

July, 2020



## The Mountain Meadow

A quarterly publication from the  
Sublette County Conservation District



Photo by: Mike Henn

2020 Roosevelt fire riding has begun!

## Highlights In This Issue

- Need Tanks?
- Roosevelt Erosion Monitoring
- Get Your Cows Out of the Box!
- Quaking Aspen
- Farewell to Brad! Surface Water Updates
- Calling All Landowners! Let the Water do the Work

Come see us at the Sublette County Fair!

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

# From the District Manager's Chair

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## What's going on at the District

Mike Henn, District Manager

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Summer is now in full swing and Sublette County is busy as everyone capitalizes on the beautiful, be it short, summer months. The District is busy with all the projects that we have lined up including water sampling, range monitoring, wildlife fencing projects and fire rehabilitation to name a few.

### **Upper Green Decision**

Another important project we are currently working on within the County involves the Upper Green grazing decision and some groups that have appealed the United States Forest Service (USFS) decision to authorize livestock grazing in several allotments in the Upper Green. The groups asked for an injunction to prevent the “taking” of problem Grizzly bears in accordance with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s biological opinion allowing “take” if warranted. The federal court denied the group’s injunction request. This means that until the court rules, the grazing will be implemented according to the record of decision. The District plans to join in on the litigation and provide vegetative data that has been cooperatively collected by the USFS, ranchers, University of Wyoming, and the District since 1995. This data, housed by the District, will be beneficial when the court makes a decision regarding grazing in the Upper Green.

### **Sublette County Fair**

Look for the District at the Sublette County fair this year! We are planning to have a booth highlighting conservation in the County and a soil tunnel that will give adults and youth a look at how things function below our feet. We are also planning to have chicken poop bingo again to raise money for the Sublette County 4-H Foundation! Enjoy Summer and don’t hesitate to stop and talk with any of us while we are out and about.

# What We've Been up To

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## Need Tanks? SCCD has Them!

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The Sublette County Conservation District currently has tire tanks for sale. The cost is \$600.00 per tire tank. Tanks are 12.5 feet in diameter. If interested in purchasing a tank please call or email us!

## Roosevelt Post-Fire Monitoring

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SCCD is in cooperation with both the USFS and BLM to complete erosion monitoring and post fire vegetation monitoring on BLM and USFS lands affected by the Roosevelt Fire. Erosion monitoring takes place monthly on BLM land with the goal of assessing soil loss and erosion rates on specified areas north of the rim. These locations have greater than 20% slope and target areas that pose the most risk to public safety, including areas that are in close proximity to roadways and private land. There are currently two erosion sites with installed rain gauges that are measured monthly. Vegetation monitoring will occur on both the BLM and USFS in July this year. Post fire monitoring is important for documenting vegetation changes as it pertains to plant community succession, bare ground, litter and plant production (trend over time) post fire . This information can then be used to guide management decisions .



# Get Your Cows Out of the Box!

## Using Technology to Inspire Range Health

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

I would have to imagine that when the West was being settled, no one ever thought of carrying capacity in the way we do today. Just as much as technology has changed how we interpret the landscape, technology has also given us the ability to learn new things at a much higher rate of speed.



Because I believe technology can be a tool to help us evolve here in Sublette County, I wanted to share a few places you may be interested in discovering “out of the box” land management thoughts and techniques.. It never hurts to broaden our scope and make changes if needed within the borders of public land permits and private land fences.

The recent quarantine made me reach out to stay connected- and in doing so, found that the world of **podcasts** and **online resources** can bring a whole new level of “range thinking” to the table. Some of the resources I have gleaned from include:

The Art of the Range Podcast [www.artofrange.com](http://www.artofrange.com): For a more scholarly approach, the Washington State University has developed a podcast directed at material focused on rangeland education. Host Tip Hudson has great conversation with researchers, ranchers and resource professionals on a wide variety of topics- many of which apply directly to Sublette County! These podcasts are released once every two weeks.

The world of Range is quickly evolving. The International Society for Rangeland Management meeting is one that I truly enjoy attending when possible. But often-times travel is difficult. The 2021 meeting was to be held in Boise, ID; however, it will be held virtually instead! Stay tuned to [www.rangelands.org](http://www.rangelands.org).

The National Grazing Lands Coalition ([www.grazinglands.org](http://www.grazinglands.org)) is another resource that I enjoy. They do tours every summer, have webinar series, provide grants for a variety of programs, as well as help you get connected with other organizations. Their focus is to work together to maintain and improve the management and health of the Nation’s grazing lands, mostly private but also public.

Its okay to listen to different ideals. Tradition is good, but we should not discount the benefits of hearing how others view and manage the land. Heck- you may even find something you would like to incorporate into your own operation!

# Plant Spotlight

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## Quaking Aspen

Sno Ann Engler, Tree Program Manager

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*Populus tremuloides*  
Plant Symbol = POTR5



Photo from <http://plantsofmagnolia.net/>

How do you know if your aspen is a male or a female? The Aspen is a dioecious with male and female flowers normally borne on separate trees. The trees rarely reproduce by seed. In early spring, an aspen will produce small, inconspicuous strings of reproductive parts called catkins, which are either male and produce pollen or female and produce

eggs. Huge numbers of viable, tiny seeds mature and float off from the female on a tangle of cotton-like seed hairs that catch air currents, sometimes traveling great distances.

This species is fast-growing but lives only a short time, 80 – 100 years. Indians named the aspen poplar “the noisy tree” because of the sound of fluttering leaves. The buds, inner bark and leaves of this tree were important sources of natural curatives used by First Nations People such as the Cree and, through them, the early settlers. Aspen is an important fire-successional species in the boreal forest. Fire affects aspen in a variety of ways, depending on its intensity and on soil factors. Generally, most fires kill the above-ground parts of the plant. Even when they are not killed outright by fire, burnt trees have a greatly increased potential for wood rot. But the below-ground parts usually survive, and fire promotes suckering and sprouting from root crowns and stumps. Fires also result in increased soil temperatures and reduced competition, so that aspen stands often form the dominant vegetation type after fire.

# NRCS Update

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## Conservation Seeds to Sow

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

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**Do you know exactly how much yield your hayfields provide?** To complete this simply, keep track of the number of bales you have in your field and multiply by the weight of your average bale. You can calculate acreage by drawing in areas on the Sublette County Map Server. You can then divide the total pounds harvested by the acreage you calculated to come up with pounds per acre. If that seems like too much detail, keep records of your bales and make an appointment to come in and we can assist you in determining your hayed acres and help you calculate your yield by field.

**Weeds – they matter!** It's easy to overlook the observation and control of weeds. You see a new plant out of place while you are moving cows, get busy with irrigating and fence maintenance and you may not think about it until you move cows in the same place next year. Oops, now the population is bigger than the year before. Soon it may become so overwhelming that the cost or effort just seems too daunting to address. That is why early detection - rapid response is so important to the long-term ability of your ranch to continue to produce the biomass needed to maintain your livestock operation. Weeds can impact your bottom line with your yield and your grazing periods. Come up with a system to mark plants and then come back and treat them. It is an investment in your time that is of critical importance to the land you manage. Don't minimize the importance of recognizing and then controlling your weeds. Contact Sublette County Weed and Pest for guidance, pesticides and potentially application.

**Improve water flows in fields.** When was the last time you cleaned your ditches? If you have to ponder long, it's time to clean them again. Sediment gradually builds up and plants fill in leading to friction loss and grade changes in the ditch that impedes your water flow. Cleaning out your field ditches and re-establishing the small grade that they require to flow water will greatly improve your ability to water and reach fields that you may have once been able to irrigate.

**After you change something, evaluate the impact!** Once you invest in a project or change something on your ranch, document the cost, take note of the results and evaluate on whether it was a good investment. Sometimes we get laser focused on something but if we really looked at the issue, it doesn't make financial sense to address it. While it's a bother or something we see, does addressing it with capital really help your economic or long-term picture? So, implement and evaluate but before you implement, think about the economics related to the improvement you are planning to make.

# Youth Education

## Annual Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

Jess Artz, Range Specialist/ Education & Outreach Coordinator

Every year the Sublette County Conservation District donates seedling trees complete with fact sheets to students in Pinedale, Big Piney, La Barge and Bondurant in honor of Arbor Day. This year SCCD prepared and distributed 200 Cotoneaster seedling shrubs to administrators at each school so they could be sent home along with homework packets for students. Although this year looked a little different, we were excited to continue this annual event with the youth in Sublette County. We would love to see pictures of any successful arbor day seedlings from past giveaways. If you have a seedling from a past year please email us a photo!

**“Arbor Day is not like other holidays. Each of those repose on the past, while Arbor Day proposes for the future.”**

- J. Sterling Morton (Founder of Arbor Day)

### Cotoneaster

*Cotoneaster acutifolia*

**Rapid growing shrub with colorful fall foliage, flowers and berries that attract birds.**

**Grows well in Sublette County because it is cold hardy and tolerates a variety of soils.**

**Leaves:** Dark green, glossy, 1-2 inches long with smooth edges.

**Flowers, fruit:** Little cup shaped pinkish-white flowers bloom in small clusters. Blackish to reddish fruit.

**Bark:** reddish brown, new growth is smooth, turns scaly and rough with age

**Growth form:** ovoid to irregular

**Crown density:** dense

**Drought resistance:** very good

**Cold hardiness:** excellent

**Soil considerations:** good alkaline



# Calling All Landowners!

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Let the water do the work

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

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Are you looking to restore your meadow? Does that seasonal drainage not hold water like it used to? Is that headcut you noticed last year getting worse? We might be able to help - One Rock at a Time!

Restoring land can be intensive and expensive but low-tech structures offer a back to basics approach to help slow rangeland erosion. These structures, often referred to as Zeedyk structures or One Rock Dams (although there are many designs), let the water do the work to restore riparian and wet meadows by increasing soil moisture and vegetation growth. Research indicates that these methods effectively increase vegetation productivity by 25% and keep plants greener longer, which results in greater resiliency against drought and climate variability. To learn more visit, <https://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/tag/wet-meadows/>.

SCCD and our partners want to help you implement these projects and heal some of those sore spots on the landscape so give us a call to schedule a site visit. Also, keep an eye out for details as we plan the 2021 workshop - One Rock at a Time: Slowing Rangeland Erosion.



*Rock structures one growing season after installation. Photo: Kristina Kline, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies*

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*Rock rundown with vegetation growing between cracks. Photo: Kristina Kline, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies*

## Treatment for a Head-cut on Left and One Year Later on Right



*Photo: Rio Mora Conservation Science Center*

# Farewell to Brad Blackwell!

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## Surface Water Quality Program updates

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Brad Blackwell, our Surface Water Quality Program Manager, left the Conservation District in mid May to begin a job as a college Professor of Sustainability and Renewable Resources at the McMurry University in Abilene, Texas. This move will put him closer to family and allow him to take a dive back into academia. During Brad's short time at the District he made a lot of beneficial improvements to the Water Quality program by simplifying and streamlining both the chemical and macroinvertebrate sampling programs. Brad implemented low level nutrient sampling that allows for better detection of important water quality parameters. He was an integral part of the team at the county level as well as the state level. He presented to and taught other District employees from across the state during state wide conventions and trainings.

Brad was an active collaborative member at the local level with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Game and Fish, among other local partners to address surface water quality concerns. Please join us in thanking Brad for his efforts during his time at SCCD . We wish him well at his next adventure.

The Surface Water program is still moving full steam ahead with monitoring this summer, despite not having a program manager. Staff will be pulling double duty to make sure that samples are still being collected throughout the County. New this year, we are also collecting E.coli samples on a Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality proposed impaired reach of Lander Creek in the Southern part of the County.



# Kid's Corner

National \_\_\_\_\_ Week was June 22nd-28th!

It's a bird... It's a plane...  
It's a \_\_\_\_\_!

Use these clues to discover what "it" is and fill in the blank above:

- Without "it" you wouldn't have one out of every **three** bites of **food** you eat!
- Many **species** of "it" are **endangered**.
- Invertebrate** species like **bees**, **flies**, **beetles**, **moths** and **butterflies** can be "it."
- Vertebrate** species such as **birds**, **mammals** and **reptiles** can be "it."
- While enjoying a **meal**, "it" carries **pollen** on its body from **plant** to **plant**.
- A lot of plant species depend on "it" to **reproduce**.
- Without "it" you wouldn't have some of your **comfortable** clothes like **cotton** tee shirts.
- "It" plays an **important** role in **healthy ecosystems**.
- "It" usually has a favorite **color**, **shape** and **scent** it looks for in a **flower**.
- Nectar** and/or **pollen** are "its" favorite foods.

## STILL NEED SOME HELP IN FIGURING OUT WHAT "IT" IS?

Solve the puzzle below and you will have the answer! **First**, circle the words printed in orange in the clues above. **Second**, find those same words you circled in the box below and mark them out. **Third**, place the letters that aren't marked out in the circles below the puzzle and you will find out what "it" is!

THREFOODPSPECIESOENDANGEREDLINVERTEBRATE  
 BEESFLIESMOTHSVERTEBRATELBIRDSMAMMALS  
 REPTILESMEALIPOLLENPLANTNREPRODUCECOMFORTABLE  
 ACOTTONIMPORANTHEALTHYTECOSYSTEMSCOLOR  
 SHAPEOSCENFLOWERRNECTAR

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# 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

Sno Ann Engler, Office Manager

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Jessica Artz, Range Specialist/ Education & Outreach Coordinator

## **Partners: USDA / NRCS Staff**

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist, Shirleena King, Administrative Assistant

Karen Clause, Multi-County Range Management Specialist

Bryan Christensen, Ecological Site Specialist

Dan Perkins, Dillon Gray, Autumn Boxum, Taylor Kepley, Soil Survey Team

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