



# The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

Volume 55, Issue 1

Winter 2015/2016

## SPRING PLANTING

Jeff Ryan, Supervisor, Lewis and Clark Conservation District



Lake Helena  
Shoreline  
Project: Before

Lake Helena  
Shoreline  
Project: After



Spring planting? My garden is still under a foot of snow and I doubt if my neighbor's back forty is ready for seed either. What I want to share is a few thoughts on streambank planting.

This is the time of year, if you've got an eroding bank on your stream and you want to treat it with something other than riprap or car bodies and want to use vegetation, you need to start preparing for the project. So why so early? The answer is that in most of Montana one of the most effective plant materials to use is willow and this time of the year they are in dormancy weathering the winter. So am I suggesting you try to dig out the willow and plant it on your eroding stream bank (in the frozen ground)? Of course not. What I am suggesting is that now is the time to cut willow stems.

Most species of willow are able to generate root growth along their stems, if while they are in dormancy, they are planted in soil. There are numerous species of willow in Montana and I wish I could identify even a few of them, but I can't. The good news is that in most parts of Montana, including our area, one of the most common species (and one of the best for streambank planting) is sandbar or sometimes called coyote willow. This is the 6-8 foot tall plant you see along most of our major rivers and streams - the one that captures your 5 dollar fly and saves those trout. If you aren't a fly fisher, it is the plant that has a long narrow leaf with a jagged sawtooth like leaf edge.



Willow cutting-In Action!

#### A few pointers on willow collection/cutting:

First make sure the stand is relatively younger growth. This time of year the younger willow stands have a light reddish hue on the upper reaches of the stem. The stem bark is usually pretty smooth and if in doubt, just take a sharp object (fingernail can work) and peel off some of the bark. If a moist green veneer is exposed, the willow is young and vibrant for cutting and transplant.

Cutting length will vary depending on how you want to plant the willow. If you want to sandwich them horizontally between fabric soil lifts (see pictures) length should be about 4-6 feet in length. If you are going to sprig them vertically in holes you've punched in the bank, they can be shorter, depending on the hole depth and where groundwater is in the

hole. There are a number of other planting techniques, but whatever you use, the key is assuring that at least 80% of the stem length is in the ground. Again, remember that the roots form along the stem length and if a lot of the stem is exposed above ground it will form too many leaves that rob energy from the roots. Vary stem diameters from approximately finger/thumb size to about 1.5 inch diameter. The smaller stems take off earlier in the season, but the bigger diameter has more stored energy to help later in the growing season.

I would suggest bundling willow in groups of about 25 cuttings each. Old baling twine works just fine for the tie together. One twine surrounding the cuttings is good, but if you want to compact the bundle for storage purposes, twine at the lower end of the bundle and another further up works just fine. You can bundle more together, but a bundle of 25 is easier to handle and simplifies keeping track of numbers cut.



After the bundles are formed you need to store them in a refrigerated environment until you are going to use them. The north side of a building with snow covering them works fine, but if you are going to plant them later in the spring you need to arrange for refrigeration. You would be surprised how many tightly bound willow

bundles you can get in a mid-sized walk in cooler. Currently, I am storing about 400 hundred in a chest freezer that should have been full of elk if they would have cooperated more last fall.

The willow should be immersed in water a minimum of 24 hours prior to use in the stream bank. The soaking activates enzymes that stimulate root growth. You can soak them for up to two weeks but at that point they form fragile roots that make transplant very difficult.

Good luck with your spring planting and don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions. We would also welcome visiting your potential streambank project and sharing ideas with you on approaches. We have some grant resources available to help with projects on a case by case basis.

A further note is that **prior to actually doing your stream project or ANY stream project, a 310 permit is required from the Conservation District.** This permit takes

30-45 days to obtain and there is no cost for it from Lewis & Clark Conservation District. If your proposed project is in another county, you'll need to contact the Conservation District in that office for specific details for permits in that county.

For more information on permitting or potential grant assistance, contact: Chris Evans, Lewis and Clark Conservation District Administrator at 406-449-5000 ext. 112 or via email at [lccd@mt.net](mailto:lccd@mt.net).



Ice ramping can do some damage to newer plantings, but they generally weather the damage pretty well.

## 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.

## New Face in the Lewis & Clark Conservation District Office

Ashley Rivero is a Montana Conservation Corps Member and she will be working directly with the Lewis & Clark Conservation District as well as Helena's Water Quality District. Ashley is a graduate of Barry University, where she received a BA in Marine Biology and was the founder of the Greater Environmental Club. Ashley also volunteered her time

with the City of Miami Beach for environmental education and outreach to the public. She was also a scuba Instructor and helped teach students about environmental stressors in the ocean.

After graduation, Ashley decided to see what this country has to offer before fully committing to her career goals by purchasing a National Parks Annual Pass. She set off on a three month backpacking road trip around the county visiting over 17 National Parks from south Florida to Maine, then headed west towards Washington, down through California, then back to the east coast. She hiked, biked, climbed, and explored all hours of the day and gazed upon many starry nights. She then set off on the grueling process of applying for jobs where she landed an internship in San Francisco building trails for the National Parks. Finally, she was on the path towards working with the environment. Then, she was contacted by the Montana Conservation Corps in regards to a watershed internship. Needless to say the job provided the exact opportunity she was looking for. Ashley has her heart set on environmental land and water management as well as municipal water.

Ashley hopes to learn everything she can while here in Montana from the environment to the stories of the generations. She plans on doing a lot of snowboarding, biking, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, and possibly even getting dry-suit certified in Canyon Ferry. Ashley has explored the depths of the ocean and is ready to tackle the mountainous region that Montana has to offer. Ashley is looking forward to meeting and working with the people of Montana.



## **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](mailto: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 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. Please be sure to include your mailing address for reimbursement.

## **District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator**

It's been a crazy several months at the Conservation District, and I missed getting the fall/winter newsletter out to people. An opportunity arose to apply to the Natural Resource Conservation Service for funds under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The CD Board decided that it would be good to apply for a 3 County project for Forest Health Improvement. Anyone driving around Jefferson, Broadwater and Lewis & Clark Counties has seen the tree death from the insect kills and increasing encroachment of juniper into rangeland areas. Our application made the first round cut and we're waiting to hear results on the full application. If we are successful, up to \$1.7 million will be available to private land managers to thin trees, remove dead and dying trees, create fuel breaks and deal with encroaching trees and juniper. It was a grueling process but we're hopeful that we'll be successful.

District Administrator Chris Evans and Supervisor Jeff Ryan attended the Montana Association of Conservation Districts Area 6 meeting in White Sulphur Springs in September. We brought two resolutions to that meeting, one of which was successful. The successful resolution was in regard to the Floodplain Permitting rules and how the current rules impact stream projects, often times forcing an end to the projects due to increased costs resulting from Floodplain Permit requirements. The 2<sup>nd</sup> resolution was in regard to funding mechanisms by Natural Resource Conservation Service. While it was unsuccessful, the board plans to bring it back at the 2016 Area Meeting.

In November, 5 supervisors and Chris Evans attended the MACD Convention in Missoula. "Change" seemed to be the main theme of the Convention and opinions are mixed as to whether changes made have been favorable ones.

Since 2015 has concluded, I can summarize that for the calendar year, the board had only 26 permit applications with 6 complaints and 1 emergency. It was a relatively quiet year for 310 permit numbers, but we had a number of big stream related projects, including an extensive review of North Fork Stickney Creek, participation in the Elliott Stream Project on Prickly Pear Creek and other issues.

The Conservation District wrapped up 2 DNRC grants in 2015, including the Cover Crop Demonstration with Jim and Tim Dusenberry. This was a 3 year project that ended up with 2 workshops and some great information getting out to local landowners in regard to the current Soil Health craze going on in the country. In addition, we wrapped up the Elliott Project Grant with DNRC for the stream project on Prickly Pear Creek. That site includes a new fishing access site and was the culmination of a lot of work by many different agencies.

The Board met in December to work on the Annual Plan update and the 2016 Budget for the Conservation District. Once finalized, both of those items will be available on the Conservation District's website.

In January, the District welcomed Ashley Rivero (see included bio from Ashley), as part of the Big Sky Watershed Corps program. Ashley will be serving with the CD, the Lake

---

Helena Watershed Group and the Water Quality Protection District working on issues that we all need help with.

District Administrator Chris Evans traveled to Tampa Florida in January as a subpoenaed witness in a federal trial. The trial had something to do with a 310 permit from 2008. We anticipate learning more about the matter once the trial is complete.

## **Weed Cost Share Program**

Once again in 2016 the Conservation District is offering up to \$1500 per landowner/manager or up to \$5000 as a 50/50 match for weed management. If you or someone you know would like to apply for this, contact the Conservation District office at 449-5000 ext.112 or via email at [lccd@mt.net](mailto:lccd@mt.net). Applications need to be in by March 31.

## **PARTNER NEWS**

Helena: Conservation program to help Private Forestlands

John George, district conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Helena, today announced the availability of funds to help landowners protect private forestlands across the South Hills of Helena and Ten Mile Watershed. The funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is targeted funds from the Farm bill to protect critical resources across multiple land uses, and encourages private owners to improve forest health and reduce fuel hazards. "The opportunity to clean up these forest lands is imperative, especially with the fires we saw in 2015 across the West," George said.

The Helena NRCS Field Office is accepting applications for EQIP continually for projects throughout the county, however \$268,000 are currently available from Interstate 15 to the Continental Divide, north to Highway 12 and south to Jefferson City. Applicants must contact the Helena or Whitehall NRCS Field Offices to be considered for this year's priority funding.

"The Program is an opportunity for private landowners to ensure the long-term use, health and survivable space on these forest lands," said Mr. George. "I encourage private landowners to contact our local NRCS office to see how this program can help them achieve their management goals."

A pair of meetings will be held in February to explain the program, how projects are implemented, and how residents can participate. There will be a meeting at the Baxendale Fire Department February 4 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and the Unionville Fire Department February 11 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The application deadline is May 20, 2016, and this is scheduled to be the last year for these targeted dollars.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program allows landowners to identify natural resources issues on their lands and then organize a line of attack as to how to address those issues. Eligible landowners can contact the local NRCS field office at 790 Colleen St., Helena, MT 59601 or at 406 449 5000 x 101 to learn more.

Learn more about opportunities in Lewis & Clark County and Montana by visiting the NRCS Montana EQIP webpage at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mt/programs/financial/eqip/>



**LEWIS & CLARK  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

790 Colleen Street  
Helena Montana 59601

Prsrt Std  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Helena, MT  
Permit No.  
243

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

STAN FRASIER	CHAIRMAN
SCOTT BLACKMAN	VICE CHAIRMAN
BOB BUSHNELL	TREASURER
RON INGERSOLL	MEMBER
JEFF RYAN	MEMBER
STEPHEN GRANZOW	MEMBER
SARAH HOWE-COBB	MEMBER
ALAN ROLLO	ASSOCIATE

**OFFICE STAFF**

CHRIS EVANS	ADMINISTRATOR
ASHLEY RIVERO	BIG SKY WSHED CORPS
JOHN GEORGE	NRCS DC
DIANE FITZGERALD	NRCS SOIL CON
DARCY GOODSON	NRCS SOIL CON
JIM WILLIAMS	NRCS SOIL CON TECH

<b>Contents:</b>	<b>Pg.</b>
Streambank Planting	1
New Face	4
Well Test Project	5
District Report	6
Weed Cost Share	7
Partner News	7

Come see us on the web at [www.lccd.mt.nacdnet.org](http://www.lccd.mt.nacdnet.org)

**LCCD SPONSORS-** *"Those who assume responsibility."*

Bank of the Rockies, N.A.  
Murdoch's  
Power Townsend  
Schatz Ranch & Leasing  
Westech Environmental Services Inc.

**LCCD STEWARDS-** *"Those in charge of a large estate."*

Bridger Veterinary  
Broken O Ranch  
Prickly Pear Simmental Ranch

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

**LCCD CHAMPIONS-** *"Those who fight for a cause."*

Meadowlark Search  
Northwestern Energy  
Sieben Livestock  
Sieben Ranch Company