



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

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Agricultural international Intern Program

Sarah Howe-Cobb, CD Supervisor

In 2011, Mike and I became involved with an international agricultural exchange program by chance here on the Cobb Charolais Ranch in Augusta, Montana. My brother in New Hampshire had converted the family dairy farm into an organic vegetable and flower farm. My brother had historically relied upon international agricultural interns from a program named Cultural Homestay International (CHI).



Jack Mothiba

One of my brother's applicants for 2011 wanted to work with cattle so my brother called us here in Montana to see if we were interested in sponsoring this young man. Thus, Jack Mothiba arrived from South Africa, an amazing young man with a smile a mile wide and curious about our world. He came to us for a year about nine years ago and we have been involved with this program since.

Jack went through a fall and spring calving season, haying season, two bull sales and all the necessary ranch work from fixing miles of fences to moving cattle in mountain pastures for the summer. Jack set a high work performance standard which has set the bar for all other interns who have followed.

Mike and I each have a B.S. in Anthropology from UM in Missoula, MT. Mike's focus was archeology and mine was in Cultural Anthropology. After years on the ranch raising a family (and my job as Public Health Nurse in Augusta), we realized we may not be able to travel the world as we had hoped. This program has brought the world to us. So far, in 9 years, we have had 5 South Africans, 5 Brazilians, 1 from Krygyzstan, 1 from Turkey and one now from Pakistan. Our newest intern for 2021 will come from Uganda.

All of these young men and women had to apply to the program, pay a fee and be college graduates in an agricultural related field. The CHI mission statement is



Thiago

“a non-profit, public benefit, educational organization. Our mission is to bring people of diverse cultures together to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of one another”. CHI has been operating since 1980 and it helps to screen applicants, arrange J-1 visa documentation, orientation and supervision.

We have established long term friendships with many of our interns. Our daughter Michaela and her husband Mike Whitmore visited Brazil a few years back specifically to see our intern Thiago on his family agricultural operation in Brazil. They had a thrilling time and hope to go back again.

Our first Brazilian Andre has revisited us already after he left. He fell in love with the snow, learned to ski and went on to Alaska for a visit. (Believe me, with most interns coming from the

southern hemisphere, the cold is not their favorite aspect of their stay!).

He is in New Zealand now and we are invited to his wedding in the near future.

Jack is flourishing in South Africa and working with Lima Rural Development Foundation. He is very active in bringing sustainable agriculture to his region.

We incorporate these interns into our family and lives here in Augusta. We have taken some to Glacier National Park, Yellowstone Park, local museums, hiking, fishing, skiing and have them participate in our traditions such as Halloween and Christmas.

We have had very successful relationships with most of the interns but sometimes the desires of the intern do not fit into our ranch

model. The isolation of our ranch and the small size of our local town can be a deterrent too for some interns. We had one Brazilian who just wanted to travel and did not want to do the daily chores of the ranch. Two young gals from South Africa could not manage the cattle but ended up on a beautiful goat farm on the coast of Maine where they had a successful experience. The CHI program director Alex has always been wonderful in her communications with us. We and the interns do have to do quarterly reports on how everyone is doing and that opens up an avenue to work on any issues that arise.

The cultural barriers can be challenging at times but we stay open and curious. For many of our interns, it is the first time they have traveled outside their country. We respect these courageous individuals as they explore our world and treat them as we would want our daughters treated in another culture.

One of our daughters stated “you replaced us with the interns” as our daughters have left home for college and life choices. In a way, she was accurate... these young men and women have filled a



Andre with former supervisor Mike Cobb



Zaid

gap of youthfulness and new ideas in our lives as our children have left. Our employee of six years, Justin Garrett, has experienced and bonded with some of the interns too and would love to go to Brazil to visit Thiago someday. Our friends and community have been witness to the richness of these exchanges. Mike's only regret is that after a year of teaching/training--the intern leaves...it would be wonderful if some could stay longer.

The impact of these experiences cannot be overstated and we look forward to more agricultural interns in the future. If you are interested in this program or have questions, please contact us in the evenings in Augusta at 406-562-3694.

Return to Two Dot

Jeff Ryan, Lewis and Clark Conservation District

I think it's well over 30 years since I visited Two Dot, Montana. At the time I was the lone Biologist with the then called Montana Department of Highways.

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society was holding its annual summer field tour and the Musselshell River was selected because of a number of recently completed stream restoration projects we could visit. About 30 Fisheries Biologists - State, Federal and Tribal (all guys - in those days women Biologists were rarer than black footed ferrets) took in the tour. We were all camped at the Selkirk Fishing Access site, about five miles west of Two Dot.

We visited several projects utilizing then state of the art stream restoration techniques. All the sites were reasonably successful at stabilizing eroding banks but most relied on hard features using large wood and a fair amount of rock. Although vegetation was incorporated into projects, it was a small part of the whole project. At the time this was the way projects were done. It would take almost two decades before it was recognized that incorporating a preponderance of vegetation over hard structural techniques was a much better approach.

So, after a long hot dry day of site visits, we all made our way to the local watering hole - the Two Dot Bar. My first visit to Two Dot. Today there is a sign at the Highway 12 turn off "World Famous Two Dot Bar". I'm not sure how it got its title, but to us, on that very long evening, it was very "famous" (not so famous in the morning).



Before

So why did I return to Two Dot? Several months earlier I had met Laura Nowlin, with the Musselshell Watershed Coalition at the Watershed Summit in Helena and mentioned that I would be interested in providing some technical assistance to folks in the Musselshell watershed that were interest in using bank restoration techniques that utilized a lot of vegetation and very little, if any, rock. Laura put me in touch with Cheryl Miller, Administrator for the Upper Musselshell Conservation District. They had a project, virtually in Two Dot, on the Musselshell River and wanted to use a willow soil lift technique.

I had come across this technique over ten years ago when I was permitting stream projects across the state for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. I knew it was well suited for the Musselshell and landowners that had been ravaged by recent flooding that couldn't afford more expensive rock riprap.



I worked with Cheryl Miller and Mike Ruggles, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Regional Fisheries Manager, who is also well versed in the technique. Together we came up with a project, installed last month, that will not only stabilize an eroding bank, but also provide good fish habitat and serve as a great demonstration site for other folks on the Musselshell that want to use this technique. I also want to thank my Lewis and



Clark Conservation District board members that are okay with me helping on these kinds of projects, our two new CD employees - Andrew Kretschmer, Connor Mertz and Autumn Christenson, Missouri River Watershed Program Coordinator who helped cut the two thousand willow that went into the project.

Included are several pictures of the installation. The pictures pretty well tell the story without more details. However, in the near future, our CD will include a “how to do” section on our website with details on the technique.



After

Timber Management in Lewis & Clark County

Andrew C. Kretschmer, LCCD Conservation Planner



Lewis and Clark County is home to some of the most breathtaking forests around the state, if not the world! Our timbered lands, private and public, offer an immense resource to the community. If you hike, bike, hunt, or fish you likely already realize some of the benefits our forests provide. Even if you don't recreate in the forests you probably still enjoy many of the benefits they provide, from clean drinking water and quality air, to state tax income derived from wood products and livestock production.

Despite the plethora of amenities provided by our forests they are not always an easy neighbor to live alongside. At times we share in the hardship that forests can bring to the communities we call home. These tribulations may take the form of predators threatening livestock at times and at others, wildfire taking homes handed down over generations.

Historical management of timbered lands helps to dictate the benefits and trials we now face. Luckily, our growing understanding of ecosystems and their functions has given us a variety of tools to help shape and strengthen the natural communities we live among while simultaneously preserving their integrity for years to come.

One such tool is the Montana State Forest Action Plan, a guiding document that provides land managers with recommended forest management goals and the strategies to achieve those goals. The plan is still in draft form but is expected to be published in its final form in the near future. If you are curious about the direction state forest management and funding opportunities are heading this is a great read.

Another tool to help land managers is your local USDA office, where you can find technical assistance and financial assistance for on the ground projects. If you own timbered land and want to take proactive steps to manage your property but aren't sure where to start this is the place. NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Conservation District staff will help you develop a plan specific to your goals and property. To boot you may be eligible to enroll in cost share programs such as CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) or EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program).

These programs can help to pay for a variety of projects including implementation of fuel breaks, fuels reduction, and species diversification. This is by no means a comprehensive list but if you are intrigued don't hesitate to contact your local USDA office. For more information contact the Helena Field Office located at 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601 at 406-449-5000 ext. 3

CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAMS

Pollinator--The Conservation Districts in the Area 6 region of the state were recently awarded a grant to establish Pollinator Initiative programs that provide free pollinator seed to landowners in their counties. Landowners can request up to 2500 square feet worth of seed.

Landowners who are interested can contact the office at 406-449-



5000 ext. 5 or via email at chris@lewisandclarkcd.org. You can also look at the details of the program and find the landowner interest form on our [website](#).

Well Water Test Program

For several years now, the Conservation District has run a well test reimbursement program for landowners in Lewis & Clark County. Landowners can submit their water test results to the CD and receive a \$25 reimbursement when they get their wells tested for at least the basic \$35 test for bacteria etc.

Contact the Water Quality Protection District at 406-457-8584 for recommendations on water testing. Send us your results (mail to LCCD, 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601 or email to chris@lewisandclarkcd.org) and we'll reimburse you \$25! This program is in conjunction with the Water Quality Protection District and MSU's Well Educated Program.

PARTNER INFORMATION

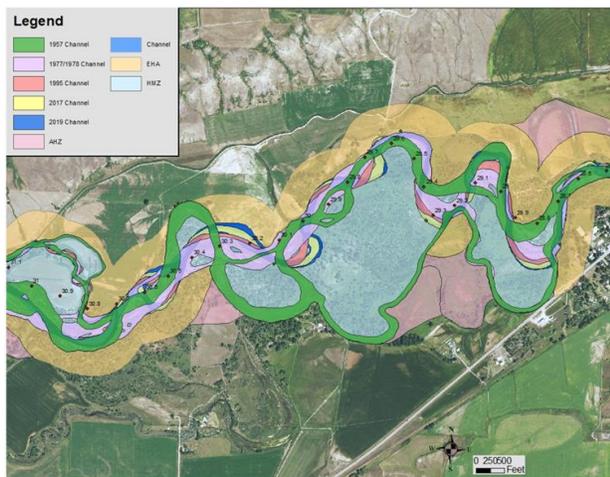
SUN RIVER CHANNEL STUDY EXTENDED THROUGH ELK CREEK

Anyone who has lived in Montana knows: rivers and streams change constantly. Flooding in 2018 and 2019 brought major changes to the Sun River and Elk Creek, in some cases resulting in major land losses and rivers ending up in completely new locations once the floods subsided. Trying to understand where a river might move next and planning a business, home, road, or other project around that movement is a daunting prospect and a risky investment.

That's why the Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) and partners have been studying river movement in this area. In July 2020, SRWG released a study of the historic movement of the Sun River, which is posted on its website, www.sunriverwatershed.org. This Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) study uses historic photos, data, and local knowledge to explain and predict how the Sun River moves through the basin.

Now, SRWG has partnered with Lewis & Clark Conservation District to expand that study to include Elk Creek. Earlier this year, LCCD received DNRC HB223 grant funding for this study. SRWG is managing this effort, to be completed in the spring of 2021. The work will be performed by a team led by Applied Geomorphology as an extension of the work they completed on the first phase of the Sun River CMZ report.

The Elk Creek CMZ report will be a valuable resource for the public and agencies to guide future work and understand the best way to plan and prioritize projects in the area around Augusta.



The Sun River CMZ Map

confluence with Smith Creek, through Augusta, to where it joins into the Sun River. The study will describe the historic movement of Elk Creek and assess risk of future movement based on this historic information. This risk assessment will support planning for future projects, infrastructure locations and protection, flood mitigation, and other activities to ensure the best use of funding and effort, as well as to maximize ecological benefits.

Karin Boyd (Applied Geomorphology) and Tony Thatcher (DTM Consulting) completed Phase I of the CMZ project and will continue with Phase II. The Sun River CMZ Study can be found on the Sun River Watershed Group's website: www.sunriverwatershed.org.

For more information, contact Tracy Wendt at tracy@sunriverwatershed.org or Chris Evans at chris@lewisandclarkcd.org.

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY WEED DISTRICT

The Lewis and Clark County Weed District is running a new Cost Share Program for weed control, in which landowners can be partially reimbursed for chemical and insects. This program applies to noxious weeds and there is an annual maximum payment of \$250 (50/50 for a project total of \$500). An approved 5 year weed management plan must be on file with the Weed District, which is a simple plan to fill out. For more information contact the Weed District office at 406-447-8372.

YOUTH LOANS-FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Contact the Farm Service Agency Office for assistance in preparing and processing the application forms.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

*Check out our website at www.lewisandclarkcd.org. We're also on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lewisandclarkcd
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