

**Pondera County
Conservation
District**

Local Common Sense Conservation

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MARCH 2007

PONDERA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Annual Dinner

Date: March 10, 2007

Time: 6:30pm

Location: Moose Lodge, Conrad

Cost: \$15.00 per person

Dinner:

*Roast Beef

*Potato

*Salad

*Dessert



Event Includes:

*Conservationist Of The Year Award

*NRCS Year-End Report

*Gary Olson, FW&P, Grizzly DNA
Study Update

*Paul Jones, Montana Range Days
Committee Chair

*Door Prizes

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Featuring
ERIK "FINGERS" RAY



Tickets may be purchased from the Pondera County Conservation District at 406 North Main, Conrad; By calling 278.7611 ext 101; or from any Pondera County Conservation District Supervisor.

NRCS NEWS - BY STACY DENNY ENEBOE

USDA CONTINUING RESOLUTION

As of today (2/12/07) the USDA is still working under a continuing resolution. But what does that mean to your local NRCS staff and the producers of Pondera County?

Through the Farm Bill, Congress sets budget minimums or acreage minimums for USDA programs. When USDA is operating under a continuing resolution, all programs and budgets are operated with the assumption that only the Farm Bill minimums will be available.

NRCS staff has been asked to closely monitor the use of government vehicles and limit the number of trips whenever possible. Training and travel budgets have also been cut. Staffing plans are being closely monitored, and only critical positions are being filled at this time.

Pondera County producers will be receiving less financial assistance through NRCS programs. Total number of EQIP contracts pre-approved for funding this year is 18 compared to 42 last year. Conservation Security Program (CSP) is on hold until the budget is finalized.

For additional information concerning the budget or farm bill updates take a look at the following website: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>.

NRCS PROGRAMS UPDATE

The NRCS staff is working on completing 2007 EQIP contracts. County dollars for EQIP totaled \$157,858. The three funding categories established by the Local Working Group are Dry Cropland, Irrigated Cropland, and Grazing land. Because staff is still completing contracts, the following are estimated cost share dollars.

Funding Category	# of Contracts	Estimated Cost
Dry Cropland	0	0.00
Irrigated Cropland	6	\$84,350
Grazing Land	4	\$105,725
Sensitive Lands Special Initiative	6	\$72,475
Ground and Surface Water (State)	1	\$67,269
Tribal Allocation (State)	1	\$122,400
TOTAL	18	\$342,059

In addition to EQIP there was one funded Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract in the amount of \$14,237 for 2007. WHIP cost share improves wildlife habitat by addressing wetland, native prairie, and in stream/riparian woody draws.

Conservation Security Program (CSP) participants were able to request modification of their contracts in Aug & Sept. While there was a large number of CSP contract holders who received contract modifications, requests have not been funded. Because of the Continuing Resolution, there is no guarantee contract holders will receive the approved 2007 modified increases. Until the 2007 budget is approved by Congress, CSP is on hold. There has been no indication at this time if there will be a 2007 CSP sign-up or an open modification period.

If you have any questions on NRCS programs call the office at 278-7611 ext 3.



Most NRCS cost share programs are under a continuous sign-up process. If you are interesting in receiving assistance to address natural resource issues please stop by the office and pick-up an application. The office is currently taking application for fiscal year 2008. The cut off deadline has not yet been announced, but it will be on or before June 1, 2007. You can reach the office by calling 278-7611 ext. 3. Office hours are 8am to 4am and available by appointment between 7am and 5:30 pm Monday through Friday.

MONEY AVAILABLE FOR WETLAND RESTORATION

Wetlands benefit the environment by providing fish and wildlife habitat, improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reducing flooding, and recharging groundwater. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. The program offers easements and restoration contracts depending on the goals and objectives of the landowner. Through the easement acquisition, the landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, but retains private ownership.

There are three enrollment options:

Permanent Easement: This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payments for this option equal the lowest of three amounts: the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays 100% of the costs of restoring the wetland.

30-Year Easement: Easement payments through this option are 75% of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays up to 75% of restoration costs.

For both permanent and 30-year easements, USDA pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement: This is an agreement (generally for a minimum of 10 years) to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays up to 75% of the cost of the restoration activity. This enrollment option does not place an easement on the property.

Some examples of eligible lands include: Wetlands farmed under natural conditions, farmed wetlands, prior converted cropland, farmed wetland pasture, former or degraded wetlands, and more. Not sure if you have wetlands? NRCS can help.

For more information, please contact your local NRCS office or Matt Walker, area biologist, at 406-453-9641 x143, matt.walker@mt.usda.gov, or visit the web at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/.

PROTECTING YOUR NEW TREE PLANTINGS

Roy Knudsen, NRCS Soil Conservation Tech

It is time to start ordering your trees & shrubs. Order forms from the Montana Conservation Seedling Nursery and other conservation nurseries are available at the Conrad NRCS field office or online at www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/nursery.

Care and handling of woody planting stock is important. Be sure to order adapted species from a reliable source. When the seedlings arrive it is best to leave them in their shipping package until planting. Open the packages and make sure the roots are moist. Store the package in a cool moist environment and plant the seedlings as

soon as possible.

When planting, do not plant on hot windy days to avoid excess drying. Weather above freezing with high humidity and no or light wind is best for planting. Do not expose the seedling roots to air for more than 30 seconds. Keep the roots moist during planting operations by placing them in a soil-water (mud) slurry, peat moss or an equivalent. Rooted stock should be planted in a vertical position with the root collar approximately 1/2" below the soil surface in a hole deep and wide enough to avoid bending and compacting roots.

New plantings will need protection from livestock and wildlife for a number of years; repellants and fences are normally the best options.

Approved fabric mats are helpful for weed control and for conserving moisture.

Micro-irrigation (trickle irrigation) is also an option to help seedlings establish and to maintain the shelterbelt.

The CD has a fabric layer and a tree planter available for rent. The District also places a bulk order of fabric each spring. Call for prices and availability.

EQUIPMENT RENTAL RATE UPDATES

The Pondera County Conservation District recently updated Equipment Rental prices as follows:

TREE PLANTER:	\$0.15 per tree with \$50.00 per day minimum
FABRIC LAYER:	\$20.00 per roll **Free if Fabric is purchased through Conservation District
TREE SPADE:	\$20.00 per tree
DISK:	\$10.00 per acre first time over; \$6.00 per acre each additional time over
SCRAPER:	\$75.00 per day
LEVEL:	\$25.00 per day

The following items are also For Sale from the District:

WALL OWNERSHIP MAPS:	\$35.00
MARKER FLAGS:	\$10.00 per bundle
TREE FABRIC (WEED BARRIER):	\$83.90 for 6' x 300' roll - Order must be placed by March 30, 2007

PCCD SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED TO 2007 GRADUATES

As spring approaches it is time for college-bound high school seniors to be planning for their financing opportunities. The Pondera County Conservation District is again planning to award scholarships to those graduates within Pondera County who plan to pursue an education in Agriculture, Natural Resources or a related field. Scholarship amounts vary (normally \$250 - \$500) depending on the number of recipients.

Guidance counselors at each Pondera County high school are provided with a copy of the scholarship application. Applications may also be acquired from the Conservation District office or any Pondera County Conservation District Supervisor.

Applications must be postmarked by May 1, 2007 and will be awarded thereafter.

310 PERMITS REQUIRED

A 310 Permit is REQUIRED if you are planning ANY project including the construction of new facilities or the modification, operation, and maintenance of an existing facility that may affect the natural existing shape and form of any stream or its banks or tributaries. Any private entity or non-governmental individual that proposes to work in or near a stream on public or private land MUST obtain a 310 Permit PRIOR to any activity in or near a perennially flowing stream. Please contact the PCCD for permit applications.

MONTANA RANGE DAYS QUICKLY APPROACHING

By Lisa Schmidt

Montana Range Days, Montana's largest range education event is quickly approaching. This three-day event will be packed with fun, hands-on workshops for all ages.

Participants will learn the best land management practices, how soils influence plants and water, how to identify plants, what makes them different and how to follow changes in range conditions. After a day of learning, Super Starters (ages 9-11), Wranglers (ages 12-13), Youth (ages 14-19) and Open Class (ages 14-adult) will compete in plant anatomy, plant identification, range sites, monitoring, range planning and stocking rate competitions. Buckaroos (ages 4-8) will enjoy plenty of learning activities, too. Adults also have the opportunity to attend three range management tours.

Daily tours will visit the Western Triangle Experiment Station, Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area, Froggies Stopping Place along the Whoop-Up Trail as well as the Tepee Ring Bi-

son Ranch.

Montana Range Days will be held June 18-20 at Conrad's Utterback Middle School. Participants will travel to various range sites each day.

Registration costs \$30 for individuals or \$80 per family prior to June 1. After June 1, fees will increase by \$5. Registration includes workshop materials and meals, except dinner on Monday.

Contact your local county extension agent, FFA advisor or Conservation District to register.

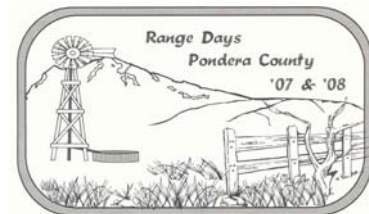
This 31st annual Montana Range Days is hosted by the Pondera Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation District and the Northern Ag Network. Several area and statewide businesses and organizations have joined on as financial or awards sponsors as well.

The Montana Range Days program is offering \$1,500 in college scholarships in 2007. Three \$500 scholarships will be given, including the Bob Sitz Memorial Scholarship, presented by the Sitz Angus Ranch of Harrison and Dillon, a Montana Range Days Scholarship, and the Harold & Lillian Jensen Scholarship, which is sponsored by the Jensens of Baker.

These scholarships are provided to assist young persons with an interest in range science.

Applications are available at www.montanarangedays.com or contact Montana Range days Scholarship Committee, c/o Montana Livestock Ag Credit, PO Box 4549, Helena, MT 59604 or call 406-442-3740.

Selection is based on applicants involvement in range activities, leadership, academic achievement, and financial need. The deadline for application forms is April 30. The winners will be announced publicly at a presentation on June 19 at the 2007 Montana Range Days in Conrad.



THANK YOU TO THE AREA SPONSORS WE HAVE RECEIVED SO FAR...

Big Sky Equipment Co.

Conrad Building Center

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Liberty Co. Conservation District

Stockman Bank - Conrad

Trader's Dispatch

Randy & Rebecca Wolenetz

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

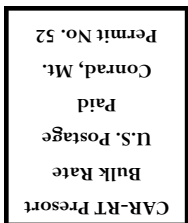
6th - Marias River Watershed @ 1:00pm – Shelby
10th - PCCD Annual Dinner @ Moose Lodge
12th - Regular Monthly Meeting @ 7:30pm
15th -Range Days Planning Meeting @ 7:30pm
17th - St Patrick’s Day

April

3rd - Marias River Watershed @1pm – Shelby
8th - Easter
9th - Regular Monthly Meeting @ 7:30pm
19th - Range Days Planning Meeting @ 7:30pm

May

1st - Marias River Watershed @1pm - Shelby
13th - Mother’s Day
14th - Regular Monthly Meeting @ 7:30pm
17th - Range Days Planning Meeting @ 7:30pm



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CONRAD MONTANA 59425**