

Conservation Pathways

Fall 2012

Important Dates to Remember

November 2012

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference

November 1-3, 2012; Anchorage, Alaska

For more information: www.aises.org/nationalconference

Montana Farm Bureau Federation

November 11-14, 2012; Billings, Montana

For more information: www.mfbf.org

Montana Association of Conservation Districts State Convention

November 11-13, 2012; Kalispell, Montana

For more information: www.macdnet.org

Soil Health Workshops

November 27, 2012; Great Falls, Montana

November 28, 2012; Hardin, Montana

November 29, 2012; Miles City, Montana

For more information:

www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ees/agronomy/soilhealth/workshops-nov27-29.html

Deadline to Apply for NRCS Montana Student Intern Program

November 30, 2012

For more information: Sharon Huber, NRCS Human Resources Manager

406-587-6937

American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

November 2012

For more information:

www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civil/amindian/amindianmonth.html

December 2012

Montana Grain Growers Annual Convention and Trade Show

December 4-6, 2012; Great Falls, Montana

For more information: www.mgga.org

Fifth National Conference on Grazing Lands

December 9-12, 2012; Orlando, Florida

For more information: www.glci.org/5NCGL.html

Intertribal Ag Council Member Meeting

December 10-13, 2012; Las Vegas, Nevada

For more information: www.indianaglink.com

more important dates on page 8

In this Issue

A Note from the State Conservationist p. 1

Montana Hosts WEWAI Training p. 2

Installing Watering Facilities on Rangeland p. 3

Crow Earth Day: Children Discover Sage-Grouse and Bonds to Their Culture p. 4

How to Tell Sulfur Cinquefoil from the Native Plants p. 5

Rocky Mountain IAC Symposium a Success p. 6

Pathways Program p. 7

Wildfire Damage Assistance Available from NRCS Montana p. 7

Vacancy Announcements p. 7

Important Dates to Remember p. 1, p. 8

Tribal Field Office Directory p. 8

A Note from the State Conservationist

Greetings,

We are starting the new fiscal year at NRCS with optimism for what we can accomplish in Montana and in Indian Country in 2013. We recently provided training to more than 40 NRCS employees at Flathead Lake on Working Effectively with American Indians and had great participation from the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes. I've received many positive comments about the training, and I hope our employees are better prepared for their duties as a result. The NRCS instructors from Colorado, Oklahoma, and Utah were all people I've worked with in the past, and I know they have a deep passion for what NRCS can provide to our tribal customers.

We have some great success stories in 2012, and I hope you can take some time to enjoy this issue of *Conservation Pathways* to read more about them. We are working with Little Big Horn College to assist them in growing culturally significant plants for Greater sage-grouse in their greenhouse. We are moving forward on a very large project with Fort Belknap on Lake 17 and some adjacent wetlands. We've assisted on post-fire assessments on Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Fort Belknap this year. On Fort Peck, we assisted with range improvements that included 100 miles of fencing. I attended the Governor's Range Tour on the Blackfeet Reservation in September and learned about their buffalo herd and listened to their FFA class presentation on the uses of all parts of the bison. In June, I signed a new Cooperative Working Agreement with the Flathead Nation Conservation District.

As we embrace the new fiscal year and the challenges of reduced budgets, I am still very optimistic that we will continue to bring the best of our programs and technical assistance to Indian Country in 2013.

Joyce Swartzendruber

NRCS State Conservationist in Montana



Montana Hosts Working Effectively with American Indians Training



Mike Dolson, (seated front and center) Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal member and local instructor/historian, and Carol Crouch, (seated front and right) workshop instructor and National American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program Manager, lead a discussion at the Working Effectively with American Indians workshop. Seated to the left is Allison Milodragovich, soil conservationist, Choteau, and to the rear is Blake Stiffarm, soil conservation technician, Fort Belknap.

Forty-six NRCS employees from Montana and four from Washington state attended the Working Effectively with American Indians training delivered by the National Employee Development Center, Sept. 10-14, at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station located on the Flathead Indian Reservation, home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

A cadre of three NEDC instructors from around the country (Utah, Oklahoma and Colorado) worked hand-in-hand with local NRCS staff and Tribal presenters to deliver this unique learning experience.

It has been a decade or more since NRCS in Montana hosted a Working Effectively with American Indians workshop. Since that time we have hired many employees that are new to working with Tribes. These employees are either in a location where they will work directly with Tribes and Tribal members or are in support roles.

Providing service and delivering programs to Tribes and Tribal members can be challenging due to differences in culture, land status, Tribal sovereignty, Tribal laws or ordinances and the Department of Interior's rules and regulations. In addition, the federal government (including NRCS) has a trust responsibility to provide services to American Indians. The goal of this course is to provide an understanding of how NRCS can assist Tribes and Tribal members to participate in our programs, how we can work with Tribes in meaningful Government to Government consultation to ensure that any barriers or challenges with our programs are identified so that they may be addressed and, ultimately, how NRCS employees can provide better service so that Tribal lands and resources can participate in our programs as effectively as possible.



Levi Montoya, NRCS district conservationist from Colorado, provides instruction at the Working Effectively with American Indians workshop.



Working Effectively with American Indians workshop participants present a planning exercise in which they used the Indigenous Stewardship Guide in the conservation planning process to address a unique resource issue.



Installing Watering Facilities on Rangeland

The NRCS Conservation Practice Standard for a watering facility states that the purposes of installing a watering facility are:

- To protect and enhance vegetative cover through proper distribution of grazing.
- To provide erosion control through better grassland management.
- To protect streams, ponds, and water supplies from contamination by providing alternative access to water.

Watering facilities can increase the quality and worth of rangeland by providing a reliable and clean source of water to both livestock and wildlife.

According to studies published in the 2002 Journal of Range Management, cattle that have access to clean water spend more time grazing and less time resting compared to the cattle that were offered pond water. Another study showed calves with cows drinking clean water gained 9 percent more weight, or approximately 0.25 lbs./day compared to cattle drinking pond water. The same study showed 23 percent more weight gain in yearling heifers, which came to about 0.33 lbs./day. While rangeland usage can be improved through installing water tanks, cattle performance can also be improved.

When a producer is planning to install a watering facility, it is important to factor in several things. First, the producer needs to consider how much storage they will need. What kind and how many head of livestock does the producer have? According to the NRCS conservation practice standard, a watering facility must provide the daily water requirement of the livestock and provide access to the entire herd within a four-hour period. The total daily minimum water requirements for livestock are shown in the table at right.

Another detail for the producer to consider is the availability of power sources for water pumps. When an electrical source is unavailable, the producer can consider alternative sources such as wind or solar powered pumps. When these choices are used, a three-day water storage capacity is required and in remote areas, a seven-day storage capacity is required. There are many alternative choices available to producers that are relatively affordable.

There are also numerous types of watering tanks that are available to the producer. Metal, fiberglass, concrete, and tire tanks can all be used. Currently, the NRCS shares the cost of watering facilities (in addition to pipelines and wells, if needed) through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Livestock water distribution is important to consider. Where does the producer plan to install a water tank, and where is this location in comparison to other water sources (if any) in the same pasture? According to South Dakota State University Extension, forage utilization on grasslands declines substantially when water sources are one-quarter to three-quarters of a mile away, depending on land topography.

The producer also needs to make sure the location of any watering facility is well drained. A minimum 6-foot wide area around the tank can be covered with gravel, scoria, concrete, or another nonpolluting material to provide a stable area for livestock.

Watering facilities are an excellent way to increase cattle performance on rangeland by providing a clean source of water.

Total Daily Minimum Water Requirements for Livestock

Animal	Conventional Grazing Drinking Water Requirements		Maximum Water Spacing (Miles)	
	Gal/ Day (Min.)	Rough Relief	Gentle Relief	
Cow and Small Calf	20	0.5	1	
Range Cow	15	0.5	1	
Horses and Mules	15	0.5	1	
Sheep and Goats	2	0.5	1	
Dairy Cow	25	-	-	
Hog	2	-	-	

Daily water consumption for feeder cattle may be calculated at one gallon per day per 100 lbs.

For summer conditions, a minimum of two gallons per day per 100 lbs. of body weight is recommended for range cattle.

Source: Field Office Technical Guide, NRCS Montana.



Crow Earth Day: Children Discover Sage-Grouse and Bonds to Their Culture

Deborah Richie, Sage-Grouse Initiative Communications

A young girl leans forward to sniff the fresh silver sage, while her classmates look on with rapt interest. In front of them is a taxidermy mount of a sage-grouse male in full breeding display mode.



For the 150 children who attended Crow Earth Day on May 2, a stop at the NRCS booth to learn about sage-grouse revealed two strong connections to their culture.

Jeremy Not Afraid, the Crow Reservation NRCS district conservationist, said that the students, who ranged from preschool to eighth grade, knew very little about the bird and most have never seen a sage-grouse.

What proved as familiar to them as apple pie was the scent of silver sage that the children had seen in their homes and is used for purification and other cultural purposes, he said.

When they learned that the sage-grouse eats a diet of only sagebrush in winter, that fact became more meaningful because of the Crow's cultural dependence on the same plant.

Similarly, the sage-grouse taxidermy mount came to life through a link to something the kids knew well—traditional dancing. Each spring, sage-grouse males parade on a natural stage of open land set within sagebrush. They fan their tails, stomp their feet, and inflate air sacs to impress females. Many Plains Indian tribes imitated the sage-grouse in dances that continue to be performed today.

Not Afraid hopes that the students eventually will have the opportunity to watch courting sage-grouse some early spring morning on the Crow Reservation.

While the habitat is there and so are birds, he said the reservation has yet to be mapped for sage-grouse. That would take a financial grant to fly over and identify leks and other important seasonal areas.

Meanwhile, sage-grouse were a fitting part of Crow Earth Day that began with an opening prayer. Other activities included talks from Crow EPA health directors, and a fitness walk.

When small groups came to the NRCS booth, Not Afraid and Bruce Waage, NRCS/Bureau of Land Management liaison for sage-grouse, added a bit of extra fun to the sagebrush scents and the impressive bird mount.

"We'd talk to the kids and then ask them questions. When they answered correctly, they got a prize," said Not Afraid.



Bruce Waage, NRCS/BLM liaison, holds out a piece of sagebrush for a student to smell as part of an educational presentation on sage-grouse at Crow Earth Day, May 2012.

How to Tell Sulfur Cinquefoil from the Native Cinquefoils

Jim Jacobs, Plant Materials Specialist

Sulfur cinquefoil is a noxious weed that invades pastures, rangelands, and open woodlands where it reduces forage production and wildlife habitat. Aggressive herbicide control of new infestations is good management to prevent them from becoming big and expensive problems. But it is easy to mistake sulfur cinquefoil for a number of our native and beneficial cinquefoils. The flower color and leaf shapes can be very similar, and it is not good management to use limited time and money spraying beneficial plants.

There are a few visual characteristics to help distinguish the good cinquefoils from the bad. The most consistent and obvious difference is the hair on the plants. Sulfur cinquefoil plants have relatively sparse, long (up to ¼ inch, 6 mm), coarse hairs. Botanists call this type of hair “hirsute-hispid” (look closely at the photo and you can see the hairs) and they are on the leaf petioles, stems, flower stalks and bracts. Once you train yourself to recognize these hairs, identification becomes much easier. The hairs on the natives are variable; some native cinquefoils have white wooly hairs on the bottom of the leaf, some are fuzzy with short hairs, and some are hairless, but none are hirsute-hispid.

Flower color is a less dependable identifier because of the variability in both the weed and the natives. But generally, sulfur cinquefoil flowers are a lighter, sulfur color (thus the common name) compared to the deeper yellow of the natives. Also sulfur cinquefoil will have more flowers like the plants in the picture whereas natives may only have one or a few. Another clue that you may have the weed and not a native is there are more and larger palmately compound leaves (having four or more lobes or leaflets radiating from a single point) on the flower stem of sulfur cinquefoil (you can also see this in the photo) than on the natives’ stem. The natives sometimes have leaves on the flower stem but generally they are mostly found at the base of the plant.

There is a sure-fire way to tell the good from the bad if you can collect seeds. The seeds are small and dark colored, but if you look very closely and have good eyes or a magnifying lens, you can see a pattern of lines on the seed coat of sulfur cinquefoil. The seeds of the natives are smooth.

If you have checked all these features and are still not sure, collect a plant specimen and take it to your weed coordinator, Extension agent, or NRCS district conservationist, and they will help you with identification.

It is easy to mistake sulfur cinquefoil for a number of our native and beneficial cinquefoils.



Stems, leaves and flowers of sulfur cinquefoil showing the hirsute-hispid hairs that distinguish this species from similar native cinquefoil species.



Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council Symposium a Success

The Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Symposium was held August 22 and 23 at the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes' Kwa Taq Nuk Resort in Polson, Montana, on Flathead Lake. The Rocky Mountain IAC region is made up of the seven reservations in Montana and the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. The idea for IAC to host the first symposium was proposed during an IAC meeting in February. IAC has traditionally hosted a national conference every year in Las Vegas since 1988, but decided to also host a regional meeting covering Rocky Mountain regional issues. IAC has agreements with NRCS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Carbon Coalition to reach out to producers; so this symposium on ag-related issues was a logical addition to those outreach efforts.

There were approximately 80 who attended the IAC conference, providing scholarships to some of the participants. Attendees were a mix of producers, tribal council members, tribal land office employees, and state, tribal, and federal government officials. Highlights included Bruce Nelson, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Montana, giving the keynote address. Nelson recently returned to Montana after serving as the director of the FSA in Washington, D.C. He is now back at the helm as the Montana director of FSA. Also in attendance were Joyce Swartzendruber, state conservationist for NRCS in Montana, and Carrie Mosley, NRCS assistant state conservationist for operations and tribal liaison, both of whom provided input and listened to the producers.

The opening prayer was given by Clark Matt, a Salish Kootenai producer. Ross Racine, IAC executive director, gave insightful opening remarks on the work IAC has done in regards to agriculture in Indian Country across the United States.

The first presenter was Eric Giles from the Carbon Coalition project, a partnership between Indian Land Tenure Foundation and IAC. The next presenter was Tahnee J. Szymanski, field veterinarian for the Montana Department of Livestock, who talked about the importance of the Trichomoniasis policies with the state of Montana and animal traceability issues.

Lisa McCauley, NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program manager, discussed NRCS easements on tribal lands and how they can be used in Indian Country. Gary Adams, APHIS Plant, Protection and Quarantine, gave a presentation about his agency and how it affects all producers.

Ed Daugherty, FSA county executive direc-

tor, Lake County, provided an update on drought and fire disaster relief. The last presenter of the day was Dave Pesicka, NRCS tribal conservationist, Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, who talked about the success of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation and how it has positively affected the tribe and residents.

The next morning was reserved for roundtable discussions with three focus topics: NRCS success stories on each of the reservations; FSA lending opportunities with St. Ignatius producer Doran Dumont who talked about his experience as an FSA borrower; IAC history, farm bill updates and an update on Montana USDA tribal strategic plan by Jennifer Perez Cole, FSA public affairs specialist.

The afternoon was reserved for two meetings. One was the Rocky Mountain IAC meeting, which was facilitated by Anita Matt, president, and Verna Billedeaux, secretary. This was a great sharing opportunity for the tribes in attendance; as well as an opportunity to bring the region's issues to the national IAC conference. The second meeting was the Tribal Conservation Issues (TCI) meeting hosted by Carrie Mosley, NRCS tribal liaison, and Doug Dupuis, acting TCI president. TCI provides input from each tribe to NRCS' State Technical Advisory Committee.

One quote from a producer summed it up—"The symposium was the best!!!! I have gained so much new information. Our family ranch will improve with all the new info that I have gained. As a producer, I'm very pleased. Thank You."

The 2012 IAC Membership Meeting will be held in Las Vegas, Dec. 7-11. Check the IAC website for details: www.indianaglink.com.



Pathways Program

Established through Executive Order 13562, the Pathways Program became effective on July 10, 2012, and replaces the NRCS' Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). The purpose of the new Pathways Program is to create a more user-friendly process for students to apply for work with the Federal Government.

The Pathways Program will have three different components:

1. The Internship Program is for students enrolled in an accredited high school, community college, trade school, vocational school, technical school, undergraduate school, graduate school, and home school
2. The Recent Graduates Program is a one-year training program for eligible applicants who have graduated from an accredited education institution within two years from their official graduation date
3. The Presidential Management Fellows Program is managed by the Office of Personnel Management with positions located only at the national headquarters offices in Washington, D.C.

All three of these programs will offer eligibility for noncompetitive conversion to career or career-conditional appointments after the Pathways Program requirements have been met.

Pathways Program vacancy announcements will be posted on the USA Jobs Web site at <http://www.usajobs.gov>, and applicants will be required to apply for the vacancies online.

Wildfire Damage Assistance Available from the NRCS Montana

If you suffered fire damage on your property during the 2012 fire season, NRCS may be able to assist you. Here is a list of assistance that is available through your local NRCS field office:

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Available for local sponsors to use to aid in recovery work intended to reduce immediate threats to life or property, retard runoff, restore capacity of waterways, prevent flooding and/or soil erosion and reduce damage from sediment and debris.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Financial assistance is available to assist ranchers with deferred grazing on private rangeland for one to two years, in addition to other facilitating practices. Regular EQIP funding may be available to landowners for longer-term restoration activities, such as cross-fencing and prescribed grazing plans.

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

NRCS offers conservation information and expertise to individual homeowners or landowners seeking technical assistance in their rehabilitation efforts.

If you would like more information on fire disaster assistance, please contact your NRCS field office. A list of the Montana NRCS field offices can be found at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/index.html.

Vacancy Announcements

Engineering Technician (Civil)

GS-0802-08/09 opened on October 25, 2012, and will close on November 8, 2012.

This is a permanent full-time position located in Big Timber, Montana. Applications are being accepted from current NRCS employees in a competitive status position and individuals with special program eligibility under announcement number MT-774161-SH.

These vacancies can be found on the USA-Jobs Web site at <http://www.usajobs.gov>.

Personnel Note:

Carrie Mosley, assistant state conservationist for operations in Montana was selected as the state conservationist for New Jersey and she began her new job there on Nov. 5, 2012.

If you or anyone you know would like to be added to the mailing list for the Montana NRCS' Conservation Pathways Newsletter, please send your name and mailing address to:

USDA-NRCS
Attn: Conservation Pathways
724 Third Street West
Hardin, MT 59034

Or Email:
seanna.sparks@mt.usda.gov

Important Dates to Remember

December 2012

Montana Stockgrowers Association and Montana Cattlewomen Annual Convention
December 13-15, 2012; Billings, Montana
For more information: www.mtbeef.org

January 2013

Montana Weed Control Association State Conference
January 15-17, 2013; Great Falls, Montana
For more information: www.mtweed.org

February 2013

International Global Herbicide Resistance Conference
February 18-22, 2013; Perth, Australia
For more information: www.herbicidesresistanceconference.com.au

June 2013

Deadline to Apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for Fiscal Year 2014
June 1, 2013
For more information on how to apply, contact your local NRCS field office: www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/offices/index.html



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To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign, and mail a program discrimination complaint form, available at any USDA office location or online at www.ascr.usda.gov, or write to:

USDA
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

Or call toll free at (866) 632-9992 (voice) to obtain additional information, the appropriate office or to request documents. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

Tribal Field Office Directory

Browning Field Office

Phone: 338-3153; FAX: 338-3529
Blackfeet Tribal Headquarters Serves:
Blackfeet Reservation
P.O. Box 1169
Browning, MT 59417-1169

District Conservationist- Anne Stephens,
Email: anne.stephens@mt.usda.gov

Crow Agency Field Office

Phone: 638-9102; FAX: 638-9101
8645 South Weaver Drive,
Student Union Building (SUB), Room 205
P.O. Box 699
Crow Agency, MT 59022

District Conservationist- Jeremy Not Afraid,
Email: jeremy.notafraid@mt.usda.gov

Fort Belknap Field Office

Phone: 353-8488; FAX: 353-2228
158 Tribal Way, Suite D 353
Harlem, MT 59526

District Conservationist- Scott Morton,
Email: scott.morton@mt.usda.gov

Soil Conservation Technician- Blake Stiffarm,
Phone: 406-353-8350,
Email: blake.stiffarm@mt.usda.gov

Lame Deer Field Office

Phone: 477-6494; FAX: 477-8431
East Boundary Drive
P.O. Box 330
Lame Deer, MT 59043-0330

Tribal Conservationist- Kathy Knobloch,
Email: kathy.knobloch@mt.usda.gov

Pablo Field Office

Phone: 675-2700; FAX: 275-2804
Tribal Land Department
42487 Complex Boulevard
Pablo, MT 59855-0871

Tribal Conservationist- Herb Webb ext. 1245,
Email: herb.webb@mt.usda.gov

Poplar Field Office

Phone: 768-3566; FAX: 768-3373
500 Medicine Bear Road
Box 1027
Poplar, MT 59255-1027

Fort Peck and Turtle Mountain Tribal Liaison-
Paul Finnicum, Phone: 406-768-3964
Email: paul.finnicum@mt.usda.gov

Rocky Boy Field Office

Phone: 395-4066; FAX: 395-4382
98 Veterans Park Rd.
Serves: Chippewa Cree Tribe
Rocky Boy, MT 59521

District Conservationist- Lance Lindbloom



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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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