



# The Explorer

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

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Autumn 2023

## LCCD Day on the Range

September 21<sup>st</sup> sounds like a nice day for a workshop right? Even in the Lincoln area? Well, summer came to a screeching halt (as my mom says) and we got an early taste of winter at our event last week, and it wouldn't have been any nicer anywhere else in the county.

A smaller group than expected braved the inclement weather and met at the Ponderosa Snow Warrior's Clubhouse outside of Lincoln and learned about:

- Soil Health with Marni Thompson from NRCS
- Invasive Species with Christian Lehnert from Lewis & Clark County Weed District
- Water Concerns with Joe Kremer-Herman from the CD, Patrick Uthe from FWP and Clancy Jandreau from the Blackfoot Challenge
- Forestry Projects in Lewis and Clark County with Becky Ayre from NRCS
- Lewis & Clark CD's Pollinator Initiative with Chris Evans from the CD



**Group Learning about the Rainfall Simulator and how cover improves infiltration of rain. Photo at left shows soil which is fallow (darker) and soil that has had no living cover. Aggregates are a plus (darker soil)!**



Rainfall Simulator/Trailer



Noxious Weed Education Trailer





**Rolling Rivers Trailer**

## God is Great, Beer is Good and People are Crazy

Jeff Ryan, Lewis and Clark Conservation District



The title of this story is from the lyrics of a current country western song. They came to mind as I watched dozens of folks show up for a volunteer willow cutting event at Spring Meadow State Park late last March. The temperature was well below freezing and there was snow on the



ground. People of all ages showed up. School kids (Spring Break was on) and numerous adults of all ages, at least one gentleman in his 80s.

They were there to help cut willow for the thousands of willows needed for the bank restoration project FWP was sponsoring, to restore



eroding banks at the Black Sandy State Park, that were buffeted by increasing wave action from increased boating activity. The Lewis and Clark Conservation District partnered with FWP on the initial design and provided construction oversight. Overall, the project was very successful as the pictures indicate and I would encourage folks to take a look at it before winter sets in.

Again, a great project, but the real “greatness” were the folks that volunteered their time to help cut willow on that very frigid Spring morning. Were they crazy? Well, if they were, thank God for crazy people!!!

## **USDA News and Programs Updates Notifications**

Tired of losing out on new USDA programs, missing important deadlines, or searching for program bulletins? Producers, landowners, and other stakeholders interested in keeping up to date with USDA program announcements, deadlines, and news can sign up for GovDelivery. This communication system allows newsletters, deadline reminders, and bulletins to be sent right to your cell phone or email address.

### **How to Access the Farmers.gov Update Platform**

The following list is a step-by-step guide to creating a Farmers.gov account and subscribing to updates from the USDA agencies in Montana and Lewis and Clark County.

1. Visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/)
2. At the very bottom of the web page, find the Sign up for Updates section and select the green Subscribe button.
3. Select your preferred subscription type from the dropdown menu. (Email or SMS/Text Message)
4. Enter the associated email address or phone number and select Submit.
5. Follow the prompts to confirm the email address/phone number, create a password, and complete the necessary security checks. Select Submit when finished.
6. Under Subscription Topics, select the plus sign next to Montana.
7. Select the plus sign next to MT USDA Service Centers.
8. Select the checkboxes for desired subscription topics. Recommended topics include:
  - a. MT – State NRCS Conservation Programs
  - b. MT – State NRCS Easement Programs
  - c. MT – State NRCS News Releases
  - d. MT – Lewis & Clark USDA Service Center Newsletter and Updates
9. After selections are complete, select Submit to complete this process.

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

It's been a busy summer, celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and all of our normal activities. The CD hosts one of the MACD Rolling Rivers Trailers (there are 4 of these in the state) and there was rarely a week this year from May through September, where it wasn't out at some event, providing education about the importance of healthy riparian areas for stream health.

The CD's Pollinator Initiative was a huge success this year, getting just over 5 acres worth of seed distributed across Lewis & Clark County. We are taking stock of what seed we have remaining

and may encourage interested landowners to do a fall (dormant) seeding between November 1 and November 15<sup>th</sup> this year. If you are interested in seed (this fall, or next year) please check out the information at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org/programs/pollinator-initiative/> or email [chris@lewisandclarkcd.org](mailto:chris@lewisandclarkcd.org).

CD Administrator, Chris Evans, was able to travel to Bismarck, ND for the National Association of Conservation Districts summer meeting, and toured Menoken Farm and some of the Agriculture stations doing regenerative agriculture and other practices for soil health.

CD Resource Specialist, Joe Kremer-Herman, has been busy learning the specifics of his job, and getting in some training. He was able to participate with our SRWG partner on the Weed Whacker Rodeo (won the longest taproot award!) as well as their Low Tech Process Based workshop, installing Beaver Dam Analogs.

The District is now moving into wrapping up the summer activities and into reports for 2023 and planning for 2024. If you, or someone you know, would like to provide some feedback for us on natural resource concerns in Lewis & Clark County, [fill out our survey!](#)

## 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. You may also get your test kits from other labs that do water testing. Once you've gotten your results back, email a copy of your results and invoice 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!

## Partner News

### Farm Service Agency

#### **Acreage Report for Winter Wheat and Other Fall Seeded Crops Due by November 15**

Agricultural producers in Montana are reminded to complete their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting any fall-seeded crops, such as winter wheat, triticale, or other fall-seeded small grains. Please make an appointment with the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office before the November 15, 2023, deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of USDA benefits.

### NRCS

#### **NRCS Sets Conservation Program Funding Application Batching Date for October 27, 2023**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE). To be considered for funding in the current cycle for fiscal year 2024, producers and landowners



should apply by October 27, 2023. Landowners in Lewis and Clark County can apply by contacting the Helena NRCS Field Office by phone at 406-389-500 ext. 3 or in person by visiting the office at 790 Colleen Street, Helena, MT 59601.

"NRCS provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners implement conservation practices that improve their environmental and economic sustainability," said Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist for Montana. "Conservation work focused on local outcomes with support of local partners and land managers achieves meaningful conservation across a landscape. These opportunities are open to ag operations of any scale."



## **Sun River Watershed Group**

### **SUMMER EVENT WRAP-UP WITH SRWG**

The Sun River Watershed Group just wrapped up a summer full of community events and projects. Right now, we're in planning mode to prepare for 2024 and our next big event, Winter RiverFest on February 17, which is co-hosted by the Missouri River Flyfishers Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Visit [www.sunriverwatershed.org](http://www.sunriverwatershed.org) or our Facebook page for more information. If you would like to receive regular emails from SRWG, please contact [tracy@sunriverwatershed.org](mailto:tracy@sunriverwatershed.org) and ask to be added to the mailing list.



Here is a recap of our busy summer:

Freezeout Lake Spent Ammo and Trash Cleanup: SRWG partnered again with FWP to hold a cleanup event at Freezeout. Volunteers from Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Montana Salinity Control Association, Missouri River

Flyfishers, Montana Wildlife Federation and several members of the general public came out to spend the morning picking up trash and ammo shells. We had a record turnout and are pleased this has become an annual event.

Weed Control: This spring, SRWG participated in several weed control events in Lewis & Clark County organized by the USFS. We also held a special weed pull event at Wadsworth Pond for employees of Vision Net. This warmed us up for our big event, the 25th Annual Weed Whacker Rodeo. We had more volunteers this year than we have in the recent past, and one lucky volunteer won the kayak door prize, donated by Montana Valley Irrigation. We paid special recognition and thanks to the originator of this event, Al Rollo, and many of the supporters who

have been along for the 25-year-ride. This event occurs the second Saturday every July in Sun Canyon.

Low-Tech Restoration at Arnold Coulee: SRWG completed a restoration project at Arnold Coulee that uses natural materials and simple techniques to restore natural stream processes, such as groundwater storage and revegetation. Read more about that project in Emily Kemp's blog elsewhere in this newsletter, and stay tuned for a workshop at the project site in the next year or so.



**Bashin' Trash River Cleanup:** Once again, SRWG spearheaded a river cleanup on the Missouri and Sun Rivers. Thanks to the folks from LCCD and Lake Helena Watershed Group who captained teams on local waterways. SRWG also had a team working in Great Falls at Oddfellows Park and there were several teams on the Missouri River. Turnout was lower this year, so we'll be exploring ways to draw more teams in – potentially changing

the date for next year's event. [Read our MCC Conservation Fellow Emily Kemp's blog about the event!](#)

**Bear Aware:** SRWG partnered with FWP to hold a workshop at Sun Canyon Lodge in August aimed at helping canyon residents, local landowners, and those who recreate in the area about avoiding conflict with bears. After an educational session and Q&A, attendees practiced using deterrent with inert bear spray. This event was so well-attended we plan to have another later this winter, so watch for details on our website and social media.

SRWG is wrapping up our 19th season of Water Quality Monitoring in October. We are always looking for volunteers to help. Contact [tracy@sunriverwatershed.org](mailto:tracy@sunriverwatershed.org) if you are interested.

Thanks to all of the volunteers, partners, and sponsors who made this year's events possible. We'll see you in 2024!







## LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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If you prefer to get this newsletter via email, sign up at [www.lewisandclarkcd.org](http://www.lewisandclarkcd.org). Call the District at 406-389-3895 for more information!



