

April, 2022



The Mountain Meadow

A quarterly publication from the
Sublette County Conservation District



Photo by Jess Artz

Spring is just around the corner!

Highlights In This Issue

- Going Back to Our Roots
- What We've Been up To
- Fencing Without Fence? What?
- Cleaning Ditches?
- Springtime Takes Flight
- New SCCD Staff!
- Today's Small Seedling
- Spring Expo 2022– Save the Date!

Seedling tree distribution days are planned for the last week of April!
Exact dates will be finalized once shipping occurs.

*"By working with local people who understand local problems,
the best conservation measures can be accomplished."*

From the District Manager's Chair

What's going on at the District

Michael Henn, District Manager



The bluebirds are back in Sublette County and spring-time is trying to arrive. Unfortunately, Sublette County is dealing with an average snowpack in the Upper Green River basin sitting at 71% of normal. This means we need to prepare for potentially another dry year with limited irrigation water and vegetative growth on our rangelands. SCCD is finalizing its plans for the next field season and gearing up for a busy and exciting summer. Staff are excited to work with landowners and managers to put conservation on the ground.

This summer we have some mesic habitat enhancement projects associated with both public and private lands to help with erosion in ephemeral and intermittent drainages. SCCD is also working in partnership with the Bridger Teton National Forest to assist with trail clearing efforts as a result of the blowdown event that occurred in the Wind River mountains in the fall of 2020. We will be collecting water quality samples around the County this summer to keep an eye on surface water within our County. As you begin enjoying the County if you see SCCD, please feel free to stop and chat with us regarding our projects. As always if you have any questions regarding natural resources feel free to call the office and chat with one of us.



SCCD Surface Water Quality Sampling Site on the Little Sandy River

What We've Been up to

SCCD Presents at NACD

Shari Meeks and Michael Henn attended the National Association of Conservation District conference in Orlando, Florida to give 2 presentations. Shari presented on the efforts that are currently going on in the greater LaBarge planning area, highlighting a large collaborative effort to improve the watershed within the area. Michael highlighted the collaborative effort that assisted in the restoration efforts associated with the 3 large wildfires in the County since 2012. They also attended the Public Lands Resource Policy Group, representing Wyoming that helps the national association with public lands policy issues.



2022 Conservation Conversations!

The 2022 Conservation Conversations have been a great success so far! This year presentations are being held at the BOCES building (665 N Tyler Ave, Pinedale, WY) throughout the winter/Spring. Grab and go snacks are provided for all participants. Come join us for the last 2 topics! All past presentations can be viewed on our website. For more information on the last 2 presentations listed below please visit our website at <https://www.sublettecd.com/conservation-conversations>.

April 27th from 12:00-12:30pm

"Fungal Facilitation: The Symbiotic Relationship Between Mycorrhizal Fungi and Sagebrush"

May 25th from 12:00-12:30pm

"Snowpack and Drought: Navigating a Drying Future in Sublette County"

NRCS Update

Cattle Fencing Without a Fence? What?

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

When we work with our customers, a fence inventory is completed as part of our services. Ranchers know that every spring and at various times during the year, fence maintenance is necessary and time-consuming. While attending a recent sage-grouse local work group meeting, we discussed specific fences that are resulting in higher sage-grouse strikes which may equate to sage-grouse mortality. We discussed the absolute need for a fence on BLM land, but the current location and annual attention in needs is problematic. This fence is only needed for the grazing season – five weeks. Then something came across my communication chain that piqued my interest – Virtual Fence. This is a containment system that is powered from portable solar towers which communicates with a neck collar fixed on cattle. Fence lines are drawn on a permittees smart phone and a warning sound is sent once cattle get close to the “fence”. If a cow continues closer, they will receive a small shock (~1/3 of the voltage of an electric fence). Cattle producers that have utilized this system, say that they spend a few days at home training their cows to the collars and get about 95% compliance to the unseen fence when turned out to the new pasture boundary. Please stop for a moment here and consider management of cattle without a physical barrier...

- Graze in smaller units, allowing for a more efficient harvesting of all grass species while allowing other areas more time to green up and put on biomass before accessing them.
- Truly begin to rotationally graze and use different areas of a pasture at different times to allow for native forage species to set seed and populate the seed bank.
- Fence out treatment areas or sensitive areas that you may have trouble managing (without a rider).
- Use the technology to gradually move the fence to push cows out of a pasture instead of riding for days to gather out of a large landscape.
- See the movements of individual animals and if one hasn't moved in a while, you have a location to check on the health of that animal.

Consider the impact removing internal fences would be to migrating wild-life in addition to the cost savings of fence building and maintenance. Fencing technology hasn't changed in 100 years, but I think we are on the brink of something big. Current costs are a bit high, but if you look at how fast technology changes and how more "users" will lower the price, I really see this being feasible and very exciting for many facets of our community. Of course, you can punch holes in the technology or say it can't work – that's easy. Or you can look to the future with new possibilities and consider how this might just revolutionize your operation and provide a flexible way of management you never imagined possible. If you stop and consider just 20 years ago you had to have a physical road atlas available to you while you traveled. Today you have built in navigation devices on your phone or in your car removing the need for a physical copy of a map. Today's technology back then was unimaginable. If you are interested in discussing this further, the SCCD, the BLM and NRCS desire to provide additional information and insight. Colorado and Montana are both experiencing high success with trials on the landscape and we are hoping to transfer their successes to Wyoming, where other pilot projects are also occurring. For further research and information, a few links are listed below. Be inspired!!

<https://vence.io/about>

<https://agfundernews.com/vence-raises-12m-to-enable-rotational-grazing-with-virtual-electric-fences>

Virtual Fencing Pilot Program in Montana - (producersvoice.net)

“Rock”-in’ and Rollin’ Into Spring 2022

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

Remember those rock structures or Zeedyk structures you kept reading about last year? Maybe you even participated in the workshop held last August and wonder what it would be like to see them in action. Well, you’re in luck because I’m going to give you a little preview!

Spring has turned its head in Sublette County – switching its face from cold and stormy to warm and sunny and back again. While those nice warm sunny days are welcomed, so is any amount of precipitation we can get! We placed some cameras out on the structures we built to see if we could capture run-off events and our efforts paid off.

A warm spell occurred at the end of March, and between March 26th to March 30th we watched as this ephemeral drainage carried the snowmelt with the Zeedyk structures in place. Check out the sequence of pictures below as we begin with some snow still on the ground...



March 26th at 1:00 p.m.

Cont. on next page



March 27th at 1:00 p.m.

Over the course of 24 hours, approximately half of the snow in the drainage has been replaced by its water equivalent.



March 29th at 4:00 p.m.

By March 29th, most of the snow is gone as we watch what might be a bit of peak run-off in this ephemeral drainage. The rangeland habitats were happy to see some water and so was the wildlife! The video [found here](#) portrays it quite well!

Finally, on March 30th, the water has been mostly absorbed into the soil and the meadow is back to looking ephemeral in the way we often see it.



March 30th at 4:00 p.m.

Spring time in the Rockies is “Rock”-in’ and the water is Rollin’ (well at least what we have of it), so hopefully we will see more precipitation and be able to watch as these Zeedyk structures capture sediment, grow more vegetation, and heal the erosion in this landscape.

Do you want to see more cool videos and learn a little more about mesic habitat restoration and Zeedyk structures? Click the link to watch these short [Zeedyk Workshop Videos](#). Do you want some help to implement similar structures on your property? Give us a call!

This project has been made possible by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government, or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or its funding sources.

Going Back to Our Roots

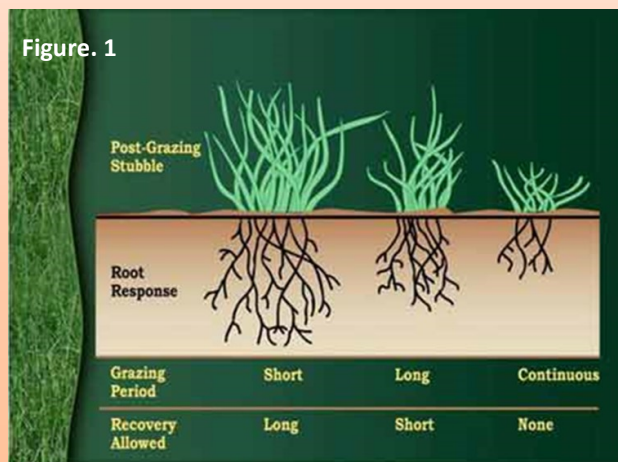
Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Grass. Its key to the functionality of our watersheds and contributes to the ecologic, biologic, and hydraulic integrity of our rangelands. Its important forage for our livestock and wildlife. At the end of the day, grass supports every facet of our economy in Sublette County. But it's not what you 'see' that matters most to grasses. The aboveground biomass is directly impacted by the belowground biomass, which holds a lot more weight in rangeland health and productivity. So, let's dig down to the root of it!

Root development is strongly tied to frequency and extent of leaf removal. The taller grasses are allowed to get prior to grazing, the better the root structure and, in turn, greater site stability. However, the taller the grasses get, the less palatable they become.

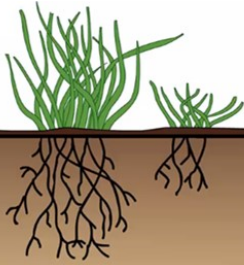
Following the plant height grazing recommendations from NRCS will help in determining when pastures should be grazed. To reduce impacts to your vegetation, a pasture rotation is recommended so pressure on the vegetation does not happen at the same time every year on each pasture. The diagram below shows root vs shoot growth against the grazing system applied.

Keep in mind that if the grass on the right in Figure 1 wasn't continuously grazed; the root structure would be like the grass on the left. Poor grass stands prevail in overgrazed systems.



Cont. on next page

Figure. 2



| Percent leaf volume removed | Percent root growth stopped |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 10% | 0% |
| 20% | 0% |
| 30% | 0% |
| 40% | 0% |
| 50% | 2-4% |
| 60% | 50% |
| 70% | 78% |
| 80% | 100% |
| 90% | 100% |

Roots are the key to productivity. Did you know that 50-80% of annual production in grasses takes place in the roots? You may have heard the saying “take half, leave half”. This saying means that if your grass average ungrazed height is 6” tall, then once you’ve grazed down to 3” it’s time to move pastures. This is because root growth is greatly reduced at >50% utilization. Anything beyond 80% utilization stops root growth for the growing season (Figure 2).

When we lose our roots or choose not to manage for root health, it can be detrimental to our plant communities in several ways:

- *Root loss reduces water and mineral uptake*
- *Root loss reduces above-ground growth*
- *Root loss contributes to reduced plant vigor*
- *Root loss results in less litter (plant material) on the soil surface – therefore leaving more soil susceptible to detachment and erosion.*
- *Root loss results in increased water runoff*

Bunchgrasses offer our rangelands the greatest benefit because bunchgrasses have the root structure to hold more soil in place and capture more water compared to grasses that are rhizomatous.

When we manage our pastures and rangelands for health, it ensures the viability of using those plant communities for a long time in the future. Sustainability is key to our economic vitality here in Sublette County. If you want to learn more about your pasture or range management, give us a call and we can help you define a plan for long-term success!

Cleaning Ditches?

Game and Fish Wants Your Spoils!

Luke Schultz, Pinedale Game and Fish Department



If you are planning to do any ditch or canal maintenance, consider contacting Game and Fish. Willows, cottonwood trees, root balls, and other woody material can be used for streambank stabilization, and are very valuable for fish habitat work. If you have removed any of these materials from your ditch (or plan to), Game and Fish is

willing to travel to pick up the materials and haul them to project sites around Sublette County. In addition to helping out with these projects, materials that are hauled away can save landowners the hassle of burning or otherwise disposing of brush piles.

Materials that were removed in the last year are particularly desirable for this work, but anything less than about 5 years old can be put to use in these projects. Please let the Conservation District or Luke Schultz from Game and Fish know if you will be doing any of this work and are interested in donating this material. Luke can be reached at 367-4353, and is happy to answer any

questions about this opportunity. A couple photos below illustrate how these materials are used in this work.



Springtime Takes Flight

Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator

Springtime is a very short but welcomed season in Sublette County. We all are a little cabin crazed from being cooped up inside through the winter and ready to venture outside in warmer temperatures. One thing to keep in mind this time of year is that as our snow melts and springtime rain showers leave puddles on the ground, that water also creates stagnant pools. Those stagnant pools are the perfect breeding grounds for those pesky mosquitos that make summertime activities less desirable. This article will teach you how to help keep those mosquitos at bay by attracting one of my favorite birds to watch.

The Tree Swallow is a small bird with a white belly and handsome iridescent blue feathers covering the back and wings. These birds can be found everywhere in the US depending on the time of year, they take up residency in Wyoming during their breeding season. They tend to nest in tree hollows or abandoned woodpecker holes which is how they got their name. They also readily nest in homemade nest boxes and provide benefits to those who help house them. These birds are incredible aerial acrobats and use this talent to feed on flying insects, including mosquitos and grasshoppers. This helps rid your backyard/property of these pests. Tree swallows are also a great defense in gardens with flying pests.

Attracting these entertaining backyard nesters is simple. Place nesting boxes on a 5-6-foot-tall pole in open areas away from trees and other places larger birds can prey on them and their nests. Ideal areas have tall grass and are usually near water (I have placed mine along a ditch bank). Make sure that the opening to the nesting box is South or East facing and $1\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter. During the breeding season they are usually on the hunt for two other items besides housing and food. These two items are empty eggshells and white feathers. By placing these in the nest box area you can increase odds of them taking up residence in your nest boxes. To keep these birds coming back each spring, make sure that old nests are removed from the nest box.

In conclusion, Tree Swallows are an easy to accommodate bird that can help make spring/summertime more appealing. These aerial masters are both entertaining and useful as they perform their acrobatics while chasing prey or playing a game of catch the feather with each other. For more information or to read more in depth the information for this article can be found at allaboutbirds.org.



SCCD Welcomes New Staff!



Hi, I'm Anna Welsh and I'm excited to join SCCD as a Range Specialist focusing on watershed health for our county. I recently moved to Sublette County from Beulah, WY where I crossed the state line everyday to work for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as a Private Lands Specialist.

I graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a B.S. in Natural Resource Management. Since then, I've made my way around the country working in various natural resource related fields.

I've skipped around from co-owning and operating my own cow/calf operation and sawmill in New Mexico to guiding back packing and horse packing trips in both New Mexico and Nevada to surveying and monitoring fish and wildlife in Lake Mead and Mojave to my work with South Dakota Game and Fish.

I'm excited to bring this background of experience to my new position here with SCCD, and even more excited about the opportunities to expand my knowledge and experience by working in such a diverse and incredible landscape.

While all jobs come with paperwork, despite it, this is the kind of job that offers the satisfaction most people turn to extracurricular hobbies to gain. So even in my free time, I'm usually doing something related to what also pays my bills. My husband and I enjoying horseback riding and working cattle with friends and neighbors, but we also spend as much time as we can in our kayaks either fishing or floating lakes and rivers.

Rodeo runs in our family too. My husband is a semi-retired bull rider and together we have a goal to help "build" Wyoming bull riders. We do this by contracting to provide the bulls for various high school and county rodeos throughout the year. Our objective is to bring a pen of bulls to each event that offer prospective and current bull riders the opportunity to build and strengthen their foundational riding skills.

We've already been warmly welcomed by the Sublette County community and look forward to meeting more of our neighbors as we settle into a blessed life where the deer and the antelope play.

Cont. on next page



We would like to introduce our seasonal Natural Resource intern, Jackie Nutt. Recently graduating from Northern Wyoming Community College in Sheridan, she earned an Associate's degree in Agriculture.

Jackie was born and raised in Pinedale and is excited to return and work in her field of study. Previously, she worked as a seasonal spray technician for the Sublette County Weed & Pest. Some of

Jackie's hobbies include riding horses, hunting, fishing, and gardening. Throughout the summer, she will assist SCCD in the busy field season.

Sublette County Employment Opportunities

Sublette County Conservation District will soon have a full staff in place including a new Senior Natural Resource Technician who will be starting next month. Watch in future newsletters for his introduction. Hiring a great group of natural resources professionals allows us to better spread a growing workload and take on new exciting projects around the county.

Check on our website throughout the year for job announcements. As we take on new projects there are new opportunities to hire technicians and other staff specific to each of these projects.

<https://www.sublettecd.com/employment-opportunities>

Today's Small Seedling to Tomorrow's Leafy Giants!

Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator



The snow is finally melting, and the temperatures are slowly creeping up. With springtime trickling its way into Sublette County it's time to start thinking about those seedlings you ordered this winter. You might be thinking how difficult can it be? Dig a hole and stick it in the ground right? Wrong! If you want to ensure the success of your seedlings check out these steps.



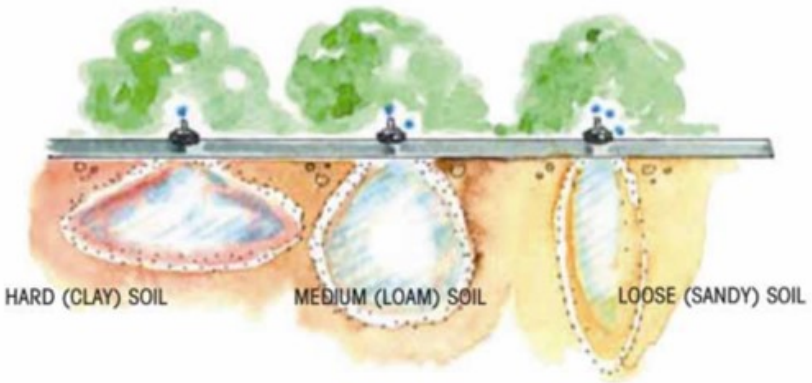
As we all know our County can either be plentiful or scarce when it comes to precipitation on our landscape. This is an important factor to think about when planting seedlings. They require a lot of water to grow and the simplest way to take care of this need is to install a drip irrigation system. Another thing to consider regarding water is the slope in which you are planting on. A hill isn't going to be great at holding water for seedlings even on a drip system.

Protection from the elements would be my number two consideration for planting seedlings. Our winters here can be cruel. Freezing winters and unrelenting winds can be especially hard on a young tree. The sun can be an equal threat especially if water is hard to come by. Tree guards as well as tubex can be used to increase seedling odds of survival. Both items can be purchased from Sublette County Conservation District (SCCD).



Another key to seedling success is soil type. Knowing the type of soil will help with determining which species will be more willing to thrive. There are other steps such as tilling the area before a planting that can help with allowing the soil to soak more moisture as well as allowing the roots to spread easier. Placing fertilizer with your plantings can also be an advantage with the ability to get your seedling the nutrients needed for optimal growing success. Fertilizer tablets can be purchased from the SCCD.

These tips and many more can be found in our Planting for Conservation in Sublette County guide. These informational books can be either picked up at no cost at the office or an online version on our website sublettecd.com. Feel free to call the office (307-367-2364) with any questions!



Spring Expo 2022- Save the Date!

SPRING EXPO 2022



Growing the Bounty of Sublette County

June, 18th

Sublette Ice Arena

Event Schedule

- 9:00 AM-Vendor Booths Open
- 9:30 AM-Early Bird Door Prize Draw
- 10:00 AM-Kids Activity Booth Opens
- 10:00 AM- Combat Gardening in Western Wyoming (Presentation and Panel Discussion)
- 11:00 AM-Door Prize Drawing
- 11:30AM- Growing Indoors Year-Round: All About Aeroponic Grow Towers
- 12:45 PM-Door Prize Drawing
- 1:00 PM- Does SCCD Have the Tool for You? Products & Tools Available to Landowners (Range Drill, Aerator, Chutes, Panels)
- 1:30 PM-Chicken Poop Bingo!!
- 1:15 PM-Door Prize Drawing
- 2:00 PM-Vendor Booths Close



- Presentation upstairs
- Door Prize Drawings

SCCD is excited to announce the agenda for our 5th Annual Spring Expo. This year the expo will take place on June 18th from 9am-2pm at the Sublette Ice Arena. We have 3 great presentations lined up that you wont want to miss!

We have a great spread of vendors again this year and Sage and Snow Garden Club will be selling annual and perennial seedlings from their club booth just in time for planting.

If you are interested in being a vendor at the Spring Expo please fill out the vendor form on our website.

[https://
www.sublettecd.com/spring-
expo](https://www.sublettecd.com/spring-expo)

We are excited to bring this event to Sublette County residents again and hope to continue to improve this event each year to better match the interests of all of our constituents.

Hope to see you all there!

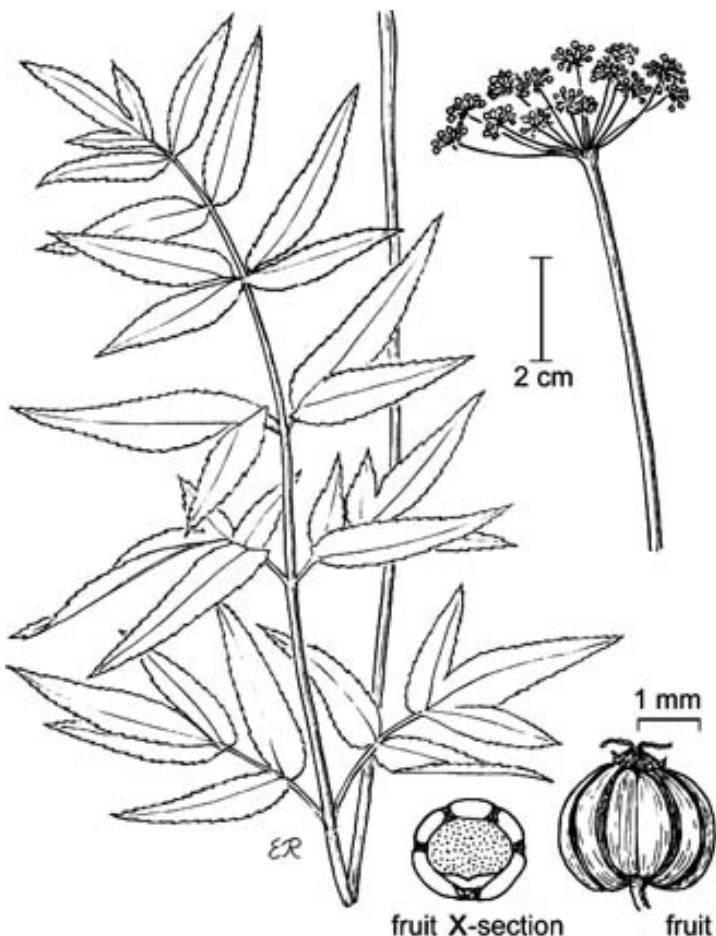
Kid's Corner

National Invasives Species Week took place on **February 28 - March 4, 2022**. Its important to learn how to identify noxious weeds in Sublette County. Let's start by learning about Wester water Hemlock!

This Invasive plant is a member of the Parsnip Family. It likes to grow in wet areas and is very poisonous to animals and people so never put it anywhere near your mouth!

Leaves are alternate (across from each other), twice or thrice divided and green. Stems are hollow, smooth and purple-striped. Flowers are white. (For more information and photos go to <https://sublettecountyweed.com/>)

Color in the Western Water Hemlock below using the plant description above!



Cicuta douglasii

Who Are We?

Sublette County Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Coke Landers-Chairman
Darrell Walker-Vice Chairman
Dave Pape-Sec/Treasurer
Meghann Smith
Milford Lockwood

Sublette County Conservation District Staff

Michael Henn, District Manager
Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator
Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager
Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager
Jessica Artz, Range Specialist/ Education & Outreach Coordinator
Anna Welsh, Range Specialist
Kristy Smith, Natural Resource Technician
Jackie Nutt, Natural Resource Intern

Partners: USDA / NRCS Staff

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist
Shirleena King, Administrative Assistant
Karen Clause, Multi-County Range Management Specialist
Dillon Gray, Autumn Boxum, Taylor Kepley, Jenna Platt- Soil Survey Team

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. The USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer and Lender.



217 Country Club Ln. / P.O. Box 647 Pinedale, WY 82941

Phone: 307-367-2364 Email: sccd@sublettecd.com Website: sublettecd.com