USDA NRCS
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Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Conservation Pathways

Spring 2012

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## Important Dates to Remember

**May 2012**

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society National Conference
April 30- May 3, 2012; Cherokee, North Carolina
For more information: www.nafws.org

Second Annual Native American Cultural Awareness Conference
May 15-17, 2012; Billings, Montana
For more information: Eloise Whitewolf 406-477-8321 ext. 4864

National Tribal Forum on Air Quailty
May 22-24, 2012; Tulsa, Oklahoma
For more information: www4.nau.edu/itep/conferences/confr_ntf.asp

Seventh National Conference on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution
May 22-24, 2012; Tucson, Arizona
For more information: Pam Carlson at Carlson@ecr.gov
or Tina Gargus at gargus@ecr.gov

**June 2012**

Deadline to Sign up for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
June 1, 2012; Statewide
For more information, contact your local NRCS Field Office
or visit: www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov

**July 2012**

Obligation Deadline for FY2012 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Contracts
July 1, 2012; Statewide
For more information, contact your local NRCS Field Office
or visit: www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov

**August 2012**

2012 Tribal Lands Forum
August 20-23, 2012; Coos Bay, Oregon
For more information:
www4.nau.edu/itep/conferences/confr_tlf.asp

National Tribal Environmental Council Annual Conference
August 26-29, 2012; Traverse City, Michigan
For more information: http://ntec.org/annualmeeting.html

*more important dates on page 4*

## A Note from the State Conservationist

I've been traveling to the Indian Reservations with the US Department of Agriculture's Food and Ag Council this winter and spring. We've made stops at all seven reservations and have had excellent turnouts as we sit down to speak with the tribal councils. My message to each council has been slightly different each time. Not just because the news and programs are constantly changing, but because our NRCS service and interactions at each reservation takes different angles depending on what the needs of that tribe are. I believe we should do our best to meet the needs of the individual tribes, and I feel very fortunate that a state conservationist before me made the decision to place NRCS staff on each reservation. Our locations are in a variety of spaces: at the college, in the BIA office, at tribal headquarters, or a construction office. But in each location, it is working and we are close by for the producers who need our assistance.

This summer, each state conservationist has been asked to determine what the NRCS Field Office of the Future should look like. In uncertain financial times, some agencies are closing offices; indeed, NRCS closed 375 Resource Conservation and Development offices across the country last year, and we're closing dozens of soil survey offices this year. When that conversation comes to your town this summer, will you be able to tell me what is vital to you in assistance from NRCS? What are the most important services you receive, and how can they best be delivered to you? Finally, tell me what NRCS can do better. I believe we will come up with a plan to improve our services across the board with your help and input.

I would like to mention that we received a ruling from the Department of Interior regarding the interface between our Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other financial assistance programs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations. We now know that the BIA superintendent is authorized to approve EQIP and other program conservation plans and implementation and construction of conservation practices for those allotments that do not meet over 50% majority consent. For details on this, please visit with your local NRCS staff. We also have clarification that legal surveys are not needed on livestock pipelines because they don't fall under the BIA 169 right-of-way regulations.

There are constant changes in our programs and our policies which can affect farmers and ranchers across Montana and across the reservations. As your conservation needs change, be sure to check with our staff to find out what may be available to you in terms of financial or technical assistance.

*Joyce Swartzendruber*
*NRCS State Conservationist in Montana*

# Little Big Horn College Hosts Ag and Science Expo

*Jeremy Not Afraid, NRCS District Conservationist, Crow Agency*

*Kate Norvell, NRCS agronomist, explains soil health principles to students at Little Big Horn College during the Ag and Science Expo.*

On February 28, Little Big Horn College hosted its First Annual Ag and Science Expo at the Crow Multi-Purpose Building in Crow Agency, Montana. The main objective for the expo was to get our area students excited about the ag and science opportunities that are available to them. LBHC invited high school students from five different high schools in our area: Lodge Grass, Hardin, Plenty Coups, Northern Cheyenne Tribal, and Lame Deer.

Twenty Federal, State, and Tribal agencies, along with Montana State University, set up displays showcasing their employment opportunities as well as how they use science within their daily operations.

Bill Yellowtail, director of Tribal Partnerships at Montana State University, served as the master of ceremonies for the Expo. Yellowtail talked with the students about the chance that they had to talk with each group represented and how important it is for them to take advantage of this occasion. The students were introduced to each agency and then periodically provided a chance to answer science trivia questions for door prizes that were donated by the different agencies present.

After lunch, the students were free to roam through the displays and a horsemanship demonstration by Shane Mussetter. Mussetter set up his demonstration outside the Multi-Purpose Building and went through his natural horsemanship techniques with the students.

*The main objective for the expo was to get our area students excited about the ag and science opportunities that are available to them.*

The LBHC Ag and Science Expo was sponsored and organized by the LBHC Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, the LBHC Ag Department., the LBHC Greenhouse Project, Indian Nations Conservation Alliance, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service – Crow Agency field office.

The LBHC Ag and Science Expo organizing committee would like to thank all of the agencies, groups, and students that attended the Expo, along with the staff at the Crow Multi-Purpose Building, for making this event a success.

*Jeremey Not Afraid, NRCS district conservationist at Crow Agency, talks to students about employment opportunities in agriculture at the Ag and Science Expo at Little Big Horn College.*

# Fort Belknap Community Projects

*Scott Morton, Fort Belknap NRCS District Conservationist, Fort Belknap*

For the year 2011, Fort Belknap NRCS feld office has been involved with installing fences, stockwater pipeline systems, and water wells; planning forest thinning and slash treatments; and helping the community recover from flooding. Big projects include protection of a community structure from stream/river bank erosion on Little Peoples Creek and removing debris against a diversion on the Milk River using the Emergency Watershed Protection program. On the Little Peoples Creek, riprap was installed at four locations to protect the following: a house at two different locations, a cemetery, and a small section of the road (MT-66) going into Mission Canyon. These tasks were a joint effort by the Fort Belknap Indian Community, the Fort Belknap Road Department, Fort Belknap's Environmental Department, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and NRCS. A "thank you" goes out to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for providing equipment that allowed these projects to be installed successfully.

*Box culvert project was installed to protect Montana Route 66.*

*The last big tree is moved away from the diverson on the Milk River.*

*Riprap was installed to protect this house threatened by bank erosion on Little Peoples Creek.*

## Vacancy Announcements

### Rangeland Management Specialist

(Ecological Site Inventory Specialist), GS-0454-11, opened on April 13, 2012, and will close on April 26, 2012. This is a permanent full-time position located at the Bozeman State Office, Technology Staff. Applications are being accepted from current NRCS employees in a competitive status position, or individuals with CTAP eligibility under announcement number MT-642952-SH..

### Soil Conservationist

GS-0457-07/09, opened on April 13, 2012, and will close on April 27, 2012. One position is located in Chinook and one position is located in Scobey, Montana. These are permanent full-time positions. Applications are being accepted from status and special program eligibles under announcement number MT-643848-SH.

### Soil Conservation Technician

GS-0458-05/06 (full performance level is 07), opened on April 16, 2012, and will close on April 30, 2012. This is a permanent full-time position located in Circle, Montana. Applications are being accepted from status and special program eligibles under announcement number MT-643950-SH and from all citizens under announcement number MT-644044-SH.

### Engineering Technician (Civil)

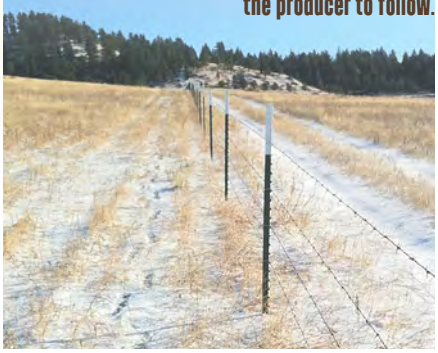
GS-0802-08/09, opened on April 9, 2012, and will close on April 30, 2012. This is a permanent full-time position. This position may be filled in Glasgow, Jordan, Scobey or Circle. The location will be determined upon selection. Applications are being accepted from status and special program eligibles under announcement number MT-638955-SH and from all citizens under announcement number MT-639043-SH.

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

# Cross Fences on Rangeland

*Seanna Sparks, NRCS District Conservationist, Hardin*

**Installing cross fences on rangeland can increase livestock use of forages. When cattle are turned out on a large pasture, an even grazing distribution can be difficult to accomplish. While some patches of range are eaten bare, other areas remain almost untouched. Cross fencing large sections of rangeland into smaller areas encourages cattle to graze more efficiently. Having a grazing plan in place can enhance cross fences by creating a baseline for the producer to follow.**



The producer needs to take several things into consideration when planning to install cross fences. The first thing to consider is the current habits of livestock on rangeland. If the rancher knows the areas of their pasture that are being grazed heavily and the others that aren't, they can better judge where to install their fenceline to get improved usage of that land.

Also, an important thing to take into account when figuring out where to install fences is the location, quality, AND reliability of the water sources. According to the South Dakota State University Extension Service, forage use declines substantially when livestock are anywhere from one quarter of a mile to three quarters of a mile from a water source, depending on the topography of the land.

Another thing the producer needs to consider is what management strategies he or she would like to pursue. Does the producer have an interest in also managing their rangeland for wildlife? Is there interest in implementing a grazing rotation? Would the producer like to have a more management-intensive role in using the rangeland?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides range inventory services to producers at no charge. The NRCS does not set stocking rates. However, we can create grazing plans that the producer can use as a tool in constructing their own pasture rotation to improve the quality of their rangeland. The rangeland inventory that the NRCS does can also serve as a beginning point for the producer to record and keep track of any changes or trends that may be occurring on his or her rangeland.

The NRCS provides free conservation technical assistance to ranchers that are interested in planning and designing cross fences, stockwater projects, and rangeland inventories. There are also NRCS programs available to assist producers in installing these practices. Please stop by your local NRCS field office for more information, or go to the NRCS Montana Web site at: www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov.

# USDA Town Hall Meeting in Pryor, MT

*Jeremy Not Afraid, NRCS District Conservationist, Crow Agency*

*Mike Turley (standing), farm loan manager for the Farm Service Agency in Billings, discusses farm loan options with farmers and ranchers at the Little Big Horn College outreach and assistance meeting.*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with the Little Big Horn College Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR), sponsored a USDA Town Hall Meeting in Pryor, Montana, on March 15 at the Arrow Creek Community Center.

Pryor, is located on the western edge of the Crow Reservation and is approximately 68 miles from the Crow Tribal Headquarters in Crow Agency, Montana.

Nearly 25 local residents turned out for the evening meeting that consisted of presentations by the local USDA agencies that serve the Crow Reservation. The NRCS, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development gave an overview of the services that are available to the local community. Along with the USDA agencies, the Intertribal Ag Council and Indian Nations Conservation Alliance also gave the residents updates on the ag issues facing Native Americans in Montana.

The Pryor community members asked a variety questions and voiced their concerns in a relaxed forum that made access to the agencies more comfortable.

The NRCS and the LBHC OASDFR plan on making a tour with the USDA Town Hall Meetings through the different communities on the Crow Reservation. We would like to thank the Arrow Creek Community Center, Long Otter Catering, and the residents of Pryor for coming out and attending this USDA Town Hall Meeting.

# New Montana NRCS Outreach Specialist

Teri Loring Dahle was hired by Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) as an outreach specialist for Montana NRCS. Under the general supervision of the IAC executive director, she will work with the NRCS to disseminate information to the seven reservations in Montana. She has been employed since January 3, 2012, and has met with most of the NRCS tribal conservationists to do planning with each reservation. Dahle has also been included in the USDA tour of the reservations where she gained more information in each tribe's and tribal producers concerns with conservation. The goal of her position is to work with tribal producers with conservation practices and help them get more practices on the ground. She is the link between the producer and NRCS. The goal is to be on every reservation at least four times during the year, scheduling and hosting multi-day workshops. Dahle attended the Ag and Science Expo at Crow Agency, helped the Northern Cheyenne in forming an agriculture group, attended the Chippewa Cree Farmer/Rancher meeting, participated in the Blackfeet Conservation Board meeting and Blackfeet Fires Disaster producer meetings, and attended the Pryor area USDA outreach meeting. She will work with IAC, the tribes, and NRCS tribal conservationists in planning more producer meetings. In her travels she will also promote the importance of higher education in the natural resources fields to the students on the reservations.

*Teri Loring Dahle*

Dahle (enrolled Blackfeet) came from a farm/ranch background, raised on the Seville Flats area of the Blackfeet Reservation. She was active in 4-H and rodeo while growing up. Dahle maintains that being raised on a farm/ranch taught her the work ethic she has today. Graduating from Montana State University in 1986 with a bachelor of science in agricultural business, she has taken many paths in her career. At the beginning of her career, she worked in the Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS) field offices in Cut Bank and Forsyth and also worked as a crop insurance adjustor. She and her husband of 23 years, Dennis Dahle, lived on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation for nine years, where she began a career in tribal higher education working at Chief Dull Knife College. She and her husband moved back to the Blackfeet Reservation where they made their home for another eight years. They started a successful rodeo photography business that took them across the United States and Canada to most large Indian rodeos and celebrations. They were fortunate enough to live in Arizona in the winter and Montana in the summer. They moved back to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation two and a half years ago to help her husband's family with its cow/calf operation. Dahle once again found herself back at the tribal college as the career coach. When she saw the IAC-NRCS job opening, Dahle said she found her dream job because there has not been a day in her life that she was not involved in agriculture, be it horses, cattle, or people.

If a producer has a question or needs clarification, please contact Dahle at tdahle@indianaglink.com or 406-697-5452. She is willing to go the extra mile in communicating between all the USDA programs and producers. Please go to the IAC Web site (www.indianaglink.com) to learn more about the important role the Council has in promoting "Indian use of Indian resources." The mission of IAC is "to provide a unified effort to promote change in Indian Agriculture for the benefit of Indian People."

## Upcoming Sign-up Deadline for EQIP FY2013

Applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for 2013 funding in Montana must be submitted no later than June 1, 2012. EQIP provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers implement conservation practices that provide environmental benefits to help sustain the agricultural operation. Assistance to eligible participants includes the installation or implementation of both structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. The Farm Bill authorizes increased payments for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, in addition to beginning and limited resource producers. It further allows that tribal individuals may receive in advance up to 30 percent of the amount needed for purchasing materials or contracting.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round; however, applications for 2013 funding consideration for EQIP must be submitted by June 1, 2012. Applications made after the application deadline will be considered in the next funding cycle.

Additional information about the EQIP program is available from your local USDA Service Center or at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/.

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

**November 2012**

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference
November 1-3, 2012; Anchorage, Alaska
For more information: www.aises.org/nationalconference

Deadline to Apply for NRCS Montana Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)
November 30, 2012
For more information: Sharon Huber, NRCS Human Resources Manager
406-587-6937

# 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+last 4
Harlem, MT 59526

*District Conservationist*- Scott Morton,
Email: mailto: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

*Fork Peck Tribal Liaison*- Thomas Beck,
Email: tom.beck@mt.usda.gov

*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

*Chippewa Cree Tribal Technician*-
Bobby LaSalle,
Email: robert.lasalle@mt.usda.gov

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