



# BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## State Envirothon Competition Held in Challis

The annual statewide Envirothon competition was held April 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto:butteswcd@outlook.com). Stephanie can be reached at 208-527-8557 or by e-mailing [stephanie.barnes@usda.gov](mailto:stephanie.barnes@usda.gov).

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- July 29<sup>th</sup> – August 3<sup>rd</sup> - Custer County Fair
- August 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> - Butte County Fair
- August 15<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting
- September 19<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting
- October 14<sup>th</sup> – Office closed for Columbus Day
- October 17<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting

To join the newsletter e-mailing list, send an e-mail to [Stephanie.Barnes@usda.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Barnes@usda.gov)

Butte SWCD  
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Mindy Hawley	Outreach Coordinator
Stephanie Barnes	Admin. Assistant
Berett Erb	Technician

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Lara Fondow	Soil Conservationist
Chris Merrill	Engineering Technician

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