



## The Mountain Meadow

A quarterly publication from the Sublette County Conservation District



Photo by Traci Berg

Summer is finally here and we have leaped into field season!!!

## Highlights In This Issue

- What We've Been Up To
- NRCS Update
- Backyard Conservation & Wildlife
- Happy Trails Jess!
- Growing the Bounty of Sublette County
- PLEP

SCCD is hiring 2 positions! Head over to our website for job descriptions and application details.

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

*"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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**Drew Keller**

Drew has recently been hired for the Sublette County Conservation District as the Senior Natural Resource Technician. He has an associate's degree in Natural Resources and Wildlife Technology from Garrett



College located in western Maryland and received his bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology from Liberty University located in Central Virginia. He is originally from Virginia but recently relocated to Wyoming to pursue and begin his career in natural resources and conservation. He has previously interned and worked for the U.S. Forest Service on a Botany Survey Crew. Although he is young in his career, he is mechanically minded having a mind for detail and accuracy taking the time to pause and dot every "I" and cross every "T". His background and education in various fields of conservation allow him to have the ability to interact with a solid understanding and work within multiple disciplines within conservation providing versatility on the job. His interests and passions for this career relate to vegetation and wildlife to produce and enhance pristine ecosystems that all can enjoy today and for future generations. In the few times, you may find him not working in one aspect or another, he can be found bird watching, fishing, hunting, hiking, and spending time with his fiancé Ellianna along with family and friends.

# What We've Been up to

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## SCCD Trail Crew

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In partnership with the USFS and a grant from the Wilderness Society, SCCD hired two technicians to clear trails in the Forest associated with the blowdown event that occurred two falls ago.



They are off to a good start and cleared the section corner trail from Willow Creek guard station to Section Corner Lake and the Bluff creek Trail from Indian Park to the

Double Top Trail. As you can see from the photos they have had their work cut out for them. They will over the summer be from Green River Lakes to the Big Sandy Openings helping the public have access to the Forest. If you see them when you are exploring the Wind River Range say Hi!

## 2022 Sublette County Fair

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SCCD staff will have an educational booth at the fair that we hope to see you at! This years booth will feature “soiled” underwear, wildlife track game for the kiddos, and also your chance to win seedling tree baskets with our two raffles.



We will have multiple pamphlets/ educational materials about all of the programs we offer here at the District.

# NRCS Update

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## Learn More About Plants in Our Area

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

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An excellent resource when it comes to information about plants is a website NRCS maintains found at <https://plants.usda.gov/home>. This resource has in-depth information including plant guides, fact sheets, images and more about numerous species. There is a basic search engine at the top left hand side of the page. There is a drop-down menu of methods you can use to search for herbaceous vegetation. Select common name from the drop-down menu to search for the name of the species you are interested in. You can search for grasses, forbs, grass-like species, shrubs, and trees. Once you enter the name, you may be presented with multiple different species that have similarities in the common name. Conversely, the common name you use may be regional enough that you will not find the species you need. For example, typing blue-eyed grass yields 46 records. Which one? You can select the scientific name and it will take you to a page with additional information along with species distribution across the United States. The one in this area has Idaho in the name. This is also a great resource for invasive and other weed species.

Creeping Meadow Foxtail

Canada Thistle

Bluebunch Wheatgrass

Kentucky Bluegrass

Bitterroot

Nebraska Sedge

Redtop

Cheatgrass

Quaking Aspen

Wyoming Indian Paintbrush (state flower)



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If you need assistance in identifying a species, there are many resources in our county. NRCS, Sublette County Conservation District and Sublette County Weed and Pest all have staff that are able to assist you with identification. If you want to collect a sample of the plant, try and remove the entire plant, including the root and place in a plastic bag and get it to one of the offices within 48 hours. Pictures can sometimes be used to identify the species, but small details crucial to identification are not always able to be discerned through photos. If you are a plant aficionado, the Sublette Chapter of the Wyoming Native Plant Society is another resource that is local and active. For more information about this organization, you can search for them online and on Facebook.



# Happy Trails Jess!!!

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Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Happy Trails, Jess!

Jessica Artz joined our staff in May 2017. During her 5-year stint at SCCD, we watched as Jess jumped into a variety of tasks with excitement. She led various cooperative monitoring projects for SCCD and took on a diverse projects such as the Big Piney-La Barge Restoration Project where she led SCCD's efforts in the development and implementation of an inventory which continues to inform the BLM's watershed restoration efforts in the Big Piney-La Barge project area.

Jess worked closely with agency staff, permittees and private landowners and brought her best every day. Private landowners enjoyed working with Jess as she worked one-on-one with them to develop seed mixes and other conservation planning strategies appropriate for their landscape.

During her time at SCCD, Jess took time to develop SCCD's Outreach and Education efforts. Because of Jess, SCCD started Conservation Conversations with BOCES to deliver conservation presentations to our constituents that were applicable to Sublette County residents and visitors. She improved relations with schools throughout the County and jazzed up our newsletter a bit through electronic delivery.

In addition, Jess designed our Annual Reports and Plans of Work which received 1<sup>st</sup> place and Honorable mention respectively, for the last two years. This recognition from the Board of Agriculture is one our District is incredibly proud of because the competition is so stiff!

Jess brought high energy and excitement to our office. She worked with diligence and always enjoyed learning new things. There are so many things that Jess did here at our office, her shoes will be hard to fill. Thank you, Jess for your 5 years of service at SCCD!

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# Backyard Conservation & Wildlife Habitat

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Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

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What is wildlife habitat? It consists of a combination of food, water, shelter, and space arranged to meet the needs of wildlife. Even a small yard can be landscaped to attract birds, butterflies, beneficial insects, and small animals. There are four essential elements needed for animal survival:

Sources of food — these can include a wide range of items such as nuts, berries, native plants and fruits;

Sources of water — birdbaths, ponds, lakes and streams all serve as acceptable water supplies;

Sources of cover — thickets, shrubs, rock piles and birdhouses provide shelter and protection;

Places to nurture offspring — shrubs, vegetation and nesting boxes give wildlife a place to raise their young and protect them from predators.

When planning, you have both a horizontal area (the size of your property), as well as a vertical area (from the soil to the tops of the trees). Since different wildlife utilize each of these zones, numerous habitats can be provided in your backyard.

To create wildlife habitat, first identify all existing plants and note their condition and locations, how much shade is provided, whether trees are evergreen or deciduous (drop their leaves in the fall), and if they provide valuable food sources. Once you have identified existing plants you want to save, start exploring options for enhancing the existing habitat. Some plants provide food but little cover and vice versa. Sketching out the property and design you want may be beneficial. Your plan may be considered a work in progress, which you can refer to and make adjustments as needed or desired.





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Native species are well suited for providing wildlife habitat as they are adapted to the local soil and climate. Additional considerations include eventual size – deciduous trees planted on the south side of a house will provide summer shade and also allow for winter sun to seep through, plant varieties - well as a selection of plants that flower and bear fruit at different times of the year. Filling in with smaller shade-tolerant trees and shrubs in the understory enhances the vertical structure, while flowering forbs add color to the yard and are great for attracting birds and butterflies.

Remember your design does not need to be symmetrical, natural habitats have curves and clumps of vegetation that provide retreats for wildlife. Diversity in the landscape is necessary! Clean, fresh water is important so be sure to change water out as needed for the appropriate container. You can get creative with your water too. Logs, rocks, and water-holding structures provide drinking and basking habitat for amphibians, butterflies, and songbirds. Stones with depressions that collect water will help attract butterflies. Now, go ahead and get started with your backyard conservation creation!

This commentary was adapted from NRCS Backyard Conservation Tip Sheet. To view the full article, visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/>



# Private Land Enhancement Program

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Anna Welsh, Range Specialist

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SCCD is partnering with the Upper Green River Basin Wyoming Sage Grouse Local Work Group to implement and administer the Private Lands Enhancement Program. This is a grant funded initiative designed to increase cover and forage availability for sage grouse and other species while also helping landowners in Sublette County increase agricultural and/or rangeland productivity through planting or interseeding projects.

Seventeen percent (542,309 acres) of private land acres in Sublette County are zoned as Agriculture. Imagery analysis from 1984 to 2020 indicates a downward trend for perennial forb and grass ground cover for these acres ([www.rangeland.app](http://www.rangeland.app)). Not only is shrub cover important for the Greater sage-grouse, but perennial forbs and grasses provide critical habitat elements during the breeding, nesting and brood-rearing seasons. Many private agricultural acres are also positioned near waterways, which are also critical for Greater sage-grouse due to the higher number of forbs and insects available, especially during late-brood rearing.

SCCD gets several calls a year by private landowners throughout Sublette County that ask for recommendations to improve their private agricultural lands, including pastures, hay meadows and rangelands. In most cases, the landowner goals are focused on improving vegetation diversity and productivity. To assist landowners with these projects, SCCD has recently acquired a rangeland drill and a Lawson aerator, which are available to landowners within the County for free.

By pairing the need of Greater sage-grouse with the needs and desires of private landowners in Sublette County, pasture lands, hay lands, and rangelands can become more productive and more diverse, offering greater ecosystem services that benefit all.

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Opportunities for improved agriculture lands include, but are not limited to, planting pivot corners in desirable plant species, improving species diversity in homogenous hay stands, and improving species diversity on rangelands where historic management has led to reduced biodiversity.

With the new program, qualifying landowners can receive 50% reimbursement for seed costs up to \$2,500.00. If this sounds like a program that will fit your needs, checkout the eligibility requirements below and be on be lookout for more information coming soon.

## 2022 Eligibility Criteria:

- 1) Land must be zoned AGRICULTURAL
- 2) Seed mixes must include plant species beneficial to Greater sage-grouse conservation such as, forbs and grasses (different mixes are acceptable for different uses – pasture, hay, range). Seed mixes must also be compliant with Wyoming state weed seed laws and “cheatgrass free”.
- 3) Landowners agree to a pretreatment plan to increase the probability of success. Pretreatment would be focused on reducing seed competition with existing plant species through practices such as herbicide treatments, mowing, tillage, or aerating, etc.
- 4) Landowners agree to a weed management plan including landowner completed annual weed checks. (SCCD is available to help identify any existing weed species prior to treatment and will be available to help identify weeds post-treatment.)
- 5) Landowners must defer haying or grazing, or rest treated areas for a minimum of one growing season post-treatment to facilitate optimum conditions for seed establishment.

# Growing the Bounty of Sublette County!!!

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2022 Spring Expo

Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator



On June 18<sup>th</sup> about 367 of Sublette County's residents got to end the cabin fever feeling by attending the Sublette County Conservation District's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Spring Expo.

This event is fun for all with tons of vendor booths, door prize drawings, raffles, and presentation seminars. This year we chose to invite a panel to discuss how to combat gardening in western Wyoming. The next speakers educated attendees on aeroponic grow towers, and lastly Michael Henn gave a presentation on tools that are available at the district for locals to check out.



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This year like many others we had a chicken poop bingo raffle where 50% of proceeds goes to the winner and the remaining half is for the 4H Club. It was successful in that all 100 squares were purchased raising \$50.00 for the 4H Club.

Our 2022 Expo also included a raffle for 5 seedling Colorado Blue Spruce trees and some seedling survival products. This raffle was to raise money for the arbor day program that the District participates in, in providing seedling trees to over 100 students in Sublette County. The goal is to raise \$300.00 between a raffle at the expo (we raised \$150.00!) and two more baskets during the Sublette County Fair. If you missed the expo this year don't worry! Mark your calendar for next spring to watch for this annual event of fun!



For more information on attending or attending as a vendor to our annual Spring Expo please give us a call or stop by the office! (307)367-2364, 217 Country Club Ln. in Pinedale.

# Kid's Corner

## Natural Resources

N H Y D R O E L E C T R I C D A M Y  
 I H T I M B E R C O A L R K Q L V K  
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Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘

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Coal



Natural Gas



Oil



Soil



Metal



Hydroelectric Dam



Sunlight



Wind Energy



Timber



Solar Energy



Geothermal Energy



Water



Nuclear Energy




Earth



Fossil Fuels



# Who Are We?

 Find us on Facebook!

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## **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  
Anna Welsh, Range Specialist  
Drew Keller, Natural Resource Technician, Senior  
Jackie Nutt, Natural Resource Intern  
Keller Hyde, Natural Resource Technician  
Zane Hayward, 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, Jenna Platt-Soil Survey Team

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*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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