

The Mountain Meadow



A quarterly publication from the Sublette County Conservation District

April 1, 2010



Photo courtesy of Sharon Williams— NRCS

Can you guess when this photo was taken? See inside to find out!

In this issue

A word from the Board.....	page 2
Local Happenings	page 3
A word from NRCS	page 4
Range plant spotlight	page 5
Wildlife Alert.....	page 6 and 7
What we've been up to	page 8
Biology Corner.....	page 9 and 11

*"By working with local people who understand local problems,
the best conservation measures can be accomplished."*

A Word From SCCD

A Message from the Board

Good News,

The sage-grouse did not get listed, but unfortunately the USFWS has already been sued by Western Watersheds and I'm sure there will be more lawsuits filed.

The SCCD is going to keep forging on with Conservation Ranch Plans and pursuing Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA), Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCA) and the habitat leasing concept. The meeting we had with the USFWS and others was very productive and many questions were answered. We will be working very closely with them in order to get CCAA's & CCA's in place. There are no set time tables for when permitting will be ready but we plan to be ready to move as fast as possible when the time comes.

-Darrell Walker, Board Chairman

Cover Photo Story

This photo was taken circa early 1940's of the SCS/Big Piney Conservation District office. The sign reads United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, then underneath in capital letters Big Piney Soil Conservation District. The Board of Supervisors at that time consisted of: Joel Budd, Arnold Olson, Walter Yose, Phillip Marincic, and Dan Budd.

Friend of Agriculture Award

Congratulations to our friend and partner, Jennifer Hayward of the NRCS! This year she was the recipient of the Green River Cattlemen's/ Cowbells "Friend of Agriculture" award, presented at the annual banquet. To be



Photo by: Meghann Durbrow

considered for this award the nominee must provide significant contributions to agriculture in our area, promote a better understanding between ranch and non-agriculture people, cooperate with the agriculture industry and related activities such as fair, 4-H, FFA, etc , as well as show a cheerful supportive attitude and personal interest in ranch families. Congratulations again Jennifer, we are proud of you!

Local Happenings

Green River Cattleman's Association

The SCCD was invited to the Cattleman's Committee Meeting on February 26, 2010, to discuss our programs and recent activities over the last year. Updates on the ground water, surface water and natural resources programs were given. Darrell Walker spoke about the status of the Greater sage-grouse, and gave more details about CCAA's.

Other presenters included, Jim Logan, the Wyoming State Vet, who discussed the activities of the Wyoming Livestock Board. He commented that Chris Strang is still handling the brucellosis in the county but can perform trichomoniasis testing as well. He also discussed the revisions to Chapter 15 trichomoniasis rules, which have not been updated since 1998. County Commissioner, Joel Bousman gave a report of the county, as well as commented on the CCAA program.



Photo by: Sno Ann Engler

"Guard Dogs for Livestock" was the title of Cat Urbikite's presentation, as she talked about a new breed of dog they have been using. Randy Bolgiano, the Green River Basin Advisory Group's spokesperson, stated that the water business has not changed much from last year. He then touched on the "Million Project" which would divert water to the Colorado Front Range. Dan Budd briefed the audience on the history of the project. Travis Ames gave a BLM Agency Report which included a list of the current projects.

At the Annual Meeting, held on February 27, 2010 at the Marbleton Town Hall, Mr. Jim Magagna, from the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, reported on current legislation, and spoke about brucellosis research and answered several questions and concerns. Sheriff Richard Mack was the featured speaker for the 2010 annual meeting and talked about "C.P.R." or state sovereignty. Mr. Mack showed a presentation entitled "The Constitution for Peace Officers", emphasizing state nullification, theory of interposition, and defining Constitutional Authority. Bill Winney showed a power point presentation on climate changes, and talked about historical weather patterns and also those of the sun.

Thank you to Nikki Marincic for providing the SCCD with the meeting details, and to all those who were involved and attended! Till next year....!

A Word From NRCS

Sage-Grouse Initiative - Farm Bill Programs

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

NRCS has announced a signup for EQIP and WHIP for a Sage-Grouse Initiative that is being offered in 11 Western States. In short, the program will offer a per acre incentive on private rangelands to prepare and implement a documented grazing program. Also to qualify for the incentive, monitoring on your rangelands has to be implemented. We can assist you in the design of the program and the first year's monitoring, but after that, the producer will be responsible for the monitoring and report. An evaluation of fences located within 0.6 miles of leks will also be a part of this effort. This incentive payment would be an annual payment for three years. While the final dollar amounts are not yet known at the time of this submission, they may be significant enough to your operation that you may want to consider an inquiry to the office. In addition, small tweaks to your hayland harvesting practices might also be attractive to you through the incentives offered in the program. The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) will compliment the incentive based payments through Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to help install structural practices (if needed) to help you implement your grazing plan.

If we haven't worked with you before, there still could be opportunity to get started. The candidate listing of sage-grouse is an important designation for our area. The more we work together and document what agriculturalists are doing on the land, the better the chance of the species not becoming listed. Private landowners are an important part of this process! If you haven't been following the current information about sage-grouse, I would be happy to share with you what information we have learned. Grazing is listed as one of the threats, but not the act of grazing by itself. They interpret grazing as a threat only if it's in a management plan that is not compatible with sage grouse needs. Agriculture is also considered a threat, however, that term encompasses the act of conversion of sagebrush ecosystems to tilled cropland. This is an issue in Montana, but is not so problematic in our area. We are in a premier area for sage grouse – the word is out. SW Wyoming is also considered to be a potential stronghold for the species for the near future. If you are interested in the program, please contact me soon. The deadline to sign up for the program is April 23, 2010.

Range Plant Spotlight

Quaking Aspen

Karen Clause, Rangeland Management Specialist for USDA-NRCS

Populus tremuloides
Plant Symbol = POTR5

Aspen is a short-lived, mid-sized deciduous tree native to Sublette County. It is the most widely distributed and common tree to North America. In Sublette County, it is found on a variety of soil textures in the mid-elevations and precipitation zones, mainly in conjunction with the transition zone from mountain big sage to conifer forest. Aspen grow in clones, groups of trees that stem from the same underground root system. While each tree only lives ~80 years, these clones are possibly some of the oldest (>1 million years) and largest living organisms.

Description: Aspen is most easily recognized by its thin white and peeling bark, which becomes thicker and furrowed with age. Leaves are oval to almost round with teeth on the margins. The shape and attachment of the leaves to branches create the “quaking” affect, allowing the leaves to cool and minimize water loss through evapo-transpiration. Stands of aspen may consist of a single clone or a mosaic of different ones, which is most evident in the fall by color and fall dormancy timing. Removal of stems causes vigorous re-sprouting.

Uses: It has been said that over 80% of the wildlife in the Intermountain West rely upon aspen for some part of their life cycle. Aspen is superior wildlife habitat and a good forage source for most classes of livestock and wildlife because of its palatability and high nutritional value, particularly in the fall and winter (protein values 10-15%).

Season Species→	Cattle	Horses	Sheep	Elk	Deer	Antelope
Spring	D	F	P	D	P	F
Summer	D	F	P	D	P	F
Fall	D	F	P	P	P	F
Winter	D	F	P	P	P	F

P=Preferred; D=Desirable; F=Fair; U=Undesirable

continued on page 10

Wildlife Alert

Melanie Purcell, Natural Resource Project Coordinator

We all hear the stories about wildlife falling to their demise by getting caught in fishing line, about how small birds and mammals get trapped in the plastic six-pack packaging, or about how wildlife get wrapped up in plastic grocery bags and how those bags are mistaken by sea turtles for jellyfish (their primary food source). In our area we hear a lot about fences, migration corri-

dors and wildlife passage. We may take action to donate money to a source for the conservation of these creatures. Some of us even make small changes to be more responsible, like picking up fishing line and disposing of it, cutting up those plastic six-pack rings, or building wildlife friendly fence.

We do our best to be good stew-



Photo Courtesy of Pinedale BLM

ards of the land and yet we can't help but get fed-up by all the hype one species, such as the Sage-grouse, receives while in the spotlight of some type of litigation. Nevertheless, we tend to our daily duties and are apt to forget about everything else for a while. Take a moment to think about your daily activities. What actions do you take locally to try to conserve our surrounding wildlife? What things are so common to you that you don't even think twice about it? Have you thought about baling twine? Yes, that's right...I said baling twine. It's a common item found around here that we might just leave lying around like a rope or a hose and think, "It's not going to hurt anything". Nevertheless, there is always some creature who finds the material irresistible.

Take raptors, such as the Osprey, for example; each spring they begin building and reinforcing their nests. They collect harder materials such as twigs and limbs for nest support, then softer materials like grasses...and yes, baling twine (as well as fishing line) for additional support and padding. Unfortunately, baling twine is often deadly. There are many cases where birds become entangled in the material and are found hanging upside down from their nests, tree limbs, or telephone poles. Other hawks and eagles have occasionally been observed using baling twine in their nests as well. There have also been several reports of other animals getting caught-up in the material; a buck antelope was found entangled in the twine near Jeffrey City, and north of Buffalo a mule deer doe was found wearing the material around her neck. Human and wildlife interactions are bound to occur but rarely do we immediately realize the consequences of our actions in these situations.

So, what is the solution? Luckily, it doesn't have to be complicated. Simply picking it up and properly disposing of the twine in a trash receptacle or better yet, take it to your local recycling center. Bagging it up first will help deter these animals from finding it and taking it from the landfill. It can be stored out of sight, in the barn for example. Who knows, if you're the creative type you might just find something to make with the durable material, the Osprey did. Just cutting baling twine into small pieces helps keep it from being a dangerous snare. In some places, it can even be recycled. This might sound like just one more thing on your to do list, but with respect and responsibility we try our best to help our fellow creatures survive. Afterall, who knew baling twine could be so popular!



Photo: <http://www.whitetaildeer-management-and-hunting.com/images/Baling-Twine-Buck.jpg>

What We've Been Up To

Air Quality

Can you believe it has already been a year?? The sampling portion for the Air Toxics Health Risk Assessment will be wrapping up at the end of the month. It was decided that the stations should be run until the end of ozone season, which put the sampling over the original one year sample time by one month. The 27th of March is the last sample day. From here the remaining one month of data will be sent to the contract company, Sierra Research, to be analyzed. We should expect to see the actual Health Risk Assessment by the end of the summer. There will be a public meeting on April 13th at 6:30 pm at the Pinedale Library for the community to discuss the Health Risk Assessment process with Dr. Ryan from DEQ. All four quarterly reports are located at http://deq.state.wy.us/aqd/Ozone%20Air%20Toxics_Sublette%20County.asp . If you have other questions about the study or the meeting, please call Meghann at the Conservation District at 307-367-2257 X113.

Grazing Workshops- done for the year

We would like to send out a big thank you to those who participated this winter in our first round of grazing workshops. They were a success because of participation and would not have happened without it! For those of you who were unable to make it, our workshops covered topics from plant identification, vegetation treatments, invasive weeds, riparian and watershed function to devel-



Photo by: Sno Ann Engler

oping grazing plans and conservation plans along with alternative energy sources for your home or ranch.

We will keep the public informed when the new series of workshops will be happening, and if you have a specific topic or idea you would like to see covered in future workshops, or would like to help out, please

feel free to contact us, 307-367-2257 Melanie Purcell X108 or Meghann Durbrow X113. We look forward to seeing you all again soon, and hope to see some new faces as well!

Biology Corner

Meghann Durbrow, Range Conservationist Technician

Ever wonder how male sage-grouse make that strange “Bloop” noise? Or what they eat in the winter? Read on to learn some interesting facts about sage-grouse ecology.



Photo: <http://utahwildlifephotos.com>

Male birds congregate on these leks, and perform their mating dance while females look on. Birds start strutting in the morning about 5am and finish about an hour after sunrise, from March until May, depending on weather.



Photo by: Mark Gocke, WY G&F

Mating: Sage-grouse use grassy openings, called a Lek for mating. Ridge tops or disturbed areas are typical locations, and are surrounded by taller sage brush for protection. These sites are typically used year after year.



Photo: <http://utahwildlifephotos.com>

Males have an esophageal pouch which they inflate by sucking in air. The “bloop” sound they make while strutting is when the air is released.

continued on page 11

Range Plant Spotlight

Continued from page 5

Aspen allows more groundwater recharge than conifers and provides superior erosion control. It can grow on a wide range of soil textures, but needs a reliable source of water and is intolerant to shade. New plantings should be excluded from browsing until plants are well established and tops are out of browse height, typically 6 to 8 years under optimal moisture conditions.

Management: Aspen is tolerant to browsing, however it produces the least amount of “suckers” when browsed in early summer (June-July). New stands can be destroyed by heavy browsing for three continuous years. It responds with vigorous sprouting to cutting and most fires, and provides a good fire-break in conifer stands by dropping crown fires to ground level. Catastrophic fire can kill roots near the soil surface and reduce suckering. It is self-thinning, requiring no manual thinning to achieve a healthy stand of trees from dense sprouts after a top-killing event.

References:

Karen J. Clause, Rangeland Management Specialist USDA-NRCS
USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center & the Biota of North American Program. Available: <http://plants.usda.gov>

Howard, Janet L. 1996. *Populus tremuloides*. In: Fire Effects Information System, (on U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/> [2005, March 14].



Photo by Karen J. Clause, Rangeland Management Specialist for USDA-NRCS

Biology Corner

Continued from page 9

Nesting: Most sage-grouse nests are found under sagebrush plants. The sage brush provides the grouse with cover from predators over head, while the understory grasses provide lateral protection. These nests are most commonly found within 3 miles of the lek the female was bred at. Females will typically lay between 6-8 eggs.

Eggs are incubated for 25-27 days.

Brood Rearing: Young chicks require habitats with lots of forbs and invertebrates, which provide them with the necessary protein. These habitats vary in plant species but need a canopy cover of at



Photo by: Mark Gocke, WY G&F



least 15% grasses and forbs. As the sagebrush habitats start to dry up, the hens will move their broods to a moister habitat, to provide the chicks with proper nutrient availability.

Wintering: During the fall and winter the diet of sage grouse changes almost exclusively to

sagebrush leaves and buds. It is important that the height of the sagebrush be at least 10-12" above the snow level to provide food and shelter for the birds through the winter.

Who Are We?

Sublette County Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Darrell Walker, Chairman

Brad Bousman, Vice Chairman

Dan Stroud, Treasurer

Colin Barney, Member

Chad Espenscheid, Member

Sublette County Conservation District Associate Supervisors

Lee Shafer, Jim Bousman and Les Burrough

Sublette County Conservation District Staff

Sno Ann Engler, Administrative District Coordinator

Kathy Raper, Surface Water Quality Specialist

Delsa Allen, Ground Water Quality Specialist

Sharon Harrell, Water Quality Assistant / Field Technician

Melanie Purcell, Natural Resource Specialist/Project Coordinator

Meghann Durbrow, Range Conservationist Technician

Loren Racich, Range Conservationist Technician

Oakley Ingersoll, Range Conservationist Technician

Partners: USDA / NRCS Staff

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

Karen Clause, Range Conservationist, Multi-County Team Specialists

Steven Petersen, Civil Engineering Technician, Multi-County Team Specialists

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sublette County Conservation District

1625 W. Pine St. (Stromness Building) / P.O. Box 36

Pinedale, WY 82941

307-367-2257 / Fax 307-367-2282

E-mail us at sccd@sublettecd.com

www.sublettecountycd.com