resource management and systems throughout my education, and it was rewarding to be able to apply this knowledge to a real-world project. It gave me tangible experience working with stakeholders that I had only mimicked or learned about in classes. Sharing information to the general public is also a skill that necessary in forest and rangeland management.

WHAT YOU DID

- Attended the Western Regional CSU Extension conference in Durango, Colorado and networked with other Extension professionals to gain more insight on the formatting of the Guidebook.
- Gathered information and inspiration from similar literature in order to decide what the most important topics for the Guidebook are.
- Met with my committee members weekly to continue to build and edit the chapters.
- Traveled to Steamboat Springs, Colorado to learn more about agriculture and natural resource needs in the area and hold meetings with local stakeholders.
- Met with members of the Colorado State Forest Service, Routt County Board of Relators, Community Agriculture Alliance, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Routt County Assessor's Office, and other local community members.
- Shared my draft with these stakeholders after applying the feedback from these meetings and edited as needed.
- Continued to research resources as I finalized the book and include information that was missing from similar publications.
- Utilized programs such as Canva to design the layout of the Guidebook and mirror the format to the After the Disaster Guidebook.
- After compiling information, figures, photographs, and designing an engaging layout, I submitted the final draft for approval.

Figure 1.



From left to right: Sarah Leal and Carolina Manriquez of the Colorado State Forest Service meeting to discuss forest management needs for private landowners, and ranch tour from the Western Regional Extension conference.

WHAT YOU LEARNED

This project allowed me to explore aspects of natural resource management and agriculture that I was inexperienced in. Processes on private property relating to water rights, conducting soil tests, agriculture tax classification, high altitude gardening, and zoning were just a few of the subjects that I am now familiar with. I also learned just how much different agencies are interconnected and regularly work with each other.

Another new skill area that I worked in was public communications. It is difficult to share information with the public if the means of communication is not designed or explained well. Creating the Guidebook to be something that people can take notes in, easily find information, and reference important data is the best way to get them interested and involved in land stewardship.

Figure 2.



From left to right: Pictures from Steamboat Springs, and Sarah Leal and Supervisor Todd Hagenbuch at a CSU Extension event.

NEXT STEPS

The Guidebook will be printed and distributed to landowners after purchasing their property. We partnered with the Routt County Board of Realtors in order to make this possible. It will also be available as a free online resource for people to reference - replacing the older version. Once the Routt County version is published the template will be available for other counties to update and distribute as well.