



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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Spring 2016

Shifting Times, Shifting Communication

One of the tasks that BSWC member Ashley Rivero is undertaking for the Conservation District (and the Lake Helena Watershed) is outreach and social media. While there are a LOT of people out there who don't utilize social media, more and more are involved in life in that way. The Conservation District has a presence on Facebook now (www.facebook.com/lewisandclarkcd) and while our website has been around for almost 17 years now at www.lccd.mt.nacdn.org, Ashley is working on a significant expansion and update of the website.

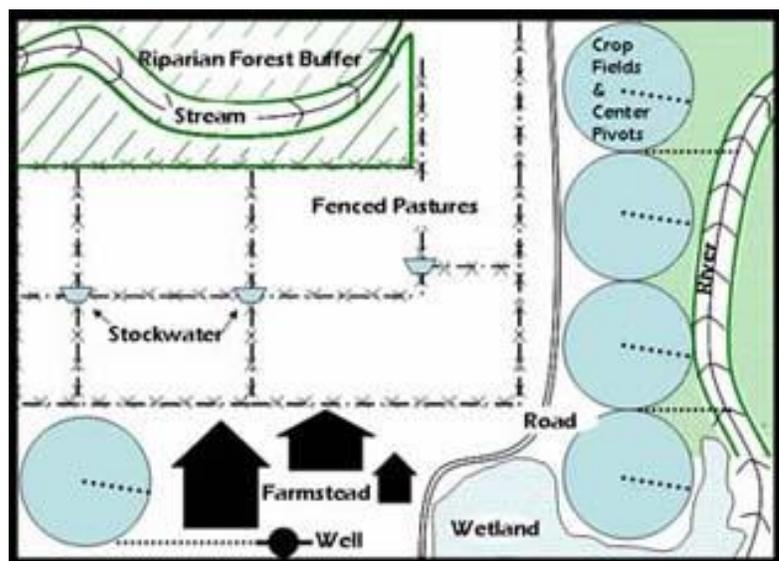
In addition, we've begun utilizing email for newsletters. While we still plan to keep the "snail mail" edition, if you would like to switch to an emailed version, just let me know, or sign up on the district's website. You can call me at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or email at lccd@mt.net. If you do sign up for the electronic newsletter, let me know so that I can take your name off the hard copy list.

Conservation Planning

Darcy Goodson, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Conservationist

"a written record of the management decisions and the conservation practices that are in use or planned for that operation"

When I tell people that I am a Soil Conservationist I usually get a puzzled look. What exactly is that? Well, in NRCS we affectionately call ourselves 'planners' because making plans is the heart and soul of our job. More specifically a conservation plan is one that addresses problems and looks to the future of a farm, ranch or forest. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been providing farmers and ranchers assistance



based off a conservation plan for decades. The conservation plan is developed for each individual or family to meet their goals for production and conservation. Our job is to combine your knowledge of the operation with the vast technical resources available to us, and improve and enhance the resources found on your property. We want to get you the people and tools you need to make your operation more sustainable, profitable and productive, for you and future generations. And it all starts with a plan.

Things that are found in a conservation plan are:

- Aerial maps of your operation,
- Soil maps and properties specific to your land
- Any data collected to evaluate your resources.
- Alternatives to your current operation that may help you meet your goals
- A schedule of planned practices to adopt the alternative that best meets the needs of you and the land.

This may sound like a lot of work but it's hard to know where you are going without knowing exactly what you have and the options available. The NRCS planners put in the time collecting data, analyzing it, and developing alternatives. We may call upon the many experts that we have at the agency like engineers, agronomists or just people who have been doing this for a long time, to put together a tool that you can use. In the end, the plan is yours. You control it, and NRCS will not share the information gathered for you without your permission.

We all have ideas and plans for the future. This process is nothing more than putting those ideas down on paper so that it is easier to communicate and take action. Managing natural resources is a complex job. You may have been doing it your whole life or it may be a new adventure, but developing a plan is worth the work.

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. While not all the seed is native, it's a nice mix that many people have had good luck with in the area. For more information, contact the District office at 449-5000 ext. 112.



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

Summer Camps

The Lewis & Clark Conservation District Board of Supervisors allocates money every year to assist in reimbursing students or their family for ½ of camp registration costs. The following camps are scheduled this year:

Montana Range Days

June 20-22

Hosted by: Upper Musselshell Conservation District

Contact: Cheryl Miller, 406-632-5534 x 101 or Cheryl.miller@mt.nacdnet.net

Ages: 4-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-13 years and 14-19 years

Montana Natura Resources Youth Camp

July 10-15

Location: Lubrecht State Forest east of Missoula

Contact: www.mnryc.org

Cost: \$175

Montana Youth Range Camp

July 31-Aug. 4

Location: Highwood Mountains

Contact: Cascade Conservation District, 406-727-3606 ext. 125

Cost: \$175

For more information on all of these, contact your local conservation district (406-449-5000 ext. 112) or the Montana DNRC at 406-444-6667, or

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/camps>. To qualify for reimbursement from Lewis &

Clark Conservation District, you must live in the Conservation District and also send a letter to the Conservation District indicating which camp you plan to attend, and where we should send the reimbursement after you've attended. Call the Conservation District for more information at 406-449-5000 ext. 112.

NRCS offers assistance for Honey Bee Habitat through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Diane Fitzgerald, NRCS Soil Conservationist



The European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) is an important pollinator of food crops in the United States. Today, over 2 million colonies, or hives, earn a living for commercial beekeepers by producing honey and pollinating crops. Hives are moved across the country, accommodating the bloom periods of various crops. Following pollination season, bees return to a home base for rest and production of the honey crop. The north central states, from Montana to Michigan, are the most important resting grounds in the country.

The area where hives are kept is known as an apiary. Apiaries are maintained in Montana from late spring through summer. Ideal habitat for bees has both grass and flowering plants to provide nectar and pollen. The nectar is made into honey, and pollen

provides nutrition to raise new bees. Beekeepers like their apiaries less than 2 miles from high quality habitat where insecticides are not used.

Recently, pests and diseases have been introduced that attack honey bees. Pesticide use and loss of wildflowers have reduced nectar and pollen availability. These factors have caused over a 30% yearly loss of hives.

Establishing or enhancing bee habitat within 2 miles of a known apiary is an opportunity to try to reverse this decline. It is important to know the pesticide use in the area. You personally may not spray insecticides or herbicides, but chemical drift from neighboring properties can affect habitat or the bees themselves.

The NRCS can assist with plantings for bees that include early, mid-season, and late blooming plants to provide a full season of nectar and pollen. Other opportunities to improve conditions for bees may include cover crops, an integrated pest management or grazing management plan, or fencing to protect new or existing bee habitat from grazing until after a killing frost.

Please contact the Helena NRCS office to discuss technical or financial assistance for honey bee habitat at (406) 449 - 5000. The NRCS has extended the signup period for the Honey Bee Initiative to April 15, 2016.

Editor's note: For those landowners in Lewis & Clark County who may not qualify for NRCS' program for the Honeybee, the Conservation District is working with local seed dealers in hopes of putting together some "standard" mixes for native irrigated, native non-irrigated, mixed native/nonnative irrigated and mixed native/nonnative non-irrigated ground. We even have a cost share program that people may qualify for smaller acreages.

It's time to think about Spring Stream Projects!

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.

Water Well Test Cost-Share



The Lewis & Clark Conservation District is helping to 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 or drop off a copy of the test results to the Conservation District at 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601** or email them to 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. Please be sure to include your mailing address for reimbursement.

District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator

In lieu of a district report this issue, I'd like to take a bit of space to bid farewell to a couple of people who I've worked with over the past 17 years with the Conservation District.

Susan McNeal, who has worked for years along the Rocky Mountain Front for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, will be retiring in April.

Sue worked closely with the Conservation District as part of the Partner's for Fish and Wildlife Program. We had a "Partner's Agreement" which accomplished an amazing amount of work, from fencing and stock water pipeline projects, to stream restoration projects, to releases of insects that fight invasive plants and many other projects.

I have worked for the Conservation District for nearly 17 years and Sue has been along for the ride longer than I have been here. Many landowners in Lewis & Clark County have worked with her and projects that she's completed will have far reaching effects.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently re-organizing and it is uncertain as to whether Sue's position will be filled. It will be a very sad thing if it's not.

A second "farewell" is to Alan Rollo. Alan has been the Sun River Watershed Coordinator for longer than I've worked for the Conservation District. The bridges built and ties made with the community in the Sun River Watershed in all 3 counties are truly inspiring. I think back to my first few years with the Conservation District and specifically the Willow Creek Feeder Canal project comes to mind. Alan was instrumental in the compromises that group worked toward.

Alan has worked tirelessly for water quality in the watershed, from organizing community events like the Weed Whacker Rodeo to working individually with landowners on irrigation/permitting needs, to coordinating stream restoration projects.

The Watershed recently hired a new coordinator who will begin work in April. I'm sure the outlook is good for the watershed, and Alan is staying on as an Associate Supervisor, but he and Starla, his wife, will be missed.

Thank you Sue and Alan for all the work that you've accomplished for Lewis & Clark Conservation District and beyond! Your absence will be felt!

PARTNER NEWS

WEEDS – NOXIOUS – WEEDS

Lewis & Clark County Weed District



The growing season is fast approaching and that means "noxious weeds" will be in full bloom early this spring.

The spread of noxious weeds is a threat to pastures, crop lands, wetlands, private and public lands and recreational areas of Lewis and Clark County. Noxious weeds are a common problem to all lands of the county and state of Montana.

“NOXIOUS” is a legal designation for many kinds of weeds. The designation is determined by a weed’s potential threat ecologically, socially or economically and varies by county. Species of noxious weeds are legally mandated by the state and counties for management by landowners.

Why Care? Weeds displace native plants, reduce habitat for native and grazing animals and threaten diversity of wild lands and waterways. Weeds spoil pastures, rangelands, cropland, and property values, alter soil fertility, dry up water supplies, poison animals, decrease agricultural production, clog rivers and reduce the recreational value of open space of the county, state and federal lands.

Weed control is extremely expensive and will continue unless landowners – public and private – manage existing and new infestations. In Montana noxious weeds are spreading and invading private and public lands at a rate of 12-14 per cent a year. Crop losses are estimated at over \$42 million plus a year in Montana.

Control and management of noxious weeds is everyone’s responsibility. Now is the time to take action against invasive species!

What YOU can do: **Manage** noxious weeds on your property, be an informed land owner; **Know** the noxious weeds of the county; **Stay** on established roads and trails; **Don’t** walk or drive in weed patches; **Feed** animals certified forage; **Report** noxious weed sightings and **Prevent** new--or the spread--of infestations. Do your part in the reduction of noxious weeds and protecting the environment.

Be On the Lookout for the main noxious weeds in Lewis and Clark County:

- Leafy Spurge
- Knapweed – Spotted, Diffuse and Russian
- Whitetop
- Toadflax – Dalmatian and Yellow
- Canada Thistle
- Salt Cedar
- Field Bindweed
- Houndstongue
- Sulfur Cinquefoil
- Hoary Alyssum
- Common Tansy
- St. John’s Wort
- Purple Loosestrife
- Dyer’s Woad
- Yellow Starthistle
- Common Burdock
- Black Henbane
- Common Mullein
- Garlic Mustard

If you need a weed identification booklet – Call 406-447-8372 or stop by the Lewis and Clark County Weed District office – 3402 Cooney Drive, Helena, Montana.

For more information on noxious weeds or to report noxious weed sightings, call your local county weed district – 406-447-8372.

Spring Private Applicator Workshop-Helena

Lewis & Clark County Fairgrounds, Entry Hall, Helena MT

Tuesday May 10, 2016

3 continuing education credits

3 commercial/government credits

You will need your Private Applicator license number at sign in to receive the credits.

RSVP REQUIRED-For registration forms contact:

Lewis & Clark County Extension

100 West Custer

Helena, MT 59602

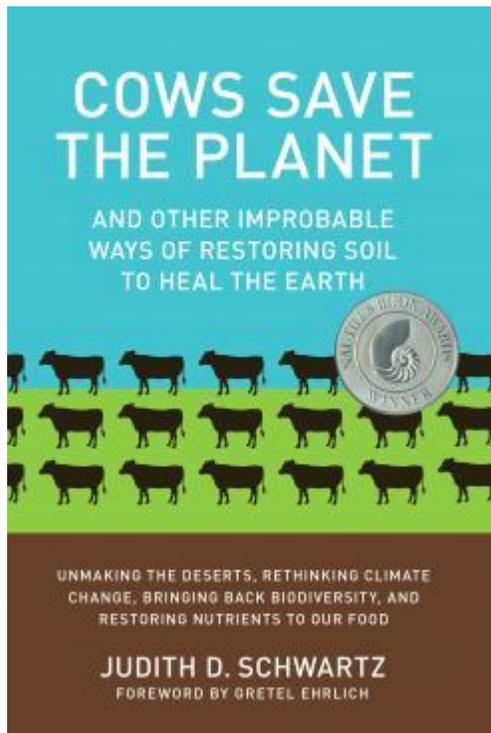
Questions? Call (406) 447-8346

Montana State University encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of special accommodations or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the office at (406) 447-8346 in advance of your participation or visit.

The Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.

Some More Interesting Reading

By Supervisor Scott Blackman



Cows Save the Planet: And Other Improbable Ways of Restoring Soil to Heal the Earth

By Judith Schwartz; Chelsea Green Publishing, May 2013, 240 pages

Like I stated a few months back, I like to read some unique books.

In this book, Judith Schwartz looks at soil and soil health in different views than what most people would think of. For a journalist and not a soil scientist she makes it an interesting read for the most part. She reveals that for many problems like climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss, droughts, floods, wildfires, rural poverty, malnutrition, and obesity – there can be positive, alternative scenarios to the degradation and devastation we face. It is up to us to turn these crises into opportunities, but it all depends on how we treat the soil. She uses examples from the works of thinkers and doers, renegade scientists

and institutional whistleblowers from around the world,

Schwartz uses examples how under grazing is as harmful as over grazing. She goes into how the carbon dioxide problems that we have are not from emissions but can be caused by our traditional farming practices. If carbon is returned to the soil, emissions can be lowered and the return increases soil fertility at the same time.

Well, I hope this is enough to get you to want to read this book. Maybe next time we might look at MIG grazing chickens or something totally different like the spine of the continent.



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Come see us on the newly expanded website! www.lccd.mt.nacdnet.org We're also on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lewisandclarkcd

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To update your mailing address, contact Chris Evans at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or email lccd@mt.net.

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