



The Explorer

The Official Newsletter of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District

Volume 51, Issue 2

Spring 2012

Ranching For Profit: The Three Secrets for increasing profit seminar, June 26, 2012

The Lewis & Clark Conservation District will be hosting Dave Pratt from Ranch Management Consultants. Pratt is a well-known and much sought-after speaker on sustainable agriculture and profitable ranching. The seminar in June will specifically be on the Three Secrets for Increasing Profit. Topics will include:

1. Is Ranching Really A Business?
2. The Three Secrets for increasing profit
3. Crunching the numbers (a planning process)
4. Looking for "deadwood"
5. Wealthy on the Balance Sheet but Broke at the Bank

The seminar will begin at 1 p.m. (lunch not provided) at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel on June 26. It should run until 4:30 or so. In Dave's words:

"Most Montana ranches are subsidized with off-farm income, inherited wealth and free or under-paid family labor. The balance sheet looks better and better because land values have and are appreciating, but that doesn't produce cash flow. So while ranchers are often wealthy on the balance sheet they are usually broke at the bank.

Most Montana ranches resemble a collection of assets and a lot of jobs more than they do a real business. At the Ranching For Profit School we help people transform their ranches into real businesses that produce a healthy, unsubsidized profit.

At this very interactive workshop, participants will learn what it to turn their ranch into a real business and how that will be good for their ranch and their life. They will learn what we call the "three secrets" for increasing profit, and how to use simple, powerful benchmarking tools to determine which of the three secrets applies to them. Most importantly, participants will see their ranch from a new perspective. In doing so they will see important threats and opportunities that they hadn't been aware of before."

The Seminar will be followed by the Lewis & Clark Conservation District's Annual Dinner, featuring a Baron of Beef buffet, great conversation about conservation, and recognition of District Sponsors. For more information, or to register for either or both events, call Chris at 449-5000 ext. 112. Seating is limited! The seminar will be \$20 and dinner will be \$15 and payment in advance is required.

Annual Dinner!!!

Once again the Lewis & Clark Conservation District would like to invite landowners, residents of the county, sponsors and anyone else who is interested to a gathering to celebrate our years working to conserve our natural resources! The dinner will be held in conjunction with the Seminar (see page 1) by Dave Pratt. It will take place on June 26, 2012 at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel, and will feature a Baron of Beef Buffet with all the trimmings. We expect good conversation and recognition of our sponsors. A cash bar will be available as well. Cost is \$15, and seating is limited, so call Chris at 449-5000 ext. 112 and reserve your seat today!

The Conservation District has Land Ownership Maps for Sale! The booklets are \$25 plus any shipping, and the larger booklets and wall maps are \$40 each, plus any shipping necessary. Please call the office at 449-5000 ext. 112 to inquire, or stop in at 790 Colleen Street to pick one up!

How to tell sulfur cinquefoil from the native cinquefoils--Jim Jacobs, NRCS 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 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 District Conservationist and they will help you with identification.



This is the first in a series of articles from Jim Jacobs in regard to plants in the state of Montana.

District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator

February through April, the board review 15 new 310 permits, one emergency and one complaint. The board has maintained their activities in the Sun River Watershed Group, the Lake Helena Watershed Group, the Water Quality Protection District, the Missouri River CD Council, the Blackfoot Challenge, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts and many other organizations.

The Board hosted the Local Work Group on March 8 before their regular meeting. This meeting was to help determine local priorities for the NRCS EQIP program.

The Conservation District once again budgeted for teams for the Envirothon from county schools. Four teams (two each from Helena High and Capital High) went to the state Envirothon in April. The Board is also contributing \$4000 to the National Envirothon which will be held in Montana in 2013.

The April Meeting is the last one in Helena before October. The next meeting will be May 10th at the Augusta Youth Center; June, July and August the board meets at the Dearborn Community Center on Highway 434 outside of Wolf Creek. The June-August meetings are at 8:30 a.m. In September the Board will meet in Lincoln at 9:30 a.m.