

Montana NRCS Conservation Update

January 2010

Quarterly Newsletter

www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov



2009 in Review for Montana NRCS

Joyce Swartzendruber, State Conservationist

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Joyce Swartzendruber, State Conservationist

Greetings from Bozeman, and Best Wishes for 2010. As I look back at the accomplishments (and my travel file) from the past year, I am very pleased with the conservation and inventory work we've completed over the last year of the decade. We implemented the new Farm Bill with great success, and producer participation in our conservation programs was high. Here's a quick rundown:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The new Conservation Stewardship Program encouraged our producers to improve existing conservation activities and to implement additional practices. Montana was allotted the second highest acre allocation in the nation and successfully met sign-up goals. There were 463 applications submitted statewide. The average number of acres per application is 4118 and the ranking scores ranged from 92.22 to 768.61. Contracts will be awarded by January 29, 2010 and dollar values will be available at that time.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The 2008 Farm Bill clarified EQIP purposes to include forest management and energy conservation as well as production and fuels management practices. The bill also allows for increased payments up to 90% for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. Statewide there were 635 EQIP contracts for 2009, with obligated funds totaling \$21,167,502 involving 877,663 acres. For 2010, 1054 applications are anticipated including 529 applications deferred from fiscal year (FY) 2009. The 2010 EQIP and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) application ranking is due February 15, 2010 - contract obligation deadline is April 1, 2010.

2009 EQIP Special Initiatives

Tribal Contracts with allocated funding of \$1,928,775 on 114,658 contracted acres; 20 AFO-CAFO contracts; and 37 Conservation Innovation Grant Air Quality contracts to tribal governments, tribal individuals, or individuals. In addition, four contracts addressed erosion reduction and improved soil health from cover crops; 17 contracts assisted Montana certified organic producers and 19 contracts assisted producers transitioning to organic production with a statewide organic funding pool of \$1.2 million.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

2009 funding levels to address improvements in wildlife habitat were again increased. There were 29 contracts with obligated funds totaling \$541,350.



Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The 2008 Farm Bill changed the process for determining easement value in the WRP, allowing NRCS to use a market analysis and imposing a Geographic Area Rate Cap as an alternative to obtaining appraisals. For FY 2009, NRCS made offers on two perpetual easements, one in Valley County (approximately \$105,000) and one in Gallatin County (approximately \$45,000). There is one 30-year easement in Phillips County (approximately \$235,000). NRCS estimates 15 applications for the 2010 Wetlands Reserve Program in Montana. The application deadline is February 1, 2010.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

The 2008 Farm Bill broadened the purpose of the FRPP to “protecting agricultural use and related conservation of the land” beyond protecting prime and unique soils. The program allows NRCS to develop agreements with potential matching entities of five years in duration for entities that are certified and three years for entities that are not certified. For FY 2009 there were four perpetual easements involving 6,434 acres.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

Jointly administered by NRCS and the Farm Service Agency GRP supports working grazing operations,

enhances plant and animal bio-diversity and protects grasslands and lands containing shrubs and forbs that are threatened by conversion. The 2008 Farm Bill increases maximum acreage enrollment by 1.2 million acres through 2012. Priority enrollment is given for acreage expiring from the Conservation Reserve Program, limited to 10% of the total acres enrolled in any given year. In Montana we are successfully focusing our GRP funds toward protection of greater sage grouse habitat in three counties: Blaine, Phillips and Valley. We made offers on 2 easements (11,270 acres) and 3 rental agreements (13,208 acres) in these counties.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

There are two Watershed Operations projects in Montana funded under provisions of ARRA. Construction is underway on both.

The Buffalo Rapids Project: The existing system of flood irrigation is being replaced by a sprinkler system to conserve approximately 400 acre feet of water annually. This project is located in Custer, Prairie and Dawson Counties and is designed to improve water quantity and quality for irrigation. Estimated federal spending is \$281,000.

The Lower Birch Creek Project: A three-tiered project involving irrigation canals, a waste-way and a “blow-off” waste-way, this project is designed

to reduce sediment in Lower Birch Creek in Pondera County, reduce soil erosion and improve water quality and flow. Serious overflows have historically created severe gully-deep erosion. Estimated federal spending on the project is \$527,000.

As We Enter 2010

The New Year promises continued growth in the participation and support of conservation practices in Montana. We’ve been allocated over \$53 million in financial assistance to continue providing conservation incentives to Montana farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

We are celebrating our 75th anniversary in 2010. On April 27, 1935 the Soil Conservation Service was enacted into law. I want to ensure that every Montana resident hears or reads something this year about the improvement of our land and water resources due to the important work that NRCS and our local and state partners have helped us provide to the private landowners across the state. Over the coming months we will be joining the celebration of our 75th year sharing with you some real-life insights offered by conservation veterans in Montana who’ve been eyewitnesses to the growth of conservation efforts in our state. Perhaps you have a story to tell about conservation that you’d like to share? Please give Larry Cooper, Public Affairs Specialist, a call and tell us what’s on your mind.



Montana Participates in High Tunnel Pilot Study

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs Manger

Montana is participating in a 3-year, 38 state study designed to verify if high tunnels, (also known as hoop houses) are effective in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers.

USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced the project under the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” to increase the availability of locally grown produce in a conservation-friendly way. Merrigan and other Obama administration officials highlighted opportunities available for producers in a video posted on USDA’s YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07vtMJgp0no>, which shows high tunnels recently installed in the White House garden.

“There is a great potential for high tunnels to expand the availability of healthy, locally-grown crops – a win for producers and consumers,” said Merrigan. “This pilot project is going to give us real-world information that farmers all over the country can use to decide if they want to add high tunnels to their operations. We know that these fixtures can help producers extend their growing season and hopefully add to their bottom line.”

In Montana a high tunnel is presently in use at the State Prison farm facility at Glendive and by at least one Glendive area farmer. The County Extension Office at Glendive is planning to build three high tunnels in the spring.

High tunnels are used year-round in warmer parts of the country, providing steady incomes for farmers – a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited resource farmers and organic producers.

NRCS is offering financial assistance for the high tunnels through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the EQIP Organic Initiative, and the Agricultural Management Assistance Program. NRCS can fund one high tunnel per farm. High tunnels in the study can cover as much as 5% of 1 acre.



The new NRCS video “Protecting Pollinators” is now available on-line. The National Pollinator Partnership is hosting the video through its YouTube site and the video is linked on our Montana NRCS Web site. To view the video go to our Web site at <http://pollinator.org/multimedia.htm>

Cost free copies of the video can be requested by e-mailing MT-nrcs-publications@one.usda.gov. Identify the video title and include a mailing address.

Red and Dead

Red and Dead - Montana's Pine Beetle Infestation

It's no bigger than a kernel of rice, yet the mountain pine beetle is reeking havoc on Montana's forests and urban trees. There is no silver bullet to eradicate this native pest as it moves across the state.

The following web site <http://www.montanapbs.org/MontanaFocus/episode602/> features an excellent video on Montana's pine beetle infestation. This video was an episode of “Montana Focus” aired on the Montana Public Broadcasting System. The video covers the beetles life cycle, politics, natural resources issues, and social challenges. It's about 27 minutes long but worth the viewing. Enjoy.

New Farm Bill Brochure

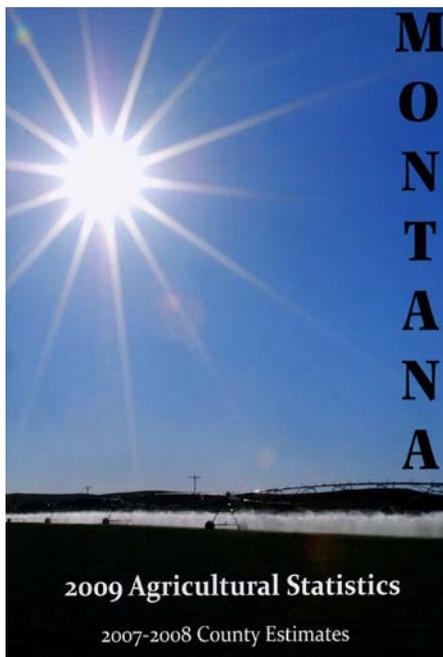
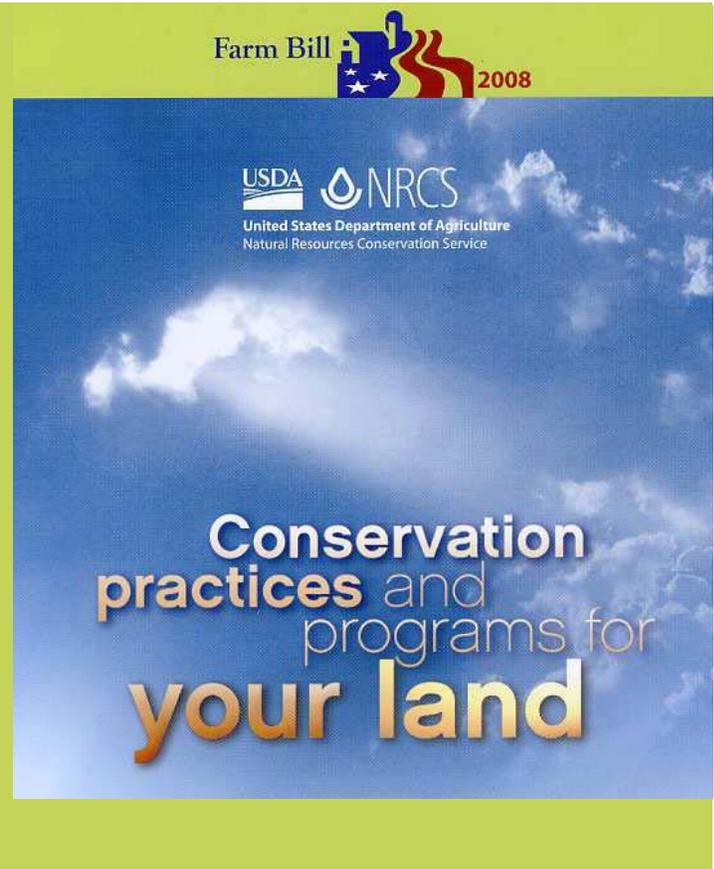
NRCS Landcare

Farm Bill  2008

NRCS's new Farm Bill brochure and inserts are now available. You can order these at no charge directly from LANDCARE. Go to <http://landcare.nrcs.usda.gov> and click on the "View New Items" button, or search for "2008 Farm Bill."

Additionally, there are 9 inserts available for this brochure on the following topics:

- Energy
- Climate Change
- Conservation Opportunities for Federally Recognized Tribes
- Air Quality
- Historically Underserved Individuals and Groups
- Forestry and Agroforestry Assistance
- Specialty Crop Producers
- Organic Farming
- Wildlife



2009 Montana Agriculture Annual Statistics Book

Ivy Allen, Public Affairs Specialist

The 2009 Agriculture Statistics book contains state and county data for all major crops and livestock. In addition, it includes farm income, land

values, wheat and barley varieties, and weather data. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) issues the publication each fall.

Copies of the book have been sent to each MT NRCS office but additional copies are available by e-mailing MT-nrcs-publications@one.usda.gov.

Job Vacancies-- Student Career Experience Program

Sharon Huber, Human Resources

- ❑ The vacancy announcement for the 2010 Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) opened on December 18, 2009, and will close on March 5, 2010. The announcement number is: MT-10-0002B and is available on the USAJOBS Web site www.usajobs.opm.gov.
- ❑ This year we expect to hire approximately 12 new students. We are recruiting for students who are interested in pursuing a course of study related to soil conservation, rangeland management, natural resources and/or other agricultural disciplines such as agronomy, soil science, forestry, rangeland management, civil or agricultural engineering and/or any discipline closely related to and qualifying for the position being filled.
- ❑ Please see the announcement for all the details.

A Memorable 70th Year for MACD

Ivy Allen, Public Affairs Specialist

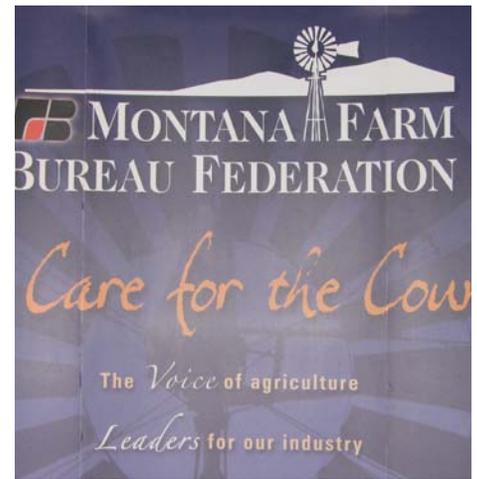
Steve Hedstrom, President of the Montana Area Conservation Districts, welcomed attendees at the annual MACD conference by recognizing the Districts' past seven decades of accomplishments, and giving special credit to ranchers and farmers for their "one step at a time" approach to addressing resource concerns. Hedstrom was passionate about his family roots, while discussing the Dust Bowl and its role in igniting the soil conservation movement.

Topics of the conference evoked many discussions on conservation and policy, and it reminded us all how important each piece is as a part of the whole program. Joyce Swartzendruber, NRCS State Conservationist, shared information on the 2008 Farm Bill programs, reviewing program enrollment, locations, and dollars

contracted. Joyce also announced the creation of a new Montana NRCS Watershed and Project Resource Planning Team. The team will provide grassroots support for review and planning on large projects and watershed related proposals.

Building partnerships to take on resource challenges and implement conservation practices were recurring topics throughout the conference. Conservation Districts and partners provided updates and reports outlining their upcoming strategies and long-term plans.

A new forestry partnership agreement was finalized during the conference. Representatives of five agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide services to private forest landowners. The memorandum provides a framework to deliver coordinated and complimentary assistance in a "one-stop shopping" model. NRCS, MSU Extension, MACD, DNRC, and USFS are all parties to the agreement.



More than 700 Attend Farm Bureau Conference

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs Manager

Bill Stallman, the National Farm Bureau Federation President addressed the Montana group predicting that passage of the house version of Climate Change legislation will result in a 15% income tax increase for consumers. He also labeled the proposal to take farmland out of crop production to grow trees for carbon sequestration "ludicrous."

White Sulphur Springs Rancher Bob Hanson was re-elected President of the Montana Farm Bureau while Bruce Wright of Bozeman was elected Vice President.

Ryan Osmundson of Buffalo won the Young Farmer and Rancher Discussion Meet. He urged producers to work harder to educate the public about the impact agriculture producer problems may have on consumers.

Valerie Kutsch, a Bozeman High School junior, won the Senior Division Youth Speech Contest by talking about the need to educate the public on the successes of food safety as well as the warnings. Her sister, Rosalyn won the Junior Division competition.



Steve Hedstrom, MACD; Jim Knight, MSU Ext; Joyce Swartzendruber, NRCS; Spike Thompson, USFS; and Robert Ethridge, DNRC representing a new Forestry partnership in Montana



Dennis Phillippe, range consultant, Bozeman, MT; Peter Lefebvre, Great Falls AO; STC of Montana NRCS Joyce Swartzendruber, Bozeman, MT; Lon Reukauf, rancher at Terry, MT; Russell Nemetz, chairman of MT GLCI, Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT; Chief of NRCS David White, Washington DC; Janet Haughian and Terry Haughian, ranchers at Kinsey, MT; Carole and John Hollenback, ranchers at Gold Creek, MT; Aggie Helle, rancher at Dillon, MT; Robert and Kathy Lee, ranchers at Judith Gap, MT; Chase Hibbard, rancher at Helena, MT; Carla Lawrence, Beartooth RC&D, Joliet, MT; and Jon Siddoway, coordinator of MT GLCI, Bozeman, MT.

Montana, Well Represented at National GLCI Reno Conference

Carla Lawrence,
Beartooth RC&D Coordinator

Seven of ten Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiatives steering committee members were on hand for the Fourth National Grazing Land Conference, December 13 – 16 at Sparks, Nevada.

The conference is held every three years at rotating locations.

NRCS Chief David White addressed the opening plenary session talking about the growth and future of conservation and about the history of NRCS and the “Father of Conservation” Hugh Hammond Bennett whose influence, White noted, is still felt in the agency today.

Honoring 100 Years of Ranching

Tom Cook, Montana Historical Society

Keeping a farm or ranch in the same family for 100 years or more through good times and bad deserves recognition.

At the direction of the Montana Legislature, the Montana Historical Society has created the Centennial Farm & Ranch Program to identify and honor the families that have accomplished that feat.

“It is becoming less and less common for a large agricultural property to stay in the same family for one century or more” commented Society Director Richard Sims.

To qualify for centennial recognition, a farm or ranch must have been passed down through spouses, children, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces,

or adopted children in a continuous sequence of ownership. In addition, one current owner must be a Montana resident. The farm or ranch does not have to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places to qualify.

There is a \$60 fee to cover the cost of processing applications, and the Society Research Center will provide technical assistance to those who need it. The form is detailed and includes questions about the history of the farm or ranch and the people who lived on it. For additional information contact jboughtman@mt.gov.



Plover Protection Partnership

Tim Solberg, Soil Conservationist

Flat Lake Farms Incorporated is a large ranching and farming operation owned and operated by Wayne & Chad Solberg of Westby Montana. In 2005, the northeast corner of Sheridan County became a focus area for a special cost share initiative concerning the Piping Plover, a small shorebird that is a threatened and endangered species.

This area is home to several migratory song birds, and has the highest density of nesting waterfowl species in the entire state of Montana. Flat Lake Farms is located in the heart of this area, also known as “The Prairie Pothole Region.” NRCS was able to locate areas that are known Piping Plover nesting habitat by working closely with Tim Connolly, a private lands biologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), at Medicine Lake. The USFWS continues to be a vital partner to many NRCS projects.

In an ongoing collaborative effort with our partners, NRCS has written 3 EQIP contracts to assist Flat Lake Farms in developing alternatives that would improve their grazing system, while allowing them to rest pastures adjacent to plover nesting lakes during the nesting and brood rearing season. Flat Lake Farms has drilled wells, installed stock water pipelines and tanks, and utilized cross-fencing in order to improve the grazing rotation, increase cattle distribution, and implement rest. These rotational grazing systems increase forage production, and also eliminate the disturbance to the nesting plovers, and improved the nesting cover for waterfowl, upland game birds, and Neotropical migrants.

The partners involved in providing technical and/or financial assistance on this project are many, and additional funding has been extensive. The partners include the following:

- *USFWS*
- *Medicine Lake Wildlife Refuge*
- *Montana FW&P*
- *Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society*
- *The Nature Conservancy*
- *Flat Lake Farms Inc.*

There has been many conservation improvements or practices installed, some of them include the following:

- *Power*
- *Well Drilling*
- *Stock Tanks*
- *Pumps*
- *Stock-Water Pipelines*
- *Cross Fences*
- *Native & Tame Species Grass seeding*

The total dollar value spent on these projects by our conservation partners is \$70,735.

Since 2005, Wayne & Chad have worked closely with NRCS & USFWS in order to make even more improvements on their landscape. They have seeded marginal cropland back to both tame and native species grasses.

The Nature Conservancy also funded the cost of grass seed for approximately 400 acres of native species grass seeding, which will be incorporated into a grazing system when the grasses become established.

USFWS and Medicine Lake Wildlife Refuge also completed a gravel enhancement project located along the beaches of one of the bigger wetlands on this property in an effort to promote additional nesting by the Piping Plovers.





Photo courtesy of Trout Unlimited

Fleshman Creek Restoration Progressing

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs Manger

Drive down highway 10, about a quarter of a mile east of the Yellowstone Truck Stop near Livingston and you'll see a new sign on the south side of the road identifying the site of one Fleshman Creek Restoration Project.

The project involves the complete restoration of the section of Fleshman Creek that runs through the property of Dr. Dan Voyich. NRCS developed the overall plan and contributed \$90,657 in cost share. The sign and planned re-vegetation is supported by grants from Trout Unlimited Joe Brooks Chapter.

The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks contributed more than \$50,000 and conducted much of the baseline monitoring for fish populations and will conduct post monitoring of the project as well. Park County contributed more than \$21,000.

Livingston schools are using the project as an outdoor classroom. The project will protect fish habitat, realign the creek to help stream flows, and reduce debris build-up. An Environmental Assessment for the project is nearly completed.

New Standards Recommended for on-farm Energy Audits.

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs Manger

The American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers have approved a new standard for performing on-farm energy audits. Energy Conservation is one of the NRCS key management initiatives and the agency is recommending producers conduct energy audits on their operations.

The new standard outlines procedures that help producers determine and document current energy use, and identifies a method of estimating energy savings by adopting alternative methods of cultivation, protection, harvesting, processing and storage of agricultural commodities and in the feeding, housing and processing of farm animals and animal products.

The document is intended to support energy audits of all types of farming operations, including ranching. For more information visit <http://www.asabe.org>.





RC&D Awards: Kit Sutherland, Chris Malgren, Dixie Berwick, Marvin Carter

RC&D Update

Ivy Allen, Public Affairs Specialist

The Montana RC&D Association met during the MACD annual meeting, and presented these 2009 RC&D awards:

- ❑ *Coordinator of the Year: Kit Sutherland, Bitter Root RC&D*
- ❑ *Council of the Year: Bitter Root RC&D*
- ❑ *Council Member of the Year: Marvin Carter, Beartooth RC&D*
- ❑ *Sponsor of the Year: U.S. Forest Service, Nan Christianson, Bitterroot National Forest and State and Private Forestry*
- ❑ *Council Employee of the Year: Byron Bonney, Bitter Root RC&D*
- ❑ *Program Assistant of the Year: Julianne Brown, Headwaters, RC&D*

For the upcoming year, RC&D, NRCS, and MSU Extension all discussed ways to make farm-to-table a broadened reality in Montana.

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils announced that

Northwest Regional RC&D Council has been awarded membership in the National Circle of Diamonds program. Northwest Regional RC&D covers Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, and Sanders counties in northwest Montana.

To become a member of the Circle of Diamonds, Northwest Regional RC&D Council demonstrated its work positively impacted the quality of life within its local area. "We are pleased to receive this honor," said Chris Malgren, Northwest Regional RC&D Chair. "We have worked hard to provide a service to the communities." A signature project for this RC&D is the hazardous fuels program where grant money is made available to private landowners to reduce the risk of a wildfire.

Graminoid Quarterly

Jennifer Woodward, Rangeland Management Specialist

The Graminoid Quarterly is an NRCS field office newsletter designed to bring you the latest information and happenings in grazing land management.

View the fall edition, which contains the articles listed below, at <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/range/graminoid.html>.

- *Upcoming Range Events and Activities*
- *GLCI Rangeland Road Trip & Multispecies Grazing Workshop*
- *Multispecies Grazing—Sheep Producers Roundtable*
- *The Aleutian Cattle*
- *Governor's Range Tour*
- *Weed Eating in Pasture*
- *Rangeland Chiseling Trial, Madison Valley*



RC&D Council members accept National Circle of Diamonds recognition. Front Row: Joe Brenneman, Chris Malgren (Chair), and Carol Brooker (Vice Chair). Back Row: Sue Sutherland (Coordinator), Sharon Rosenbaum (Secretary), Denise Smith, Wayne Maahs (Treasurer), Pete Woll, and Gary Winship.

FireSafe Montana's fall quarterly newsletter is jammed packed with the latest news, local council updates, grant opportunities, and where to go throughout the state for hazardous fuels reduction cost share assistance.

The Montana Communities and Wildfire Conference "Wildfire Preparedness: It's Your Responsibility" will be held on February 25-27 at Fairmont Hot Springs, MT.

To register for the conference or view the FireSafe fall newsletter visit the Web site at www.firesafemt.org.

Winter Grazing Seminar

Heidi Olbert, Montana DNRC

Fresh ideas, the latest research and a healthy dose of optimism are on the docket for this year's Montana Winter Grazing Seminar, scheduled for Jan. 13-14, 2010, in Havre, at the Duck Inn's Olympic Room.

This year's featured speaker is Bruce Vincent of Libby. A logger by trade, Vincent is executive director of Provider Pals, a group that works to build understanding between urban and rural youth and their natural resource providers.

Additional sessions include:

- *New cattle-handling facility and latest research at the ARS station*
- *Livestock behavior and cattle eating weeds*
- *Pasture, range and forage insurance program*
- *Feeding the World – Challenges and Opportunities for U.S. Beef Producers*

- *"Farm-to-Table" promoting local food system development*
- *Riparian grazing.*

For more information or the registration form, contact Jennifer Kenck at (406) 265-6792 X 101 or Heidi Olbert at (406) 444-6619.

Women Stepping Forward Urged to "Talk about Ag"

Andrea Ceartin NRCS, Federal Women's Program Manager

This past October, NRCS once again participated in the Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium. The symposium provided a great venue for women involved in Montana's Agriculture to learn about issues affecting them and their neighbors.

There was approximately 70 attendants from across the state at last year's event. Everyone went away with a renewed spirit of promoting agriculture and protecting their way of life.



Trent Loos

Guest speaker Trent Loos challenged everyone to get out and talk to their communities and consumers. Remind them where their food comes

from, how it is cared for, raised, harvested, and etc. He encouraged us to teach out of your comfort zone and visit with the person sitting next to you on the plane, remind them that hamburger comes from a cow or flour from wheat in the field. We need to educate the consumer several generations removed from agriculture or they will truly believe that chocolate milk is from a brown cow.

Holly Franz answered questions on water rights and all the terminology that goes with it. There was a lively panel discussion about the need for a horse slaughter facility in the U.S. and Montana's active role in resolving the issue. Phyllis Philipps outlined NRCS programs. USDA had representatives from FSA, RD, AG Statistics, APHIS, and Risk Management.

AFO/CAFO Roundtable & Newsletter

Thomas Bass, MSU Extension

The first Montana AFO/CAFO Roundtable Discussion is scheduled for January 12-13 at the Holiday Inn Grand in Billings. More information is available at: <http://www.afostewardship.org/secure/resdocs/Roundtable%20Registration%20Form%20FINAL.pdf>.

AFO Stewardship News is published by Montana State University Extension and NRCS on behalf of the Montana AFO/CAFO Outreach Partnership, a stakeholder based committee representing: educational entities, technical assistance providers, commodity representation and government agencies.

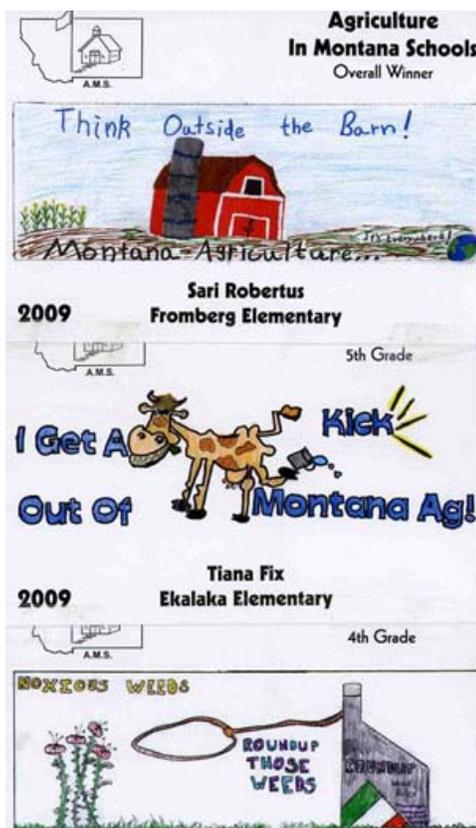
View AFO Stewardship News at <http://www.afostewardship.org/secure/resdocs/AFOstewardship%20News%201-1%20FINAL%20I.pdf>

Agriculture in Montana Schools Bumper Stickers

Ivy Allen, Public Affairs

The Agriculture in Montana Schools, Inc. (AMS) Foundation was organized by a group of agriculturalists and educators interested in the future of agriculture in Montana. Supporters of the Foundation come from all backgrounds, but they share a common goal—providing educational materials about the food and fiber system to Montana students.

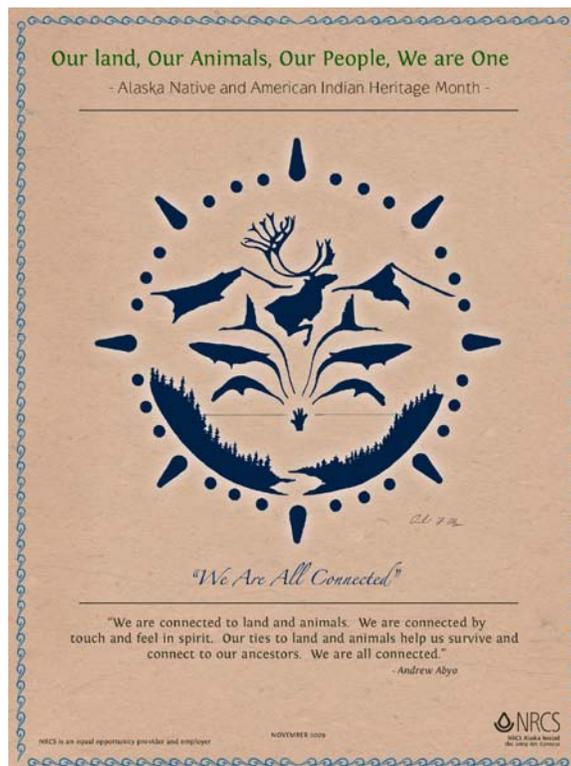
As you complete your 2009 Montana individual income tax return there is an option to contribute to the “check-off” programs. You can contribute the designated program(s) of your choice, in any amount. Choosing Agriculture in Montana Schools provides a contribution to agriculture education. It also provides funding for the agriculture bumper sticker and student essay contest.



Alaska Native and American Indian Heritage Month Poster

Kathy Knobloch, American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager

November was American Indian Heritage Month. This provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the history of American Indians and their contributions to the world. One of the ways NRCS celebrates American Indian Heritage Month is by distributing a poster created by an American Indian artist. Artwork by Andrew Abyo was chosen for this year's poster. Andrew Abyo was born in Anchorage, Alaska and raised in the Bristol Bay village of Pilot Point. He is an Aleut/Alutiiq artist and carver who works cultural traditions into his



art. Andrew wants everyone to have a greater understanding of the Alutiiq culture and its rich history. “My goal is to bring out different things that you normally don’t get to see, other than in a museum.”

The theme for this year’s poster is “Our Land, Our Animals, Our People, We Are One”. Andrew titled his artwork, “We Are All Connected,” it depicts the relationship between land, animals, and people. Andrew described his piece this way: “We are connected to land and animals. We are connected by touch and feel in spirit. Our ties to land and animals help us survive and connect to our ancestors. We are all connected.”

Copies of the poster can be requested from MT-nrcs-publications@one.usda.gov or landcare@usda.gov.

View full size poster online at [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/MT/www/civil/AIAN_poster_2009.pdf](http://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/MT/www/civil/AIAN_poster_2009.pdf).



2010 Western RC&D Association Conference

Ivy Allen, Public Affairs Specialist

The four-day Western RC&D Annual Conference is being held at the Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown At The Park, from January 31 - February 3. The theme is "Creating Tomorrow's Food and Energy."

A welcome note from the RC&D:

It is our pleasure to invite you to the 2010 Western States Regional Conference of Resource Conservation and Development Councils serving our ten Western States planned for Sunday, January 31 through Wednesday, February 3, 2010 in Missoula, Montana.

As our respective home states and communities add strength to our recovering economy, we are in an effective position to offer leadership and "technological know-how" in some cornerstone knowledge areas. Our 2010 Conference will focus on building our internal interaction and will feature two major subject tracks: Sustainable, Renewable Energy and Food to Table projects. There will

also be an opportunity to share stories of highly successful projects from around our region and to informally exchange ideas and cautions. Some outstanding additional training chances are proposed for those who choose to take part. A major part of one day will feature a choice of several tours to visit successful operations on-the-ground.

Review the registration form at <http://www.westernrcd.org/conf2010.htm>.



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Upcoming Events

For up-to-date conservation and agriculture-related events and activities in Montana, visit <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/events.html>.

January 2010

- ☐ Montana AFO/CAFO Roundtable, 12-13, Billings
- ☐ Annie's Project, 11-25, throughout Montana
- ☐ Montana Weed Control Association Annual Conference, 12-14, Missoula
- ☐ Montana Winter Grazing Seminar, 13-14, Havre
- ☐ Western RC&D Association Conference, Jan 31- Feb 3, Missoula

February 2010

- ☐ Montana Communities and Wildfire Conference, 25-27, Fairmont Hot Springs

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