



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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Summer 2018

Lewis & Clark County Day on the Range

Please join the NRCS and the Lewis and Clark Conservation District for a Day on the Range on August 14, 2018. It runs from 10-3 and the cost will be \$10/person to help cover lunch.

Topics include:

- Range Monitoring
- Invasive Species insect releases and monitoring
- Rainfall simulator
- Montana Wild presentation on Raptors

Cost is \$10/person and covers a sack lunch and any materials.

For more information contact the Lewis & Clark Conservation District at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or via email at lccd@mt.net.

The Floods of 2018



For Lewis & Clark County, this will go down in history as a pretty odd flood year. After near record snow pack in the mountains, and initial lower elevation flood on Spokane Creek, then early season flooding in the Helena Valley on Ten Mile Creek and Prickly Pear Creek, record, or near record, rainfall in the northern part of the county created perfect conditions for an extremely fast flood event on the Dearborn watershed and Elk Creek and Sun River watersheds.

Many bridges went out on private roads, roads are impacted, culverts clogged or just gone.

Irrigation headgates and pipe were damaged and stream systems have completely changed in some cases.

If you are a landowner who was affected by these events, please contact the Lewis & Clark Conservation District to let us know what damages you suffered, and if you have stream work that needs to be done, especially culverts and bridges, you'll need to talk to us about stream permitting. Emergency notices can be obtained on our website, or I can email or mail them to you. Full 310 permitting can



take several weeks, but we are looking at having multiple board meetings as necessary to deal with the workload of permits. For more information, contact the Lewis & Clark Conservation District at 406-449-5000 ext. 112.

In addition, the Farm Service Agency is doing an ECP sign up from July 9 to August 24. The program won't cover anything in the stream but may assist with fencing and other issues. Contact Kathy or Nina at the Farm Service Agency office at 406-449-5000 ext. 2.

The Eagle Has Landed

Jeff Ryan - Lewis & Clark Conservation District

No - not another moon landing. Something more important - young folks working together to restore eroding stream banks.

Back in April, on a Saturday morning, just before high water hit Ten Mile Creek, my grandson Drake and I went out to the creek, near the Colorado Gulch turn off west of Helena, to help a troop of scouts sprig willow cuttings on the eroding stream banks. Eric Roberts, FWP had called me earlier to let me know he would be out there with a boy scout troop to help sprig willow cuttings.





The project was coordinated by Seth Mousel as his Eagle Scout project. Seth is a Life Scout in Boy Scout Troop 214 and a Junior at Capitol High School. The project was quite an undertaking. Seth had to mobilize about 20 of his troop members, to not only cut and collect area willow sprigs, but also direct the planting of several hundred of them on about 150 yards of eroding stream banks.



Most of the planting of was accomplished using metal bars to make holes in the bank for the willow with a lot of hard hammering of metal bars and cuttings into the stream bank soil. Drake and I had it a little easier. We had brought along our high-pressure water pump to bore the holes for planting with a stream of water. The machine uses a 6-foot narrow pipe to bore the holes hydraulically - like a pressure washer on steroids.

Overall the project was a success. We knew many of the plantings might wash out when high water hit and I've not been back since to see how they fared. But getting any woody vegetation on the eroding bank was a great step towards slowing the rate of erosion.

If we could have laid the vertical banks back a bit with a covering of an erosion control fabric and then did all the willow planting we did, our risk would have gone way down. That had been similar to Eric Robert's first plan, but unfortunately the area is in a mapped floodplain area and comes under FEMA mandated County floodplain

regulation, that even though there is no infrastructure anywhere near this restoration project, a permit is needed. Obtaining the permit requires a time-consuming engineering analysis and costs several thousands of dollars.

This floodplain permit issue has adversely affected other restoration projects in the Helena area and numerous statewide projects. We are working with a committee at DNRC to try to identify flexibility in the regulation, but sometimes it seems like that is more difficult than a moon landing. I hope we can go forward with the regulation changes so good restoration projects are not harmed by the excessive costs of time and money the regulation requires.

Again, many thanks to Seth Mousel for coordinating this great project, Seth's parents for providing a fine lunch, the scouts of Troop 214, Eric Roberts, all the other folks that helped and grandson Drake for helping old grandpa.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

The Farm Service Agency has an ECP (Emergency Conservation Program) signup from July 9, 2018 to August 24, 2018. This program is in response to the widespread flooding in Lewis & Clark County this year, and may assist with removal of debris from farmland, grading, shaping, or leveling land, restoring some fences and conservation structures.

For more information contact your local FSA office at 406-449-5000 ext. 2, or come into the office at 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT.

District Report

Chris Evans, District Administrator

It has been a wild quarter at the Lewis & Clark Conservation District. Our last issue touched on the lower elevation flooding in the Spokane Creek watershed. That was obviously just the beginning of the flooding. Since then, Ten Mile Creek has washed across the Helena Valley in 2 separate flood events, with snowpack run off and then again in mid-June with heavy rain on already saturated soils. Landowners are reminded of the need for 310 permits to replace bridges, culverts etc. If you have experienced an emergency and need to do work in or near the stream, you may be covered under the emergency provision of the 310 law. Give the office a call if you have questions. If you need to complete some work that's not considered to be an emergency, contact the CD office about filing a 310 permit application.

Unfortunately Elk Creek, Smith Creek, Ford Creek and all of the other smaller streams on the mountain front don't have stream gauges in them to measure flow. Given the amount of rain (from 6 to 12 inches depending on who I talked with) and the already saturated ground, it was inevitable that some flooding would happen. Water rose quickly in and around the town of Augusta. It is currently unknown what the magnitude of the flood event was in Augusta.

Let's not forget the other parts of the county that have had flooding, including the Lincoln area, the Dearborn, Lyons Creek, Gladstone Creek and more.

So far for the calendar year, we're up to 15 emergency notifications (filed after the work is done) and twenty-two 310 permit applications. I have a feeling that those numbers will both increase since the water is really just starting to get to normal flow levels in some drainages.

Partner News

USDA Reopens Application Period for Producers Recovering from Cattle Loss, Additional Feed Purchases, Other Disasters

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is reopening the application period for two disaster assistance programs in response to statutory changes made by Congress earlier this year.

The FSA began accepting disaster assistance program applications on June 4 from agricultural producers who suffered losses of livestock, honeybees, farm-raised fish, feed, grazing, and other losses due to natural disasters.

FSA is now accepting new applications for losses for calendar year 2017 or 2018 filed under the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) for livestock death losses due to an eligible cause of loss or Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) for additional feed purchases, grazing losses, or other feed losses.

In February, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which made several changes to these two disaster programs, including:

- Removing ELAP's \$20 million fiscal year funding cap, enabling FSA to pay producers' 2017 applications in full and their 2018 applications as soon as they are approved.
- Removing the per-person and legal entity annual program payment limitation of \$125,000 for LIP for 2017 and future years. (The income limitation applies as it did before, meaning producers with an adjusted gross income of more than \$900,000 are not eligible.)
- Changing LIP to allow producers to receive a payment for injured livestock that are sold within 30 days for a reduced price due to an injury that was directly related to an eligible loss event. Previously, the program only covered financial loss for livestock death above normal mortality.

Producers interested in LIP or ELAP should contact their local FSA Office immediately and before August 1, 2018. There will be a deadline announced for applications to be filed within 60 days following the date the information is placed in the Federal register. To apply, producers will need to provide verifiable and reliable production records and other information about their operation.

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and LIP and ELAP are two of many programs available through USDA to help producers recover. Learn more at <https://www.usda.gov/disaster>.



LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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To update your mailing address, contact Chris Evans at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or email lccd@mt.net. If you would rather receive this via email, let me know!