



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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Winter 16/17

Cheatgrass Management Seminar

The Lewis and Clark Conservation District and the Lewis and Clark County Weed District are co-hosting a seminar on the management of “cheatgrass” on forage and range/pasture land. Lunch will be provided. Four re-certification credits will be offered for private, commercial and government applicators.

When: February 2, 2017, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Where: Valley Community Center

COST : \$15 PER PERSON

PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by **January 26, 2017**

Topics will include:

Management of cheatgrass on crop/hay land

Management of cheatgrass on range/pasture

Management of water and herbicides

Management Opportunity – Soil Inoculation for cheatgrass

Speakers will include:

Jane Mangold – MSU – Rangeland

Susan Tallman – NRCS – Forage

Cecil Tharp – Water Quality and Herbicides - MSU

Cheryl Swartzkopf – Soil Inoculant – Weed Suppressive Bacteria

To register, contact the CD office at 406-449-5000 ext. 112, or email lccd@mt.net. You may register on our website at <http://lccd.mt.nacdn.net/org/index.php/2016/12/12/cheatgrass-management-seminar-2017/>.

We will accept credit cards, or you may use PayPal, or you can send a check with registration information (# attending, contact phone number or email) to Lewis & Clark Conservation District, 790 Colleen Street, Helena, MT 59601. The cost is \$15/person.

Stewardship: Part 1 of 4 – by Chris Evans, District Administrator

What is stewardship? We hear the word used a lot in the natural resource field. Having grown up in agriculture, I knew stewardship before I knew what it was.

There was an inherent understanding that if you treated the land and your resources well, they would do the same for

you. Going to college, I learned the “book” part of stewardship—the definitions—especially as they relate to the natural world.

Upon preparing to write this edition of the CD newsletter, I asked a couple of supervisors what they think stewardship is. Our newest Supervisor, Jeanette Nordahl,

said that she thinks stewardship is “thoughtfulness, consideration and respect”. Jeff Ryan, had a pithier comment, but it boiled down to “taking care in your actions because they will likely directly affect you”. Merriam Webster’s online dictionary defines it as “the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something; the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care”. Stewardship implies that careful use of a resource is important because in the long-term, it will pay off.



To me, stewardship has always essentially meant “balance”: use, but not abuse; thinking about future generations.

When I look at our county, I see diversity in the type of land ownership. However, each of us is responsible for our own piece of the county. There are 3 main types of ownership on private land: ranchers/farmers, the small acreage landowners, and urban properties. Each of us is also responsible for the things we do “out there” whether on public land, in town or wherever, because our actions can have a direct effect on soil health, air quality, plant quality and water quality for a larger area.

The defined mission of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District is “to provide Leadership in the Conservation and Wise Use of Soil, Water and related Resources”. This mission basically defines our realm of stewardship: We are here to help Landowners--big and small--to the best of our

ability, and do it fairly & equitably. We try to achieve that mission in several ways.



First, the CD is the lead in convening the Local Work Group. This work group assists NRCS in coordination of their programs. We call the meeting and welcome anyone who’d like to be there. Based on the need on the landscape in the county, the group tries to define the highest priority for the county, to help NRCS determine what the greatest natural resources stewardship concern is for our residents. Future articles will discuss NRCS programs and how they tie into the Local Work Group recommendations. But, while federal programs are important and are a part of the CD’s planning, enrollment in programs for the sake of checking boxes on a list and getting an allotment of funds from Washington D.C. lacks the concept of true stewardship, it’s not simply about money, but about meeting the needs of local landowners, both small and large. Sometimes, that one cross-fence or off-stream water supply can have a more meaningful effect on the larger landscape than that “full deal plan” by a neighbor that ranks higher simply because they have more land uses to treat or can afford to take on larger projects than a beginning or smaller operation can cash flow.



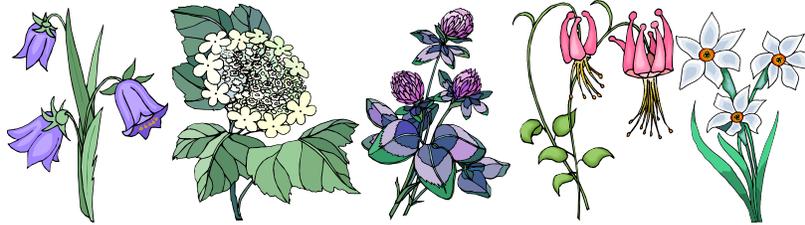
The second way we help landowners is through our varied education programs, including the website, newsletters, workshops and seminars, camp sponsorships and the Envirothon. A large part of the CD budget every year is set aside for education purposes. We try to assess the needs for education every year when we revise our Annual Plan of Operations which is also tied into our annual budget. A priority is to provide education for both large and small

Jeanette says that she looks forward to serving on the Lewis & Clark County Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

She will finish out Bob Bushnell's position as an appointed supervisor and if she desires, will run for re-election in 2018.

Wildflower Seed

The Conservation District has wildflower seed available to landowners. Fall is a great time to seed this mix! It is 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.

Egge Diversion Dam Removal--Jeff Ryan, Supervisor

This is a project about 175 miles east of Helena on the Musselshell River just south of Lavina. For the last two years I've had the opportunity to help with it, first with some technical suggestions on the willow soil lift component of the project and recently in November, the actual construction phase. It's a good example of collaboration with the Lower Musselshell Conservation District and the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) with a little help from the Lewis & Clark Conservation District and numerous other partners such as the Montana Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Musselshell Water Coalition. A special thank you needs to go to Mike Ruggles, FWP Fisheries Biologist for his tireless work on this project and the watershed.

In 2011 the Musselshell River did what major rivers can do - it responded to snowpack and rain events and flooded, but with a duration and ferocity that also changed major portions of its floodplain and created numerous new river channels. The Egge Irrigation Diversion was hit hard by this event. A new 160 foot wide channel was cut



Figure 1 Post Flood March 2016

around the diversion dam and it was severely damaged structurally.

The costs to replace this decades old concrete dam were very

substantial and so the irrigators decided replacement with pumps was more cost effective and would allow them to respond to future river movements if pump relocations were needed. The irrigation interests would be served, but also removing the diversion would benefit the local fisheries. Approximately 24 miles of river and two major tributaries would be reconnected to the river system allowing fish passage that had been obstructed for several decades.



Figure 2 Preparing to Blast the Dam

completed this spring it will become a demonstration site for the Lower Musselshell Conservation District to show local landowners a cost effective alternative to riprap. I'll do



Figure 3 Beginning to pull back dam

There are a number of photos attached to show project progress to date.



Figure 4 Placement of fill to start project

front of the flood events? That snow piling up will be melting sooner than we think!!!

My contribution to this project was minor. The new 160 foot channel would be filled as a new floodplain and a willow soil lift would be constructed to face the new flood plain on the existing channel. I provided some technical assistance to the willow and the floodplain design.

When the soil lift is a follow-up story this summer on the results of the willow soil lift component of this project, but the major effort went into the dam removal. It was removed but required explosives and major machine work. Apparently, the designers and concrete folks of that bygone era might have a few things to teach us all.

In closing - again, I'll follow up on the final progress with this project this summer, but a heads up to our own backyard. We are looking at major snow this winter and perhaps flooding in our valley areas. This was a story about a great response to a major flood, but wouldn't it be better to put these kinds of efforts up

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.

The Aftershock Investor

A Crash Course in Staying A FLOAT In a Sinking ECONOMY

By David Wiedemer Phd., Robert A. Wiedmer, and CINDY S. Spitzer

A Review by Scott Blackman, District Supervisor

This is an interesting read, especially during any new administration. It goes into depth of politics and investing.

The book is non- party specific and is scary about the future of not only the USA, but all world economy. These authors predicted the 2008 correction that happened in their first book "Aftershock" years ahead of what happened in 2008. And yes they have a prediction in this book also.

Yes this is a totally different type of book than I normally write about, but I read a lot of different educational books. I enjoyed this book and may reread it soon.

PARTNER NEWS

Conservation Stewardship Program

John George, District Conservationist, NRCS

The Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP - is the largest conservation program in the United States. Starting as the Conservation Security Program in 2002, a complex watershed-based pilot with just 2 million acres in its first year, the Conservation Stewardship Program has evolved to a nationwide program that has enrolled more than 70 million acres since 2010. Fifteen years of experience and evolution in the program bring us to where we are today, poised to deliver improvements to a program that kicks conservation up another notch.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, rotational grazing, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat - all while maintaining active agricultural production on their land. Crop producers, ranchers, dairy farmers, forest landowners, poultry producers, organic farmers, and specialty crop farmers all participate in the program. It is delivering real results on the ground and for the nation's natural resources.

CSP is a continual signup program with batch periods to finalize rankings into the program, so you can always come into the Field Office in Helena to visit with us about the program at 790 Colleen St. in Helena.

If you are interested in applying or want to learn more about this program please call us at 406-449-5000 or email us directly at darcy.goodson@mt.usda.gov or jonathan.george@mt.usda.gov

Planning for the future with EQIP --Darcy Goodson & John George

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 tree stand can have long term benefits to forest health and fuels reduction, and also produces a more aesthetically pleasing property with a greater diversity of foraging species for wildlife.

NRCS has two funds pools to place applications into for potential funding. One fund pool treats all resource concerns identified on the property, these treatment types are called Resource Management System (RMS) treatments. These types of treatments are great for the landowner that has the cash flow to commit to a full treatment schedule and taking on a commitment of that level. For the operator/landowner that needs to look at project work on more of a case by case bases NRCS has a "Progressive" fund pool that allows producers to look at the most pressing issue/issues on their property and simply apply for a smaller project. While the Field Office will plan with you at the "RMS" level, and help you identify all the resource concerns on your property, and the tools available to address those concerns the operator/landowner will ultimately make the decision on what is best for their operation and how to move forward with their application. Our office is here to help you work thru those decision making processes.

Small acreages 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 you can stop by the office at 790 Colleen St. in Helena, call us at 406-449-5000 or email us directly at darcy.goodson@mt.usda.gov , diane.fitzgerald@mt.usda.gov , or jonathan.george@mt.usda.gov



2016 Benefits for Livestock Producers

If you had an interest in pasture/grazing land during 2016 and you had an interest in livestock, you may be eligible for a payment through the local Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Livestock producers with owned or leased land in the following Montana Counties may be eligible for 2016 drought benefits: Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Fallon, Flathead, Granite, **Lewis & Clark**, Missoula, Park, Powder River, Powell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, or Teton. These counties were designated eligible for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) based on the U.S Drought Monitor.

LFP payments are based on calculations involving acreage and livestock numbers. Please contact the FSA Office ASAP at (406) 449-5000 if you wish to make an appointment to explore your eligibility and amount of potential payments through this program.

Do not delay; the deadline to apply and provide all required supporting documentation for 2016 LFP benefits is January 30, 2017.



Assistance Available for Livestock Death Losses

If you experience livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible cause, you may be eligible for a payment through the USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA). Following are some examples of the previous 2016 payment rates:

Beef, Non-adult, Less than 400 pounds	\$757.59
Beef, Cow	\$1,987.89

If you experience livestock death losses as a direct result of an adverse weather event, or due to attacks by animals protected by Federal law or reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government, please contact the Lewis & Clark County Farm Service Agency immediately at (406) 449-5000.

It is imperative to keep accurate records, including:

- An accurate, daily record of livestock the ranching operation has on hand, including date of birth, date of death and cause of death for every death loss suffered.
- It is recommended that you keep dated pictures to help document each death loss due to **all** causes, including all normal causes, weather-related causes, or predator causes.
- Verifiable documentation to support beginning and ending inventory of livestock (such as Department of Revenue personal property tax statements, financial statements or loan records).

Producers who suffered livestock death losses must submit a notice of loss within 30 days of the loss becoming apparent.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Montana Association of Conservation District Scholarships

Two \$500 Scholarships are available for Montana students – high school seniors or students who are attending an accredited post-secondary institution in Montana may apply.

Eligibility requirements include:

- US citizenship,
- Montana residency,
- minimum grade point average of 3.0, and

- enrollment or plans to enroll in a course of study that allows students to explore natural resource issues. Appropriate courses of study include agriculture, agribusiness, animal science, range science, forestry, environmental science, land resource science, plant science, etc.

Students may receive a scholarship both as a high school senior and once during post-secondary career. Application deadline is February 24, 2017. To obtain the application:

<http://macdnet.org/blog/2016/12/13/2017-macd-scholarship-application-now-available/>

Loss of a Dear Friend in Conservation



Just before Thanksgiving, I found out that long time former administrator for the Montana Association of Conservation Districts passed away. Jan Fontaine was a dear friend to me personally, but in a larger sense, she was a friend to Conservation Districts.

Late in 1998, Jan and I both interviewed for the job at MACD, but we didn't know each other yet. When I got the job with Lewis and Clark the following spring, we had a good laugh about the fact that we interviewed for the same job.

Jan's background was in accounting. She loved the idea of audits for some reason and would get so excited over numbers that balanced. I could never really understand that side of her I guess but her love of accounting translated into an amazing gift to Conservation Districts across the state. Jan was always willing to try to help people who were struggling with getting their financial books in better shape. She did a lot of traveling over the years to assist with that.

In 2002, Jan and I put together a Statewide Administrator Training for Districts, hosting one training in Miles City and the other in Helena so that all the districts had a better chance at attending. We focused on QuickBooks, Local Government Services, the financial side of administering grants and what tax considerations were pertinent to Conservation Districts. It was such a pleasure to work with someone who cared so much and had such good experience in those topics.

Conventions were another thing that she took very seriously. She had an incredible system organized for working with registration, the hotel/venue and the programs presented. One year she had a family emergency and had to miss the convention. She asked me to fill in for her, and it was a testament to her organizational skills that I could step in for her that week.

Jan hated having her picture taken. The above photo was one of the only ones I could find and is from a training in 2007. Jan will be deeply missed by family and friends.



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.

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