



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

Volume 61, Issue 3

Summer 2022

Helena Rain Barrel Workshop – Connor Mertz



Co-hosted with the Lake Helena Watershed Group (LHWG), LCCD hosted its first ever Rain Barrel Workshop at the LC County Fairgrounds early this June. We had a great turnout for the event, with over 40 participants attending from across the county and some from as far away as Bozeman, Butte, and Choteau!

Participants were each provided with a 55-gallon barrel, a hardware kit for installation, and the opportunity to decorate their

barrels at the event. We were thoroughly impressed with the artistic skill of those who showed up!

Rain barrels are an effective way for landowners to conserve water and reduce stormwater runoff in their communities. Rather than being diverted from the roof to the lawn (and often then the street), rain barrel systems capture and store rain water for use in yards and gardens. In addition to reducing treated water consumption in drier months, they help reduce the amount of pollutant-carrying stormwater delivered to treatment facilities and local streams. Ultimately, rain barrels can be effective in helping landowners save money on water bills and improving their water quality footprint.

The Helena Valley receives an estimated 11-13 inches of precipitation annually, with some areas receiving even less. Water conservation is extremely important in the Helena Valley and other parts of the state, particularly in the context of current drought conditions and population growth. It is estimated that roughly 50-60% of all individual water

consumption is used for outdoor purposes, namely lawn irrigation and gardens. That being said, paying close attention to and reducing outdoor water use can have huge impacts. While a rain barrel is a great start, here are several other tips for water conservation in the yard and garden:

1. Check for leaks! Even the smallest leaks (both indoors and outdoors) can result in



thousands of gallons of water wasted each year. Contact your local nursery or irrigation specialist to see if they offer irrigation audits to make sure your system is as efficient as possible.

2. Consider the timing, frequency, method of watering! Try to water during cooler parts of the day (early morning or late evening) to reduce water loss through evaporation. Aim to water less frequently for longer durations to encourage deep root growth. Last, consider using drip irrigation systems where possible – they can be much more efficient than overhead sprinkler systems by reducing water lost to evaporation and delivering water directly to plant roots.

3. Consider incorporating more native species into your yard and garden! Native species are adapted to grow in our dry climate and often

require much less water and maintenance.

We received some great feedback on this event and hope to host another workshop somewhere in county next year. In the meantime, stay tuned for other workshops and events hosted by LCCD and our partners this summer. If you are interested in learning more about water conservation in the yard, the Lake Helena Watershed Group will be working with Gardenwerks to host several xeriscaping workshops this July. Check out their website for more information.

The Lewis & Clark Conservation District would like to extend thanks to Harrington Pepsi in Butte for the donation of the 55-gallon syrup drums, which made this workshop possible and affordable to participants.



Mid-Term Service Reflection

Jessica Ramirez, BSWC member



Jessica at the recent Education Summer Walk at Tenmile Park

In October of 2021, I was working as a substitute teacher in Austin, Texas. I had been job hunting for 4 months after completing my first seasonal field technician position in Colorado. Just earlier that year, I had graduated from College of

Charleston with my Masters of Science in Marine Biology. Every day, I was scouring the internet and my email server subscriptions for any wetland related jobs. That's when I came across Montana Conservation Corps' Big Sky Watershed Corp Program. I found the website and looked at past BSWC member's experiences. This was an area of conservation that I've never worked in. There was a lot of diversity in the projects you could work on but it seemed like I could keep up my technical training and learn more watershed management and outreach skills. In graduate school, I wasn't able to take a GIS course nor had experience with grant writing. Those were the two goals I set for myself when applying for this position. I wanted to add these tools to my toolkit to help jumpstart my professional career.

Six months later, I am halfway through my term of service and doing things I didn't think would be possible with my position. I am serving with Lewis and Clark Conservation District and Sun River Watershed Group. I've written grants (received my first grant!), practiced grant reporting, completed a Fundamentals of GIS Course, taken volunteers out to the Sun River to help with water quality monitoring, learned about aquatic invasive species, seen the stream permitting process, attended numerous board meetings, and had a lot of fun doing it all. In May, I completed the Wetland Training Institute's Wetland Delineation Training and am scheduled to take a plant ID course in August. Wetland work is my passion and thanks to my supervisors, I've been able to continue learning about them. I'll also be assisting with an upcoming wetland delineation and will get in the field training with experts in the field.

One of the most creative parts of my work plan is social media. My supervisors call me the 'Social Media Queen'. I consume social media on a daily basis and was excited to create informative posts for my organizations. For Women's Herstory Month, I created a social media campaign to highlight Montana's Most Notable Conservationists. I researched women who

made an impact in our communities. It was awe-inspiring to learn about these women and their stories.

After my term with MCC, I hope to work in wetlands and use the skills and trainings that I received throughout my term of service. I'm also working with a lot of great people in the conservation world who are great resources (and friends) to have moving forward. Montana Conservation Corps allows me to travel, experience new places, and further my professional development that will help me continue my career in conservation.

Upcoming CD Events

Wonders of Wetlands: <https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/178991>

Join Lewis and Clark Conservation District to discuss the importance of wetlands and the ecosystem services that they provide. We will be walking around the wetland and take a deeper look at wetland plants, wildlife, and ecological processes that occur here. Then we can discuss ways to protect and conserve these resources. We will meet at the green gate by the bird blind and information sign. This walk is for students 3rd grade and up and will include uneven terrain, tall vegetation, and wet areas.

For questions about this specific walk contact Jessica: jramirezbswc@gmail.com

Meeting on: Thursday, July 21, 2022 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Registration opens July 7

Located at: Lake Helena, Helena, MT 59602

This is the link to the summer walk series webpage: <https://www.register-ed.com/programs/montana/241-summer-walk-series>

Bashin' Trash (2nd Annual)

Join LCCD and many partners in a one-day joint clean-up effort of the Missouri River and its tributaries along Helena, Great Falls, and the Breaks. Captains will lead volunteers in designated reaches to clean-up train by foot and boat.

When: August 20th

For more information contact Connor: connor@lewisandclarkcd.org and check out <https://www.sunriverwatershed.org/bashin-trash>

Lake Helena Watershed Festival:

The Lake Helena Watershed Festival returns in 2022 and will be August 27 at Women's Park. The Conservation District plans to be there with the Rolling Rivers Trailer, and probably our Chair's Willow demonstration. Please join us there!

District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator

The 2nd quarter of the year turned out to be non-stop action it seems! The Pollinator Initiative picked up some steam, with over 80 participants in the county so far, and around 7 acres of pollinator habitat seed distributed.

Stream permit applications have really picked up, with the fear of drought looming and there are already plenty of complaints about stream work that have come in that CD staff and supervisors are dealing with.

The Rolling Rivers Trailer has been out more than it's been in this quarter, at various events in Lewis and Clark County and beyond, being used by a number of other CDs in the area. These trailers are owned by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, but are hosted by 4 CDs across the state, who are responsible for insuring and maintaining them. It's been to the Education Summer walk kick-off, our Stream Studies walk,, the Lincoln Public School, the Big Sky Watershed Corps training, Bitterroot CD, and Beaverhead CD.

The last week in March, LCCD staff and volunteers worked to install a 700 ft willow soil lift to restore a severely eroding section of shoreline along the north shore of Lake Helena. In April, CD staff helped out at the Montana Envirothon in Great Falls. Lewis and Clark County had 3 teams in attendance, who all had a really great time.

The CD hosted a stream permitting workshop in May, and we had around 30 CD people there from across the state. It was a gale-force windy day, so the field portion was not the best, but it was really a great workshop.

The first of the Conservation District's Education Summer Walk series took place in June. Again, it was a very windy evening, but participants seemed to have a good time, learning all about streams.

CD Staff and Supervisors attended parts of the Montana Association of Conservation District's Spring Meeting and the Employee Organization financial training in June as well.

And of course, as noted earlier in the newsletter, the CD and the Lake Helena Watershed Group co-hosted a rain barrel workshop where residents were able to build and paint their own rain barrel.

The next quarter will continue to be busy with events and permitting. The Local Work Group regional meetings are happening in the Dearborn Watershed area and in Lincoln and the Local Work Group in September in Helena will be the 4th and final for the year and will wrap information from the others as well as the [Natural Resource Concern Survey](#) together. Information gleaned at these meetings assist the Conservation District and the Helena NRCS office in their long-range planning. If you want to provide feedback about natural resource concerns and can't make one of these meetings, email chris@lewisandclarkcd.org or take our survey (link above).

Upcoming Local Work Groups

July 14, 2022 10:30 am
Dearborn Community
Center
Hwy 434 outside of Wolf
Creek MT

August 11, 12:30 pm
Lambkins Restaurant
Supper Club
Lincoln MT

September 8, 11 am
USDA Service Center Conf.
Room
Helena MT

PARTNER NEWS



Meet the Sun River Watershed Group--Augusta July 20

The Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) will be holding our quarterly board meeting at the Augusta Community Center on July 20 at 1 pm and we invite the public to attend. If you can't attend the full meeting, join us at 3 pm for an update from the Project Committee about current and upcoming work across the watershed. Following the meeting, head over to the

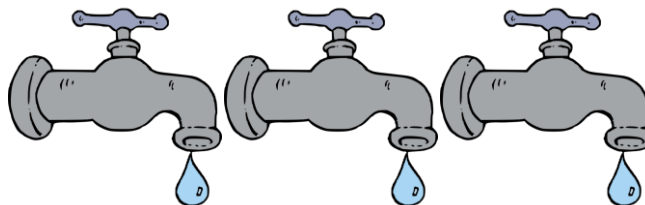
Buckhorn about 4 pm and meet our board and staff. SRWG would like to talk to YOU to learn more about natural resources issues around Augusta and Sun Canyon and figure out how we can better support landowners in the area. For a copy of the agenda or for more information, contact Tracy@Sunriverwatershed.org or (406) 214-2868.

This summer looks to be SRWG's busiest yet! In addition to the many projects and ongoing programs we are continuing, we have some fun new events. More information is available on our Events Page (www.sunriverwatershed.org/events).

- July 9 Sun Canyon Weed Whacker Rodeo
- July 20 SRWG Board meeting in Augusta; happy hour at Buckhorn
- July 24 Great Falls Rain Barrel Workshop
- July 28 2nd Annual BBQ at the Ballpark with SRWG (Voyagers Game)
- August 1 Suds for the Sun – pint night at Mighty Mo Brewing
- August 20 Bashin' Trash – Sun and Missouri River Cleanup
- Sept 1 Shenandoah Concert at the Beacon Icehouse (Volunteers Needed)

Water Test Cost Share Program

The CD will reimburse landowners in Lewis and Clark County up to \$25 when they get their well water tested. Your first call should be to the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District at 406-457-8584 for recommendations on what tests would be best to run. They should also have test kits available from the Well-Educated program from MSU. Once you've gotten your results back, email a copy to us at chris@lewisandclarkcd.org or mail to LCCD, 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601.



New Big Sky Watershed Corps Member for Lake Helena Watershed and the Water Quality Protection District!

Hello! I am Ali Bowe, the new Big Sky Watershed Corps Member in Helena, MT! I will be shared between the Lewis and Clark Water Quality Protection District and the Lake Helena Watershed Group. My term is May through mid-November. I will be creating outreach campaigns, running educational workshops, and conducting water quality fieldwork. Recently, I have launched a 'Weekly Conservation Tips 'n Tricks' blog and an environmental book club, but I have much more planned.



I grew up in Eau Claire, WI, where I developed a passion for agriculture, hydrology, and sustainability. I graduated with a B.S. in Biological Systems Engineering-Natural Resources from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, trail running, and yoga.

I am looking forward to exploring the Helena area, learning about Montana wildlife, and developing my fieldwork and educational outreach skills!

If you are interested in connecting, contact me at lakehelenawatershed@gmail.com.

Check out our website at www.lewisandclarkcd.org. We're also on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

If you prefer to get this newsletter via email, sign up at www.lewisandclarkcd.org or give us a call at 406-449-5000 x5.

Take our Natural Resource Concern Survey [here](#). This survey helps the CD board and the NRCS Helena Field Office determine needs as they plan for upcoming years!



**LEWIS & CLARK
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

790 Colleen Street • Helena, MT 59601

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

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

JEFF RYAN	CHAIR
KARL CHRISTIANS	VICE CHAIR
JEANETTE NORDAHL	TREASURER
JOHN BAUCUS	MEMBER
STAN FRASIER	MEMBER
SARAH HOWE-COBB	MEMBER
DAVID MARTIN	ASSOCIATE
CHRIS CARPARELLI	ASSOCIATE

LCCD STAFF

CHRIS EVANS	ADMINISTRATOR
CONNOR MERTZ	RESOURCE TECH.
JESSICA RAMIREZ	BSWC MEMBER

NRCS STAFF

REBECCA AYRE	DISTRICT CONS.
JASON SAARI	SOIL CON
ANDREW KRETSCHMER	SOIL CON
SEAN CLANCY	AREA ENGINEER

Contents	Page
RBWorkshop	1
Mid-term reflection-BSWC	3
Upcoming events	4
District Report	4
Partner Information	5

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

Power Townsend
Schatz Ranch & Leasing
Westech Environmental Services Inc.

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

John George
Pioneer Technical, Inc.
Prickly Pear Simmental Ranch
WWC Engineering

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

Action Print
Northwestern Energy
Sieben Ranch Co.

SPECIAL EVENT SPONSORS-

Murdoch's Helena (Weed Whacker Rodeo)
The Bagel Company (Willow Cutting Days)