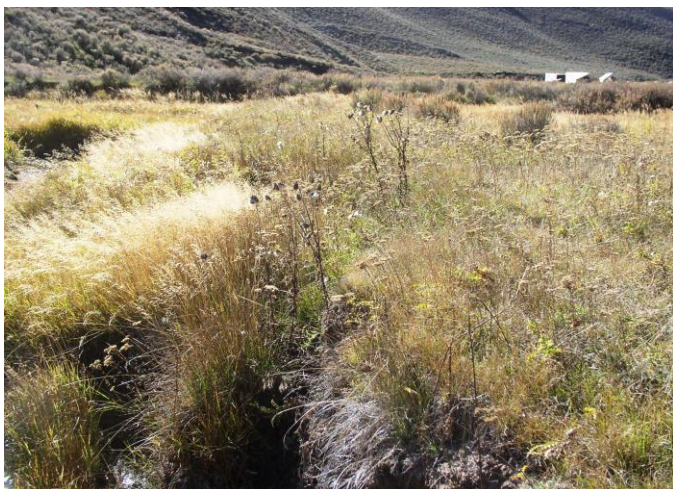




LINCOLN CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2013 TO JUNE 30, 2014

Every year has its high and lows. This year started out very favorable for agricultural producers throughout the district. Most area wide snow packs were above average. Irrigation water supplies were predicted to be above normal for most streams and rivers. This past spring, although, was colder than normal with several moisture events causing problems for the timely planting of crops.

Most agriculture producers had a good first crop of alfalfa and alfalfa /grass at the end of June but the second crop results were disastrous. Late summer rains in August and September were off the charts, causing problems getting hay cut and dried. Small grain crops lodged and re-sprouted causing major problems to harvest. It was a disappointment to many farmers and ranchers in the district.



Noxious weeds can proliferate in riparian areas if not controlled.

The one bright spot the past couple of years has been the rangeland vegetation. The extra moisture kept the range plants growing resulting in exceptional production. Overall, riparian conditions have greatly improved the last couple of years along with willow growth. The upland vegetation also had excellent production. The one problem experienced by increased moisture has been the proliferation of noxious weeds. Weed control is a never ending battle for all land owners. It is imperative noxious weeds are controlled or nothing will remain for livestock or wildlife to eat. The Lincoln Conservation District (LCD) urges all land-owners to implement a weed control plan through their local Lincoln County Weed and Pest Office.

LCD Management and Business Update

The effective management of the natural resources in the LCD requires the efforts of all land owners. It is critical that individuals have the information and guidance to maintain and improve their natural resources. The LCD board members have worked very hard this past year arranging for workshops on natural resource conservation measures and installing conservation practices on the ground with cooperating agencies. Board members directing LCD activities this past year were Erick Esterholdt, Chairman; Kenny Petersen, Vice Chairman; Robert Peternal, Secretary-Treasurer; Paula Bowling, Member and Paul Clark, Member.



LCD board members and employees (left to right) Paula Bowling, Kenny Petersen, Robert Peternal, Brenda Lazcanotegui, DeMont Grandy, and Erick Esterholdt. Paul Clark not in picture.

Local involvement is critical for local management of natural resources in Southern Lincoln County. The majority of the county is under federal ownership. The LCD's position as a Cooperating Agency in federal land management decisions provides for local input in the federal land use management planning process. Many conflicts may be avoided by having the LCD involvement before a final decision is made.

LCD board members have attended many meetings this past year with federal and state land managers, environmental groups, and state/national congressional representatives trying to benefit all parties involved. Without the LCD board members' local grass roots efforts, many landowners would suffer due to national decisions not sympathetic to

local needs. Board members are not compensated for their efforts, but donate their time for the benefit of our local communities and landowners. Conservation districts, state and nationwide, have the respect and admiration of federal land managers and elected government officials.

LCD Past Year's Accomplishments

Rangeland Activities

The proper use and management of rangeland within the LCD has taken center stage the last several years. LCD board members recognize the importance rangeland vegetation is for both livestock and wildlife. The profit margin for most ranchers in the LCD depends upon the harvesting of rangeland grass, forbs, and shrubs by livestock. Without the private, state and federal rangelands, the livestock industry would not survive in the LCD. Hence, LCD board members work closely with ranchers to improve the LCD rangelands.

This past year, the LCD continued its efforts with the Smithsfork and South LaBarge Grazing Associations in their Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) effort to properly graze their BLM allotments. Rangeland monitoring of key grazing areas on riparian and upland range sites helps local ranchers know when to move from pasture to pasture in a rotational grazing system. The Smithsfork Grazing Association (SGA) is in the second year of their Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) grant. The South LaBarge Common Grazing Association (SLCGA)



South LaBarge Common Grazing Assoc. members evaluate riparian zones within the allotment with Technical Review Team members for suitable grazing monitoring sites.

has applied for a RHAP grant through the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) to develop a livestock grazing monitoring program. The RHAP grant has recently been approved. The LCD sponsored the SLCGA grant application and will be overseeing the proposed rangeland monitoring and financial activities.

Many federal allotments within the LCD need more active rangeland monitoring efforts for their permit renewals. In order to determine if the BLM Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands are being met, it requires both qualitative and quantitative monitoring data. The LCD can help with this effort on a limited basis. The LCD workload for rangeland monitoring assistance has increased substantially over the last couple of years. RHAP may be applied through the WDA for those interested. Contact the LCD office for details.



End of year grazing monitoring on the Huff Creek riparian area within the Smithsfork BLM Allotment showed excellent green line stubble heights after grazing.

The LCD, once again, sponsored two workshops this year with the University of Wyoming Extension Service. The workshop in February centered on Tools for Range and Pasture Investment and Managing Plant and Animal Behavior to Maximize Production. Twenty two people attended the workshop. In September of this year, the Tri-State Range Tour and Symposium was sponsored by the LCD in conjunction with the Universities of Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah Extension Services. Subjects covered included Investing in Weed Control; Low Stress Cattle Handling Basics; Hands on Cattle Demonstration; and a tour of the Clark Ranch northeast of Cokeville, WY. Approximately 40 people attended the symposium



A number of agriculture producers tour the Clark Ranch northeast of Cokeville, Wyoming

The LCD helped the local BLM office commemorate the National Public Lands Day by participating in the maintenance of the public access trail in Raymond Mountain, gathering of native grass seed and the placement of enclosure fences around willows in the Mill Creek drainage within the Smithsfork BLM Allotment. A barbeque was held at the Cokeville Town Park after the field activities.



Several willow enclosure fences were installed in the Mill Creek Drainage within the Smithsfork BLM Allotment during National Public Lands Day.

Finally, the LCD has been actively working with the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) program. Board members and employees have attended planning meetings throughout the year and will be sponsoring a rangeland improvement projects in the future involving a rangeland cross fence in South LaBarge Common BLM Allotment for a rotation grazing system.

Overall, the rangeland activities this past year have been varied and encompassed a lot of activities.

Water Related Activities

The most pertinent water activity this year has been the LCD's involvement in the Wyoming Water Development Commissions (WDCC) Level I Watershed Study for the Black's Fork River Watershed in Uinta and Lincoln Counties. Anderson Consulting Engineers (ACE) Inc. out of Fort Collins, CO. will be completing their study by the end of the year. Numerous water development projects for stock water and irrigation were identified by ACE within the Hams Fork River Drainage, a sub watershed of the Blackfork River Watershed that could qualify for WWDC cost share funding for construction purposes. The LCD could be the sponsoring agent for these small watershed projects.

This past August, the LCD filled out an application to the WDCC for a Level I Watershed Study for the Bear River within the State of Wyoming. This will include land in Uinta and Lincoln counties. The LCD will be taking the principle lead on this study with Uinta County Conservation District (UCCD) partnering with the LCD. If the application is approved, the Bear River Watershed eligible landowners will eventually be able to receive cost share assistance for small water development projects once the Level I study is completed.

A major project the LCD has been helping the Cokeville Watershed Improvement District (CWID) directors complete a study by the WWDC to replace the Cokeville Tri-Diversion Water Control Structure northeast of Cokeville, WY. The structure divides the Smiths Fork River into three separate channels for irrigation and flood control purposes. The structure was built in the early 1960's and is starting to deteriorate. A couple of years ago the middle channel's headwall undercut, causing a concern that the whole structure would fail. This would have been a disaster for the Town of Cokeville's residents. The structure has been repaired; however, maintenance cost continues to increase. It is time to consider its replacement.

Once the study is completed, the WCDD has cost share funding available for its replacement or major repair. The CWID directors are in the process of obtaining construction and access easements for the proposed structure's replacement.



The Cokeville Tri-Diversion structure was repaired this fall in anticipation of flood flows this coming spring.

Another water related effort the LCD undertook this past spring was with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to sponsor water development and management practices under their Partners for Wildlife Program. The LCD will sponsor the construction of two irrigation water control dikes this year along Bear River for two ranches that border the Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. These projects will help the ranchers with irrigation and will promote wetland habitat for waterfowl.

Finally, DeMont Grandy, Natural Resource Specialist for the LCD, attended training in Casper, WY, for several days on water quality monitoring. He completed Module III in the water quality training series so he could take credible water quality measurements. LCD board members are in the process of strengthening their water quality capabilities. It appears more regulation is around the corner involving water quality for district streams and rivers.

Other Activities

LCD board members prepared a resolution to be introduced at the fall meeting of the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (WACD)

Area V meeting held in Etna, WY, this year concerning the problem of recreational hunters, and miscellaneous users leaving gates open and/or cutting fences when crossing private, state, and federal lands. This causes problems for livestock owners when cattle roam into neighbors' properties or into deferred pastures within their federal allotments where they are not supposed to be grazing. Trespass fees result, along with civil court cases. Stiffer penalties need to be enacted, along with more officers to enforce existing laws. Currently, little effort is being taken to stop the problem. The LCD resolution passed the Area V meeting and will now be introduced at the WACD's Annual State Convention to be held in Sheridan, WY, in November.



Closing of public and private pasture gates after entry is critical for livestock owners to manage rangeland grazing.

LCD board members are currently investigating the need to develop a Land and Resource Use Plan (LRUP) for the district. The LRUP will identify the LCD's goals, objectives, and policies to the state and policies to the state and federal regulatory framework that governs the management of private, state, and federal land in conjunction with the rangeland, soil, water, and wildlife resources. The LRUP will help guide county, private, state, and federal decision makers in addressing federal and state natural resource management issues. This will help the LCD obtain better standing as a Co-operating Agency in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

A LCD representative has also been attending the Coalition of Local Government (CLG) meetings

on a monthly basis where counties and conservation districts participate in federal land resource land and project planning as a Cooperating Agency. This gives the LCD a direct voice in shaping federal land decisions that are consistent with local Long Range Plans and LRUP.

Activities On Going

A number of seedling trees and shrubs for conservation plantings were sold last year by the LCD. The LCD will be offering seedling trees and shrubs starting December 2014. Order forms will be available at the LCD Field Office, phone number (307) 279-3256. Most trees and shrubs offered for sale are bare root and small potted. Some larger potted conifer trees are available on a limited basis. Order early or your desired species may be out of stock.

The LCD provided seedling conifers for the Cokeville Elementary fifth grade to commemorate Arbor Day this past spring. Assistance was also provided to the Cokeville tree board by LCD employees to plant several large potted trees at the Cokeville Elementary School and the Cokeville Town Park to celebrate Arbor Day. A number of local residents helped with the event.



Two large potted trees were planted this past spring at the Cokeville Elementary School to commemorate Arbor Day.

The LCD continued to sell firewood, pole, and Christmas tree permits for the US Forest Service this past year due to the efforts of Brenda Lazcanotegui, LCD district clerk. She is a big help

to Cokeville and surrounding residents processing more permits than any other outlet.

Summary

The LCD had a very successful year. A lot was accomplished by board members and employees. Due to many federal, state, and county agencies, and mainly the great private landowners and their support of the many conservation measures and practices that were installed. It takes the commitment of many people to get the job done. ***THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!***

Finally, those wanting more information about the LCD may periodically checkout the LCD website at www.lincolnconservationdistrict.org. A district cooperater, Julia Carollo, developed the website. Her assistance was very much appreciated.

NRCS 2014 Annual Report

As always, I would like to start with a message of thanks to the LCD. Every year, the LCD makes life easier for us NRCS folks by helping out in numerous ways. From tracking down signatures, to offering natural resource information, we genuinely appreciate working with them.

Although not required for all grazing applications, several landowners in South Lincoln County have enrolled in specific program options that require rangeland monitoring. Typically NRCS assists the landowner with setting up and completing the first year of monitoring. After that, the landowner becomes responsible to complete the yearly monitoring. The LCD has made this process much easier for landowners by allowing them to hire DeMont Grandy to complete their required monitoring for them. This process has now gone on for two years, and has been extremely beneficial to the NRCS, the landowners, and the LCD. NRCS is very thankful to the LCD for starting up this agreement.

Over the last two years, NRCS, in Wyoming has gone through a lot of changes to ensure that our programs are being administered correctly. One of the changes that started this year was that a portion

of our funding could no longer be designated specifically to Lincoln County. Instead, WY NRCS is now required to have funding distributed among geographic areas. What does this mean to ranchers/farmers in South Lincoln County? They will be competing for funds from one large funding pool that serves Lincoln, Teton, Sublette, Uinta, and Sweetwater Counties. This is the way in which funds were distributed for 2014. Obviously folks are concerned that some counties may not receive any funds at all in some years. In 2014, all counties had several projects funded. In South Lincoln County, we were able to fund three grazing projects and one irrigation project. NRCS personnel from all five counties work together on applications to ensure that we are being consistent across counties. Yes, the distribution will vary from year to year, but we are optimistic that the financial assistance will continue to be distributed evenly among counties over time.

Regards,
Gary Blazejewski, NRCS District Conservationist



A pipeline being installed in south Lincoln County to assist a producer improve water efficiency

FINANICAL STATEMENT

Balance on Hand July 1, 2013	\$ 53,827.91
Receipts for FY 2013 - 2014	121,161.00
Expenditures for FY 2013-2014	142,078.04
Balance on Hand June 30, 2014	\$ 32,910.97

The Lincoln Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer, and offers all programs, services, and assistance on a non discriminatory basis, without regard to age, creed, marital status, national origin, physical or mental handicap, politics, race, religion, or sex.