



Conservation CONNECTION

Rosebud and Big Horn Conservation Districts

ROSEBUD CONSERVATION DISTRICT: 270 S. Prospect • P.O. Box 1200 • Forsyth, MT 59327

BIG HORN CONSERVATION DISTRICT: 724 West 3rd Street • Hardin, MT 59034

ROSEBUD CD: Meetings: 1st Thursday • 406-346-7333 ext. 101 • Fax/Phone: 406-346-7479 | BIG HORN CD: Meetings: 1st Thursday • 406-665-3442

NRCS FORSYTH FIELD OFFICE: 406-346-7333 | HARDIN FIELD OFFICE: 406-665-3442 | LAME DEER FIELD OFFICE: 406-477-6494 | CROW AGENCY FIELD OFFICE: 406-638-9102

Treasure County Conservation District hosts annual banquet

Treasure County Conservation District, together with Rosebud Conservation District, held their annual banquet at the Hysham school, on Saturday, March 10. The banquet was well attended by producers from both counties as well as supervisors from each of the conservation districts. The attendees of the banquet were entertained listening to stories told by Wally Badgett. The wonderful meal was prepared and served by the hard working members of the Hysham FFA chapter.



Wally Badgett entertained the crowd with his unique storytelling.



Supervisors and staff from Rosebud and Treasure County Conservation Districts



Treasure County Conservation District Range and Agronomy Workshop

Treasure County Conservation District hosted their annual Range and Agronomy Workshop for local FFA members in April. The workshop was held at Hysham Public Schools and was a great learning opportunity for the future of farming.



~Education and Outreach Fun~

Hardin Field Office Staff Assist with Earthweek Presentations

Seanna Torske, District Conservationist, Hardin NRCS Field

The week of April 23rd was a busy week for the Hardin Field Office staff, as they traveled throughout Big Horn and even part of Yellowstone County to educate K-6 grade students at Wyola, Lodge Grass, Fort Smith, St. Charles, and Morin Elementary Schools about life in the soil, totaling about 250 students. Using the Bozeman Area Soil Microscope, which is equipped with a camera, Evan Van Order and Seanna Torske took a soil sample and showed students real-life microorganisms that live in the soil, explained how they're important for range and crop production, and why it's so important for us to conserve our soil resource.



important for us to conserve

Seanna Torske, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, visits with Lodge Grass Elementary Students about life in the soil



Dirt Cake with the Hardin Primary First Graders

Seanna Torske District Conservationist
Hardin NRCS Field Office

The Hardin NRCS Field Office spent two days on the 26th and 27th of March, 2018, giving a dirt cake demonstration to the Hardin Primary First Grade class.

Seanna Torske, Evan Van Order, and Randell Hopkins explained to the kids how soil is formed, different kinds of soil particles, how there is life in the soil, and how everything needs soil in order to live and grow. The presentation culminated in making dirt cake for the students where there were different ingredients for parent material (oreos), soil particles (chocolate pudding), organic matter (coconut flakes), living organisms (gummy worms), and microorganisms (ice cream sprinkles).

Over 100 first grade students were in attendance, and it was a great opportunity to reach out to the young minds of Big Horn County!



Evan Van Order, Hardin NRCS Soil Conservationist, talks to Hardin Primary students about soil.

Colstrip 4th graders learn about where their food comes from

Heather Nenner, SWCDM's Sage Grouse Initiative Biologist, and Monica Boyer from Rosebud Conservation District travelled to Colstrip in April to teach fourth graders about where their food comes from. The presentation taught the students interesting agriculture facts and then moved onto the fun stuff. The fourth graders were given the opportunity to grind wheat with a mortar and pestle and also investigate the structure of a honey comb along with bee's wax. The classes then began to turn simple cream into butter by shaking it repeatedly in a glass jar.

They then enjoyed their hard work by enjoying the butter on crackers topped with honey!





Surveying



Range



Forestry



Wildlife



Soils



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Are Your Fences Wildlife Friendly?

Fences are such a common sight here in the west, that many people don't think much about them. Many might think, as long as there are posts and wire, the fence will keep livestock in or people out. When it comes to wildlife passage and safety, there are a few considerations when planning or installing fences.

Pronghorn generally cross fences by passing underneath the bottom wire. To facilitate safe passage for pronghorn, it is recommended that the bottom wire of fences are at least 16 inches above the ground. Although not necessary, smooth wire is recommended for the bottom wire to help prevent pronghorn from scraping their backs on the sharp barbed wire. Having gates that are no more than 36 inches in height, is another option to help facilitate pronghorn jumping over.

Deer and elk generally cross fences by jumping over them. Making sure that fences are not too tall, and the spacing between the top 2 wires are not too close together will help make fences more wildlife friendly. Fences should not exceed 42 inches in height, and the top wire and second wire should be at least 10 inches apart. The 10 inch wire spacing is important because if a deer or elk gets a leg caught between the wires, it can get twisted and tangled in the fence, preventing escape. A couple other alternatives can include smooth wire on top and bottom wires, and putting extra stays in the fence to prevent wires from crossing or getting tangled.

Considerations should also be taken for other wildlife such as flying birds. This is especially important in sage grouse habitat. Improving fence visibility is important in reducing the risk of impact during flight. Installing fence markers on the top wire of fences is a good practice to help increase fence visibility. These markers should be spaced every 4 feet or less for standard wire fences, and every 6 feet or less for power fences. A few options for fence markers include white vinyl under sill, reflective tape, or PVC pipe. The contrasting color to the surrounding landscape can help birds see the top wire of the fence and avoid it during flight. Alternating black and white markers are recommended in areas with snow during sage grouse breeding season (March and April) and in wintering areas.

Hopefully this article helps with an understanding that wildlife should also be considered when fences are planned and installed. Information for this article and specifications for all of these practices can be found on the USDA-NRCS website in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), Section 4. Here is a link to the Field Office Technical Guide: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx. You can also contact your local USDA-NRCS Field Office for more information on Wildlife Friendly Fencing. You can find your local Field Office here: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mt/contact/local/>.

By: Randell Hopkins, Soil Conservationist, Hardin NRCS Field Office

visit us at www.rosebudcd.com

"The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man." ~Unknown~

"Without love of the land, conservation lacks meaning or purpose, for only in a deep and inherent feeling for the land can there be dedication in preserving it." ~Sigurd F. Olson~

Exempt water rights claims informational meeting held

Rosebud Conservation District hosted an informational meeting about exempt water rights claims on March 2 at the Rosebud County Library. Jim Beck, retired from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's water resource areas, provided the attendees with important facts and tips about completing a filing. Beck discussed the exempt claim filings in detail and explained the consequences of the loss of priority date if the filings were not made. He shared with the crowd how to search for previous water rights filings, explained what to expect from a consultant, and also provided resources for the completing the claim forms. Each attendee walked away feeling informed and confident regarding exempt water rights claims.



Rosebud Conservation District Reserved Water

Montana's water reservation law provides an opportunity to legally allocate water for future consumptive uses as well as to maintain in-stream flows to protect water rights, aquatic life, and water quality.

The conservation district water reservations are for agricultural irrigation and in some districts for stock watering. Districts rely on land users within the basin to develop the water resource and put the reserved water to use. Districts encourage land users and resource managers to apply for reserved water for new or supplemental irrigation projects.

A reservation is subject to protection under the Montana Water Use Act and is an appropriate water right protected by law. In the case of the conservation district, the right is held by the district on behalf of the individual users. Individuals will apply to the district once they have plans to put the water to use. A water user receives an authorization or permit from the district for the right to use a portion of the district's reserved water. Legally, this is the same as when an individual obtains a permit from the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) to use water.

The Rosebud Conservation District, as a water reservation holder, is responsible for apportioning the reservation in an equitable manner. The district is also responsible for administering the use of its reserved water and in accordance with the "Board of Natural Resources Board Order Establishing Water Reservations". Rosebud Conservation District holds a water reservation of 87,003 acre-feet per year with a maximum flow rate of 540.7 cubic feet per second from the main stem of the Yellowstone River which has a priority date of December 15, 1978 (4:18 P.M.)



**Rosebud Conservation District has
83,249.40 acre-feet and a flow rate of 466.07 cubic feet per second available.**

If you are in need of reserved water and would like more information or an application contact Rosebud Conservation District's Administrator Bobbi Vannattan at 406-346-7333 ext. 101

Lek-y in Love: Sage Grouse stomping grounds perfect place to count birds

By Heather Nenninger, SWCDM's Sage Grouse Initiative Biologist in Forsyth, Montana

Every spring, sage-grouse and biologists alike anticipate the beginning of lek season. Leks, also known as dancing or stomping grounds, are where male sage-grouse gather yearly for their courtship display. From February to May, males puff up their chests and dance, hoping to catch the attention of hens. This display starts just before dawn, and may continue for longer than four hours. Over 100 males can gather at these leks and be dancing simultaneously. However, only a couple will be lucky enough to breed. Biologists spend a majority of the lek season waking up far too early and driving or flying to lek locations as dawn approaches. Thankfully, leks are generally in the same location every year, which makes them easy to find. All this effort is spent so that biologists can count sage-grouse, particularly the males. Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks have been collecting male lek counts for decades, in order to monitor the population. While it would be exorbitantly expensive and nearly impossible to get a true count of the sage-grouse population, lek monitoring allows biologists to estimate how the population changes year-to-year. Of course, most biologists don't count sage-grouse just for the science; there are few things more entertaining than getting to watch a chicken-sized bird with yellow air sacs attached to its chest strut around the sagebrush like it's the most regal creature on the plains. For more information about sage-grouse, leks, and sagebrush conservation work being done with private landowners in Montana and the West, visit www.sagegrouseinitiative.com.

Big Horn Conservation District Cover Crop Cost Share Available

It's time to think about utilizing a cover crop in no-till cropping systems. In order to encourage producers to learn the benefits of cover crops, the Big Horn Conservation District has initiated a program to pay the actual cover crop seed costs up to \$20 per acre on a **maximum of 40 acres per producer**.

Producer responsibilities to participate in this program are to prepare a weed-free seedbed, use a minimum of three varieties of seed in the cover crop mixture, and agree to tours and newsletter articles, if applicable, concerning the experience.

Contact the Big Horn Conservation District at 406-665-3442, ext. 112

Sign up now for the Rosebud Conservation District Cover Crop Cost Share

Rosebud Conservation District is looking for producers who are seeking diversity in no-till cropping systems.

Incentive- \$20 per acre with a maximum of 20 acres

The purpose of the soil health incentive is to encourage the utilization of cover crops in no-till cropping systems. The proper cover crop can economically control erosion, reduce runoff, increase organic matter, break up crop disease patterns, cycle deep nutrients, and be used for haying and/or grazing. The Rosebud Conservation District will pay the actual seed and seeding cost up to \$20 per acre up to 20 acres or \$400 per producer in the conservation district boundaries. Responsibilities of the producer are to prepare a weed free seed bed, note all important observations, agree to tours and news article, if applicable, and provide information regarding fertilizer techniques. A requirement of the cost share agreement is that seed mixtures consist of at least three varieties of seed in the cover crop planting.

Contact the Rosebud Conservation District office at 406.346.7333 or stop by the office located at 270 Prospect Street in Forsyth.

Invasive and Noxious Plant ID Workshop Held

Seanna Torske District Conservationist
Hardin FO

The Invasive and Noxious Plant ID Workshop was held on Wednesday, March 28th, 2018, at Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, MT. Twelve people were in attendance, and lunch was provided through the Little Big Horn College Equity Program. Seanna Torske, Acting Tribal Conservationist for the Crow Agency FO, reviewed general plant identification techniques, and went over identification of the more common invasive and noxious weed species in Big Horn County.



Seanna Torske, District Conservationist, speaks to workshop attendees.

A big thanks goes out to the Wheatland CD for the use of the plant mount collection, and the Harlowton and Roundup Field Offices for getting these plant mounts to Big Horn County.

~Wildlife Profile~

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius Ludovicianus*)...

-Can be found throughout nearly all of Montana, with concentration in open areas which have shrubs and few trees.

- Diet consists of insects, lizards, frogs, small birds, and rodents, it is unique because they are predatory songbirds.

-Are nicknamed the "butcherbird".

-Will skewer their food on a thorn, yucca leaf, or barbed wire as a way to hold their prey, the pierced prey may also help attract a mate.

-Leave poisonous prey, such as the monarch butterfly, speared for three or more days before eating, this time allows the poison break down, making it safe to consume.

-If you are interested in having a free presentation for your group or class, about wildlife, conservation, or habitat please contact Heather Nenninger at 406-346-7333.



****Read upcoming editions of the Conservation Connection for more intriguing facts about Montana's native wildlife, presented by Heather Nenninger, Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Partner Biologist!**

Time to Think Ahead and Address Resource Concerns for the Future

Seanna Torske

USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, Hardin Field Office

Do you farm or ranch? Do you have issues with the quality or quantity of stockwater on your ranch, or cropland productivity on your farm? Or, maybe you have some long term goals of leaving your Ag operation to the next generation in your family, and you would like to ensure that it can operate in a sustainable manner for years to come. Whatever your problems, concerns, or goals, your local USDA-NRCS Field Office is here to help!

Your local Field Office can assist you with developing a conservation plan for your Ag operation. Some tools created in a conservation plan are grazing plans, nutrient management plans, irrigation water management plans, wildlife habitat evaluation guides, etc. A conservation plan can result in more viable and productive land. The NRCS also offers cost-share programs to further aid producers who would like to improve the resources on his or her land.

If you would like to learn more about USDA-NRCS's financial assistance programs, check out the MT NRCS Programs webpage here: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mt/programs/financial/>. Feel free to also contact your local NRCS Field Office for more information about NRCS Conservation Programs, or to request free Conservation Technical Assistance on your operation.

When is a 310 permit needed?

A 310 permit is REQUIRED if you are planning ANY project that physically alters or modifies the bed or banks of a stream. The purpose of the permit is to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation, protect and preserve streams and rivers in their natural or existing state, and to prevent damage to the lands and property immediately adjacent to streams and rivers.

The application process is easy, simply pick one up at your local conservation district, upon completion, return the application to the office. An inspection of the proposed project is necessary, afterwards, the Board of Supervisors determine the fate of the 310 permit. Sometimes additional permits are required and it is the responsibility of the producer to secure all permits before beginning any projects.

Rosebud County

- ◆ Yellowstone River
- ◆ Tongue River
- ◆ Rosebud Creek
- ◆ Reservation Creek
- ◆ Otter Creek
- ◆ **Armell's Creek**
- ◆ Numerous Other Creeks

Big Horn County

- ◆ Big Horn River
- ◆ Tongue River
- ◆ Little Big Horn River
- ◆ Rosebud Creek
- ◆ Numerous Other Creeks

Treasure County

- ◆ Yellowstone River
- ◆ Big Horn River
- ◆ Sarpy Creek

*All Perennial Streams in Big Horn, Treasure, and Rosebud Counties Require a 310 Permit!
If you are unsure, please contact your local conservation district!*

Rosebud Conservation District

270 Prospect Forsyth, MT 406-346-7333

For Sale:

- *Wildlife Ramp~ \$20.00
- *Gate Latch~ \$20.00
- *Marking Flags (5"x8")~ \$10.00/bundle

For Rent:

- *Track Filler~ \$100.00/day or \$200.00/week
- *No Till Drill~ \$7.00/acre (200 acre maximum)

Books For Sale:

- *Range Plants of Montana~ \$15.00
- *Rosebud County Land Ownership Map Books \$28.00/
small or \$40.00/large \$38.00/small aerial view or \$50.00/
large aerial view

Treasure County Conservation District

211 Elliot Avenue Hysham, MT 59038 406-342-5510 ext. 102

For Sale:

- *Marking Flags (5"x8")~ \$10.00/bundle
- *Wildlife Ramp~ \$20.00

For Rent:

- *Great Plains Native Grass Drill~ \$7.00/acre (200 acre maximum)

Books For Sale:

- *Treasure County Land Ownership Map Books~ \$16.00/
small or \$20.00/large

Big Horn Conservation District

724 W 3rd Street Hardin, MT 59034 406-665-3442

For Sale:

- *Moisture Probe~ \$65.00
- *Wildlife Ramp~ \$25.00
- *Hydrosorce Plant Gel~ \$7.00/pint

For Rent:

- *Tree Planter~ \$.10/tree (\$30.00 min)
- *Fabric Layer~ \$.10/tree (\$30.00 min w/o fabric purchase) or \$.05/tree + fabric cost (w/ fabric purchase)

~For Sale or Rent~

Easy to Grow Vegetables for Beginning Gardeners

* Tomatoes

* Zucchini

* Peppers

* Cabbage

* Bush Beans

* Lettuce

* Beets

* Carrots

* Chard

* Radishes



****Fascinating Facts****

- * A female zebra mussel can produce up to one million fertilized eggs per year
- * Algae are the primary food of zebra mussels
- * The mussels can survive out of water for several days as long as the weather is humid
- * Zebra mussels live for around 4-5 years
- * They are native to the Caspian Sea
- * The Zebra mussel was originally brought to America in the mid-1980s by a ship that traveled into the Great Lakes



~Upcoming Events~

Stockmanship Clinic

Flesh Angus Shelby, Montana June 4, 2018

For more information: Gail Cicon 406-759-5778 ext. 102 or liberty@macdnet.org

Stockmanship Clinic

Jim & Dena Fritz Ranch Chester, Montana June 5, 2018

For more information: Gail Cicon 406-759-5778 ext. 102 or liberty@macdnet.org

Stockmanship Clinic

Northern Ag Research Center Havre, Montana June 6, 2018

For more information: Gail Cicon 406-759-5778 ext. 102 or liberty@macdnet.org

Montana Range Days

Red Lodge, Montana June 18-20, 2018

For more information: Darlene Schwend 406-962-3641 ext. 105 or mabel.schwend@mt.nacdnet.net

Riparian Grazing Workshop

Thompson Falls, Montana June 26, 2018

For more information: www.swcdm.org

Riparian Grazing Workshop

Helena, Montana June 27, 2018

For more information: www.swcdm.org

Riparian Grazing Workshop

Deer Lodge, Montana June 28, 2018

For more information: www.swcdm.org

2018 River Rendezvous

Great Falls, Montana July 11-12, 2018

For more information: Rachel Frost 406-454-0056 or Tenlee Atchison 406-727-3603 ext. 125

Montana Range Tour

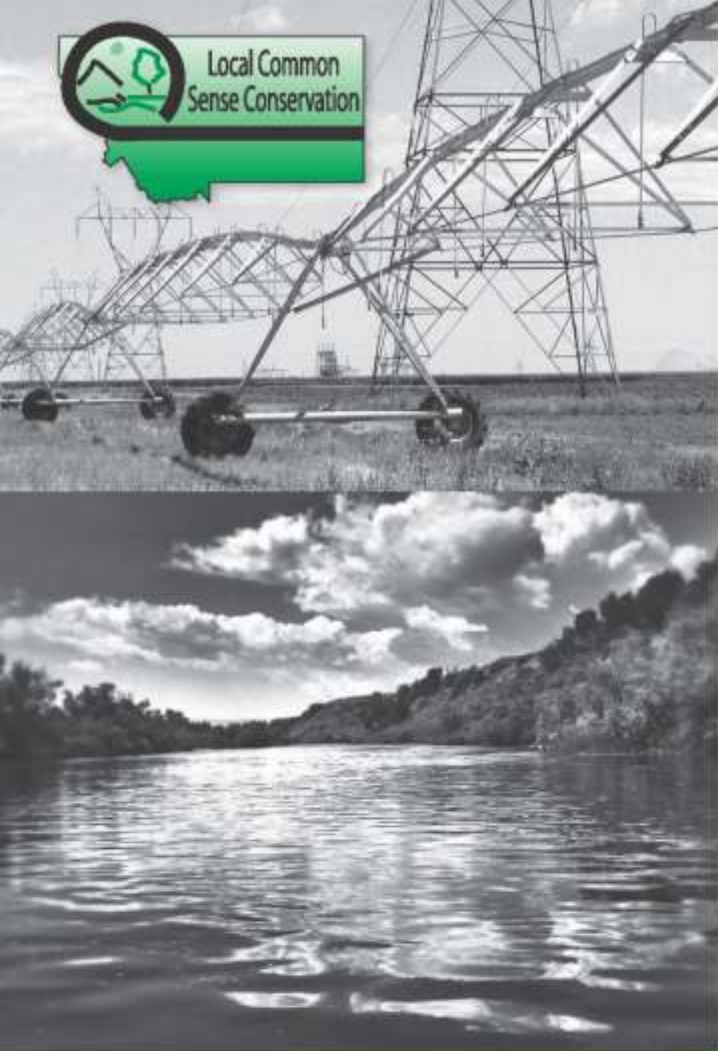
Sidney, Montana September 5-6, 2018

For more information: Julie Goss 406-433-2103 ext. 3001 or julie.goss@mt.nacdnet.net



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**PROTECT OUR
WATERS**

To learn how you can help protect the great state of Montana from Aquatic Invasive Species visit www.cleandraindrymt.com

The bottom section of the page is a large green rectangle with a dark blue border. Inside, there is a graphic of the state of Montana. The top part of the graphic is a light blue horizontal bar. The rest of the graphic is a dark blue shape that follows the outline of Montana. The text 'PROTECT OUR WATERS' is centered within this shape. 'PROTECT' is in green, 'OUR' is in orange, and 'WATERS' is in white. Below the graphic, there is a line of text in a black, sans-serif font: 'To learn how you can help protect the great state of Montana from Aquatic Invasive Species visit www.cleandraindrymt.com'.