



# The Explorer

*The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District*

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## Changes coming to the CD Office



In early January 2023, the CD will welcome our 3<sup>rd</sup> Big Sky Watershed Corps member, Claudia Lyman. Claudia grew up in the Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania where she developed a passion for exploring the outdoors. She graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Geoscience from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. Since graduating she has been working with the American Conservation

Experience in Northern California helping to maintain trails and restore habitats. Claudia is extremely excited about becoming a Big Sky Watershed Corp Member and working with the Lewis and Clark Conservation District and the Montana Association of Conservation Districts. She is looking forward to interacting with the local community of Helena and exploring the natural beauty of Montana.

The Conservation District was very fortunate to have a valuable member of our staff the past 2+ years. Connor Mertz came to us in 2020 following his Big Sky Watershed Corps year of service, as our Resource Technician. Many landowners worked with Connor over the past 2+ years, either doing stream permitting, working with the Pollinator Project, the Shoreline Projects on Lake Helena, or the many education events that Connor worked on in the county. We got news the past few weeks that Connor is moving on to new challenges, and will be looking at graduate school in the fall. His last day with the Conservation District will be December 23<sup>rd</sup>. We look forward to seeing the great things that Connor does in his bright future, and will really miss him. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in applying, please call the CD office at 406-389-3884.

In addition, in November, Jessica Ramirez, our Big Sky Watershed Corps member finished her term of service and has moved on to her next adventure. Jessica also worked on a lot of education events with us over her term, as well as creating some amazing content that we will be able to use on our website and social media platforms for years to come. We would like to thank Jessica and Connor both for their hard work and dedication.



## **Happy 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Lewis and Clark Conservation District!**

June 25, 1948 was the date that our Conservation District formed. In 2023, we'll be doing a number of special things that will look back over the past 75 years, using the past to help plan for our future! We hope to be around for at least the next 75! Some of our planned activities include:

- Pollinator Pop-Up days around the county to deliver free pollinator seed to landowners
- Some webinars on topics pertinent to resource needs in the county
- Social media push for Stewardship Week, Pollinator Week and other days/weeks of note
- Purchase of a drone to assist with reporting on the work that we do on stream and shoreline projects, as well as stream permitting work
- Participation in Bashin' Trash with the Sun River Watershed Group and the Lake Helena Watershed Group
- Participation with the Lake Helena Watershed Festival in August

And more! Stay tuned for a brilliant year!

## **Water Test Cost Share Program**

The CD will reimburse landowners in Lewis and Clark County \$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](mailto:chris@lewisandclarkcd.org) or mail to LCCD, 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601. There is a limited amount of funding for this program so get your information in soon!

## Portable Solar watering system-Karl Christians, Vice Chair

Technology in the Solar water world is improving daily. At LCCD we are striving to learn more about the benefits of solar water systems. A few years ago, I made a homemade portable self-contained solar system myself, and it has paid for itself and then some. It has allowed me to utilize pasture where I didn't have a powered water source,



which allows me

to manage my cattle better. I have also noticed my cows minimize their time in the riparian areas, creek bottoms, irrigation ditches, reservoirs, or mud holes when a tank of water is available nearby. One thing is clear, having a healthy source of water also means an increase to my bottom line with bigger calves and healthier animals. The technology available today makes it easy and can be used for a wide variety of uses. I am impressed every year on how my system works, even on dark cloudy days.

One of the things we do at LCCD is help landowners with streambank protection efforts such as willow lifts or willow walls for bank restoration. These are great projects for streambank stabilization. However, there is a challenge in keeping the project adequately



watered to allow the willow to set root, grow and become

established. It usually takes a reliable watering effort for the first growing season, and sometimes the second. While it's easy to say, "sure, I'll water it a couple times a week for the entire summer", the reality is that it usually doesn't happen! Completely understandable! Knowing this, LCCD applied for a grant to build a portable solar water system to rent





out or use for demonstration projects. We were successful and built a portable solar trailer complete with solar panels, pump, wire and hose that is now available for rent. Below is a bit about the LCCD solar trailer project.

**RESOURCE CHALLENGES:** Willow projects not getting established to best of their ability due to amount of time and labor required. Also, livestock instream watering or lack of available watering sources are common on most operations, especially during drought years.

The purpose of the portable solar watering system is two-fold. The first is to ensure that stream bank stabilization projects using willow can be adequately watered to ensure successful willow growth. The biggest challenge is being able to water these projects to get the willows started growing. Landowners time is limited during the summer. Using a solar watering system, it will automatically water the willows thru a soaker hose or perforated pipe installed during the willow installation.

The second goal is to encourage/demonstrate off-stream livestock watering. With the portable system, watering locations can be easily moved throughout the summer with livestock pasture rotation. Interesting enough, livestock will water out of a tank more often than drinking directly from a source such as a stream. This in turn will result in less impact to riparian areas, allow you to manage your grass/range better. LCCD supervisors have demonstrated this on their own operations, however the portable system can be demonstrated anywhere.



**GOAL:**

One goal is to improve the success of willow lift projects by providing a system to automatically water the newly placed willows until their root systems can reach the water source. Especially during a drought year. The second Goal is to demonstrate, thru its use, the benefits to riparian areas, stream banks, grazing management, and livestock health, etc. from off stream or clean source of livestock watering.

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

This project was built and was used on a recently installed willow lift project. The landowner stated he was spending an hour and a half every other day using a gas pump to water the newly installed project. Once the portable system was set up and used, the project was watered every day automatically, thus freeing his time for other ranch duties. This was the key to the success of the project by ensuring willow growth which in turn will promote a stabilized stream bank, reduced erosion, improved water quality, and a healthy riparian area. The system will be available for rent at the Conservation District office. Feel free to contact the office for more info.

*Check out our website at [www.lewisandclarkcd.org](http://www.lewisandclarkcd.org). We're also on [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).  
If you prefer to get this newsletter via email, sign up at [www.lewisandclarkcd.org](http://www.lewisandclarkcd.org).*

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

As we wrap up 2022 and look to 2023, we reflect on what a busy year it was. We had amazing staff doing great things, and have a really great Board of Supervisors.

At the December meeting, the board met to review the Strategic plan for 2022-2026, and made some edits based on some new information obtained at our Local Work Group meetings in 2022. These meetings were held in 4 locations from June through September. We didn't have much in the way of outside attendance, but what we had we made use of and are incorporating changes accordingly. The Elk/Smith Collaborative Fuels Reduction Project was one of those things and will be a collaborative project between the NRCS, the DNRC, the USFS and the Conservation District in the Augusta to Dearborn River Forest Boundary areas. In addition, we're enhancing some of our education efforts and will be looking at potential changes to some of our programs. The Strategic Plan and Operations Plan for 2023 will be posted on our website once they have final approval from the Board of Supervisors.

The Annual Report for 2023 is completed, and can be found on our website at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Annual-Report-2022.pdf>, or just go to our website and look at the District Planning and Local Work Group page on the Landowner Resources tab.

## **Pollinator Project 2023!**

As part of a grant from DNRC, the Conservation Districts in our area are again participating in pollinator planting seed giveaways for 2023. There is limited seed and we will be requiring follow up monitoring by landowners as a part of the grant project.

If you are interested in this program, please go to our website and read about the program at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org/programs/pollinator-initiative/>. We will have a third seed mix available this year, and you can read the basics about the program and check out the form that has to be filled out. Return these forms to [chris@lewisandclarkcd.org](mailto:chris@lewisandclarkcd.org).





# MONTANA Soil Health Symposium



## Pre-Conference Feb 7th

*Grass to Table! How to get your livestock in the hands of the consumer.*  
Four ranchers will share their knowledge on livestock processing, regulations with state and USDA processing facilities, restaurants, marketing strategies, and other options to get your livestock to the consumer.

## Conference Feb 8-9th

Two days with Jerry Doan, Brendon Rockey, and John Kempf. Pannel discussions from local Montana producers, and a chance to connect and learn with peers.

**Knowledgeable keynote speakers & engaging breakout sessions!**



MONTANA  
ASSOCIATION of  
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Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**Register online at [mtsoilhealth.org](https://mtsoilhealth.org)**



406-443-5711



**[mtsoilhealth.org](https://mtsoilhealth.org)**



Billings Hotel and Convention  
Center, Billings, MT





*The Montana Rangeland Resources Committee and the Rangeland Resources Program at DNRC are excited to announce a unique opportunity for students.*

## Working Lands Internship Program

The successful applicants will have the opportunity to spend 2 weeks at each of the 6 host/mentor's ranch operations. This internship is designed to offer beginning agriculturalists, natural resource and range specialists, biologists, soils majors or any student looking into natural resources, the real-world and hands-on experience implementing the educational tools already gained to a ranching operation. This paid internship will last for three months during the summer where interns will work and learn from mentoring ranchers from across the state of Montana. A monthly wage will be paid with room and board provided by the mentoring/host ranch.

**Students majoring in any natural resource related field are recommended to apply for this opportunity.**

Applications and additional information at:  
<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cadd/rangeland-resource-program/montana-working-lands-internship-program>

Please note that the Internship Program is not designed solely as a working ranch hand position, but students will be responsible to help in any way possible throughout the summer doing various chores that are necessary for daily ranch operations. Interns will have the opportunity to learn about rangeland monitoring, plant and weed identification, rotational grazing, ranch economics, erosion control, habitat conservation and much more.

There will be two parts to the application process for the Internship Program; approval of the application and a 2 part interview.

### Internship Highlights:

- Free housing plus wages
- Networking with ranchers, agency personnel and more
- Hands-on working lands experience in a ranch environment

**Contact: Stacey Barta | [sbarta@mt.gov](mailto:sbarta@mt.gov) | 406-594-8481**



**Application deadline is  
February 1**



*The internship program is sponsored by efforts of:  
 Rangeland Resources Program, Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service*



## LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Contents	Page
CD Changes	1
Anniversary	2
Well water test	2
Portable Irrigation	3
District Report	5
Pollinator	5

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For more information on any of our activities, call the CD Office at 406-449-5000 ext. 5.