



LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

790 Colleen Street • Helena, Montana 59601 • 449-5000 ext. 112

Lewis & Clark Conservation District Annual Report Area VI Meeting, September 27, 2017

WATER RESOURCES: Watershed work continued this year, with efforts on Elk Creek as part of the Sun River Watershed, Lake Helena Watershed Group, the Upper Clark Fork group and the Blackfoot Challenge and the Dearborn area.

The CD has 27 permit applications to-date, with 6 complaints and 3 emergencies.

The board continues the water well test cost share program in 2017 and foresees continuing it in 2018. Several years ago, they approved ear-marking \$1000 toward cost-sharing \$25 to landowners for water well tests. This is a cooperative program with the Water Quality Protection District and County Extension.

We continued funding support this year for the Rimini stream gauge on Ten Mile Creek. Our \$2750 contribution allows USGS funding to assist in supporting other gauges in the Helena area.

The board also continues their support of the Sun River Watershed Group, budgeting \$4000 annually to assist in the operation of the group. We also helped support their search for a new director.

INVASIVES: Our Dearborn area landowners on the South Fork and Middle Fork of the Dearborn Rivers gathered again to continue work on their noxious weed problems. Assisting in this project were the USFS, the County Weed District and the Conservation District. This is a great project that is driven by landowners and for that reason has met with continued success. The Conservation District and Weed District provide cost-share for the chemical used.

In 2017 the CD continued the Weed Cost Share Program. With \$25,000 budgeted again in 2017, they also approved using funds that were not used in 2011-2016 to cover all applicants. It's estimated that this year's expenditures will total nearly \$40,000. These funds come from accumulated savings from the past years. Landowners may apply for chemical cost share, commercial applicator cost-share, re-seeding and insect cost-share if the insects have a cost associated with them. We will continue the program for the foreseeable future. To-date the CD has spent almost \$120,000 on the program with the bulk of the projects for 2017 still to come in.

The Lewis & Clark CD continues their financial support to the Montana Biological Weed Control Project. The board approved a 4th annual donation of \$1000 to the organization in 2017.

The Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable has had the CD support now for 5 years, with the CD donating \$750 again in 2017.

LAND RESOURCES: We continue our support for planting trees by directing landowners to the Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery in Missoula for their shelterbelt and other tree and shrub planting needs. Landowners who have smaller needs than their minimum order size work with the County Extension who will combine orders for landowners.

The District maintained involvement with the Missouri River CD Council, with Jeff Ryan as the voting member.

New in 2017, the Conservation District, NRCS Field Office, Water Quality and Weed Districts from the county have banded together to take a different approach to small acreage landowner education.

Utilizing the subdivision maps from the county, we've selected 6 "starter" subdivisions where we know our help could be useful. Either having a Homeowner Association member contact landowners, or direct mail outreach to each address, we're having targeted education sessions to let landowners know who we are, and what we may have available to help them with their concerns. So far we've had some good success.

Like many districts in the state, Lewis & Clark had a number of wildfires this year, on public and private land, forested and range. It will make for a challenging year for area landowners and we plan to assist wherever we possibly can.

COMMUNICATIONS: The CD website continues to evolve. New this year, we've created a Land Management-Stewardship for Large and Small Acreages page. The website incorporates district history, supervisor information, meeting notices and newsletters as well as 310 forms, and a photo gallery with a variety of topics. The District posts often to their Facebook page. We continue *The Explorer*, our quarterly newsletter, incorporating partner news from FSA, NRCS, Extension and the Weed District. The newsletter is also available on the web site and as an emailed newsletter.

In December 2016, CD Supervisors updated the annual plan and budget for 2017. The layout used allows Supervisors an opportunity to expand and take ownership of specific projects in the county.

EDUCATION EFFORTS: The 10th Annual East Valley Middle School Flood Awareness Day was held in May 2017 with rave reviews. We look forward to our 11th year coordinating that event.

The Conservation District board continues to fund Envirothon Teams from the two high schools (4 teams in 2017) in Helena. It was a great experience for the students and the coaches plan to return in 2018 with continued CD support. For a second year in a row, one of the Helena High School teams won the state competition.

In July, we assisted the NRCS in hosting a Ladies Range Day. Located in the Dearborn area, we had a pretty good turnout, in spite of the heat.

PEOPLE: Current supervisors include Stan Frasier, Jeff Ryan, Steve Granzow, Scott Blackman, Ron Ingersoll, Sarah Howe-Cobb and Jeanette Nordahl. Administrator Chris Evans celebrated 18 years with the CD in April this year. David Martin joined the board as an Associate Supervisor and works hard at remembering which "hat" he's wearing, whether it's DNRC or LCCD.

2018: For the next year, we anticipate continued work with our small and large acreage landowners, the various watershed, weed, fire and education projects that we are involved in, our education efforts with the schools in the county and of course the website and our quarterly newsletter, *The Explorer*. The District looks forward to another East Valley Middle School Flood Awareness Day in May, and assisting the two Helena high schools in sending teams to the Envirothon. We will be doing an 8th year of the weed cost-share program as well.

In February the CD will be hosting the Winter Grazing Seminar. It should be an interesting line up of presentations about things affecting grazing conditions, including a section by Jeff Mosley in regard to grazing on rangeland that was affected by fires.

The CD Board voted to not pay MACD Dues in 2017. Instead, they are directing those funds toward fire rehabilitation for landowners in the county who were affected in 2017. While it is currently unknown as to what other funding will be available, there are sure to be some gaps in assistance. Along with those funds, the Weed Cost Share Program application requests that are coming from people affected by fire will be given first priority for funding in 2018.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Evans
District Administrator
Lewis & Clark Conservation District