

January, 2021



The Mountain Meadow

A quarterly publication from the
Sublette County Conservation District



**2021 TREE SALES NOW
OPEN!**

We here at SCCD hope you all had a wonderful Holiday season and wish you a Happy New Year!

Highlights In This Issue

- 75th WACD Convention
- Conservation Conversations Series
- Christmas Tree Disposal
- Great Conservation Idea Info
- Soil Health
- New Year, New Grazing Regulations
- Surface Water Montana Trip

SCCD is looking for Great Conservation Idea Grant Applications. It's time to start brainstorming ideas!

*"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

Mike Henn, District Manager



What an end to the 2020 year. To say the least, this year has tested everyone's ability to adapt to daily if not hourly changes to life around them. The District was the same. This fall and early winter it seemed that every area and state meeting was now in a virtual platform, and it appears that this will also happen for the national meetings that the District attends annually. Although we aren't traveling as much, which is a plus in the winter, this virtual platform leads to unique challenges when trying to conduct business without the ability to have those hallway conversations with your partners and friends during the meetings.

Nevertheless, SCCD was well represented and even brought home some awards from the Wyoming Association of Conservation District (WACD) annual meeting. Shari Meeks and I received our certificate of recertification for water quality sampling. The District was also honored with winning the 2021 Plan of Work and received Honorable Mention for our 2020 Annual Report. Jessica Artz put these reports together with input from staff. This was her first year of doing this and beat out conservation districts from around the state! The Annual Report describes program activities, projects and accomplishments between July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020. The Plan of Work sets forth the goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Head over to our website at www.sublettecd.com to view both of these documents and learn more about projects and programs and our plans for the upcoming year!

As the District moves into the new year everyone is excited for what it will bring. The District has several projects in the works partnering with several state and federal agencies putting conservation on the ground. So, stay tuned to our newsletter and Facebook page for highlights and opportunities.



What We've Been up to

Parade of Lights

SCCD staff and board members participated in the Parade of Lights in Big Piney on December 5th and the Pinedale Parade of Lights on December 12th. We enjoy taking part in these events every year and we hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. Hoping 2021 brings easier and happier times for all.



Planning for Conservation Conversations!

Jess Artz, Range Specialist/ Education & Outreach Coordinator

Conservation Conversations are coming back! Last year marked the first of hopefully many years of these educational presentations. This series, which took place at BOCES in February of 2020, covered a variety of natural resource topics that are of interest to community members in Sublette County. This year, the plan is to bring the community a variety of presentations in a webinar format which participants can view live from home as well as recorded versions that will be posted to our website as well as the BOCES website for viewing at a later time. The first session titled "Response to Catastrophic Wildfires: A Collaborative Approach in Southwest Wyoming" will be presented online on February, 17th from 12:00-12:30pm. Other presentation topics will be announced as they are developed. Keep your eyes on our website and Facebook for more specific info as we get dates and other specifics nailed down in the coming month.



That Old Christmas Tree

Tips and Ideas for Post Holiday Disposal

Sno Ann Engler, Tree Program Manager

Now that Christmas is over and it's time to put your house back in order, what are you going to do with that old Christmas tree?

Here are some fun ideas:

My favorite ... secure it in a heavy pot that won't blow over and decorate the branches with suitable bird food decorations such as; hollowed out orange halves filled with bird seed, dip a pine cone in peanut butter and cover it in bird seed, halve and hang up old fruit (i.e...apples and pears) by attaching a string and hanging from the branches

Game and Fish can take your old Christmas tree and use it in a fish habitat project at the 40-Rod Access on the Green River. It's a great way to recycle those trees and help area fisheries. Contact Luke Schultz (367-4353) if you would like to get involved, or drop off your trees at the Game and Fish Office (432 E. Mill Street).

Get together with your neighbors and rent a chipper and feed the trees through it. Next spring, spread the wood chips under shrubs; they will suppress weeds and, as they decompose, add nutrients to the soil
Strip small branches and use the remaining twigs to support indoor potted plants or stake leggy seedlings

Chop it into firewood and fire starters

If you plan to use the wood for craft or décor projects, it is easiest to work with the trees when they have dried out and the needles are falling off (or gone)

Cut the trunk into 2-inch discs and set them on edge into the soil bordering flower beds or walkways or lay them flat for steppingstones

Cut thin slabs off the trunk, sand them smooth, and use as coasters and trivets. The smaller ones make cute Christmas tree ornaments, fridge magnets or even garden signs. You may want to apply a thin coat of polyurethane to keep the sap off tables and glassware



GREAT CONSERVATION IDEA GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DO YOU HAVE A SMALL BUT GREAT CONSERVATION IDEA?
WE WANT TO HELP FUND YOUR PROJECTS!

Open to any youth and/or adults, teams, schools, clubs,
churches, businesses, or other groups

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!

Offers cost-share up to \$2500
(Cost-share can be in-kind volunteer labor)

Apply by COB
March 1, 2021

sponsored by

Pinedale Anticline Project Office



Information and application materials are available by visiting the SCCD website
www.sublettecd.com

Or contact:
Sublette County Conservation District
217 Country Club Ln
Pinedale, WY 82941
mpurcell@sublettecd.com
307-367-2364

Look for application materials posted to the SCCD website by February 1, 2021.

NRCS Update- Soil Health

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist



There are five principles to soil health that should be considered not only for large-scale productions but also for smaller gardening plots. You will find benefits such as soil moisture retention, improved microbiology activity and free nutrient input. Consider your current practices and see if you can impact one of these principles on the land or plot you manage.

Soil Armor – This is a layer of protection over your soil to protect from wind/water erosion. A mulch layer could act in this manner but you can use your existing crop for this. In a garden setting, instead of removing all the

end of year biomass from your plot, use it to cover your soil. If you incorporate it into the soil, you are also helping to feed your underground microbial population. A thick enough layer can also remove sunlight from seedling weeds and reduce the presence of unwanted plants.

Minimize Soil Disturbance – This principle can be applied to chemical application (such as over-application of nutrients or pesticides) or physical disturbance such as tillage and biological disturbance which could be an over-use of the plants grazed by livestock. All of these actions if applied to a field can disrupt the soil food web, a vast network of activity happening beneath our feet which can't be observed with our eyes.

Plant Diversity - Different types of plants such as broadleaf and grasses, provide different inputs into the soil through their roots. A broad diversity of species is better for soil and the microorganisms within. Planting of one species, monoculture cropping, isn't the best for our soils. In garden situations, instead of devoting an area to only carrots, why not introduce a legume in the box or row? Peas and beans add nitrogen to the soil. While not all vegetables would be compatible, you will find that some combinations would work; especially if you consider crops that mature quickly planted with vegetables that take longer to produce. Diversity also attracts different pollinators to your area. Incorporate flowers for a host of benefits.

NRCS Update– Soil Health continued from previous page

Continual Live Plant/Root – A growing root is critical to feeding and growing the vast network of the soil biome. Roots and their exudates (what they release to the soil) will provide a food source to keep your microorganisms active longer. Cover crops are implemented in crop-land type scenarios to improve this on larger fields. This type of action can also be implemented in your garden. Also consider letting your plants remain green for as long as they can and let them die naturally instead of pulling them from the ground when you have completed your harvest. A clean and tidy garden might “look” good but messy is better. Yeah!

Livestock Integration – This principle is important and relatively easy for us to consider. When you continually harvest and remove the biomass, the accumulated nutrients are being removed from the site. Manure from animals can incorporate nutrients back into the system. Consider a hayfield that you harvest annually but never feed on or graze on. You are withdrawing reserves from the soil and not depositing anything back. And if you pay to fertilize, you might consider incorporating feeding back onto that pasture. This action might save you money too. Gardeners can simply find a local manure source and work it (gently) into the soil.

By searching on the internet for Secrets of Soil Health, you will find a wealth of information. Soils are the building block of our world and investment now will yield dividends for our future as well as for the future of our descendants.



[NRCS Soil Health Info](#)

New Year, New Grazing Regulations?

...Continued

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager



I recently wrote an article for the Sublette Examiner titled “New Year, New Grazing Regulations?” published on January 4, 2020. Please email me at smeeks@sublettecd.com for a copy of this article. In it, I described that both the BLM and the USFS have initiated the process (otherwise known as NEPA) to make considerable changes regarding range and

grazing management. The intent of both agencies is to bring these policies and directives more “up-to-date” which is an effort that has not taken place in over 30 years!

Federal agencies must consider the impacts of any major federal action that significantly affect the human environment prior to moving forward with the action. That said, state and local government fit into the process by participating as cooperating agencies, which is where the commissioners and the conservation district get involved.

Our role as a Cooperating Agency has many benefits to our constituents. We are able to participate deeply in the process by providing local feedback, we can provide staff to assist with the process, attend cooperator meetings regarding project/policy development, review pre-decisional documents and we can maintain confidentiality of non-public information. Local Conservation Districts and County Commissioners are considered “local experts” and can provide relevant information to the agencies which can help them come up with the best decisions.

But I must say, we still need you, as the user of rangelands, to help us understand fully your concerns and interests on the public land. That is also why it is just as important for you to understand what is being proposed in these policy and regulation changes.

Continued on next page

New Year, New Grazing Regulations? continued from previous page

The SCCD can better represent your interests if you give voice to them. We always welcome public interface, especially when it can strengthen our representation to our constituents. There is never a discussion had where I don't learn something new about the needs of rangeland users.

If you are a bit hazy about federal land management, I would suggest getting a copy of the 3rd Edition Wyoming Public Lands Handbook published by the Wyoming County Commissioners Association (found <http://www.wyo-wcca.org/>). This publication provides an overview of federal land management and the roles of cooperating agencies, which can substantially increase your understanding of the public land management in Wyoming. If you have any questions regarding your participation in the process or on the BLM and USFS proposed changes, visit the links provided, and please feel free to give the District a call. We will be working steadily on forming comments as it relates to the proposed USFS revisions and BLM EIS.

Find out more:

Proposed Grazing Regulation Revision (43 CFR Part 4100, exclusive of Alaska)	
<u>Project Information</u>	
NEPA Number:	DOI-BLM-WO-WO2000-2019-0001-EIS
Project Name:	Proposed Grazing Regulation Revision (43 CFR Part 4100, exclusive of Alaska)
Project Type:	Environmental Impact Statement
Project Status:	Planned - Preparation and Planning
Lead Office:	WO-200
Last Updated:	06/23/2020, 22:32:31 MDT

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/1500093/510USFS>

Proposed Rangeland Management Directives Updates


<https://www.fs.fed.us/rangeland-management/directives.shtml>

Surface Water Montana Trip

Gabe Fancher, Natural Resource Technician



In late October, we delivered Macroinvertebrate (bug) samples to River Continuum Concepts in Belgrade, MT and surface water nutrient samples to Flathead Lake Biological Station in Polson, MT. Brett Marshall and his team at River Continuum Concepts will identify macroinvertebrates found in samples we collected from streams and rivers in Sublette County.

The taxonomic classification of 'benthic macroinvertebrates' (small animals living among stones, logs, sediments and aquatic plants on the bottom of streams, rivers and lakes) is difficult and slow even for experts; many but not all samples are identified to the species level. Once the assemblage of 'bugs' has been identified, we look at the distribution and composition of species which react to changes in their environment. The relationship between Flathead Lake Biological Station and SCCD is new as of 2019. The nutrients being analyzed at the Flathead Lake Biological Station are total phosphorus, total nitrogen, nitrate/nitrite, soluble reactive phosphorus, and ammonia. After many years of 'non detected' lab results we decided to find a lab that could sample trace levels of nutrients at finer resolution than local labs are capable of. This led to our new relationship with Flathead Lake. We were unable to tour the laboratory due to COVID restrictions but were given a cursory tour of the facilities. Adam Baumann, the lab manager responsible for our samples, was generous with his time and answered all of our questions. We departed feeling confident that we'd chosen a reputable lab.



Kid's Corner

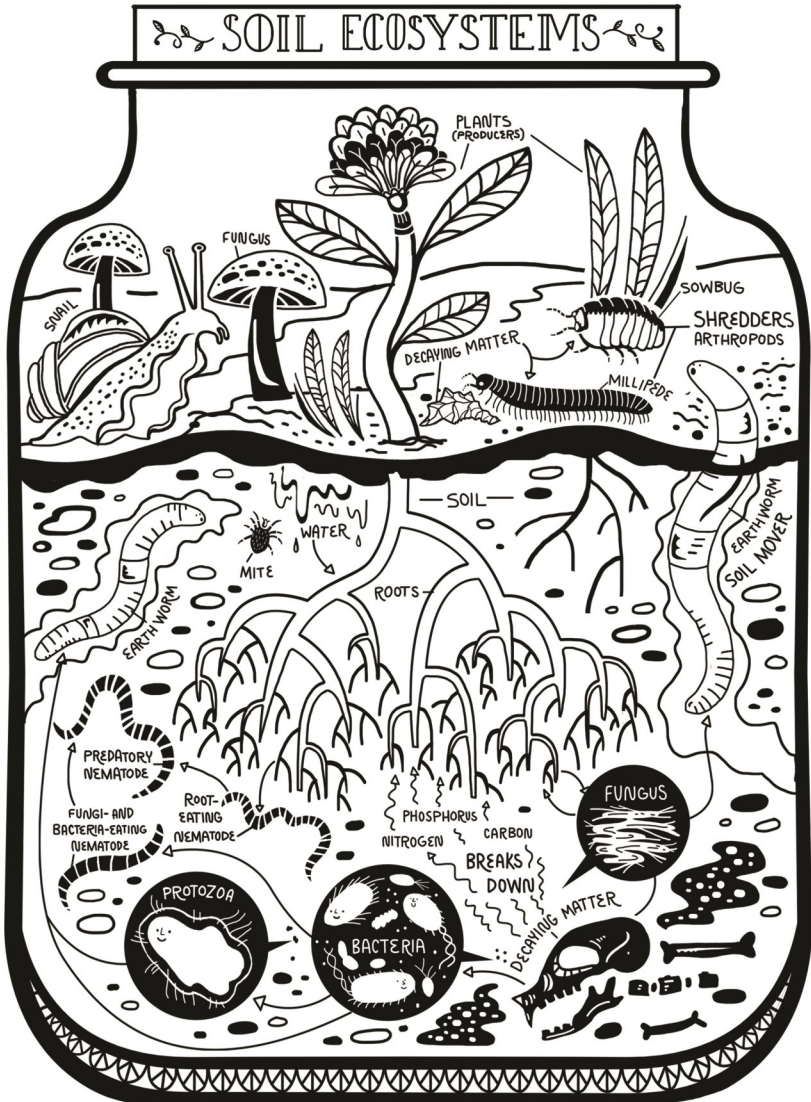


ILLUSTRATION FROM
THE WONDROUS WORKINGS
OF **PLANET EARTH**
A NEW BOOK BY RACHEL IGNOTOFSKY

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Milford Lockwood

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Michael Henn, District Manager

Sno Ann Engler, Office Manager/ Tree Program Manager

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Jessica Artz, Range Specialist/ Education & Outreach Coordinator

Gabe Fancher, Natural Resource Technician

Partners: USDA / NRCS Staff

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist, Shirleena King, Administrative Assistant

Karen Clause, Multi-County Range Management Specialist

Bryan Christensen, Ecological Site Specialist

Dillon Gray, Autumn Boxum, Taylor Kepley, 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.

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