

# CONSERVATION NEWS

## McCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



VOLUME 16, ISSUE 8: AUGUST 2016

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## Why are they called the “dog days” of summer?

The sultry “dog days” of summer might spark visions of listless canines baking in the oppressive heat, but the moniker has nothing to do with panting pooches. Instead, it’s a throwback to the time when ancient civilizations tracked the seasons by looking to the sky.

The ancient Greeks noticed that summer’s most intense heat occurred during the approximate 40-day period in the early summer when Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, rose and set with the sun. To them it was simple math. The daytime addition of the warmth of Sirius—ancient Greek for “glowing” or “scorcher”—to the blaze of the sun equaled extreme heat. According to Greek mythology, Sirius was the dog of the hunter Orion, and the ancient Romans placed the star in the constellation Canis Major (Latin for “Greater Dog”). The Romans thus referred to the sweltering period when the rising of the sun and Sirius converged as the “dies caniculares” or “days of the dog star.” By the 1500s, the English world began to call the same summertime point on the astronomical calendar as the “dog days.”

Due to a wobble in the Earth’s rotation that shifts the position of the stars in the night sky, the dates of the “dog days” now fall several weeks later on the calendar than they did thousands of years of ago. The ancient Egyptians 5,000 years ago noticed Sirius’s heliacal rising, when it was visible just before sunrise, just prior to the annual flooding of the Nile River and the summer solstice. Today, the precise dates vary by latitude, but the Old Farmer’s Almanac reports the traditional timing of the “dog days” in the United States is between July 3 and August 11.

In approximately 10,000 years, the date of the heliacal rising of Sirius will fall back so late on the calendar that future civilizations in the northern hemisphere will experience the “dog days” of winter.

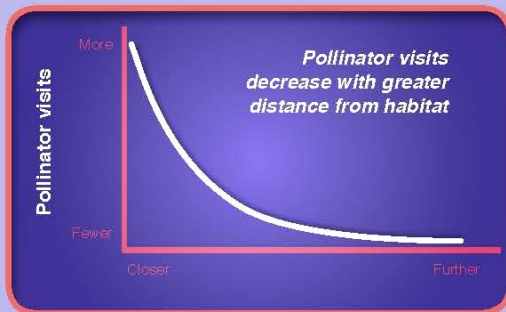
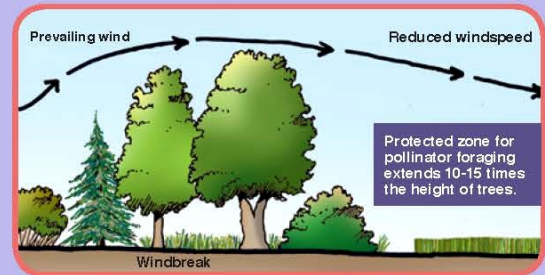
Article source: <http://www.history.com/news/ask-history/why-are-they-called-the-dog-days-of-summer>: Photo source: [www.rappdems.org](http://www.rappdems.org), [www.petcentric.com](http://www.petcentric.com)



## If you rely on pollinators, agroforestry practices can provide several benefits:

### 1. Enhanced pollination efficiency

Adding agroforestry practices that reduce wind speeds on the farm can increase pollination efficiency. Some pollinators, especially honey bees, stop pollinating when it gets too windy. Bees prefer to forage on the lee side of trees and windbreaks. Wind speeds can also influence pollination directly. For example, when the wind makes landing on a moving fruit blossom too difficult, bees may forage on the dandelion blossoms on the orchard floor where the wind is calmer.

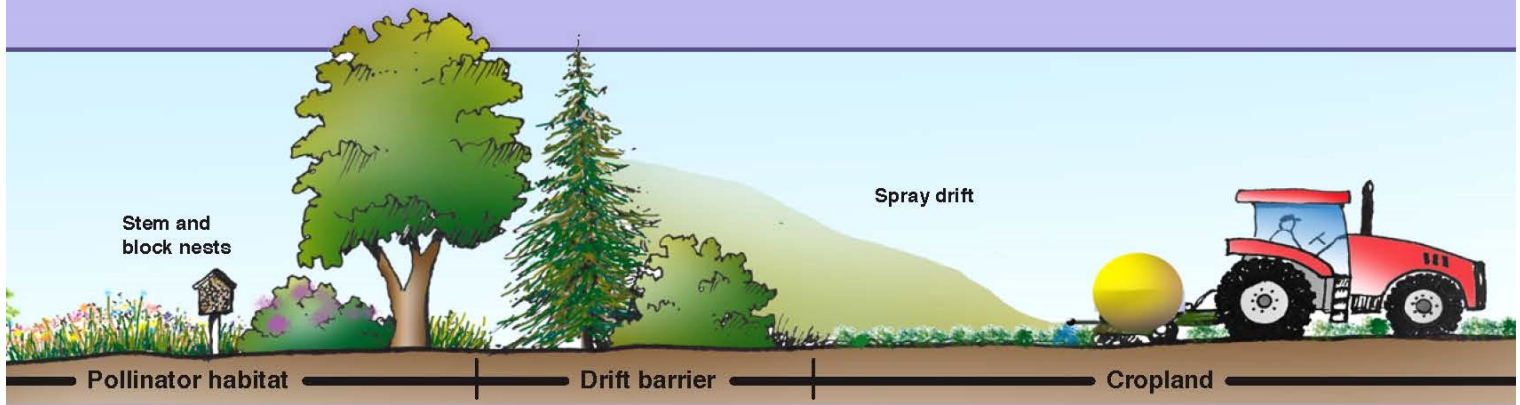


### 2. Pollinator habitat

Windbreaks, riparian buffers, hedgerows, and alley cropping are all agroforestry practices that can provide vital pollinator habitat within or adjacent to farm fields. Research shows that the amount of pollinator habitat in agricultural landscapes has decreased, leading to reduced pollinator populations. Fewer untilled areas in the landscape means less nesting habitat and fewer pollen and nectar sources through the growing season. While a crop may only require pollinators for a couple of weeks, many of its pollinators likely need pollen and nectar both before and after the crop is in bloom. Distance between crops and pollinator habitat is also critical. Pollinator visits drop off as distance from habitat increases.

### 3. Pollinator protection

Agroforestry practices can reduce pollinator contact with pesticide drift from nearby fields. Trees and shrubs, especially evergreens, collect spray droplets and reduce drift. Windbreaks and hedgerows that protect pollinator nesting and colony habitat should either consist of species that don't attract pollinators or species that only bloom when pesticide spraying is unlikely.



For more information on pollinator conservation visit: <http://nac.unl.edu/issues/pollinators.htm>

## DRWA Expanding Sidney South Service

Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is nearing construction on a new extension off DRWA's existing Sidney South line located in Richland County. The upcoming East-Yellowstone extension will expand water service from the existing water main to the Yellowstone River; serving a number of both residential and commercial users. Dry-Redwater was able to achieve this new milestone with assistance from Richland County, MDU, and DNRC.

Construction is anticipated in Fall 2016.

For questions, comments, or additional information:

Please contact Mandi Nay, DRWA Coordinator.

406-485-DRWA

[drwa@midrivers.com](mailto:drwa@midrivers.com)





United States Department of Agriculture  
Farm Service Agency

## Attention Montana Wheat Growers

With wheat prices falling at a range where LDPs may be applicable, producers should become familiar with the process to access this assistance. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

Before MAL repayments with a market loan gain or LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

To be eligible for an MAL or an LDP, producers must have a beneficial interest in the commodity, in addition to other requirements. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained. For an LDP, the producer must retain beneficial interest in the commodity from the time of planting through the date the producer filed Form CCC-633EZ (page 1) in the FSA County Office. If form CCC-633EZ is filed before loss of beneficial interest, the producer may obtain the LDP rate in effect on the date beneficial interest is lost. For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office or view the LDP Fact Sheet at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/index>. To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements or redemptions using commodity certificate exchange.

### Upcoming FSA Deadlines in Montana

- **NOW:** File form CCC-633EZ with FSA to protect potential Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) eligibility
  - **Aug. 15:** CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP) Applications for CRP contracts expiring 9/30/2016
  - **Sept. 1:** 2017 NAP Application Closing Date for Value-Loss Crops
  - **Sept. 30:** 2017 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic
- Sept. 30:** Final date for some CRP producers to complete mid-contract management activity on CRP acreage

### Filing for NAP Losses

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, documents a producer's loss or damage to a crop or commodity due to an eligible cause of loss, as well as failed acreage and prevented planting. A CCC-576, Notice of Loss must be provided for prevented planting claims, within 15 calendar days after the final planting date established for the crop, and for low yield claims, the earlier of:

- 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent
- 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date established for the crop.

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office by the dates previously mentioned.

## FEATURED INVASIVE WOOD-BORING BEETLE: EMERALD ASH BORER

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is a non-native, invasive beetle that kills healthy ash trees. It was first detected in Michigan in 2002 and has since been identified in 22 states and 2 Canadian provinces. EAB has not yet been detected in Montana, but there is tremendous likelihood that it will be introduced in the foreseeable future.

EAB was likely introduced into Michigan from Asia in infested solid-wood packing material. The insect can also be transported in nursery stock and firewood, both of which are commonly brought into Montana. Montana's recreation appeal draws hunters, anglers, campers, RVers, and various other tourists into the state. These tourists often bring firewood that can harbor undesirable insects such as EAB.



The beetles kill ash trees by feeding in the phloem<sup>1</sup> tissue between the bark and the sapwood, disrupting critical nutrient transport and essentially girdling the tree. Adults mate on the exterior of the tree and lay eggs on the bark. The eggs develop into larvae that bore into the tree and feed in a serpentine gallery pattern within the phloem. The beetles are difficult to detect and can cause significant damage to a tree before decline symptoms are evident. Symptoms include thinning crowns, epicormic<sup>2</sup> shoots near the base of the tree, and D-shaped exit holes on the main stem. Commonly, EAB

infestations occur for years prior to detection.

Emerald ash borer adults can generally fly two miles in search of a suitable host, but the primary mode of dispersal over great distances has been by human transport of nursery stock, wood packing material, and firewood. Montana is a popular hunting and recreation destination; this often translates to movement of firewood from out-of-state.

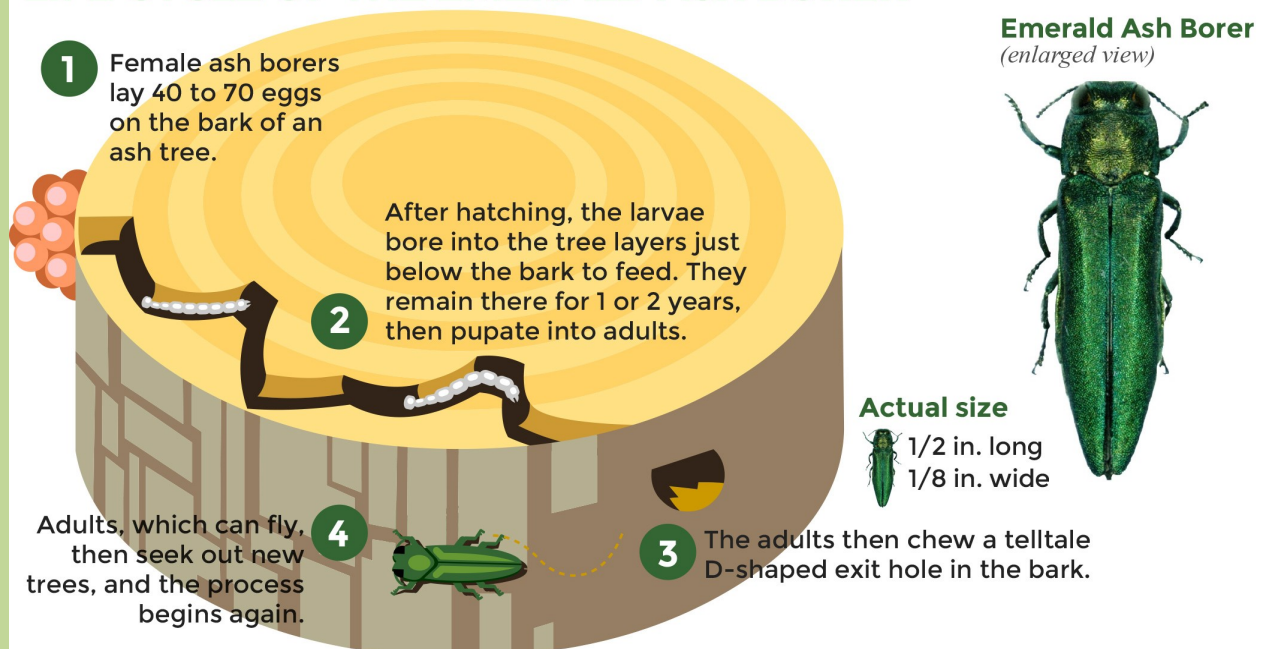
Montana has a lot to lose if EAB is introduced. Many of our communities and shelterbelts are planted with ash trees. Green ash, the only native ash species in Montana, comprises a significant component of riparian corridors in Eastern Montana and provides critical wildlife habitat and shelter for livestock. EAB has the potential to drastically change our communities and rivers by killing the trees that provide shade, erosion control, wildlife habitat, shelter and aesthetics.

<sup>1</sup>Phloem = the vascular tissue in plants that conducts sugars and other metabolic products downward from the leaves.

<sup>2</sup>Epicormic = (of a shoot or branch) growing from a previously dormant bud on the trunk or a limb of a tree.

Article source: *Emerald Ash Borer Readiness and Response Plan January 2015*, MT DNRC, Forestry Assistance Bureau, Forest Pest Management. Contributors: Amy Gannon, Jamie Kirby and Edith Dooley  
Photo source: [www.remagazine.coop](http://www.remagazine.coop) and [www.environmentalpestcontrol.ca](http://www.environmentalpestcontrol.ca)

### LIFE CYCLE OF THE EMERALD ASH BORER



**This photo shows the field we were sweeping on June 28, 2016. In the past, leafy spurge grew in all the pastures beyond this field even to the trees and hills you can see far in the distance.**



## A CAUTIONARY TALE: LEAFY SPURGE IN FERGUS COUNTY

The years from 1916 to 1919 were known to be exceptionally dry years in Montana. In 1917, local stockmen arranged to have hay shipped in from Minnesota to augment feed for their livestock. Unbeknownst to them, it also contained a non-native contaminant: a plant called leafy spurge. This prolific weed grew unchecked so that by the 1980s, a mere 60 odd years from its introduction, it had spread to over 50,000 acres or a 78.125 square mile area!

Leafy spurge was a big problem. Land managers determined that something needed to be done, so an integrated weed management program using biological control, grazing and herbicide was implemented.

**Biocontrol:** Being non-native, leafy spurge had no known natural predators in the US. Host specific biocontrol agents were found in Europe and Asia. These bugs were brought into the U.S. and rigorously tested it before it was made available for use.

At this site, *Aphthona nigriscutis* (black dot spurge flea beetle) was released in 1989 and *A. lacertosa* (brown legged spurge flea beetle) in 1990. *Oberea erythrocephala* (leafy spurge stem boring beetle) and *Hyles euphrobiae* (spurge hawk moth) have also been used. Once a large and viable population was established, insectaries were founded here, too.

**Grazing:** Goat and sheep will graze leafy spurge, however, they will pass viable seeds. Fields should be grazed from mid-May to no later than the end of June (maybe sooner). Also, leafy spurge on south-facing hills can mature earlier. Timing is crucial in using animals to control leafy spurge.

**Note:** Every part of the plant contains a white milky sap that is toxic to horses, cattle, and humans.

**Herbicides:** Herbicides can be effective in the control of leafy spurge. Again, timing is crucial. Please contact your local Extension Agent or Weed District for more information.

**How hard can it be to control it anyway?** Leafy spurge reproduces by both roots and seeds. Roots can grow laterally up to 15' across and up to 24' in depth. The root system also has numerous buds from which new plants can grow. A single plant can produce up to 130,000 seeds and can be viable in the soil for up to 10 years. When the seed capsule dries, it can explode seeds up to 15 feet away!

**It's very hard to control!** Even with the concerted efforts of all parties, currently there is approximately 80,000 acres or 125 square miles of leafy spurge. *Leafy spurge is still a big problem!*

**Why a Cautionary Tale?** Leafy spurge first appeared in Montana unnoticed in a shipment of hay. Largely untreated, it began to reduce the tapestries of native grasslands to a monoculture sea of yellow-green umbels. Ninety-nine years later, it covers a vast landscape. It has been reported in McCone County. **If you have leafy spurge, don't wait.** For more assistance, please contact the Weed District at 406-485-2605.



# Straw Bale Gardening Project August 2016

By Mary Hendrix

Nothing is growing in the garden this summer except for the transplanted tomatoes and basil. Plus many weeds.

Since planting seeds directly into the soil and bale turned out to be a bust, I had planned to purchase plants from the garden center. But have you seen the offerings in early July? There was nothing left but a few neglected annuals, leggy tomatoes and jalapeños peppers.

I had hoped to be eating the products of my efforts this summer, but it doesn't look likely. So, no more pampering! Come fall, I'll recycle the pallets and compost the bales. I learned a lot and plan to do better next year. Hopefully, there was some value in this project for you, too.

July 22 update: A fierce storm with 60mph winds blew into town and dumped 2" of rain in a couple of hours. It took out 3 large limbs from the elm trees, but the garden withstood it all. Truly amazing!

## What I learned from the project

### Weather:

- If your garden is thriving, you attract hail the size of golf balls.
- If your garden looks sad, hail will fall in adjacent counties. See July 22nd update.

### Bale:

- Call me naïve, but I didn't know that there was a difference between straw and hay bales. Next time use straw bales, not hay bales and make sure to ask if you don't know the difference-DUH!

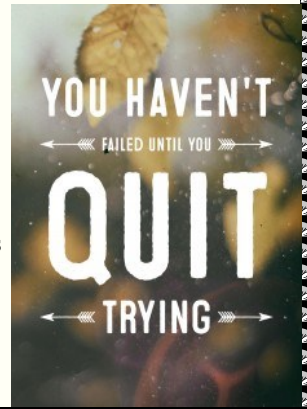
### Soil:

- Whether you use plants or seeds, always cover the soil with something: compost, grass clippings, wood shavings, anything. This will give your garden a fighting chance to grow.

### Plants:

- Start seeds indoors prior to planting or use vegetable transplants. The benefits of an established plant means early harvest especially in a short growing season environment.

*Remember: There's always next summer!*



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## 2016 SOIL HEALTH & COVER CROP FIELD DAYS



Producer(s) / Area	Date/Time	Tour Start Location
Rankin Ranch Upton, WY	Thursday, July 21st 10:00 am - 2:00 pm	Curtis Rankin's 256 Soda Butte Rd, Upton RSVP: Blake Hauptman (307)283-1192 or bhauptma@uwyo.edu
Klasna / Martin Lambert / Brockton, MT	Wednesday, July 27th 9:00 am - 11:00 am	Tim Klasna's 13611 County Rd 318, Lambert
Miske / Stenson Wibaux, MT	Thursday, July 28th 9:00 am - 11:30 am	Darin Miske's 82 Horse Point Rd, Wibaux
Gildford Hutterite Colony Gildford, MT	Tuesday, August 9th 9:00 am - 11:00 am	Gildford Hutterite Colony 21719 Road 160 N, Gildford
Anderson / Nicholson Chinook, MT	Tuesday, August 9th 3:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Jim Anderson's 3050 Paradise Valley Rd, Chinook
Hould / Solberg Malta, MT	Wednesday, August 10th 9:00 am - 11:00 am	Bruce Hould's 5867 Hwy 363, Malta
Nedens / Toews/Downs Hardin, MT	Wednesday, August 24th 3:30 pm - 5:30pm	Big Horn County Fairgrounds 167 Sawyer Loop, Hardin
Lionhead Ranch McLeod, MT	Thursday, August 25th 3:30-6:00 pm	Andy Edwards' 2389 Main Boulder Rd, McLeod
Cons. Dist. Plots Moccasin, MT	Friday, August 26th 4:00-7:00 pm	Lowell Hodge's 5443 Indiana Rd, Moccasin
Vogel / Ewen Ballantine, MT	Tuesday, August 30th 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	North 40 Ag 2150 S 14th Rd, Ballantine

Interested in soil health practices but unsure of the benefits or where to start? Join us at an interactive field day to learn more about cover crops and soil health in your area, and how local producers are putting these practices to use.

### TOPICS:

- ADDING DIVERSITY TO CROPPING ROTATIONS
- SOIL HEALTH PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES
- INCORPORATING AND GRAZING COVER CROPS
- ROOTS IN THE SOIL PROFILE
- COVER CROP IMPACTS ON CROP INSURANCE

### QUESTIONS?

CALL Amanda Riter  
(406) 545-1006  
ariter@NORTH40AG.COM

WWW.NORTH40AG.COM



*Near you*



Photo 1: June 17  
Photo 2: June 23  
Photo 3: June 28  
Photo 4: July 7  
Photo 5: July 13  
Photo 6: July 19  
Photo 7: July 26

**A  
local  
producer's  
cover  
crops**

## Davis Ranch/Coteau Ranch Tour

August 3, 2016 - Sheridan County

Mark your calendars for The Nature Conservancy/Ducks Unlimited Davis Ranch/Coteau Ranch Tour. The Davis Ranch area is one of the largest contiguous grassland in the Missouri Coteau, and with the adjoining Coteau Ranch is a premier grassland ecosystem. This is tour where we can share ideas on grazing management, weeds, invasive cool season grasses, endangered species, and prairie pothole wildlife. Of course, following the tour you are welcome to spend additional time hiking and talking with the participants. Click here for the

Thank you to Ducks Unlimited for providing a lunch of burgers and brats at the Coteau Ranch. Ducks Unlimited has been a supporter of grassland management and we appreciate their support for this event.

Please send an email with the number attending to [RangeForum@gmail.com](mailto:RangeForum@gmail.com) by Friday, July 22, 2016, if you plan to enjoy the lunch to help us in planning. There is no registration fee and the lunch is free courtesy of Ducks Unlimited. You are also welcome to bring your own sack lunch if you prefer to do that. If you decide to bring a sack lunch, no advance email is needed – just come and enjoy the event. Driving directions are on the map below.

We hope to see you there on August 3, 2016.

**9:00 AM-** Meet at the Coteau Ranch (DU) shop site which is adjacent to the TNC Davis Ranch for morning treats hosted by the ND Chapter of the Society for Range Management. Here we will have introductions and consolidate vehicles to minimize impact going cross country.

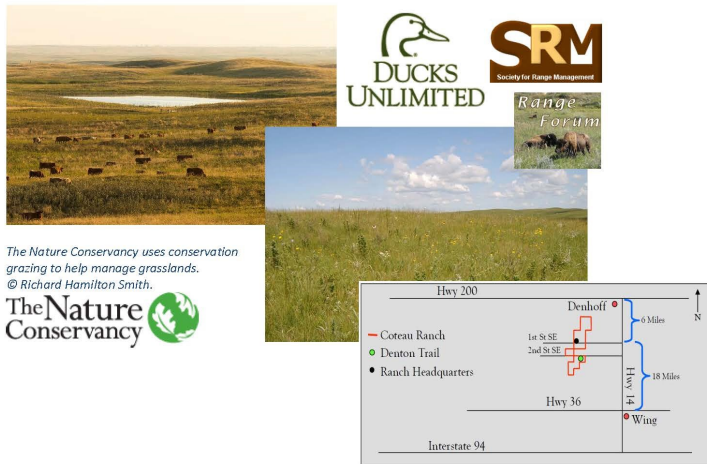
**9:30 AM-** Travel to TNC Davis Ranch to 2016 Rx burn site. Discussion topics on Rx Fire, Kentucky blue grass, monitoring results, weed control, grazing systems, prairie birds and more. Bring your ideas and ask questions.

**11:00 AM-** Head back to DU site for a lunch of brats and burgers hosted by Ducks Unlimited

**11:30 AM-** Lunch and chance to get in the shade and use the "facilities".

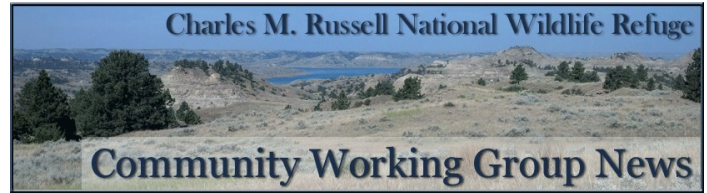
**12:30 PM-** Presentation and discussion of the Coteau Ranch, Ducks Unlimited.

**1:30 PM-** Head for home or spend some more time hiking and enjoying the prairie.



The Nature Conservancy uses conservation grazing to help manage grasslands.  
© Richard Hamilton Smith.

The Nature Conservancy



The CMR CWG met on June 23rd in Circle and developed a draft work plan for the CMR CWG. You can view the [DRAFT work plan online](#). The [meeting notes](#) are also [available online](#).

**Save the Date!**  
**Next CMR CWG Meeting**  
**August 25th 2016**  
**10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**  
**Fort Peck, Montana**

Please note that the CMR CWG is forming several committees to help guide the larger group in dealing with issues ranging from bison to weeds to generational planning in local communities. If you are interested in being on one of these committees, please contact [Rachel via email](#).

Source: [www.missouririvercouncil.info](http://www.missouririvercouncil.info)

## Events in August

### "Economics of Reduced Tillage in Sugar Beets"

*Transitioning to no-till & minimal till.*

Thursday, August 25th

Meet at Bridger Sugar Beet Dump

9:00 AM— Hwy 310

Steiger Farms: No-Till Flood Irrigated Beets

Schlemmer Farms: No-Till Pivot Irrigated Beets.

Speaker: Susan Tallman, Agronomist

*"Economics of Reduced Tillage in Sugar Beets"*

Lunch provided by Western Sugar at the  
Bridger Plant Materials Center

Tour of PMC plots after lunch.

RSVP to: Carbon Conservation District by August 22, 2016\*  
Phone: 962-3641 Email: [Mabel.Schwend@mt.nacdnet.net](mailto:Mabel.Schwend@mt.nacdnet.net)

Sponsored by:  
Carbon Conservation District

United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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## Shifting to **SOIL** Biology

**An Agronomy and Range Tour**

- Maximize profits and improve resiliency in both cropland and rangeland by integrating traditional agronomy with a new understanding of soil biology.

**August 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> 2016**  
Fallon County Fairgrounds • Baker, MT  
*Take your agriculture production to the next level!*

**USDA NRCS** Natural Resources Conservation Service Montana

Montana Soil and Water Conservation Society

Little Beaver Conservation District

United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Join us for a **2 day** event covering these topics:

Are your soil tests telling you the whole story?

**Transitioning to no-till, cover crops, and continuous crops**

Understand how microbes & insect populations affect you

**Are you preventing your soil from reaching it's potential?**

Utilizing intensive grazing, large capacity water systems & bale grazing

**Ecosystems and Prairie birds**

How soil is one of your most valuable assets

**AND MANY MORE!**

For more info contact Little Beaver Conservation District or NRCS : (406) 778-2238 x 3  
email: [littlebeavercd@nacdnet.org](mailto:littlebeavercd@nacdnet.org) \*\*Visit us at [littlebeavercd.com](http://littlebeavercd.com) or find us on FACEBOOK for tour updates\*\*



August is the Sunday of Summer

## McCONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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### Conservation District Board & Staff

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Casey Nay, Vice-Chairman  
Larry Nagel, Urban Supervisor  
Brant Quick, Rural Supervisor  
Josh Murphy, Rural Supervisor  
Greg Nagel, Rural Supervisor  
\*\* Opening \*\*, Rural Supervisor  
Kirk Haynie, Associate Supervisor  
Mary Hendrix, Administrator

### Contributors

Sue Wittkopp, CED, FSA  
Mandi Nay, Coordinator, DRWA

### Editor

Mary Hendrix

## 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.**

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed on the Conservation News do not necessarily represent those of McCone Conservation District.

## Calendar

### August 2016

3 Board Meeting, Circle  
3 Davis Ranch/Coteau Ranch Tour, Sheridan County ND  
18-20 McCone County Fair, Circle  
25 CMR Community Working Group Meeting, Ft. Peck  
25 Economics of Reduced Tillage in Sugar Beets Workshop, Bridger  
30-31 Soil Health Workshop, Baker

### September 2016

5 Labor Day: Office closed  
7 Board Meeting, Circle  
7-8 MT Range Tour, Big Timber  
21 Area 1 Meeting, Winnett

### October 2016

5 Board Meeting, Circle

## 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 Square 3' x 3'	\$0.75 each
Fabric Rectangle 4' x 3'	\$1.00 each
Fabric Staple	\$0.10 each
Fabric Staples	\$50.00 box
4' Plastic Tree Protector	\$2.00 each
Plantskydd 1 Quart	\$22.00
Plantskydd 1 Gallon	\$59.00