



BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Butte SWCD Enters 66th Year of Supporting Conservation

The Butte SWCD will mark its 66th year in 2019. Officially formed during the summer of 1953, the District included all of Butte County, except for land owned by the Atomic Energy Commission. Southern Custer County was added to the District in 1967. The first Board of Supervisors focused on assisting area farmers with improving irrigation water use efficiency and delivery of irrigation water. Today, the Butte SWCD's Board still maintains irrigation water use efficiency as a priority as well as focusing on water quality, proper animal waste management, enhancing pasture and rangeland conditions, maintaining riparian areas, and environmental education.

The formation of conservation districts across the nation allowed for federal funding distributed through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to be led by a locally elected board to address area conservation concerns. This local leadership is evidenced in special Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding that has addressed recent flooding and wildfire damage within the Butte SWCD over the past few years.



Farming in the Lost River Valley, 1965

“It is the goal of the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District directors to set high standards for conservation and wise use of the natural resources within the District.”

The Butte SWCD actively engages with other conservation agencies within the District, local government, and the University of Idaho Extension to promote wise use of our natural resources. The Butte SWCD is one of 50 SWCD's in Idaho (see map above) and is part of the National Association of Resource Districts. For more information about the Butte SWCD, visit butteswcd.org.

Seasonal High Tunnel Informational Meeting Held

The Butte SWCD hosted an informational meeting for 2019 EQIP-Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative applicants. The meeting provided information regarding EQIP program details, basic management within the high tunnel and provided a question and answer session with local producers who have experience growing crops in a seasonal high tunnel.



Seasonal high tunnel meeting in February

Butte SWCD and NRCS Partner to Create 4-H Club

The Butte SWCD has made sponsoring teams of local high school students to compete in the statewide Envirothon competition a priority for the last several years. Butte SWCD Public Outreach

Coordinator Mindy Hawley and NRCS Soil Conservationist Lara Fondow have worked with teams to educate students about natural resources conservation while training for the Envirothon competition. This year, Lara has teamed up with Butte County 4-H to create an Ecology Club and Envirothon team. The Ecology Club will meet Fridays and will feature guest speakers and activities focusing on a different area of natural resource conservation each week. Students in the Ecology Club who wish to participate in Envirothon will also train to compete at the State Envirothon competition later this year. Envirothon is an annual natural resources themed academic competition that is sponsored by local conservation districts and the National Conservation Foundation. For more information, contact Lara at Lara.Fondow@USDA.gov.

"I consider the soil conservation districts movement one of the most important developments in the whole history of agriculture." – Hugh Hammond Bennett

Invasive Weed Spotlight

Cheatgrass, also known as Downy Brome, is an invasive annual grass that has become a dominant species in some areas of the Western U.S. Cheatgrass spreads easily because of its ability to outcompete native species. Cheatgrass can expand



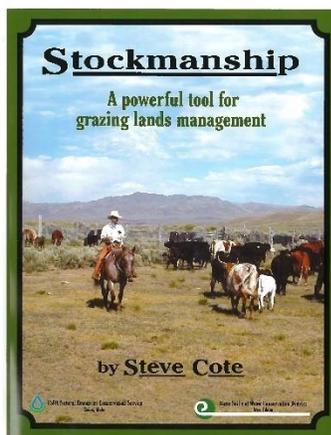
Cheatgrass graphic from the USDA Plants Database

its root system during the winter while other species are dormant and has a wide range of habitat and environmental tolerances in which it can thrive. Cheatgrass can produce an abundant seed crop each year and thrives in disturbed ground. Cheatgrass is of particular concern because it grows in dense

patches and is highly flammable. Cheatgrass has been effectively controlled by mechanical, biological and chemical treatments. Please contact your local County Weed Department, Extension office, or NRCS office to discuss potential management options.

Stockmanship Book Generates Funds for Conservation Activities

The Butte SWCD generates funds for conservation and youth projects from the sale of the book “Stockmanship: A Powerful Tool for Grazing Lands Management” written by former NRCS District Conservationist Steve Cote. The book covers



low-stress livestock handling techniques to achieve grazing plan goals. The District mails copies nationwide as well as providing the book to BYU-Idaho students. Copies can be purchased from the District for \$20.

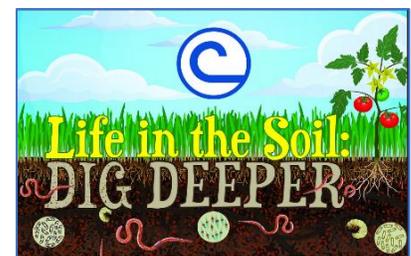
NRCS SNOTEL Measures Snowpack

Snow Telemetry, or SNOTEL, is a NRCS program that measures snowpack and estimates water for the year. The NRCS SNOTEL program has 800 sites in the western states, with over 80 in Idaho. While the system is an automated data collection system, NRCS personnel travel to select sites to collect manual snow pack data. The Arco NRCS Field Office District Conservationist, Jesse Fullmer, is part of the SNOTEL team and travels to sites within the Butte and Custer SWCD’s. SNOTEL data assists residents and local agencies with water management decisions. Data for individual sites and basin wide data can be viewed online at <https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/> or by contacting

the state information line at 208-378-5740.

Butte SWCD to Hold Youth Poster Contest

The Butte SWCD will be hosting their annual poster contest for 6th grade students. The contest is open to public, private and home-schooled students with the winning poster receiving a \$25 cash prize. The posters must follow the contest rules (found at www.nacdnet.com or contact the Butte SWCD office) and follow the Conservation Stewardship theme. This year’s theme is “Life in the soil: Dig Deeper.” The winners of the local SWCD contest advance to the state contest where winners compete at the national level.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 21st – Board Meeting
- April 18th – Board Meeting
- May 17th – Board Meeting

Butte SWCD
P.O. Box 819
Arco, ID 83213



Butte SWCD Board of Directors

Randy Purser Chairman
Mark Telford Vice-Chairman
Todd Perkes Treasurer
Walt Johnson Member
Jeff Isham Member

Butte SWCD Staff

Frances Perkes Admin. Assistant
Mindy Hawley Outreach Coordinator
Stephanie Barnes Technician

NRCS Staff

Jesse Fullmer District Conservationist
Lara Fondow Soil Conservationist
Chris Merrill Engineering Technician

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BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

State Envirothon Competition Held in Challis

The annual statewide Envirothon competition was held April 29th – 30th at the Living Waters Ranch in Challis. Fifteen teams from across Idaho met to test their knowledge about natural resources. Topics covered forestry, aquatics, wildlife, soils, and current environmental issues. Teams attended a presentation and activity on each topic and then completed a written exam. Teams were also given a current-issue topic on which to prepare and present an oral presentation. The winning team at the state competition will compete at the North American Envirothon competition in North Carolina later this year. The Butte SWCD sponsored teams from Mackay Public School and students from Butte County in this year's competition. Mackay's Envirothon team placed first in the current issue topic and third overall in the state competition.



Butte Envirothon Team

Envirothon is a North American competition that provides hands-on environmental problem-solving challenges for high-school students. Idaho Envirothon partners with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Idaho Conservation Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to promote environmental stewardship and education in the state.



Mackay Public Schools Envirothon Team

Invasive Weed Spotlight

Houndstounge is an invasive weed found almost statewide in Idaho. It is identified by its oblong leaves with distinct veins that is said to resemble a dog's tongue. Flowers are a



dull red to burgundy color that develop four teardrop shaped seeds. Seeds are covered with barbs that easily attach to the fur of animals for dispersal. Houndstounge contains alkaloids that, if ingested in enough quantity, can be poisonous to livestock. Houndstounge can spread

easily and thrive in a variety of environmental conditions, making it a tough competitor for desirable native species. Mechanical and chemical control measures have been successful in managing houndstounge. Contact the Butte or Custer County Weed District to discuss control measures.

Pollinator Seed Packets Available



The Butte SWCD along with the Butte Envirothon team has created pollinator habitat seed packets for home gardens. The mixes were developed with the assistance of the NRCS Plant Materials Center to incorporate plants adapted for the Butte SWCD area. Each packet will cover a 50 square foot area and is available in either

pollinator habitat or Monarch butterfly habitat specific varieties. Packets can be picked up at the USDA-NRCS Service Center in Arco. The decline in pollinator species in recent years has prompted nationwide conservation district outreach activities as well as NRCS EQIP practices to facilitate pollinator plantings on a larger scale. More information



about NRCS pollinator plantings can be obtained by contacting the Arco NRCS at 208-527-8557.

Students Attend Annual Natural Resources Camp

This year the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District provided scholarships for seven students to attend the University of Idaho's Natural Resource Camp. The seven excited campers included Kaydence Seefried, Jyha Christensen, Alyssa Hawley, Tannabe Cecil and Eliana Cecil from Custer County and Hadley MacConnell and Paige Kingery from Butte County. The camp was held at the 4-H campground near Ketchum from June 24th-29th. The campers spent a week near beautiful Sun Valley exploring and studying Idaho's natural resources. The camp focuses on hands-on learning experiences about wildlife, forestry, soil, rangeland and

water. Campers also enjoyed outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, volleyball, archery, survival, target shooting and fireside sing-alongs.



2019 Natural Resource Camp Attendees

NRCS Provides Funding for LESA Systems

The Arco NRCS Field Office provided financial assistance to seven producers in the Butte SWCD to retrofit existing pivot sprinklers with Low Elevation Spray Application (LESA) sprinkler systems. A total of 14 systems were approved for 2019 EQIP funding, providing increased water efficiency on 1,826 acres.

We would like to acknowledge the following businesses for investing in the District and assisting with our conservation programs:

- A & A Market*
- Arco Advertiser*
- Golden West Café*
- Ivie's Foodliner, Inc.*
- King Mountain Supply*
- Lost River Electric Cooperative, Inc.*
- McKelvey Insurance Agency*
- Metal Specialties & Hardware*
- Farmers Insurance, Arco*
- Nathan's Service Center*
- NC Quickstop*
- Pickle's Place*
- Professional Business Service, Jimmie Waddoups*
- Sammy's*
- Tri-County Supply*
- Valley Insurance Center, Inc.*

2019 Poster Contest Winners

The NACD's annual 6th grade poster contest was held in May. Students from Butte County and Mackay Public Schools participated in this year's contest.



1st Place: Nori Van Etten



2nd Place; Mylee Drussel



3rd Place: Jocelyn Seefried

Butte SWCD's Outreach Coordinator presented information to the students following this year's conservation theme "Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper". Students

learned about the importance of soil organisms on overall soil health and then created a poster following the theme. Each student received a certificate of appreciation for their participation. Winners received a cash prize and advanced to the state competition.

High County RC&D Program Reduces Wildfire Hazards

Funding for fuelbreak projects, rangeland green-strips, or weed control seeding is available through High County RC&D. The funds were obtained from the Bureau of Land Management to assist private landowners to create fire resilient rangelands. Funding will assist with combating cheat-grass and removing

encroaching conifers. The goal of the project is to reduce wildfire hazards while improving habitat for the Greater Sage Grouse. Funding covers 75% of landowner costs up to \$2,500/acre and is eligible for combining with other funding sources through the NRCS and other state and federal agencies. For more information, please contact project coordinator Kim Ragotzkie at 208-569-9775 or email: rcdholdtheline@gmail.com.

Butte SWCD Awarded NACD Technical Assistance Grant

The Butte SWCD was awarded a technical assistance grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts for the second year. The

grant allows the District to provide an additional employee to assist the NRCS Field Office with conservation planning and field work. Berett Erb has been hired to fill the TA grant position for the 2019-2020 year. Berett was born and raised in Mackay and obtained a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Montana Western. Berett has been previously employed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management as a range technician. Berett has also built and operated her own cow/calf and feeder/stocker operation in Montana. Berett and her two daughters will be making their home in Mackay. We are pleased to have Berett on our team!



New TA Grant Employee Berett Erb

New Staff Roles at the Butte SWCD

You may notice some changes the next time you visit the NRCS Field Office in Arco. Long time Butte SWCD Administrative Assistant Frances Perkes is now the Office Manager and financial advisor for the District and will work primarily from

home. Former technical assistance grant technician, Stephanie Barnes, is now working part-time as the District's Administrative Assistant. Frances can be reached by e-mailing butteswcd@outlook.com. Stephanie can be reached at 208-527-8557 or by e-mailing stephanie.barnes@usda.gov.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 29th – August 3rd - Custer County Fair

August 12th – 16th - Butte County Fair

August 15th – Board Meeting

September 19th – Board Meeting

October 14th – Office closed for Columbus Day

October 17th – Board Meeting

To join the newsletter e-mailing list, send an e-mail to Stephanie.Barnes@usda.gov

Butte SWCD
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Butte SWCD Board of Directors

Randy Purser	Chairman
Mark Telford	Vice-Chairman
Todd Perkes	Treasurer
Walt Johnson	Member
Jeff Isham	Member

Butte SWCD Staff

Frances Perkes	Office Manager
Mindy Hawley	Outreach Coordinator
Stephanie Barnes	Admin. Assistant
Berett Erb	Technician

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Jesse Fullmer	District Conservationist
Lara Fondow	Soil Conservationist
Chris Merrill	Engineering Technician

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NRCS – Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative



Dina Johnson's high tunnel near Arco

The NRCS Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative has become an increasingly popular program in the Butte SWCD. Since 2014, 21 high tunnels have been erected within the District utilizing the technical and financial assistance provided by this Initiative. The goals of the Initiative are to support local production of fresh produce, extend the growing season, reduce water and fertilizer run-off, and to reduce fuel emissions created from trucking produce from the source to the consumer. One participant, Dina Johnson, of Arco, installed her seasonal high tunnel in 2018. In a recent interview, Dina stated that the biggest challenge was educating herself on high tunnel maintenance and handling pests within the high tunnel. She added that doing your homework before installing a high tunnel will greatly improve your growing success. Dina and her husband have enjoyed the harvest of fresh vegetables this year and have intentions of expanding their production to sale at the local “Up-Wind-ers Farmer’s and Artisan’s Market” in Arco next year. Dina said the advantages to gardening in a high tunnel has been the ability to control irrigation, protection from the wind, and with a few improvements – protection from pests. Dina also noted, “Being able to start a lot of seeds in the high tunnel instead of in my kitchen window has also been a great advantage!” For more information about the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, please contact the USDA-NRCS Service Center at 208-527-8557.



Dina inside her high tunnel

Invasive Weed Spotlight



Weed species are labeled noxious if they have known harmful effects to native ecosystems and the economy. One noxious weed species found in the Butte SWCD is Spotted Knapweed. Spotted Knapweed has a thistle-like appearance in that it has pink or purple flowers made up of several disk flowers. Spotted Knapweed can produce up to 25,000 seeds per plant which can remain viable for up to eight years. Spotted Knapweed can hinder growth

and reproduction of neighboring plants, leading to accelerated erosion in some areas. Please contact the Butte or Custer County Weed Departments for control measures.

Butte SWCD has Booth at County Fairs and Local Farmer's Market

The Butte SWCD and NRCS staff participated in the Custer and Butte County Fairs with a display booth. Information



District booth

regarding District, NRCS, FSA, and the Idaho Conservation Commission programs were distributed to the public. The NRCS and the District also teamed up to provide

an educational children's activity as part of the Arco Farmer's Market. Lara Fondow, NRCS, conducted a hands-on pollinator activity where visiting kids (and adults) learned about different types of pollinators and created seed balls for planting. District employees Mindy Hawley and Stephanie Barnes presented a demonstration to highlight the importance of ground cover in reducing water-induced erosion.



Erosion demonstration

To join the Butte SWCD's newsletter e-mail list, send an e-mail to Stephanie.Barnes@id.nacd.net

Irrigation Water Management Assistance Offered through the NRCS

The NRCS offers technical and financial support to assist producers with irrigation water management (IWM). This conservation practice accompanies converting traditional sprinkler packages to Low Elevation Spray Application (LESA) sprinkler packages. Participants install a soil moisture monitoring system on each irrigated field that allows soil moisture and water application rates to be tracked throughout the season. In 2019, the NRCS assisted 27 producers to utilize IWM on a total of 5,991 acres within the Butte SWCD.

Seasonal High Tunnel Public Meeting Held

A seasonal high tunnel public meeting was held in August. The meeting featured Ron Patterson from the University of Idaho Extension. Ron's presentation covered



Ron Patterson, UI Extension, explains home composting methods

various aspects of growing inside a high tunnel, a growing calendar for the Lost River Valley, how to create a garden floor plan to maximize production, and various maintenance issues associated with high tunnels. Lara Fondow, NRCS Soil Conservationist, presented information on the USDA-NRCS Seasonal High

Tunnel Initiative. The group also took a field trip to view a local high tunnel. Dina Johnson, of Arco, provided a tour of her high tunnel along with insight into her experiences installing the high tunnel and lessons learned during her first growing season.

Participate in the NACD Conservation Photo Contest

The National Association of Conservation Districts hosts an annual photo contest for youth and adults. Each contestant can enter up to five photos per year by the December 1st, 2019 deadline. Photos must fall into one of the following categories:

- 1) Conservation Practices
- 2) Close-up Conservation

3) Conservation in Action
4) Agriculture and Conservation Across America

Photos are judged on technical and composition merits. First place winners receive a \$100 cash prize. Visit nacdnet.org for more contest details or contact the Butte SWCD.

Annual 6th Grade Natural Resources Tour a Success

The Annual 6th Grade Natural Resources Tour was held September 26th near Mackay. Sixty-seven 6th grade students from Butte County and Mackay Public Schools participated in six hands-on educational sessions covering a variety of natural resources related topics. Stations were provided by Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Land Management,

Lost Rivers Cooperative Weed Management Area, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Butte SWCD, and the South Custer County Fire Department. The Butte SWCD treated the students to a lunch following the event.



Students learn about fish identification



Lara Fondow, NRCS, presented information on pollinator conservation



The NRCS and Butte SWCD presented information on soil health



South Custer Fire Department Demonstration



Students learning about invasive weeds

**Visit our webpage at
butteswcd.org**



Butte Soil and Water Conservation District

BUTTE SWCD LOCALLY-LED WORK GROUP MEETING

Locally-Led Work Group Meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within your county.

You are invited to:

- ✓ Review performance of the past year's projects.
- ✓ Help shape plans and priorities future projects.
- ✓ Connect with partners and new audiences to seek opportunities to leverage partnership funds.
- ✓ And learn about other NRCS programs which may prove beneficial to you.

WHERE: Craters of the Moon
National Monument Visitor Center

DATE: 12/5/2019

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

For more information & to R.S.V.P., call
Stephanie Barnes, 208-527-8557, Ext. 101

PLEASE R.S.V.P



In cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

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