



# *The Explorer*

*The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District*

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## **Functional Facelift for Little Prickly Pear Creek**

As sometimes happens, the Conservation District recently had a permit application come in from a landowner that created a larger conversation. Landowner Robert Putsch wanted to do some work on the bank of the stream on his property to stabilize it and to slow erosion. As a result of some discussion at the onsite inspection, his plans changed a bit. What he'd wanted originally was a solid rock project. While rock rip-rap has its place, in this situation, the inspecting supervisor, Jeff Ryan, recommended a greener approach. In Jeff's prior work with DEQ across the state, he's seen a number of projects lately using "willow lifts" that have been pretty effective at holding eroding banks in place. Following are some of the project pictures.



This is "pre-project" during the onsite inspection with the landowner, FWP representative Eric Roberts and Jeff Ryan from the CD (not pictured). Note the eroding vertical bank that they are standing on.

The first step in a project like this is to install a temporary silt fence to prevent siltation into the stream system. Then the bank is excavated back to create a "shelf" for the willows to rest on. The willows are harvested from living willows during dormancy. The living willows aren't harmed by the harvest as they will re-grow well.



The willows are then placed on the “shelf” covered in coir fabric, and then soil. Several layers can be done depending on the stream system. In this project two layers of willows were installed, and then covered with sod.







A photo will be taken during the growing season this year so stay tuned for the “after”. It’s worth noting that a project like this requires permitting through the Conservation District and other agencies. For more information contact the District office at 449-5000 ext. 112.

## **WEEDS-BE-GONE** --Larry Hoffman, Lewis and Clark County Weed Coordinator & Greta Dige, City of Helena Weed Enforcement Officer

Spring is here and before we know it and with the warming of the weather noxious weeds are starting to surface. Noxious weeds need to be managed early in the season to get a jump on the reduction of seed production and the spread of the existing infestations. The management of noxious weeds is the responsibility of all landowners not just the neighbor. Early detection of weed populations allows a person to reduce the use of management practices – mowing, pulling, cultivation or herbicides. In the long term it will not only eliminate young plants going to seed but will keep the cost to eliminate noxious weeds low and keep the value of the land. Landowners working together to eradicate noxious weeds means a stable environment. Action can mean an increase in the grazing forage for domestic animals and wildlife, crop production and values of properties.

Lewis and Clark County Weed District and the City of Helena are gearing up for a season of noxious weeds that could be plentiful due to the moisture conditions and flood water distribution of 2011. Landowners must not assume that they are free of noxious weeds just because they were not present last year. Last year’s conditions may have produced an environment for weed growth this season.

Early spring moisture and warming of soil brings with it new infestations of noxious weeds. For the areas of the county and city White Top starts to germinate followed by Leafy Spurge and the Knapweeds. Soon to follow will be Canada thistle, Toadflax, Field Bindweed, Black Henbane, Common Mullin and Burdock. There are around thirty five (35) priority noxious weeds on the State and County list that are of concern and need to be managed.

Management of noxious weeds is the responsibility of private and public landowners. Private and public landowners – City, County, State and Federal – can

make a difference by taking steps to manage noxious weeds by working together in cooperative efforts.

The Weed District and City of Helena are here to support efforts of individuals and public agencies. Areas of support are in ; 1) management planning, 2) herbicide evaluations, rates and mixes for environment conditions, 3) community and producer projects, 4) education, weed identification and inventory – one-on-one or group, 5) spray equipment – rentals, 6) biological-insect use, 7) “No Spray” programs, 8) grazing projects, 9) reseeding or seeding disturbed areas caused by timber reduction or flood water and 10) compliance and non-compliance issues.

Community sprayers are available to residents in the Augusta, Canyon Creek, Helena, Lincoln, Spokane Hills and Wolf Creek areas. Residents are encouraged to use the sprayers for weed management on their property. Helena area landowners that need equipment there are slide-in and pull trailer or backpack sprayers that can be rented from the Weed District. Give the district a call for more information and location.

The District will initiate management of noxious weeds on county road right of ways starting in May and continue through the growing season. The City of Helena will manage noxious weeds through education and awareness throughout the season within the city limits.

Noxious Weeds-Be-Gone can be accomplished if we all work together. Noxious weeds reduction means environment protection...Do your part!  
WEED WATCH and early management of;



Whitetop



Spotted Knapweed

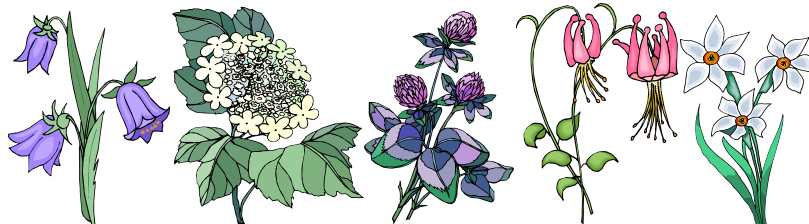


Leafy Spurge

For more information on weed management or if assistance is needed call your Weed District at 447-8372 or City of Helena at 447-8458.

## Wildflower Seed

The Conservation District has wildflower seed available to landowners. It's a mixture of native and non-native seed and costs \$35 per pound. Species include candytuft, blanket flower, clarkia, prairie aster, Palmer Penstemon, Prairie coneflower and others. For more information, contact the District office at 449-5000 ext. 112. Autumn is a great time to put this seed in the ground!!!



An additional source for wildflower seed is Valley Farms or Agri Feeds for a seed mix or mixes through Treasure State Seed in Fairfield.

## **Noxious Weeds - Collaboration is making a difference—Alan Rollo, Sun River Watershed Coordinator**

Throughout Lewis & Clark County there are many groups working to control noxious weeds. This team approach is making a difference. If we are going to continue to control and reduce noxious weeds then we need more people to step up to the plate.

In the Augusta area we need local landowners to participate in the following spray days:

June 10 - Elk Creek spray day

June 11 - Ford Creek spray day

June 24 - Sun Canyon spray day

On July 11th, volunteers are needed to help with the Sun Canyon weed pull. You can part of a group that is making an on-the-ground difference with noxious weeds.



For additional information on these events contact Alan Rollo at 727-4437 or at [arollo7@msn.com](mailto:arollo7@msn.com).

## **NRCS is Currently Accepting Forest Thinning Applications for the Ten Mile Project Area--by Jim Williams--reprint from Winter 2014/15**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Helena is currently accepting applications from private landowners for forestry improvement projects in the Tenmile Creek Watershed and South Hills of Helena. These applications are part of the Two Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership, between NRCS and the US Forest Service, which will enable cooperative forest improvement projects on public and private land to reduce wildfire threats and protect water quality and supply. The Ten Mile watershed provides the majority of the domestic water supply to Helena and the South Hills are home to many of Helena's residents and Helena's Open Lands recreational trail system. Impacts from mountain pine beetle, spruce budworm, and decades of fire suppression have resulted in uncharacteristic fuel loading in the Ten Mile watershed and Helena's South Hills. Heavy fuel loading of dead and diseased trees have increased the potential for a large landscape-scale fire that could lead to negative post-wildfire impacts to soil, water, vegetation, as well as, property damage and possible loss of life.



NRCS is offering technical and financial assistance to private landowners in this project area which includes Grizzly Gulch, Orofino Gulch, Tucker Gulch, Unionville, Colorado Gulch, and Rimini. This assistance is targeted toward helping landowners thin forests on their property to create fuel breaks and increase the resistance of the remaining trees to future pressures from insects, disease, and fire. Landowners who are interested in participating in this assistance program can call the NRCS Field Office in Helena at (406) 449-5000 extension 3 or stop by the office at 790 Colleen Street to learn more about the program and get an application.

In addition, NRCS will host a public meeting the first week of March to provide more information about the project area and the assistance being offered. Stop by or call the office to get your name on the mailing list. Once the meeting plans are finalized, flyers will be distributed to provide the date, time, location, and agenda.

**The deadline for applications for this program is**  
**May 1, 2015**

**Planning for the future with EQIP**

**By Darcy Goodson--reprint from Winter 2014/15**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the most common program that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers. Program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices. The planning staff in the field office will work with you, the owner or manager, to choose practices that fit within your operation and help promote the goals you have for the property. There are lots of choices for the landowner under the umbrella of EQIP. There are practices for crop, forest and rangeland that address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits for soil and water quality, plant and animal health, air quality and energy savings. The practices often have other benefits for the landowner and their bottom line.

For example, improving irrigation systems not only reduces labor costs and increases yields but also saves water and has positive effects on water quality. Adding reliable water sources in key areas for livestock can improve animal performance and promote more even use of pastures. In forests, thinning a stand can have long term benefits to forest health and fuels reduction, and also produces a better timber product in the long term.

Small acres to large spreads and anything in between, managing land and resources can be a huge job. NRCS is an agency that can help you accomplish your goals. Our services are free and we are accepting applications now. If you are interested in applying or want to learn more about this program please call 406-449-5000 or email me directly at [darcy.goodson@mt.usda.gov](mailto:darcy.goodson@mt.usda.gov).

**Non-Discrimination Policy**

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**The Deadline for applications for the next**  
**funding cycle is June 1, 2015**

## Practice Cost Share Program-Pilot in 2015

If you are a landowner in Lewis & Clark Conservation District and have a project you would like some financial assistance with, please contact the CD office at 449-5000 ext. 112 or go online to <http://www.lccd.mt.nacdn.net/News.htm> to find the application and guidelines. Cost share is up to \$2500 per project or 50% of the project cost, whichever comes first, on certain types of projects like riparian fencing, cross-fencing, stock water tanks or culver/bridge replacement. Applications are due April 30, 2015.

## Water Well Test Cost-Share

The Lewis & Clark Conservation District is budgeting to help off-set the cost of well testing in the Conservation District. Pick up your test kits at the Water Quality Protection District or County Extension, get your water tested. Then when you get your results, **mail a copy of the test results to the Conservation District at 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601** or email them to [lccd@mt.net](mailto:lccd@mt.net) and you will be reimbursed \$25 for at least the minimum test. We will reimburse the first 100 tests for which we receive results.

### A Friendly Reminder...

If you need to do **ANY** work in or near a stream, contact the Conservation District Office to see if you need to obtain a 310 permit. A permit takes **30-45** days to obtain. Failure to obtain a permit could result in a violation of State Law and fines for the violator. Streams covered under the law include all perennial streams including the Reservoirs on the Missouri River (Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter).

If an emergency occurs, and you need to work in the stream (if Life, Crops or Property are at imminent risk), please contact the Conservation District Office about filling out an Emergency Notification form. **These forms are required in the CD office no later than 15 days after the work is started.**

The office can be reached by calling 406-449-5000 ext. 112, or by emailing at [lccd@mt.net](mailto:lccd@mt.net).

## District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator

Whew! From calm and quiet to chaos and craziness. Spring always brings an onset of projects, planning and new ideas here at the CD office.

In the past quarter, the Supervisors have updated their annual plan of operations and their budget. Both are available on the CD website at:

<http://www.lccd.mt.nacdn.net/Ongoing%20Activities.htm>. Also in the last quarter the boards agreed to sponsor two grants, one for education materials on Invasive Species and another to assist in the completion of a stream project on Prickly Pear Creek. Look for a report on that project in upcoming issues. The CD's annual Weed Cost Share program received many applications this year. Office staff is currently going through them to assess how much money will be allocated this year.

In the upcoming quarter, the CD is looking for applications for their Practices Cost Share program. It's a pilot project, only \$7500 has been allocated for 2015. If you are interested in this program, call the CD office at 406-449-5000 ext. 112.

Flood Awareness Day will be held on May 8<sup>th</sup> this year at East Valley Middle School. Around 130 6<sup>th</sup> graders will take part in an education day all about water and flooding.

And looking further out, there will be a seminar on Soil Health in September. If you are interested in attending, please let the CD office know!



# LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

790 Colleen Street  
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**To update your mailing address, contact Chris Evans at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or email [lccd@mt.net](mailto:lccd@mt.net).**

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