



The Explorer

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Wake Boat Erosion

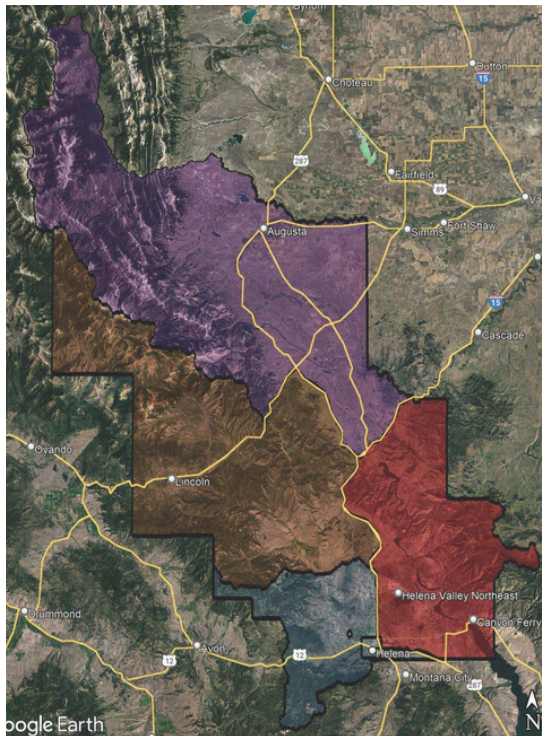
Joe Kremer-Herman, LCCD Resource Specialist

The Lewis and Clark Conservation District continues our work educating the public about various conservation practices. The LCCD was awarded a grant from DNRC to create and install a sign alerting the public to the potential damage that large waves from boats can cause to shorelines. The sign focuses on the Prickly Pear Arm that connects Lake Helena to the Missouri River. The sign shows areas of high potential erosion. An increased level of sediment in the water can lead to a degradation in water quality. Poor water quality can also be harmful to fish, aquatic life, and aquatic plants.

The primary goal of the sign is to educate the public, specifically people who recreate on the water. Other states have begun to regulate what vessels can and can't be on certain bodies of water, but LCCD would like to avoid these types of regulations in the county. LCCD wants to see all users enjoying the water while also protecting the bed and banks of our waterways.

The general recommendation to prevent damaging waves is to stay about 200 feet from the shoreline. This will allow the waves to slowly dissipate over that distance. Another recommendation is to stay near the center of the river or lake. This is to allow the waves to dispel energy in generally deeper waters. Avoiding areas that have a higher erosion potential also is beneficial.

You can read more about wake boat wave erosion on our website at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org/landowner-resources/wake-boat-erosion/>.



New Residency Areas for the Conservation District

After reviewing the residency boundary change ordinance at the last few board meetings, and receiving no comments from the public, the board approved the new area structure for the Conservation District, effective immediately.

Key Details:

- New structure: 4 residency-based + 3 at-large positions
- Supervisor role: Elected, unpaid (reimbursable expenses), helps direct the district mission within state law limitations

There will be elections for 4 supervisors in 2026, and current board members are eligible to run again.

For more information about board member responsibilities, the mission of the conservation district and more, take a look at our website at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org>.

Stream Permitting in Lewis & Clark County

A reminder for landowners and managers in Lewis & Clark County, applying for a permit to do **any work** that may affect the stream bed or the banks of any perennial stream in the county, as well as the shores of Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter Reservoirs **is mandatory**.

There is no fee for the 310 permit with Lewis & Clark Conservation District. We work closely with landowners to make sure that their project is the best project possible.

Projects include, but aren't limited to, culverts, bridges, boat ramps, docks, bank stabilization etc. If a project might impact, directly or indirectly, the bank or shore, a permit will be required.

We work with the Gilly App's [online permitting application](#), or you can fill out the [pdf version](#).

You can also scan the QR code with your smart phone and go right to the Gilly App.



For more information, email joe@lewisandclarkcd.org or call Joe at 406-594-9823.

Are You Planning to Plant Some Trees??

The Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery has announced it's opening date for orders for the 2026 spring planting season. Orders for the 99th Annual Sale will open January 21, 2026 at 8 am. To learn more about their inventory and ordering process, check out their website at <https://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Conservation-Nursery/>.

If you are seeking recommendations on species or planting plan recommendations, please call the Conservation District at 406-502-8591 to make an appointment with Chris Evans.



Our contact information has changed. You can reach Chris Evans at 406-502-8591 or by email at chris@lewisandclarkcd.org, and Joe Kremer-Herman at 406-594-9823 or by email at joe@lewisandclarkcd.org.

Beavers Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the 310 Law

Working for a conservation district in Montana is a little different than in any other state in the country. In Montana conservation districts have regulatory authority, as well as an obligation to educate, provide technical assistance, and enter into cost-sharing agreements with landowners looking to promote conservation features on their land. Here, conservation districts are also in charge of overseeing the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975, also known as the 310 Law. The 310 Law requires anyone who is doing work that could impact or alter a stream or its banks, including the riparian buffer (the highly diverse area between a stream and drier upland areas), to get a permit before such work begins. There is one exception: beavers.

Beavers are the original architects of the river. They harvest vegetation in the riparian area, dig into the banks, and dam whole streams—all activities requiring a 310 permit. Landowners who want to have a manicured bank are often frustrated that beavers' work gets done and they don't need a 310 permit. Sometimes I joke with these landowners complaining about beavers and their unpermitted work, and let them know that we take such violations very seriously. In fact, sometimes the beaver activities are punishable by death. Of course, not by the conservation districts; even with landowner violators—where we do have the ability to levy fines up to \$5,000 a day for unpermitted activities—we try to work with people to have them restore nature before we take punitive measures. The poor beavers are not always so lucky.

All that being said, restoration ecologists are emulating the beaver more and more. We are manipulating banks to activate floodplains and allow the ground to get saturated with water, only to release it slowly back to the creek in the hot summer during periods of low water. We are adding woody structures to rivers to create complexity of habitats, providing hiding places for fish and food for the aquatic invertebrates on which they feed. We even have a term for mimicking a beaver dam—BDA (beaver dam analogs)—which not only helps to put water into the soils for storage, but also traps sediment behind them, building up incised stream bottoms and creating splash pools of clean gravel. All of the beaver mimicry does require a 310 permit, even though the work is being done with the best of intentions. The law is regulation, and although the permit is free, it is another step to take for anyone working around a stream. Well, anyone, except beavers.

So this year, the 50th anniversary of the 310 Law, let's celebrate what nature does. Let's stop trying to control the world around us and literally go with the flow and let things rewild a bit. We don't need to clear our riparian areas to make lawns and then spend our weekends mowing those lawns—in fact, that is illegal. Let's enjoy watching the wild around us and learn about the ecosystem services that land provides. It is good to be industrious, but let's leave that riparian grooming to the work of the busy beaver.

From the Editor: photos and content for this story come from Radley "Rad" Watkins, Executive Director of the Missoula CD. You can learn more about Rad and the Missoula CD [here](#).

This article was originally published in the National Wildlife Federation's Montana Beaver Working Group May/June 2025 Newsletter



District Report-Chris Evans, District Administrator & Explorer Editor

As we enter the final quarter of 2025, the employees at the Conservation District shift gears. We have wrapped the summer work, including the Helena CORE Summer Walk, various education events with the Rolling Rivers Trailer, the 2025 Pollinator Initiative and more.

The 3rd quarter of 2025 was a busy one with above-noted events, as well as stream permitting, and more. The board wrapped up the proposed reorganization of supervisor areas to address the challenge to keep seven board members.

At the August meeting, they finalized the approval of that proposal, and our Associate Supervisor, Elena Frederick, was appointed to the board as the seventh supervisor. Elena says that she feels that she has a lot to offer the Conservation District since, as a Helena area resident since 1982, she and her husband have been involved in owning and developing raw land for pasture, cattle, sheep and other farm life. Elena says that they learned, experimented through many trials and errors, succeeded and shared those lessons with others. Elena has also been involved in real estate and was a teacher which in turn, has encouraged others to appreciate Helena and the surrounding community. Elena is retired now but wants to continue to share what she may have to offer. We are excited to have a full board again, and look forward to see what Elena will bring to the district!



**Supervisor Elena
Frederick**

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts recently completed editing on a couple of videos about the work that the Conservation District has been doing. One of the videos features the [Beaver Creek Project](#) that we collaborated on with the US Forest Service a few years ago. The other is about the [District's Pollinator Initiative](#).

As we look toward the end of 2025, the CD staff will begin the planning process, reviewing our strategic plan, and our 2025 Operations Plan to see where we need to make changes. Part of that process is reviewing feedback from you, our readers, and residents of Lewis and Clark County. We gather feedback via the Local Work Group Meetings, which will be held in late Winter 2026, as well as our Natural Resource Concern Survey. If you haven't already participated in that survey, you can find it [here](#).

Partner News

Farm Service Agency-From the Desk of the CED

We have great news for Lewis & Clark County FSA; a new County Executive Director has been hired!

I am very excited to hit the ground running and work hard to service the producers of the area. We have also hired a Temporary Program Analyst in the Helena office to assist producers. Please bear with us as we get caught up on applications and reach out to producers for program signups.

With the ongoing drought, we are taking applications for the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Please contact the office with your livestock numbers and put together leases that may not be on file with the office.

Please remember to contact the office once you are done fall seeding and report your acres by November 15th. The Lewis & Clark County Farm Service Agency (FSA) office will be serving customers on Mondays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Producers are encouraged to make an appointment to help FSA staff adequately prepare for your visit.

~Amber Amsbaugh, CED

Partner News, continued

NRCS

Fiscal Year 2026 EQIP, CSP, and RCPP Batching Period Deadlines Announced

The Montana NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) has announced October 31st as the application deadline for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for Fiscal Year 2026.

These are voluntary, technical, and financial assistance programs designed to help farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and Tribes with the application of conservation measures. The programs focuses strongly on conservation planning, conservation implementation, and solving natural resource concerns.

To apply contact the local NRCS office at 406-389-3882 or 406-449-5000 extension 3. You can also stop by the office at 790 Colleen Street, Helena Montana 59601.

To learn more about what's available in Lewis and Clark County, check out our [website](#)!

Grizzly Bear Mitigation Targeted Implementation Plan

From the Sun River Watershed Group

A new Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) with the Natural Resources Conservation Service is taking applications. This TIP covers all of Teton County and most of Lewis and Clark County.

The stated goal of the TIP is: to prevent and minimize human-grizzly bear conflicts in and around working farm and ranch facilities, residences, and headquarters by limiting bear access to anthropogenic attractants and unnatural food sources.

Electric fence and electric drive-over mats will be installed to deter grizzly bears from accessing attractants and areas of potential human-grizzly conflict. This effort will result in a reduction in the number of bears involved in complaints and conflict which could reduce the need to relocate or remove grizzly bears. This will also increase safety, encourage natural food sources, and will be more cost-effective conservation.

To apply contact the local NRCS office at 406-389-3882 or 406-449-5000 extension 3. You can also stop by the office at 790 Colleen Street, Helena Montana 59601.



Water Test Cost Share Program

Lewis & Clark Conservation District 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 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!



WE WANT TO HELP YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS REDUCE YOUR WILDFIRE RISK



BE A PART OF REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

In this beautiful portion of central Montana, the landscape requires active management to reduce wildfire risk and maintain ecosystem health. The **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** would like to help you with this process, and we have financial assistance that you may qualify for! Some of your neighbors in the area have already started working with the NRCS partnership to actively manage their forests and rangelands.

andrew.kretschmer@usda.gov

406-389-3882

JOIN THEM.

The more neighbors that take action, the better off the community will be when a fire occurs. Our team at USDA is here to help guide you through the landscape management process - from connecting you with a local professional conservation specialist to matching you with available financial assistance to get work done.

CONTACT US TODAY TO LEARN MORE.

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

The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to landowners through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

 **Natural Resources Conservation Service**
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Partner News, continued



September 2025 Spotlight

Don't become complacent about wildfire!



The calendar may have flipped to September, but a wildfire can happen at any time. Do you know what to do to protect yourself and your home? Reach out to Tri-County Firesafe Working group today for your FREE home risk assessment today!

<https://tcfswg.org/application-of-wildfire-risk-assessment/>.

The juniper problem

Did you know? Juniper trees and bushes greatly increase the fire risk of your property. Firefighters often refer to ornamental junipers as “little green gas cans”. They are highly flammable and burn intensely. If you have junipers near your home, consider removing them. You can replace them with fire-wise plants, rock mulches and hard surfaces.

Living Safely with Wildfire

Wildfire is a natural part of the ecosystem, and a fact of life in Montana. Are you and your property prepared? Managing the fuels around your home and being prepared to evacuate are important considerations for property owners. Learn more by viewing our new educational video, [Living Safely with Wildfire!](#) TCFSWG was also featured in a recent video production about wildland fire by Vox. Check it out at <https://youtu.be/roniU1iEZJs>.



Firewise Demonstration Garden

You can have a beautiful landscape while being firewise. You can stop by our Firewise Demonstration Garden anytime at the Montana City Volunteer Fire Station.

Partner News, continued

Helping Protect our Montana waters



Invasive Species management and prevention are critical to protecting Montana's economy, environment, and traditions. You may notice Watercraft Inspection Station (WIS) in your travels around Montana. These WIS are coordinated by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and staffed by employees of counties, tribes, conservation districts, FWP and other partners. WIS are one of our first lines of defense to prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in Montana.

Montana is one of the few remaining states that have not detected Quagga or Zebra Mussels in our waters. These invasive mussels would be detrimental to Montana waters and once they become established, nearly impossible to eradicate and tremendously costly to manage.

As of July 1st, 2025 the WIS have inspected over 30,000 watercraft and intercepted 18 watercraft that were transporting mussels this year alone. This means there are mussels present on or in the "boat." The WIS staff will decontaminate the "boat" and make sure none of the mussels are viable. Typically, these boats are locked to their trailer for further inspection once they arrive at their destination.

Montana state law requires that all watercraft stop at these stations. That includes power boats, canoes, float tubes, etc. Typically, the inspections are quick and the folks inspecting your watercraft are friendly and helpful.

What can you do to help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species? Practice CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY!

- CLEAN: Completely remove all mud, water and vegetation before leaving access area.
- DRAIN: All water from watercraft and equipment.
- DRY: Your watercraft and equipment. Aquatic invaders can survive only in water and wet areas.

To learn more about how you can help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species visit

<https://fwp.mt.gov/ais>



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Stream Permitting Required!

If you are planning any work that may affect the streambed or the banks of any perennial stream, or on the shores of Canyon Ferry, Hauser or Holter Reservoirs, in Lewis & Clark County, you are required to fill out a permit application with the Conservation District, along with a number of other agencies, using the [Joint Application](#). Culverts, bridges, fords, streambank work, construction etc. all require a permit.

In the event of any emergencies, where life, crops or property may be at risk, landowners are allowed to do the minimal amount of work to protect their property, but need to file a Notice of Emergency within 15 days of completing the work. Before and after photos are particularly helpful in these cases.

If you see a project that is affecting a stream somewhere in the county, and want to know if it's permitted, please contact our Resource Specialist, Joe Kremer-Herman at 406-594-9823 or via email at joe@lewisandclarkcd.org.

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For more information about the Conservation District, check out our [website](#), or find us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)!