

## Carbon Lakes Ditch Project

The ditch easements and water rights for the Carbon Lakes ditch were purchased, the ditch removed and the water returned to its natural drainage. The ditch was a trans-basin diversion of water from the Animas to the Uncompaghre drainage. The goal of the project was to improve water quality in the Animas River headwaters by remediation of man made impacts from historic mining operations. The Carbon Lakes ditch was an agricultural water right but the ditch flowed through an old mine site. Periodic breaches in the ditch banks contributed to serious erosion problems in a high altitude sensitive environment, and leakage from the ditch was believed to be infiltrating old mine workings and contributing to increased metal loadings in the upper Mineral Creek drainage.

The water right was purchased, the ditch was reclaimed/removed and the water returned to the Animas River basin.

The participants were:

- Animas River Stakeholders Group – Initiated and managed the project
- San Juan RC&D – Grant Recipient for EPA 319 funds
- Environmental Protection Agency – 319 grant funds to purchase the ditch and water right
- Southwestern Water Conservation District – Purchasing agency, legal services and funding for reclamation of ditch on private land
- Corps of Engineers – Nationwide permit for reclamation of wetlands area
- San Juan National Forest – approvals and funding of ditch reclamation on National Forest
- Ditch Company – held ditch easements on private and public land
- Private Land Owners – approved reclamation of ditch on private land
- Water Right Owners – Unanimous approval of all (11 or 13) individual owners required for purchase of the water right
- Colorado Water Conservation Board – accepted donation of water right- one-half for in- stream flow purposes and one half reserved for environmental purposes