

CONSERVATION NEWS

McCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Inside this issue:

Noxious Weeds	2
Invasive Weed Workshop	3
Featured Noxious Weed: Hoary Cress a.k.a. Whitetop	4
DRWA Update	4
Local Working Group Update	5
FSA News	6
End of February-March Workshops	7

It was one
of those
March
days when the **SUN** shines hot
and the *wind blows* cold:
when it is **summer** in the *light*
and **winter** in the *shade*.

—Charles Dickens



Frosty White-Tailed Jackrabbit on Seeds Lake NWR | by USFWS Mountain Prairie



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS POSTER CONTEST

- ♦ Open to Kids in Grades K-12
- ♦ Judging Categories are: K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-8 & 9-12
- ♦ Entry forms can be picked up at your local school or on the District website.
- ♦ Drop poster & entry form off at school or the District Office by due date. County winners will be announced in early May 2016.

POSTER EVALUATION

- ♦ Conservation Message-50%,
- ♦ Visual Effectiveness-30%
- ♦ Originality-10%
- ♦ Universal Appeal-10%
- ♦ See entry form for additional criteria

POSTER DUE DATE: Posters are due **May 2, 2016**.

PRIZE MONEY: The top two posters in each category will receive prizes.

- ♦ First place winners-\$20
- ♦ Second place winners-\$10
- ♦ Everyone will receive a participation certificate.

WINNING POSTERS: First place posters in each category will be sent to MACD for the state competition. If your poster is selected there, it'll go on to the national competition.

OUTGOING RURAL SUPERVISORS

Jenny Garoutte & Dusty White

For Your Service to the
Conservation District Board



NEW RURAL SUPERVISOR
NEW ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR

Greg Nagel & Kirk Haynie



Noxious Weeds

By Johnna Blankenship, DC-NRCS Circle Field Office

"The most effective method for managing noxious weeds is to prevent their invasion."

Biological and Management of Noxious Rangeland Weeds

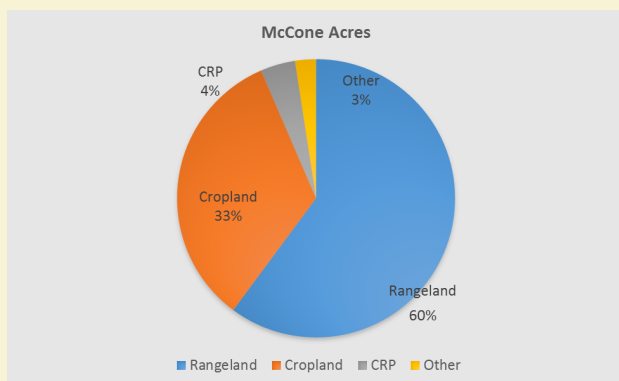
McCone County

2,683 square miles = 1,717,120 acres

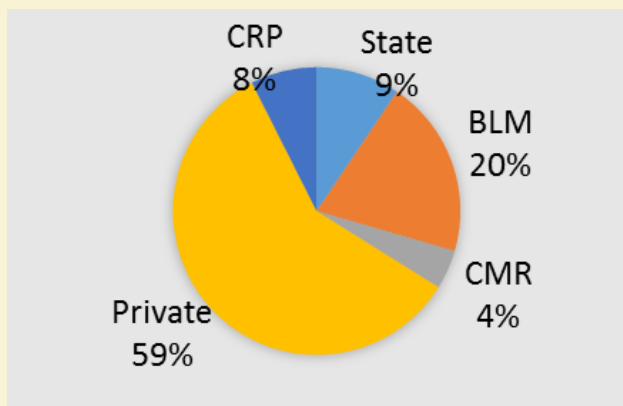
State Land: 94,569.95 acres

BLM Land: 200,800 acres

Private Land: 608,000 acres



Rangeland Acres



The Scope

The 2008 McCone County Weed Management Plan identified that 2%-5% total acres in the county is infested with noxious weeds. So what does that amount to?

2% = 12,160 acres or 19 sections of land

5% = 30,400 acres or 47.5 sections of land

The Weeds are Here

Canada thistle seen covering entire drainages in the county.

There are also known infestations of:

- Russian Knapweed
- Spotted Knapweed
- Houndstongue
- Leafy spurge
- Others

What do we do?

- Wait for someone to tell us what to do
- Hope that the county can put another crew on the road
- Be mad at the neighbors
- Wait another 10 years for somebody to organize a Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)
- Or ...

Get busy

- Contact the County Weed Board
- Work collaboratively with neighbors and purchase equipment such as a slide-in sprayer with at least 200' of high pressure hose, boom-less nozzles and JD-9 handgun (pictured below)
- Training: Field Day with education on calibration, operation, pesticides, PPE
- Other ideas?



"Only quick, informed action will keep local, occasional plant invasions from becoming wide-spread, permanent weed problems."

~ David Zamora & Donald C Thill

Invasive Weed Workshop

All about the law, keeping records, threats, combating them and more . . .

Did you know?

- EPA worker protection standards have changed. It is more stringent to protect workers handling pesticides.
- Seen coming down the divide to a field near you—Houndstongue!
- It's very important to use the right product at the right time for maximum effectiveness in combating weeds.



The front row crew

THANK YOU
to the presenters
& those who came
and for the
Awesome cookies!

46 people attended the February 17th Invasive Weed Workshop in Circle.

Dave Burch, State Weed Coordinator talked about the MT County Weed Law. He said that landowners are legally responsible in controlling noxious weeds on their property and how counties enforce the law, not the State.

Diana DeYoung, Plant Science Specialist with the MT Department of Agriculture discussed the proposed EPA changes for private applicators. She also stressed the importance of keeping records as they can be used as legal documents.

Example given: If a neighbor says you damaged their crop by spraying a certain chemical on a certain day, you would have records that document what you may or may not have sprayed on that day and that may exonerate you.

Matt Rinella, Rangeland Management Specialist ARS discussed seeding rates of grasses to establish more cover (shrubs, forbs) in grassland plantings. He touched on crested wheatgrass and said that once it is planted in rangeland, it is extremely difficult to eradicate. In response to a question from the audience on how to rid of it, he said spraying in the spring for two consecutive years may help to control it (notice he said control it, not kill it).

Johnna Blankenship, District Conservationist with NRCS covered several topics to include overgrazing and its impacts; imminent threats leafy spurge, Russian, diffuse and spotted knapweeds, houndstongue and whitetop and how they propagate.

It's pretty scary!

Mike Hanks, CHS Agronomist held a question & answer session on pesticides.

A common theme between presenters: If you are spraying for weeds, be sure to have your equipment calibrated accurately using the correct water (or other substance) to pesticide. Otherwise, the success of your treatment could be affected.



L-R: Ken Nelson, Speakers Dave Burch & Matt Rinella



Diana DeYoung explains upcoming EPA changes for private applicators.



Mike Hanks discusses different pesticide applications.



Johnna Blankenship said that the common mistakes people make when using chemical control are: wrong agent, inadequate equipment, sprayer not calibrated, bad timing and quitting too soon.

A huge THANK YOU
to Johnna Blankenship!

You were a tremendous
help with workshop ideas,
finding speakers, baking
cookies, setting up the
room, and last but not least,
being a Presenter at this
workshop, too.

You are a Rock Star!

Featured Noxious Weed:

Hoary Cress a.k.a. Whitetop



Whitetop is native to Russia and Eurasia and was accidentally introduced into the United States in contaminated crop seed in the early 1900s. Whitetop was first discovered in Gallatin County, Montana in 1916.

It typically inhabits open, sunny areas that have been recently disturbed. These areas include over-grazed pastures, waste areas, roadsides, and open grasslands.

Whitetop is a creeping perennial and can grow up to 2' in height with rhizomatous roots, which can extend 2' down and up to 12' out.

The plant is silvery gray-green in color and its leaves are lance to arrowhead shaped and covered with fine hairs. It produces numerous white flowers that have 4 petals on 1/2" long stalks. These dense flowers create a white, flat topped appearance. One plant is capable of producing 1,200 to 4,800 seeds. Seeds are produced in fruiting pods that contain 2 chambers, each capable of producing one seed.

Seeds are oval in shape and reddish brown in color. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 4 years! Seeds can germinate in the fall or in the spring.

Whitetop is difficult to control because it can reproduce through rhizomes as well as seeds. It often requires many years of repetitive herbicide treatments; integrated weed management techniques such as hand pulling and herbicides when combined work best in controlling whitetop. Article source: Montana Noxious Weed Education (agr.mt.gov)

DRWA UPDATE

Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) held its Annual Meeting on Friday, February 12th and Board Member terms were reviewed. DRWA Board Members for 2016 are Jerry Meissner (Pres.), Allen Rosaaen (V.P.), Jim Moos (Sec.), Henry Helgeson (Tres.), Mike McKeever, Alan Pluhar, Monte Billing, Jacob Lundstrom, Grant Watson, Tom Ruffatto, Richard Iverson and Charley Miller.

Dry-Redwater plans to construct two short extensions off the existing Sidney South line in 2016. The East Yellowstone expansion will extend 4,450 ft. of water main east from the existing water main to the Yellowstone River. The West Sidney Circle expansion will extend 2,300 ft. of water main and add a booster station southwest from the existing water main to the Sidney Circle Subdivision and surrounding area.

Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is still working to be able to expand services regionally. Legislation related to DRWA is currently in both the House and the Senate (S.1365, S.1552 & H.B.3867). If passed, these Bills would give DRWA Federal Authorization as well as access to a portion of existing planning and construction funding.

If you have any questions or comments, or for additional information, please contact Mandi Nay, DRWA Coordinator.

406-485-DRWA
drwa@midrivers.com
www.midrivers.com/~drwa



Local Working Group Update

The Local Working Group (LWG) meeting was held last February in Circle. A group of 23 individuals—producers, agency and conservation district folks gathered to discuss natural resource concerns and issues for McCone County. The natural resource concerns are listed below (no particular order to list).

RESOURCE CONCERNS		
Surface water quality	Riparian health	Predators
Roadway chemical drift	Keystone Pipeline impacts	Saline seeps
Riparian areas being sprayed	Habitat improvement for Upland Species	Range health
Wet areas that can't be farmed	EPA fuel containment	Water development
Soil health	AFO / CAFO	Noxious weeds
Wildlife	Small dam safety & maintenance	Reporting
Stockmanship / Livestock handling	Quality of life	Education & funding

THE PROCESS: Once a list was compiled, each person prioritized and ranked concerns (low, medium and high). The results were then tabulated. In 2015, the Resource Concerns were ranked as: 1. Range health 2. Soil health and 3. Noxious weeds.

Based on this meeting, the Conservation District and NRCS got to work.

Conservation District:

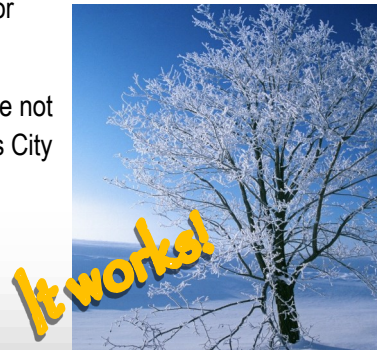
- Formed a Range Committee
- June 19, 2015: Range Monitoring Workshop in Circle. Monitoring techniques employed by the NRCS and BLM were observed. Topics also included a geology lesson on the area formations and soils.
- July 15, 2015: Soil Health Bus Tour in Fallon County: Toured 4 different operations in Plevna & Baker.
- HB223 Grant through DNRC to purchase a Wheatheart High & Heavy Post Pounder for Fencing Development for Rangeland Conservation and Grazing Management
- District board meetings discussing noxious weeds, communications between district, county commissioners and weed board/district.
- February 10, 2016: County weed meeting
- February 17, 2016: Invasive Weed Workshop

NRCS:

Update EQIP Ranking: The McCone CD Board of Supervisors invited NRCS Area Resource Conservationist Terry Heck to attend the September 2015 Board Meeting. The purpose of Terry's visit was to review the ranking process for rangeland applications for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

It was determined that some of the current ranking questions for the Rangeland fund pool ranking were not relevant to conservation concerns in McCone County. Terry worked with other Field Offices and Miles City Area Office staff to create revisions to the Area and county Local ranking questions. These were then submitted to the State Office for approval.

The 2016 EQIP ranking questions are now much more relevant to resource conservation issues and program applications in McCone County and the Miles City Area.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ~Margaret Meade



NAP: March 15 Deadline for 2016 NAP Coverage

FSA reminds Montana farmers and ranchers that March 15 is the sales closing deadline for 2016 spring crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

NAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers when natural disasters cause catastrophic loss of production (low yield) or prevented planting of an eligible noninsurable crop by providing coverage equivalent to the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance. In the event of a natural disaster, NAP provides catastrophic level (CAT) coverage based on the amount of loss that exceeds 50 percent of expected production at 55 percent of the average market price for the crop. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized additional coverage levels ranging from 50 to 65 percent of production, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. This additional "buy-up" coverage must be elected by a producer by the application closing date. Producers who elect additional coverage must pay a premium in addition to the service fee. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for additional coverage.

Eligible producers can apply for coverage at their local FSA office using form CCC-471, Application for Coverage. Producers must file the application and pay the applicable service fee on or before the application closing date for the applicable crop. The service fee is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

Beginning farmers or ranchers, limited resource producers, and underserved farmers, including minorities and women, are eligible for a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, "Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification." If you have questions regarding beginning, limited resource, and underserved producer definitions and eligibility, please contact your local FSA office.

FLP: USDA Expands Microloans to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

USDA Farm Service Agency will begin offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans will be especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers. Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Upcoming FSA Deadlines in Montana

- **March 15:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Spring Crops
- **March 16:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Begins (with prior County Committee Written Approval of Request)
- **March 31:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat and Sesame Seed
- **May 14:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Ends
- **May 31: Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed**
- **July 15:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, and all Spring-Seeded Crops and any other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines.
- **July 16:** CRP 2016 Summer/Fall Managed Haying and Grazing Begins (with prior County Committee Written Approval of Request)
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline for 2016 ARC and PLC Enrollment



END OF FEBRUARY-MARCH WORKSHOPS



PRESCRIBED GRAZING WORKSHOP

**FEBRUARY 29, 2016
2-6:30 P.M.**

Ekalaka Event Center, 209 West Speelman St.

Supper will be provided by Carter County Conservation District

CSP contract holders are encouraged to attend. For those with CSP contracts we will have sign-ups for additional hands-on workshops to develop grazing plans.



How to determine when changes need to be made in a grazing system

How does grass respond to grazing

Key grazing concepts

Grazing systems examples

Drought contingency plan

Forage & Fecal sampling/NUTBAL

PLEASE RSVP

by February 15, 2016
to 406-775-6355 Ext. 3
or by email:
Stephanie.carroll
@mt.nacdn.net

310 Workshop

Dry Prairie Rural Water Building in Culbertson, MT

8:30 – 9:00 ~ REGISTRATION

9:00 – 9:15 ~ Background of the 310 Program, Karl Christians
A brief history of the 310 program will begin the day.

9:15 – 9:45 ~ Understanding the Permitting Process–
Understanding the roles of everyone involved in the permitting process is key to successful projects. CD Administrators, Supervisors, Landowners, and the FWP.

9:45 – 10:00 ~ Break

9:45 – 10:45 ~ Project location... IS IT A PROJECT? – Dan March, P.E., HDR Inc.
Depending on the location, a project does not necessarily have to lie within a perennial stream. We will discuss what you should consider when determining whether or not something is a PROJECT, and will need a 310 permit.

10:45 – 12:00 ~ A LOOK FROM THE TECHNICAL SIDE – Dan March, P.E., HDR Inc.

Dan March is a consultant with HDR Inc.. Dan, for a number of years, was under contract with the Gallatin CD to administer their 310 program. Dan's 25 years experience as a professional engineer, and knowledge of conservation districts and the 310 law, will give you a look at 310 projects with a technical perspective.

12:00 – 1:30 ~ LUNCH (on our own)

Please note that the afternoon session is open to the public including but not limited to producers, irrigators and members of the Oil and Gas Industry.

1:30 – 3:00 ~ EDUCATIONAL SESSION AND BASIC OVERVIEW OF 310 & QUESTIONS & ANSWERS for the public

There is no better way to learn than to see it happen. We will go to a stream site (weather pending) where participants will be asked to evaluate a 310 permit. Resource professionals will also be there to answer questions and discuss their role.

“Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea,
never regains its original dimensions.”

~Oliver Wendell Holmes

SOIL HEALTH for Gardeners

**Tuesday, March 15th
6:00PM
Dawson County
Courthouse Basement**

Presenting...

Mark Henning, Area Agronomist, NRCS
Miles City, MT
Mark's focus will be on the health of your garden soil. He will share how to amend the soil to make it most beneficial for feeding your plants and producing the best crop possible. Mark will also be using a "rainfall simulator" to demonstrate how different soil types infiltrate rain and water, and whether or not your soil is receiving the right amount of nutrients.

Bruce Smith, MSU-Extension Agent
Glendive, MT
Bruce will be addressing how to plant for pollinator-friendly and beneficial insect gardens. He will also be speaking on high-tunnel greenhouses and how they affect the growing season.

**Hosted by the:
Dawson County Soil & Water
Conservation District**

**RSVP by March 8th to
Nikki Wesolek,
DCCD Administrator
406-377-5566 ext 101**

MEAL & BEVERAGES PROVIDED



McCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Conservation District Board & Staff

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Larry Nagel, Urban Supervisor
Brant Quick, Rural Supervisor
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Greg Nagel, Rural Supervisor
** Opening **, Rural Supervisor
Kirk Haynie, Associate Supervisor
Mary Hendrix, Administrator & Editor

Partners in Conservation

Johnna Blankenship, DC, NRCS
Mandi Nay, Coordinator, DRWA

Upcoming Events

March 2016

8 310 Workshop, Culbertson
8-9 Ranch Sustainability Forum, Sheridan Wyoming
13 Daylight Savings begins
15 Soil Health for Gardeners, Glendive
15-16 Windbreak Technology Training, Bismarck ND
17 St Patrick's Day
27 Easter

April 2016

5 County Weed Meeting, Circle
6 Board Meeting, Circle
12-13 Montana Invasive Species Summit, Helena
25-26 MT Envirothon, Lewistown

May 2016

4 Board Meeting, Circle
8 Mother's Day
22 Circle High School Graduation—Class of 2016!!
30 Memorial Day: Office closed

MCCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT CONSERVATION DISTRICT AUTHORITY

Mission Statement—By performing a leadership role in conservation for McCone County, the District will develop a more sustainable and economic resource management plan for the community.

Conservation District Authority—MCA 76-15-102 Declaration of policy. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and therefore to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

County Landownership Maps for Sale

Wall Map	\$30.00
Book Map	\$35.00
Color Book Map	\$45.00

Equipment Rental

Tree Planter	\$0.20 per tree
Fabric Layer	\$0.05 a foot
Post Pounder	\$95.00 day/ \$550.00 week

Tree Supplies

Fabric Squares 3' x 3'	\$0.75 each
Fabric Squares 4' x 4'	\$1.00 each
Fabric Staples	\$0.10 each
4' Plastic Tree Protector	\$2.00 each
Plantskydd 1 Quart	\$22.00
Plantskydd 1 Gallon	\$59.00