



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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Autumn 2018

Lewis & Clark County Day on the Range

It was a beautiful day and a great turnout on August 14 at the Lewis & Clark County Day on the Range.



Landowners and managers and interested people from the area came together at Scoutana on the Rocky Mountain Front.

The group broke into small groups to learn about range monitoring.





They also learned about the release of insects as biocontrol and how to monitor their effectiveness.

The group observed how soil health impacts rainfall infiltration.



And they heard about the raptors of Montana, especially owls

Our thanks to all those who took their time to present, including, Diane Fitzgerald, Darcy Goodson, Jim Olsen, Susan Tallman (all from NRCS), Loni Blackman, Melissa Maggio from the Montana Biological Weed Control Project, and Ryan Schmaltz from Montana Wild.

This was such a great day that we will likely do it again in 2019, perhaps even in the same location! If you're interested in attending, give the office a call at 406-449-5000 ext. 112.

Egge Dam, Mike Ruggles, FWP

The Egge Dam was removed in the fall of 2016 which restored the river to the natural channel. Part of that project included planting willows and reclaiming a river bank in place of the flanking channel. The willow cuttings were stored over the winter and planted as final bank work was completed in March of 2017.

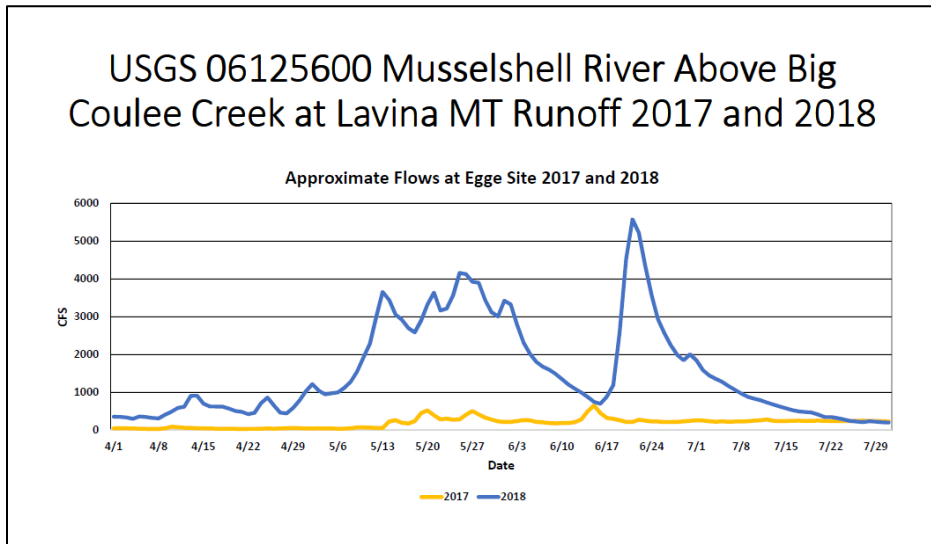
The Musselshell River in 2017 had a very wet spring due to rain and some late snow but had an extremely dry summer with limited snowpack. There was concern the willows might not survive well in 2017 due to drought conditions. The willow cuttings performed well with the best survival in the second or upper lift. Several trench rows were also planted perpendicular to flow in the floodplain bench and vertically behind the willow lifts, those also had good summer survival. We intentionally left several cuttings at full length to see how those performed compared to the others that were cut to less than 12 inches showing with typically 3 to 5 feet of stem buried. The willow cuttings that had tall exposed stalks leafed out the first few weeks then died as anticipated. It is important to ensure most of the cuttings are buried with only a small portion

exposed for leaf growth when using this method of planting.

In 2018, the basin had very good snowpack resulting in extended high-water flows. In the associated graph, the willows are inundated at approximately 2,000 cfs.

The willows were not inundated in 2017 but were extensively inundated in 2018. Therefore in 2018, the second growing season these new willows survived nearly four weeks of being underwater from late March to mid-June, got a short reprieve of a week in June, and then were under water again for nearly 2 more weeks. While some willows succumbed to the prolonged high water and potential winterkill, many survived.

Four images are attached showing the site before working on the bank and bench, bench in 2017



10/19/2016 Diversion broken apart and being removed, channel still flanking site.

without the lift, the lift in July of 2017, and in August 2018. The entire flood bank added nearly two

feet of sand and gravel behind the lift, there is still a “side channel around the edge which will also function as a wetland or be dry outside of flows less than 2,000 cfs. The sediment buried some of the willow trenching but really created a higher flood plain that will sustain wild vegetation and likely future willows better than the original elevation. Some willows on the bench survived and will likely spread over the next few years. As the willows mature they will capture more sand and the fabric will eventually degrade and get



3/12/2017 Diversion removed flow back to main channel bench and willow lift work remaining



July 26th, 2017 showing the lifts, willow trench behind lift and willow with conifer cuttings perpendicular to flow in the bench

covered with more sediment.

The bank along the field had essentially no erosion due a good slope up to the field and decreased stream velocity inside the floodplain bench that was built behind the willow lift. The site experienced change and the willows likely were reaching maximum time to be underwater before dying but in the end the site managed this round of runoff very well.



August 2nd 2018 willows on lift growing in some willows in trenches growing, sediment deposited on site during high flows.



July 26th, 2017 showing willows in lift 1st year.

District Report-- Chris Evans, District Administrator

The Conservation District continues to be excessively busy with the 310 program this year. We are up to 39 emergencies, 46 applications and 1 complaint for the year so far, with more paperwork showing up almost every day.

In the past quarter, we were also busy with trying to find assistance to the flooded landowners in the Augusta (Elk Creek) and Dearborn River system areas. With the lack of a Presidential Declaration of Emergency in those areas though, resources for assistance are pretty limited. We are still taking names and addresses of those who continue to have needs from the impacts of the June floods though and will continue to search for resources for you.

In July, the Helena High School Envirothon team that won the state competition attended the National Envirothon in Boise Idaho. The Conservation District assisted with their expenses for that event.

In August the CD co-hosted the Day on the Range and was a co-sponsor of the Montana Supervisor Summit.

Board meetings have moved around a bit in the past few months. We are looking forward to getting them back on schedule and hopefully the workload at the meetings and on 310 permit inspections will be reduced somewhat.

Forestry Assistance thru the NRCS



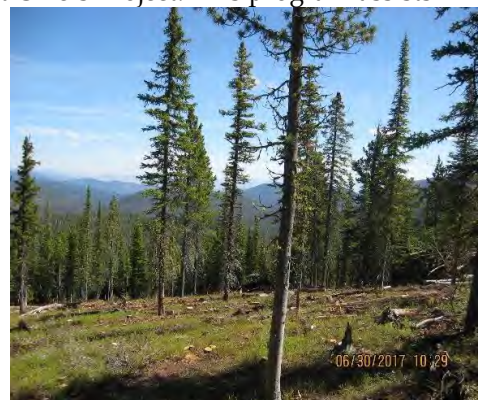
As we move into 2019 and you think about those goals you have for your land or agricultural operation, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office would like you to think of us in your planning.

Good stewardship begins with forward thinking, knowing where you're at, and where you want to

be in 1, 3, or 5 years. Our office helps organize goals and objectives into an actionable plan that will assist landowners meet their stewardship goals for the future, in a manageable and common sense approach.



Currently the NRCS office is accepting applications for the Capital 360 Forestry Joint Chiefs Project. This program assists in thinning trees or creating fuel breaks along property boundaries or to protect assets at risk (buildings/homes) on your property. Thinning and Fuel Breaks help improve the health of your timber stand & overall plant community and



reduce wildfire risks and we have the technical and sometimes financial assistance to meet those goals.

The program is highly competitive but our technical assistance is free of charge and we are more than happy to complete a field visit and give advice as desired.

We encourage anyone interested in what our office has to offer to contact us, so that we can schedule a field visit, and discuss what the NRCS has to offer.

We can be found at 790 Colleen St., Helena, MT 59601 or by calling 406 449 5000 x 101.



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