



# Sweetwater County Conservation District

SEEDSKADEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## 2023 Annual Report

This Page Has Been Intentionally  
Blank

## Vision

The Sweetwater County Conservation District envisions the needs of their communities today, tomorrow and into the future and to help protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources.

## Mission Statement

The Mission of the Sweetwater County Conservation District is to provide for conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this county, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and thereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the this County.

(Ref.: Wyoming Statutes Title 11. Agriculture, Livestock and Other Animals § W.S. 11-16-103 et seq.)

## What Is A Conservation District

We are a local governmental subdivision of the state of Wyoming as defined and established by Wyoming Conservation Districts Law. The Sweetwater County Conservation District's Board of Supervisors are elected by the people of Sweetwater County at General Elections by popular vote. Conservation District Board members are the only locally elected board charged specifically with the responsibility of representing local people on natural resource issues.

## Responsibilities' Of District Board Members

By Statute, Conservation District Board is the voice of landowners and cooperators within the District. The Conservation District Board is the only elected board charged specifically with the responsibility of representing the local people on natural resource issues.

## Why are Conservation Districts Important Today?

Conservation Districts were formed in the beginning to allow local citizens many opportunities to help guide and develop conservation programs in each county by working at the “grass roots” level, the most important vantage point for identifying problems, finding solutions and developing and implementing programs. Today, more so than half a century ago, Conservation Districts are a valuable resource to face the challenges posed by natural resource use and management.

Helping to solve soil and water resource problems.

Setting priorities for conservation work to be accomplished.

Coordinating the federal, state and local resources needed to accomplish this work.

Providing leadership at the local level and means for interested local citizens to work together to achieve desired results.

Soliciting and consolidating local input to assist federal agencies in their planning programs and projects that impact our county.



**DUST BOWL STORM, 1930-1936**

**HISTORY**

*About Us:* The Sweetwater County Conservation District was originally called the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District, which was organized in September of 1960 at the request of local citizens for the purpose of conserving the soil, water, and all other natural resources and to promote and maintain the welfare of the people in the district. The Secretary of State signed a certificate of the first Inclusion of Additional Territory within the boundary of the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District in November of 1969. Other boundary changes were made and, in 1974, the Secretary of State filed a certificate to include all of Sweetwater County in the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District. In late August of 2002, the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District name was changed to the Sweetwater County Conservation District.

**2021 Wyoming Statute Wyo. Stat. § 11-16-122**

**Title 11 - Agriculture, Livestock and Other Animals**

**Chapter 16 - Conservation Districts**

**Section 11-16-122 - Powers and Duties of Districts and Supervisors Thereof Generally.**

(viii) Cooperate, including but not limited to representing the conservation district as a cooperating agency with special expertise as provided by the National Environmental Policy Act and in federal land planning implementation as provided in W.S. 11-16-135(a), enter into agreements with and furnish financial or other aid to, any agency, governmental or otherwise, or any owner or occupier of lands within the district, in carrying on range management or erosion control and prevention operations and works of improvement for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water within the district, subject to such conditions as the supervisors deem necessary;

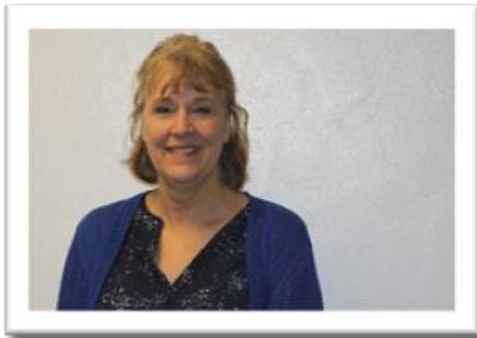
The people of Sweetwater County elect the five-member Board of Supervisors to the District during the general election by popular vote. The elected members represent both the rural and urban populations within Sweetwater County. The district supervisors are the only locally elected board specifically charged with the responsibility of representing the citizens of Sweetwater County on natural resource issues. A conservation district supervisor serves the community voluntarily. The District Board of Supervisors administers and implements projects and programs funded through local, state, federal, and private partnerships. Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month and are open to the public. Associate Supervisors are also an important part of the District. They are citizens interested in the important role of conservation districts and volunteer their time to attend meetings and provide valuable input, however, they are non-voting members.

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Jean Dickinson, Treasurer, Urban Member  
Larry Folks, Vice-Chairman, Rural Member,  
Tom Burris Chairman, Rural Member,  
Stephanie Anderson, Secretary, Rural Member,  
Henry Bliss, At-Large Member



## DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR



Karen Pecheny, District Administrator

The SWCCD staff oversees the day-to-day operations of the conservation district.

Represents the District and voices the District's opinion as designated by the Board of Supervisors.



**CATTLE IN SWEETWATER COUNTY**

## Bitter and Killpecker Creek Water Quality Monitoring

Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD) has conducted monitoring from 2004 through 2023, currently under the Bitter Creek Watershed-Based Plan (BCWBP) Monitoring is done to review impairment listings, catalog water quality and quantity and stream channel conditions, and assess management measure (MM) implementation locations and effectiveness.

Continued monitoring allows the SWCCD to evaluate long-term changes in water quality associated with the installation of improvement practices and increased *awareness* of water quality concerns.



**KILLPECKER CREEK**

## Big and Little Sandy Water Quality Monitoring

The Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD) has been monitoring surface water on the Big and Little Sandy Rivers in both Sublette and Sweetwater counties since 2008. Two sites have been established on each river, where chemical, biological and physical data are collected. The Sublette County Conservation District (SCCD) collects chemical samples five times per year and aquatic insects in the fall. The district has established a partnership with the Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD), where the SCCD provides the manpower to conduct the monitoring and the SWCCD splits the cost of the monitoring efforts. The Little Sandy River was placed initially on Wyoming's 303(d) List in 1996 for not supporting its cold-water fisheries and aquatic life, other than fish and uses below Elkhorn Junction.

## Bitter Creek Watershed Advisory Group (BKWAG)

A Bitter Killpecker Creek Watershed Advisory Group (BKWAG) meeting was held in May 2023 to review project findings and confirm 2023 implementation planning. Planning was done with input from SWCCD, BKWAG, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) and the district's consultant: EDE Consultants LLC (EDE). Ron Steg, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ), *gave an update on the EPA final report regarding the Bitter Creek chloride status*. The EPA background concentration in Bitter Creek and Killpecker Creek has been based on all the data and WDEQ is expecting a final report from the EPA.

The 2023 Annual Report and the Bitter Creek Watershed Based Plan are both available on the district's website at: [www.swccd.us/bitter-creek-watershed.php](http://www.swccd.us/bitter-creek-watershed.php)

# LAND PLANNING

## Subdivision Reviews

The District has 60 days to review and comment on a proposed subdivision review. Within this review, the District considers soil suitability, erosion control, sedimentation, and flooding problems. This information is used to inform the local Planning & Zoning staff and County Commissioners of natural resource concerns specific to the development. SWCCD found soils information and commented on six subdivision reviews over the past year.

## Coalition Of Local Governments

SWCCD is heavily involved in federal land planning and meets once a month to discuss and review federal plans and projects. The CLG consists of four county commissions as well as five conservation districts. (Uinta, Lincoln, Sweetwater, Sublette, Little Snake River)

The Coalition is currently reviewing and commenting on the BLM’s Rock Springs Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Ashley National Forest Plan Revision.

## Bureau Of Land Management

Seventy Percent of Sweetwater County is public land and the District works closely with five BLM Field Offices: Rock Springs, Kemmerer, Rawlins, Pinedale, and Lander.

Comments are made on the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Travel Management Plan, Sage Grouse 9 Plan, USFS and BLM Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)’s and Environmental Assessments (EA)’s for grazing, mineral, wind and solar development.

## Local Work Group

The Local Work Group (LWG) priorities (for Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Committee guidance) and local Resource Advisory Committee (LRAC) (the natural resource guidance to SWCCD)

The Local Work Group decided to keep the same resource concerns for 2023.



Grazing Lands Management – Forest and Woodland Health – Watershed Health

Invasive Species – Soil Health

Irrigation Watershed Management -Streambank -Riparian Health – Water Quality



## Meetings And Conventions



**BEAR RIVER WETLAND**

The Area V Meeting was hosted by the Lincoln County Conservation District in September 2022. Afton, Lincoln, Little Snake, Star Valley, Sublette, Sweetwater, Teton, and Uinta County Conservation District attended the training.

Discussion included: Pacific Power Terra Power discussed the proposed Kemmerer Natrium Advanced Nuclear Project and the on-going Bear River Wetland Restoration Project

## Wyoming Association of Conservation District (WACD) 2022 Convention



The annual convention was held in Casper, Wyoming in early December 2022. The convention was held with the Wyoming Stock/Wool Growers. The convention was packed with committee and business meetings, congressional speakers and Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon gave the keynote address.

Larry Folks, Karen Pecheny, Carol Hamilton from Uinta County, and Stephanie Anderson attended.

SWCCD nominated Carol Hamilton for "Outstanding Cooperator."

## Truman Elementary Career Day

The District along with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Trout Unlimited attended Truman Elementary Career Day. The Truman students rotated through stations set up outside and in the school gym. This year we were able to teach elementary kids (using the Enviroscape Model) about water quality, pollution, erosion, and different fish species in the Green River.



Courtney Thomas, NRCS, Karen Pecheny, SWCCD & Hillary Walrath, TU



**Seedling Tree Program:** Every fall the SWCCD brings landowners a wide selection of native trees and shrubs for their landscape and conservation needs. These native trees are a good choice for projects because they are uniquely suited to our soils, weather, and repelling pests. These trees have unique and crucial relationships with the insects, pollinators, and birds our ecosystem depends on. For the 2023 sale, the District sold 1,350 trees and shrubs.

The purpose of the program is to encourage tree planning around the county to create wind barriers to protect buildings and livestock, serve as snow fences and provide shelter for wildlife. Trees can also be used to stabilize stream banks, reduce noise, and provide shade, control erosion and moisture in an area that might otherwise run off through creeks and rivers.



## Green River Arbor Day Event

**"Plant a tree"** Arbor Day Tree Giveaway 2022: The City of Green River celebrated Arbor Day on May 18 at Expedition Island. This Arbor Day marks the 39th consecutive year that Green River has held the designation of a "Tree City, USA." Green River is the second longest-running Tree City in the great State of Wyoming; second only to our Capital of Cheyenne. Sponsored by the Green River Tree Board.

## 27th Annual Trees for Recyclables

For the 27<sup>th</sup> year in a row the Rock Springs Ray Lovato Recycling Center hosted “Trees for Recyclables Day” The event was held in May and is partnered with the Sweetwater County Conservation District. Area residents can take advantage of bringing in recycled items for free trees.



**RAY LOVATO CENTER HOST TREES FOR RECYCLABLES**



**SILVER BUFFALO BERRY**