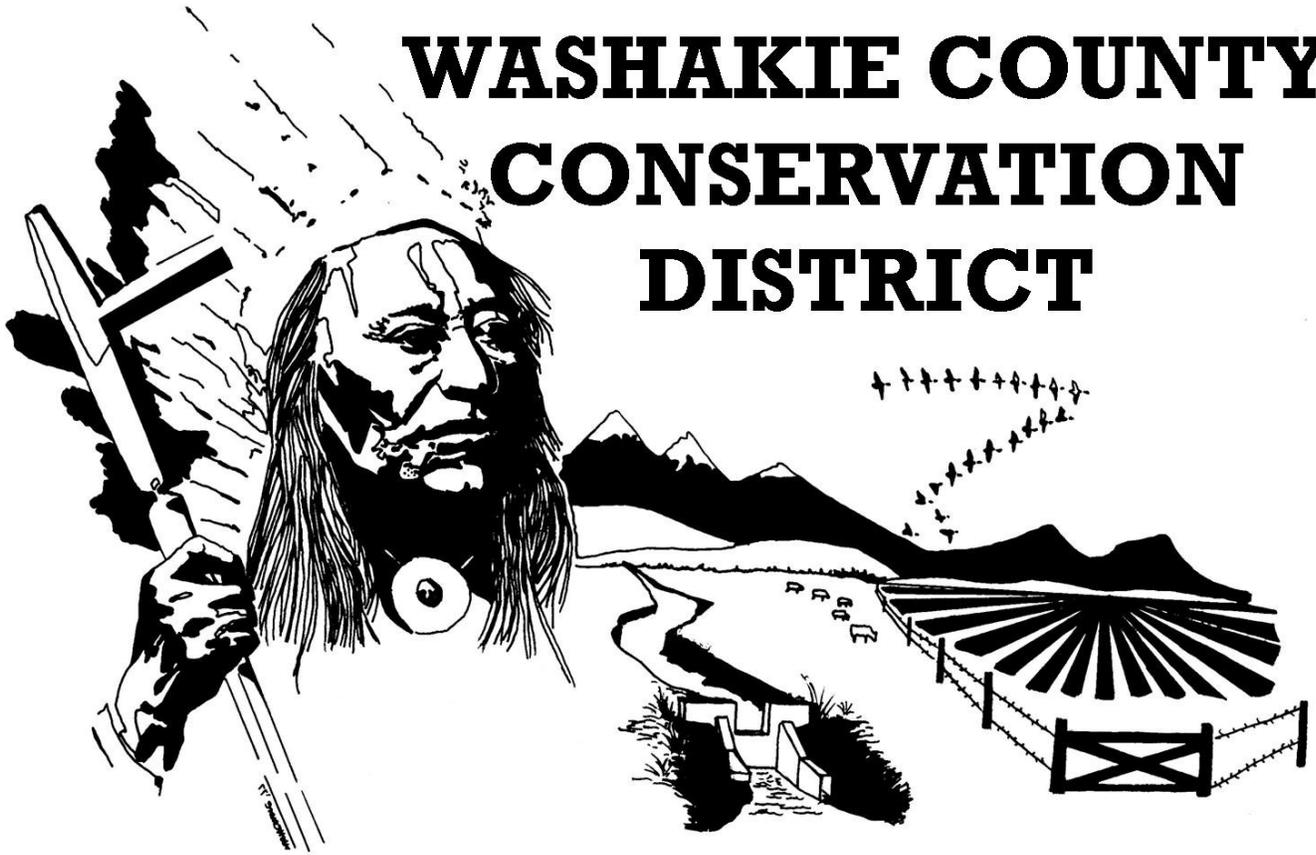

WASHAKIE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



**ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2015**

Introduction

Conservation District Board members are the only locally elected board charged specifically with the responsibility of representing local people on natural resource issues.

The Nowood Conservation District in Ten Sleep became one of the first four districts in the state and gained certification in 1941. Soon after, the Washakie Conservation District was established in 1943. In 1990, these two districts merged to create what is now our Washakie County Conservation District.

The Washakie County Conservation District's Board of Supervisors employ a Director, a Program Assistant, and an Outdoor Education Specialist, to implement their projects and programs,. Programs are funded by grants and a mill levy, which is voter approved.

Natural Resource Conservation Youth Education Activities

Water Quality/Quantity

High School Students

WCCD Education Specialist assisted eighteen Worland High School Biology students with water quality monitoring during two field trips; one to Slick Creek in Worland and the other to Sitting Bull in the Big



High School Biology Students Conducting Water Testing on Slick Creek

Horn Mountains. Tests were conducted for pH, Dissolved Oxygen, and turbidity.

Sixth Grade Students

One hundred twenty students participated in the World Water Monitoring Day activity, which is organized each year by WCCD's Education Specialist. This year students rotated through nine different stations where they learned about testing water for nitrates, turbidity, pH, dissolved oxygen and temperature. In addition, they learned about many other aspects of natural resources including; soils, range plants, stream morphology, wildlife, aquatic insects, and fisheries. Test kits and instruction was provided by WCCD to measure pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity.

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade Students

WCCD cooperated with Wyoming Ag in the Classroom during the West Side School Science Fair in developing and demonstrating a display to teach two hundred sixty four students and their parents about available drinking water in the world and the importance of water conservation.

Rangeland/Livestock

Eighth Grade Students

Forty one students participated in three different outdoor activities where the WCCD Education Specialist taught a “Pasture to Plate” center where they learned about the life cycle of a cow, cuts of beef and their by-products.

Kindergarten Students

One hundred ten students participated in classroom activities to learn about agriculture and where food comes from. Wyoming Ag in the Classroom curriculum was utilized for the activity.

WCCD Outdoor Classroom

Second, Third, and Fourth Grade Students

Eight classes, totaling one hundred thirteen students participated in four different field trips to the WCCD Outdoor Classroom, where they took nature walks to learn about tree and plant identification and animal habitat. In addition, they learned about animal skull identification, animal tracks, and differences between antlers and horns.

High School Students

Eight High School Ag and Horticulture students assisted WCCD and NRCS employees in seeding 12 range grass specie plots at the WCCD’s Outdoor Classroom. The seed was donated by the Bridger Plant Materials Center and they provided the technical expertise in seedbed preparation and maintenance guidelines. These plots are intended to be utilized by the students to help them with their range plant identification studies. In addition, four students on two different occasions, assisted WCCD employees with the maintenance of the xeric beds at the WCCD Outdoor Classroom in the spring and fall of the year.



Students Using Tree Identification Key To Learn About the Tree Species



High School Horticulture Students Broadcasting Grass Seed at WCCD Outdoor Classroom

Wyoming Boys’ School Students

Four students assisted the WCCD Education Specialist during two different occasions in maintenance activities at WCCD’s Outdoor Classroom. Activities included staining a new section of fence, creating a rock path down the bank of the pond area, and spreading mulch around the display area and along the base of the Bur oak windbreak.

Trees

Third Grade Students

WCCD donated one hundred twenty oak samplings to students for the Worland Garden Club’s annual Arbor Day Celebration. WCCD’s Education Specialist provided fact sheets about the tree and demonstrated the planting, placement, and care of the tree.

Youth Activities continued.....

Wildlife Habitat

Second Grade Students

The WCCD Outdoor Education Specialist taught thirty-two students about animal adaptations. Students traveled to the Big Horn Mountains and were able to cross-country ski and snowshoe to explore their surroundings and identify animal tracks, scat, and discuss the habitat associated with the animal evidence they had found.

Geology

Eighth Grade Students

Forty three students traveled to Legend Rock in Thermopolis where they rotated between an art project, received education about the pictographs and petroglyphs, and participated in a habitat study where they played a predator/prey game.

Third Grade Students

Thirty seven students traveled to Castle Gardens where they learned about the different land forms found in the area.

Soils

Wyoming Boys' School Students

The WCCD Education Specialist taught fifty-five students about the different Washakie County soils. The students then performed soil tests to observe how different soil types are determined and the components that make up soils.

Other Education Program Activities

Eighth Grade Students

Forty six students traveled to Spring Creek in Ten Sleep where they utilized GPS to find clues, then learned about the Spring Creek Raid.



**2nd Grade Grand Prize Poster-
Mayra Vega**

Second and Fifth Grade Students

The 2015 National Association of Conservation District's Soil and Water Stewardship Week's theme was "Local Heroes Your Hardworking Pollinators." Presentations were made to 231 students in Worland and Ten Sleep, then the students were asked to create posters for the contest. Don Bryant of Bryant Honey in Worland, taught students the importance of bees, to pollination and food production. Placemats promoting the theme were distributed to local restaurants during Soil and Water Stewardship Week.



**5th Grade Grand Prize Poster-
Charles Russell**

Special Projects

Outdoor Classroom

Improvement work at the WCCD Outdoor Classroom included:

Twelve new range grass plots:

Washakie County Weed & Pest District chemically treated the area in the summer of 2014, Worland Fire Department burned the area, then landowner, Landis Benson, rototilled the area in the fall of 2014. In the spring of 2015, the area was sprayed again by Washakie County Weed & Pest District, then seeded by Worland High School Horticulture/Ag students, Bridger Plant Materials Center, NRCS, and WCCD employees. The seed was donated by Bridger Plant Materials Center and the straw mulch was donated by the Vance Lungren family. A sprinkler system was installed for the establishment of the grass seed.



Landowner, Landis Benson, Rototilling the Range Grass Plot Area



Worland Fire Dept. Burning the Pond Area

Pond:

Washakie County Weed & Pest District chemically treated the invasive plants in and around the pond area in the fall of 2014. Worland Fire Department burned the area in the winter of 2014, then a private company was hired to remove and chip the dead stumps. Students from the Worland Boys' School assisted WCCD in moving cobble rock making a pathway to the pond for easier access for students, and spreading the mulch around the display area and along the base of the Bur Oak windbreak.

Fence:

An extension of the property parameter fence was installed by the Riverton Honor Farm inmates, assisted by NRCS and WCCD employees. Students from the Worland Boys' School then stained the new fence.

Sign:

An additional sign was installed on the outside of the fence extension to post the use and property ownership.

Parking Area:

Washakie County Road & Bridge crews leveled and applied road base and gravel to the parking area.

Special Projects continued.....

WCCD provided Washakie County agricultural producer project information and contacts to the Wyoming Livestock Roundup for their 2014 Special Cattleman's Edition. WCCD submitted an article for the special edition which summarized WCCD's programs and specific projects.

WCCD set up an informational display at WESTI Ag Days, showcasing available cost share projects which are funded by WCCD's mill levy and the DEQ 319 grant, which included before and after photos, brochures, cost share applications, and a wall map of the Sage Creek-Slick Creek watershed.

As a member of the Big Horn Ag Ambassadors, WCCD provided input on natural resource related topics and speaker suggestions for sessions held during WESTI Ag Days, which was held February 3rd and 4th, 2015. In addition, WCCD assisted with the planning for the Summer Ag Tour on September 10, 2014, which included tour stops to the Ten Sleep Fish Hatchery, Ten Sleep Brewing Company, Circle J Ranch, and Anderson Ranch in Ten Sleep. WCCD staff attended nine planning meetings associated with Big Horn Basin Ag Ambassadors.



Small Acreage Workshop Attendees Learning How to Start Garden Seeds

WCCD hosted a Small Acreage Workshop on March 7, 2015. Grants funds from a Backyard Barnyard Small Acreage Team and a WDEQ 319 grant were utilized to help fund the workshop. Presentations were made by four professionals to fifty-one attendees, and included topics of: Starting Seeds, Soil Health, Composting, Straw Bale Gardening, Vermiculture, Xeriscape Plants, & Rain Gardens.

WCCD designed and installed a new sign for the windbreak at the Washakie County Fairgrounds, which had been installed by WCCD in 2006.

WCCD partnered and shared the cost of a new boundary sign with South Big Horn Conservation District. The sign was installed at the Big Horn/Washakie County line where each side welcomed travelers to their respective conservation districts.

WCCD designed and distributed 300 2015 WCCD Calendars to help promote the WCCD.

WCCD provided a scholarship to Sherri Harvey to participate in the six week course "Annie's Project," which was held in Worland from February 9th to March 16th. The mission of Annie's Project is to empower women to be better business partners through networks and by managing and organizing critical information.

WCCD held our 2014 Conservation Awards Banquet in October 2014, to recognize the outstanding individuals and groups who have contributed towards natural resource conservation in Washakie County. Congratulations to the following: Ray Gullion, Allen Croft, Laura Galloway, Katie Schade, Emma Green, and Holden Hergert for their Outstanding Partner awards. Other awards included: David Nicholas for his outstanding service as WCCD Board member for the past 4 years; Cathy Rosenthal and Jared Dalebout for Outstanding Technical Support; Susan Lockhart for Outstanding Reporter; Donna Hunter for



Worland NRCS Employees Accepting Their Award For Outstanding Partner—A Team Award, During WCCD’s Awards Banquet

Outstanding Teacher; and Vance Lungren Jr. for Outstanding Conservationist. In addition, recognition was given to the members of the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Coalition, Washakie Watersheds Steering Committee, volunteers for the Christmas Tree Recycling program, the City of Worland Stormdrain Assessment Project, and the Community Center Tree Beautification project. Members of these organizations and individuals included: Worland Rotary Club, Ten Sleep Sage Stompers 4-H Club, Big Horn Rural Electric, Worland Landfill, Washakie County Weed & Pest, NRCS, Terry Davis, Frank Dietz, Allen Croft family, David Nicholas family, Gary Thompson, Mike Donnell, Ray & Cindy Gullion, Teresa Shelton, Sherri Harvey, Worland Tree Board, Washakie County Cooperative Extension Service, Worland BLM, Worland Public Health, City of Worland, Office of Homeland Security, Worland Community Center, Worland Recreation Board, Worland Boys School, Dave Slover, Gary Throntveit, Katherine Thompson, Peggy Truman, Steve Snyder, Doug Hamilton, and Kitsy Barnes.

Tree Program

WCCD discontinued the distribution of seedling trees this year as it was determined that residents could order direct from the Colorado State Forest Service Nursery for less cost and could receive their tree order when it was convenient for them. WCCD continues to provide technical support to residents on species selection, windbreak design, planting, and watering. In addition, weed barrier will continue to be provided of which 45 rolls were sold during the year.

Government Agency Interaction and Coordination

Continued participation with other Big Horn Basin conservation districts and agencies regarding the Bighorn Basin Predator project, and provided funding support

Continued participation as a cooperating agency in the BLM's Resource Management Plan Revision efforts. This included attendance during two meetings, four teleconferences, three webinars, one field trip.

Attended one field trip and one meeting as steering committee members, where were hosted by the Big Horn National Forest to help ensure members of Forest Service updated management changes and progress.

WCCD attended a Firewise meeting on April 9m, 2015, which was hosted by Wyoming State Forestry and Worland Fire Department giving updates on current and completed Fire wise projects and funding opportunities.

WCCD attended four meetings regarding the Lester Gulch potential irrigation project which involved five local canal districts, Governor Mead's staff and Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Range and Irrigated Land Management



The team of Buck Butterfield, Cody Baumstarck, and Matt Borovatz won 1st place. Buck was the high individual, Cody was 2nd highest individual, Elizabeth Martinez won the traditional plant press, Ricardo Martinez was 3rd in the open adult.

Sponsored seven Worland High School Ag/FFA students to attend Wyoming Resource Education Days (WyRED), which was hosted by Uinta County Conservation District.

Sponsored one NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) project which was for streambank stabilization to repair damage done by an ice jam on the Big Horn River. The total project cost was \$71,069.99, of which the NRCS EWP contribution was \$68,755.27 and the landowner contribution was \$2,314.72.

Using mill levy funds, cost share was provided to eleven landowners totaling \$51,707.00, which helped fund two older failing septic systems, four pivot sprinklers, one PV Solar set up for livestock and wildlife, one tree removal on an earthen dam, one streambank stabilization project (EWP), and two irrigation pipeline projects.

Waste Management

Conducted the 20th annual Christmas Tree Recycling event which included collecting and chipping residents' Christmas trees. Volunteers from Worland Rotary, NRCS, and Ten Sleep Sage Stompers 4-H Club assisted WCCD board and staff with the collection and stockpiling of the trees. Big Horn Rural Electric donated their equipment and time to chip the trees. The tree chips were provided to the public free of charge.



Volunteers Unloading Christmas Trees During Annual Christmas Tree Recycling Event

Continue to support the Ten Sleep Sage Stompers 4-H Club and the Ten Sleep FFA by contributing funds to help them defray costs for their monthly hauling of recyclables to the Worland Landfill.

Continue to monitor and replace disposable bags at all twelve Dog Waste Stations installed along Worland's walking path and throughout all of the city parks.

Purchased 200 recycling tubs to provide to Washakie County businesses to be used for office paper and newspaper recycling.

Habitat Enhancement

A Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust grant project was finalized this year, which included the Russian olive and tamarisk removal on the Cottonwood/Grass Creek watershed nine landowners were involved with the removal and maintenance project where grant dollars totaled \$200,000.00. Substantial in-kind match for these projects included WCCD, The Nature Conservancy, and Washakie, and Hot Springs, & Big Horn County Weed & Pest Districts, and the landowners.

Applied for a Wyoming Department of Agriculture Research grant, which is a producer driven grant to determine what plant materials will grow in the alkaline and saline soils along Gooseberry Creek where Russian olive and tamarisk have been removed. Assistance included in the grant includes NRCS and Bridger Plant Materials Center technical assistance and seed and plant materials donations. It is expected to hear whether or not the grant is awarded, in August 2015.

Water Quality

The Washakie Watershed Steering Committee assisted WCCD in the development of cost share applications and ranking sheets for the newly approved Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) 319 Sage Creek/Slick Creek Implementation Program. The steering committee met with WCCD six times and heard presentations from six landowners for applications for three cropland projects and three reservoir projects. One cropland project was completed during the year and reimbursed for \$9,030.00.

In June, the steering committee began development on the Big Horn River-Nowater Creek watershed plan and decided to move forward with applying for two new NRCS National Water Quality Initiative grant applications; one for the Big Horn River-Horse Gulch, and one for the Nowater Creek-Wildcat Gulch.



Karen Fenton, WCCD Program Assistant Collecting Discharge Data on Slick Creek

WCCD hosted a meeting for landowners within the Big Horn River/Slick Creek watershed, to announce and also provide detailed information about the WDEQ 319 grant components and application guidelines for project implementation funds. Technical assistance was provided to WCCD to assist with meeting presentations to landowners from Jennifer Zygmunt, WDEQ, and Cathy Rosenthal, Watershed Coordinator with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts. Twenty landowners were in attendance at the meeting, which was held August 6, 2014.

Received the third and final year of National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) funding for the Big Horn River-Slick Creek watershed. Nine pivot sprinkler and pipeline projects were approved for funding for the amount of \$614,813.00.

Developed in coordination with WDEQ, the Big Horn River-Slick Creek Watershed Sampling and Analysis Plan was completed and approved by WDEQ in May of 2015. Two sites were established; one on Slick Creek and one on Sage Creek. Water quality monitoring began on May 11, 2015 with plans to monitor thirteen days during the recreation season, up to September 14, 2015. The monitoring was initiated in response to requirements of the NRCS National Water Quality Initiative.

Using grant funds from Wyoming Department of Agriculture, \$4,263.76 was utilized to cost share on one well test and the rest was utilized for water quality supplies, and updates and calibration of equipment for the upcoming water quality monitoring season.

Internal District Operations

- Powers and duties of the WCCD under conservation district law were reviewed and the Board of Supervisors took their oath of office at the November 2014 board meeting.
- Continued budgeting of dues for the NACD, WACD, USDA Bridger Plant Material Center, Worland Ten-Sleep Chamber of Commerce, and the Wyoming Conservation District Employees Association
- A yearly budget request was submitted to all necessary entities, as were monthly board meeting minutes.
- Continued to utilize our full one-mill levy
- Hosted the WACD Area III meeting in Worland on September 9, 2014 where there were forty-four attendees, including one WCCD employee and three WCCD board members
- One WCCD board member and one WCCD employee attended the WACD Annual Convention held in Sheridan, where WCCD received recognition for Outstanding Plan of Work from WDA.
- Reviewed one subdivision plan and provided the necessary soils information as per our state statutes
- Two WCCD employees attended the Wyoming Employees Conservation District Winter Training on March 10th and 11th, 2015.
- WCCD received a petition to form the Nowood Watershed Improvement District (WID) on January 14, 2015. Formed a joint conservation district board with South Big Horn Conservation District. After approval of the petition, the joint conservation district board held a public hearing on March 19, 2015, where it was determined there was a need for the WID, then prepared for a mail ballot election for the formation election on August 18, 2015. The joint conservation district board of supervisors attended four special meetings associated with the Nowood WID formation.
- WCCD continued to coordinate with the Hot Springs Conservation District in conducting elections and overseeing the Cottonwood/Grass Creek WID. WCCD board and staff also participated in the quarterly teleconference meetings with the Cottonwood Grass Creek WID Board.
- The WCCD board reviewed six NRCS conservation plans of local Ag producers for Farm Bill projects.
- The WCCD board and staff met with our local Senator and Representatives and our Washakie County Commissioners to discuss legislation and WCCD programs and projects, on December 2, 2014.
- Continued with the updates to the WCCD Natural Resource Land Use Plan, where WCCD board members and staff met to work on policies and historical information during two special meetings
- Continued to utilize Facebook to promote WCCD programs and activities and direct them to the WCCD web site for detailed information that can be downloaded or program deadline announcements and legal notices
- WCCD Director participated in two separate radio talk show events to discuss specific programs and projects of the WCCD.
- Worked with professional web designer to re-create and develop new web site. In conjunction to the new site, a private board meeting tab was created to facilitate paperless board meetings, which was accomplished
- WCCD Education Specialist attended the Wyoming Ag in the Classroom Science Institute in Riverton for 2 1/2 days in June 2015 and attended the Stream Team Workshop at the Teton Science School near Jackson in July.
- WCCD Director attended WACD's water quality refresher training on April 30, 2014, and received her classroom certification. A field audit of WCCD staff was conducted by WDEQ during scheduled water monitoring days, which was to verify field competency, and quality control and assurance. The WDEQ field audit was approved in July 2015.

Financials

Cash Forward from Previous Fiscal Year \$42,638

Income - \$254,843

Mill Levy	179,001	Special Projects	205
Tree Program	2,940	EPA Urban Small Waters Grant	3,870
Dept. of Ag Grants	13,088	WWNRTF Grants	48,489
Interest Income	783	BYBY Grant	1,000
319 Grant	4,717	Wyo. Arts Council	750

Expense - \$297,481

ADMINISTRATION

Personnel	57,683
Mileage/Meals/Lodging	3,163
Office Supplies/Equipment	4,871
Training	760
Dues	12,800
Postage/Advertising	3,750
Phone/Internet/Website	1,576

OPERATIONS

Russian Olive/Tamarisk Program	48,489
Education Program	5,583
Misc. Program Services	5,781
Water Quality Programs	16,447
On-The-Ground Projects	56,463
Vehicle Fuel & Maint. Expense	928
Resource Library	140
Meeting Expense/Workshops	1,926
Projects/Organizations Support	5,271

INDIRECT COSTS

Insurance	1,783
Payroll Costs	24,067

Reserve - \$102,401