



LINCOLN CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2012 TO JUNE 30, 2013

This past year, within the Lincoln Conservation District (LCD), weather has been the challenge as usual. It has been difficult this past year to be an agricultural producer in the district. In fall of 2013 it appeared that the previous year's drought was receding when moisture levels started to increase from fall until mid-winter. This past spring and summer were very dry until the end of August when a monsoon season started that caused some areas in the LCD to receive their average yearly precipitation all within one month. Some areas around LaBarge experienced severe flooding. Other areas in the LCD received so much rain that the cool season grasses on district rangelands started to grow again. Many areas throughout the district had better grass conditions than earlier this spring. One producer in Cokeville got three cuttings of alfalfa that had irrigation water available throughout the season. It helped producers finish out their second crop.

The lesson to be learned from this year's challenges is to be flexible and have a diverse operation. Where one endeavor fails, have another

idea to implement. Living in a cold desert has its difficult weather conditions. Remember, prepare for the worst conditions and be mildly surprised when it doesn't happen. Do not blame it on changing climatic conditions; it is a part of life in our area.



Rangeland grasses started to grow this fall due to the abundant moisture received.

LCD Management and Business Update

Without effective leadership, no organization can fulfill its responsibilities. Luckily, the LCD has

had five board members who have spent many hours directing the district activities. This past year, Erick Esterholdt, Chairman; Kenny Petersen, Vice Chairman; Robert Peternal, Secretary/ Treasurer; Paula Bowling, Member; and Paul Clark, Member comprised the LCD Board of Supervisors. Board members met each month for board meetings and attended various workshops and conventions representing the LCD. Board members are not paid for their time. Through their efforts, local involvement is involved in federal and state land management decisions. This is critical so landowners and agriculture producers maintain control of their private land rights and are allowed to use federal and state lands. Do not assume you can do everything on your own. The LCD can be a big help in managing the renewable natural resources on your property.



LCD board members (left to right) Paula Bowling, Kenny Petersen, Robert Peternal, Brenda Lazcanotegui, Erick Esterholdt, and Paul Clark

LCD Past Year's Accomplishments

Workshops

One of the best ways the LCD helps landowners become aware of conservation practices, management options, and new technologies is through workshops. This past winter, employees of the LCD met with the Kemmerer Rotary Club members in December and gave a presentation on when and why conservation districts were created and the type of conservation activities the district can help implement. Numerous questions were answered that allowed local civic leaders to become acquainted with LCD programs.

Another workshop the LCD helped sponsor was with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) in February this past year in Kemmerer. Numerous federal and state agencies met with cooperators and permittees to discuss ways to survive and plan for droughts. Drought contingency plans were emphasized as a necessary management tool for agriculture producers. A lot of producers attended the open ended workshop throughout the afternoon period of the day. Another drought workshop is planned for October.

Overall, the most important workshop of the year was the in-field Rangeland Monitoring Workshop the last week of June this past summer. The workshop instructors included individuals from the University of Wyoming Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The workshop centered on rangeland grazing monitoring techniques and how to set up evaluation transects on upland and riparian ecological sites. The Line Point – Intercept method was taught to cooperators as a tool to monitor upland ecological sites. While the Multiple Indicator Method (MIM) was also taught as a tool to monitor riparian ecological sites. The MIM is a relatively new way to monitor greenlines within riparian ecological sites, using ten indicators to evaluate short and long term trends. It is a labor intensive method, but provides good quantitative data that can be statistically evaluated reliably over time. Twenty-four individuals attended the training overall. Rangeland monitoring is like playing a piano; it takes practice to become accomplished. This workshop was a beginning point for many cooperators.



District cooperators attend rangeland monitoring workshop in the Rock Creek drainage west of Kemmerer, Wyoming.

DeMont Grandy, LCD Natural Resource Specialist, Blaine Kemp, Smithsfork Grazing Association Manager, and Kay Lynn Nield, Star Valley Conservation District board member, attended an intensive week training course for MIM in Beaver, Utah, the end of July this year. Instructors for the course were the individuals that developed the MIM protocol. The team leader for the training was a member of the Nation Riparian Service Team. It was a very informative workshop that helped trainees gain a good understanding of a new upcoming riparian monitoring method.

Part of the LCD's Rangeland Monitoring Workshop included the placement of the new upland monitoring transects in the BLM Rock Creek Allotment. This will aid permittees in evaluating their grazing system within the allotment overtime.

Rangeland Monitoring Grants

One of the more helpful programs the LCD has been using the last couple of years has been the Rangeland Health Assessment Program (RHAP) developed by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA). The purpose of the RAHP is to help build relationships on-the-ground with permittees and land management agency personnel for the coordination of obtaining rangeland health assessment data. Grants may be obtained for up to \$20,000.00 to help establish rangeland monitoring sites within federal allotments and help permittees gain the knowledge how to do monitoring in conjunction with federal employees. RHAP grants require a 30 percent match. The match may be local cash, in-kind or other agency contributions. Grants are set up for a two year time frame. A sponsoring agency for the RHAP grants needs to be a governmental entity such as a local conservation district. Those desiring a RHAP grant will need all permittees within their allotment and federal agency personnel committed to the process. All mandatory partners must participate from the inception of the grant until it is completed.

Currently the LCD is completing two RHAP grants in conjunction with permittees on US Forest Service land for the LaBarge Creek, Little Hornet and Fontenelle Allotments. These RHAP rangeland

monitoring grants have proven very helpful in establishing monitoring sites within the allotments and obtaining new and locating old monitoring data to substantiate their rangeland conditions. This will prove very helpful if taken to court.

The LCD was also able to help the Smithsfork Grazing Association in their efforts to obtain a RHAP grant this spring. This grant helped 15 permittees within the Smithsfork BLM Allotment become more actively involved in rangeland monitoring efforts with BLM employees. A Technical Review Team (TRT) composed of University of Wyoming Extension Service and university natural resource staff toured the allotment this summer and will be completing a report on the current rangeland health conditions in the allotment and their recommendations for needed improvements. The permittees also helped the BLM employees complete an evaluation within the allotment to see if the given area was meeting Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. This was completed with assistance from the WDA and LCD employees.



Permittees within the Smithsfork BLM Allotment helped set up upland transects with BLM, LCD, and WDA employees for WY Standards for Healthy Rangeland evaluations.

The Smithsfork BLM Allotment currently is the most scrutinized allotment in Southwest Wyoming at the present time by environmental groups and state wildlife entities. Hopefully, the RHAP grant will help quantify rangeland conditions within the allotment. The LCD is also helping the Smithsfork Grazing Association permittees in conjunction with the WDA to re-activate the Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) process to develop a new allotment management plan that will be suitable to

all interested parties, plus maintain and improve the allotment's rangeland resource.



WDA and LCD employees are meeting with the Smithsfork BLM Allotment permittees on a regular basis to re-activate a previous CRM process to solve grazing issues

Efforts are also being taken with the South LaBarge Grazing Association to develop a CRM plan for the South LaBarge Common BLM Allotment and establish rangeland monitoring sites. It has been a very busy summer for the LCD trying to help coordinate rangeland activities. Additional help is also needed for the Slate Creek, Granger, and Carter BLM Allotments in addition to several other smaller allotments, but LCD finances and personnel are very limited.

Water Related Activities

The LCD continued its efforts to address water quality issues. The LCD's biggest undertaking this past spring was the Wyoming Water Development Commissions (WWDC) acceptance of a Level I study for the Blacks Fork River Watershed which includes ground in the LCD encompassing the Hams Fork River. This study will also include part of the Henry's Fork Watershed. All three conservation districts, Uinta County, Lincoln, and Sweetwater County, are sponsoring the study. Anderson Consulting Engineers out of Fort Collins, Colorado was given the bid to do the study. The Level I study will consist of identifying needed livestock watering developments and irrigation infrastructure structure projects, both old and new that need to be constructed or repaired. It will be an excellent opportunity for LCD land owners in the Kemmerer area to get help to identify water development projects and get preliminary

engineering plans for construction and cost estimates. The resource data obtained by the watershed study will be very valuable to identify existing conditions within the watershed and potential natural resources that could be developed. Once the Level I study is completed in a year, funding through the WWDC could be obtained to construct or repair water projects. Money will be available through WWDC grants administered by the local conservation district. It will be a great help to get financial assistance for LCD cooperators through Wyoming funds rather than dwindling federal funds. A maximum grant of \$25,000.00 may be obtained from the WWDC. A match of 50 percent is required.



The Hams Fork River's watershed is scheduled for a WWDC Study

The LCD continued its efforts to address water quality issues. This past spring, the LCD, once again, sponsored a water testing program for domestic wells and springs. Twenty-six cooperators participated in the program, mainly in the Kemmerer area. Most water sources were fine; however, some had bacteria problems and one had high nitrate levels. LCD board members feel that is an excellent program to help cooperators address their water quality problems so no health issues are experienced.

Another water quality endeavor the LCD has been attending as an interested party, has been the Bear River sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Project. A TMDL is developed to address the impairments of a surface water body when it cannot meet all of its water quality standards. The Bear River in the Evanston area has problems meeting Wyoming Water Quality Standards for total suspended solids, turbidity and bed load.

LCD board members hope to be able to glean information from the project that could prove useful in the future.



The LCD sponsored the replacement of a large irrigation water diversion structure on the Bear River north of Cokeville, WY.

The LCD completed its last Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) project in conjunction with the NRCS this past spring for a large water diversion structure on the Bear River. The structure washed out due to high water in the spring of 2011. The LCD was the sponsoring agent for the project.

Miscellaneous Activities

The LCD continued meeting with the Coalition of Local Governments (CLG) group on a monthly basis concerning natural resource issues in Southwest Wyoming. A lot of effort was taken by the CLG this year addressing Sage grouse issues and the Wyoming governor's plan of actions.

The LCD has been meeting with the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) group concerning the implementation of conservation practices in Southwest Wyoming. One conservation practice for livestock grazing management has been the use of low stress livestock herding techniques for cattle movement. The LCD and a couple of other conservation districts, have interest in sponsoring several workshops, in classroom and in the field, on low stress livestock herding. This will prove very useful when moving large herds of cattle between fields, or within an allotment. This will help herders become more effective in their jobs and will possibly curtail the number of herders to move livestock more effectively.

In an effort to help with the Brucellosis concern between cattle and elk, LCD board members wrote a letter asking elk hunters in the district to collect blood samples from their kills. Knowing the brucellosis seroprevalence rate in elk in the LCD is critical for Brucellosis management. Currently a lot of the LCD is in a state designated surveillance area that creates financial and management burdens for cattle producers. It is possible the surveillance area could be eliminated if elk seroprevalence rates are low.

Jonathan Teichert, senior planner for Lincoln County Office of Planning and Development and DeMont Grandy, LCD Natural Resource Specialist attended a workshop in Vernal, Utah, to receive training on Assessing Proper Function Condition of Riparian Areas on federal lands. It was sponsored by the Utah Riparian Team. The federal agencies use Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) as a qualitative method for assessing the condition of riparian-wetland areas. It is a very important tool to have a working knowledge about its use. It can greatly affect the management guidelines for an allotment by federal land management employees. PFC's proper use may bring a wide diversity of publics to agreement if used properly. The LCD board members felt PFC training would prove very useful when working with federal agencies. No misunderstandings would occur between permittees and federal land managers.

On Going Activities

The LCD, once again, offered seedling trees and shrubs for sale last winter and spring. Approximately 650 seedling trees and shrubs were sold. A presentation was given to the Opal Town leaders last winter on the program and its options.

This year, the LCD will again offer the program to rural landowners. Order forms will be available from the LCD Field Office, phone number (307) 279-3256 starting December 1, 2013. Remember, the seedling stock is for windbreak plantings. Do not expect large potted plans. It is not the interest of the LCD to complete with local nurseries.

Brenda Lazcanotegui, district clerk, continued to sell wood and pole permits for the US Forest

Service throughout the past year. It has proven very helpful to Cokeville residents.

LCD Wrap-up

This past year has had its ups and downs. A lot was accomplished with limited financial and technical resources. The LCD board members are very appreciative to the many federal, state, county, and private cooperators who made last year so successful. The Lincoln County Commissioners have been a big support for LCD programs, both financially and technically. A big THANK YOU goes out to everybody's support. Hopefully, this coming year will be as productive.

NRCS 2013 Annual Report

First of all, the Afton NRCS office would like to express our gratitude to the Lincoln Conservation District for the support they provide to the NRCS throughout the year. Our accomplishments would not be possible without the assistance we receive from the LCD.

This past year was not a typical year for NRCS in Wyoming. In short summary, WY NRCS has been undergoing numerous reviews from the national office, to ensure that NRCS actions here in Wyoming are in accordance with the National NRCS policies and procedures. This has affected program participants here in Lincoln County. There were significant delays finalizing NRCS contracts in 2013, forcing many producers to delay their project installations.



One project completed this past year was an irrigation water control structure in the Upper Hams Fork River Watershed by the NRCS for a district cooperator.

With respect to grazing applications (e.g. cross fences, livestock water developments), it became required in 2013 that a grazing plan needs to be completed before NRCS can financially assist with a grazing application. Unfortunately, this meant that no grazing applications were able to be funded in 2013 within Lincoln County. Catching up on the backlog of applications needing a completed grazing plan will take some time, and NRCS will continue to plug away at this task.

Although there have been some bumps in the road during 2013, NRCS remains optimistic that the ongoing reviews will ultimately improve our ability to help landowners address environmental concerns on their property with effective, feasible solutions.

Gary Blazejewski
District Conservationist

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

Thomas Edison

Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.

Sir Winston Churchill

Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.

Native American Proverb

If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance on Hand July 1, 2012	\$ 90,800.73
Receipts for FY 2012 - 2013	77,388.14
Expenditures for FY 2012-2013	114,360.96
Balance on Hand June 30, 2013	\$ 53,827.91

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.