



# Sweetwater County Conservation District 2016 Annual Report

## Conservation District Mission Statement

W.S. 11-16-103

The mission of the 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.

### Board of Supervisors

The Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD) is comprised of individuals who have expertise, experience, interest or specific concerns with conservation issues. The Board of Supervisors are elected officials who serve four-year terms on a voluntary basis. There are three rural, one urban and one at-large position. Supervisors attend monthly Board Meetings and oversee the activities and projects of the Conservation District.

Chairman, Mary Thoman, Rural, Vice-Chairman, Tom Burris, Rural Secretary, Jean Dickinson, Urban Supervisor, Bob Slagowski, Rural Treasurer, Henry Bliss, At-Large



### SWCCD Board

Jean Dickinson, Bob Slagowski, Henry Bliss, Mary Thoman and Tom Burris



Sweetwater County Commission Meeting - Anadarko donates 20 acres for Bitter Creek Drop Structure Project

# Water Quality

The Sweetwater County Conservation District (SWCCD) has conducted water quality and quantity sampling within the Bitter Creek watershed since 2004.

Sampling has been conducted to evaluate Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) 303d chloride and E. coli bacteria impairment listings in the watershed. Sampling has supported the 303d impairment listings and allowed identification of areas in the watershed contributing to elevated concentrations of chloride and E. coli. WDEQ will develop a total maximum daily load (TMDL) assignment for E. coli and implement a criterion for chloride within the impaired reaches of the Bitter Creek watershed

During 2015 the SWCCD conducted spring and fall single sample monitoring at select project locations. Spring sampling coincided with a significant precipitation runoff event which produced high flows at most sites sampled. Flows during fall sampling returned to a typical low flow condition. Results from 2015 sampling were reviewed against the project data set for indications of changes in water quality occurring in Bitter or Killpecker



**Bitter Creek High Flow**

Creeks. No significant changes were noted.

High runoff flows within Bitter and Killpecker Creeks during spring sampling appear to be correlated to:

- Lower than average chloride concentrations.
- Uniformly elevated E. coli concentrations

### WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (WDEQ)

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

The TMDL will resume in 2017. A TMDL assessment is required by the Clean Water Act.

# Bitter Creek Drop Structure

## Pierotto Ditch Drop Structure



The Pierotto Ditch project, also known as the Bitter Creek drop structure project, began in the early 1990s. After years of grant writing, getting the needed studies done and gathering support from various groups, construction on the new drop structure is finally underway.

The Bitter Creek Diversion/Headcut Drainage Area, of which the diversion structure is part, is the largest ephemeral drainage in the United States at 2,200 square miles.

Anadarko donated almost 20 acres of property to Sweetwater County for the project.

The Pierotto Diversion Structure is located approximately 14 miles east of Rock Springs. This head cut protects Interstate 80, industrial sites downstream, Union Pacific Rail Road, grazing activity and the genetically pure flannel mouthed suckers. SWCCD has successfully secured grants from the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality/Bureau of Land Management, Desert Fish Habitat Partnership and Sweetwater County Commissioners. The proposed structure will replace the old one, would use resistant rock, sheet piling, or steel sheets driven into the ground to prevent water flowing around the channel; and concrete.

## Big and Little Sandy Rivers Water Quality Monitoring

The Sublette County Conservation District (SCCD) began monitoring the Big and Little Sandy Rivers in 2008 in conjunction with the Sweetwater County Conservation District. Chemical, biological and physical data are collected and the SCCD collects chemical samples 5 times per year and aquatic insects in the fall. The SCCD provides manpower, equipment, etc. to conduct the monitoring while the Sweetwater CD provides half of the funding for this endeavor.

Aquatic Insect collections using surber nets take place between August-October. These bug samples are then sent to an independent contractor for identification and data assessment. Insects are very sensitive to changes in water temperature, fine sediment and oxygen.



## Big Sandy Working Group

The Big Sandy Working Group (BSWG) BLM continues to monitor pre- and post-season grazing along the Big Sandy Riparian Corridors as well on upland sites. The group formed in 1996 with the goal of preserving and enhancing the riparian areas and the water quality of the Big Sandy River from Farson to the confluence of the Green River. A 10 and 50 year vision of the desired condition of the Big Sandy River Corridor was developed early on.





### Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The District has numerous MOU's with different entities.



*Federal Plans – The Rock Springs BLM is revising a Resource Management Plan (RMP) that will guide the use, development, and protection of nearly all natural resources in much of Sweetwater County and portions of Sublette, Lincoln, Uinta and Fremont Counties.*



### Coalition of Local Governments

The CLG consists of four county commissions (Uinta, Lincoln, Sweetwater & Sublette) as well as four conservation districts. The CLG meets once a month to review federal plans and projects.

## Land Planning - Land and Resource Use Plan & Policy

Would you like to know what the District will be doing in the next five years? It's the question that has been the driving force behind SWCCD's development of its **2015-2020 Land and Resource Use Plan & Policy document (LRUPP)**

In great detail, this plan identifies and applies goals, objectives and policies to the state and federal policies to the state and federal regulatory framework that governs the management of private, state and federal land and the rangeland soil, water and wildlife resources. It is designed to guide the county, private, state and federal decisions makers in addressing federal and state natural resource management issues.

Because is it charged with conserving, protecting and developing these resources on all lands within the county, it is one of the few governmental entities with the authority to address resources issues; in cooperation with private landowners or state or federal land management agencies on private, state and federal lands. State law also gives the district broad powers to accomplish these policies and mandates.

"The District believes that the American concept of government of the people, by the people and for the people is best served when government affairs are conducted as close the people as possible," the LRUPP. "The District is well aware that one goal of the county's citizens and, therefore, its government, has been the continuation of a lifestyle, which assures the quiet enjoyment of private property rights and property interests and provides the highest degree of protections for these rights."

"Property rights and interests are important to the people living and working in this remote, rugged county, which has an area larger than some states but the population of a small town." "Many people who live in Sweetwater County rely on the land and its productive use. Private ownership and the incentive provided by private ownership are driving forces that support the livelihood of many Sweetwater County citizens."

SWCCD intends to keep the document a fluid one, continually evolving to address dynamic and ever-changing issues faced by the District.

If you want to read the document itself or weigh in on what the District is doing, visit the District's website at [www.swccd.us](http://www.swccd.us) or stop by the District's office at 79 Winston Drive, Suite 103, Rock Springs.

As projects are developed, SWCCD vows to seek public input and take into account any effects the projects will have on adjoining landowners and other Conservation Districts.



In addition to direct involvement, you can take advantage of the services and programs SWCCD offers each year. You can call the office at 307-362-5257.

#### FAST FACTS

70%

Seventy percent of Sweetwater County is public land.

5

The District works with 5 BLM Field Offices. Rock Springs, Kemmerer Rawlins, Pinedale and Lander.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact:  
Sweetwater County Conservation District  
79 Winston Dr. Suite 103  
Rock Springs, WY 82901

Phone: 307-362-5257

# Public Outreach

## 2016 Spring Home and Garden Show

SWCCD participated with the Master Gardeners Class from the University of Wyoming Extension Class with a booth at the Spring Home Show at the Events Complex. The Conservation District and Master Gardeners passed out information on planting trees, soil, water quality and flowers.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

**A well informed public adapts more successfully to the future.**

Website: [admin@swccd.us](mailto:admin@swccd.us)

## Thoman Ranch Days

In April the Thoman Ranch hosted 4<sup>th</sup> graders from the Washington Elementary School in Green River. Here the students learned about ranching practices, and saw all the different livestock and new off spring on the ranch.

## Green River Arbor Day Celebration

The District participated with the Green River Arbor Day celebration held at Apache Trail Park. The District handed out tree material and recycling bags.

The District supports the 20th Annual Ray Lovato « Trees for Recyclables Day »



## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual River Festival River Walk

SWCCD participated in the River Walk that was held on August 19 & 20 along the greenbelt in Green River. The District along with Trout Unlimited, City of Green River, Green River Chamber, Wyoming Game & Fish, and many other agencies were on hand to educate the community on the river and its habitat.

Picture Top right- Bottom right - Arbor Day; Bottom left winners of backpacks at River Festival:



# 2016 Tree Program

SWCCD hosts many special programs throughout the year, such as the ever popular seedling tree program. Last year the District sold **1,376** seedling trees and perennial plants. Buffaloberry and cottonwoods were the most popular species this year.

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.

## Meetings and Conventions

### Area V

The Area V Meeting was hosted by Lincoln Conservation District on September 2, 2015 at the Lincoln Training Center. Lincoln, Little Snake, Star Valley, Sublette, Sweetwater, Teton and Uinta County Conservation Districts attended the training. The agenda included presentations from Jonathan Teichert, Coalition of Local Governments and Mary Jones, Wyoming Department of Agriculture along with updates from several agencies.

### Local Work Group

The USDA Sweetwater County Local work Group met in August at the SWCCD Office. The main purpose of the meeting was to determine local work group priorities for the 2016 funding year. The group discussed the purpose of the local work group and review the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) local resource concerns,

priorities and programs. After discussion the priorities and concerns from the group will be taken to the State Technical Advisory Committee in September 2016.

### Bitter Creek Watershed Advisory Group (BKWAG)

The BKWAG meets once a year to discuss water quality, water quality sampling and receive updates on the watershed plan implementation, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) progress and development, City of Rock Springs updates, Wyoming Water Development Office Level 1 Watershed Study for Bitter Creek and the Bitter Creek Drop Structure progress and design development.

### Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) 2015 Convention

The WACD Convention was held November 2-5 in Laramie hosted by the Laramie Rivers Conservation District. This year the Association welcomed the Wyoming Weed and Pest Districts and Wyoming Section of the Society for Range Management. The keynote speaker was Dennis Knight, author, Ecology of Wyoming: Twenty Years of Change. The convention included the awards ceremony, auction and tours.

SWCCD nominated The Board of Trustees of School District No. 2 in Green River for Outstanding Elected Officials and Dennis Ellis of Anadarko for Outstanding Cooperator, both nominees were selected and received awards.

## TREES



### Buffaloberry Shrub

Medium to tall shrub, drought tolerant and good for wildlife. Grows up to 10 feet high, elevation range is 7,500 feet, very good for this region. Grows moderate.



### Cottonwood Tree

Tall, fast growing in moist soils. Growth form: 75 -100 ft. excellent- cold hardy and elevation to 6,500. These trees are not drought tolerant and need water.



### Bitter-Killpecker Creeks Watershed Advisory Group

BKWAG at work discussing local soil and water resource concerns. The group meets and work alongside the State of Wyoming, Sweetwater County, City of Rock Springs, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) residents and consultants.

# Elected Supervisors

## Mary Thoman Board Chairman



Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative - Executive Committee representative for seven SW Wyoming

counties-a special federal initiative to provide for habitat improvement projects in the heavily mineral impacted SW Wyoming counties (see wlci.gov for more). Two-term Chairman of WLCI.

CLG Executive Committee - A Coalition of Local Governments consisting of four county commissions and five conservation districts in SW Wyoming (Sweetwater, Lincoln, Uinta, Little Snake River in Carbon County and Sublette). The CLG meets monthly to review federal plans and projects. They work with a legal, technical, economic, and wildlife team of experts to draft comments for forest and Bureau of Land Management plans and projects.

Big Horn Sheep working Group -Former Governor Geringer and Senator Thomas assisted the group of interested individuals and organizations in the initial stages. A Big Horn -Domestic Sheep Plan for Wyoming was developed and approved by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. Numerous protocols were developed for the Wyoming Game and Fish and others to follow when dealing with big horn sheep. The group was instrumental in obtaining a research component for Wyoming domestic-wildlife disease issues. The Legislature provides funding. The group meets annually to discuss the latest research and anything related to big horn sheep or domestic sheep interactions. (Plan is available on the WG&F web site)

Big Sandy Working Group - Federal livestock grazing permittees, interested parties, and the Bureau of Land Management have met for over ten years to address wildlife and domestic livestock issues along the Big Sandy River. A 50-year vision and monitoring plan have been developed. Wyoming Water Development small project funding was matched with permittees and BLM funds to implement a series of projects including nine upland wells, three reservoirs, two pipelines and riparian corridor electric fencing. Five riparian sites are monitored in

he fall and spring to measure use levels by livestock and wildlife. Fencing provides for summer rest in hopes of promoting willow growth along the river.

- Jack Morrow Hills SEIS Implementation – Serves as the District’s liaison in implementing the plan.
- Rock Springs resource Management Plan (RMP) Cooperator
- Regional Economic Model (REMI) and Transportation Plan
- Kemmerer RMP and Moxa Arch EIS – District liaison
- Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) Executive Committee Member



## Tom Burris - Board Vice-Chairman

- Eden Valley Irrigation District
- Bitter Creek Killpecker Creek Watershed Advisory Group - Co-Chair currently implementing the Bitter Creek and Killpecker Creek Watershed Plan.
- Seedling Tree Program Supervisor Liaison.



## Jean Dickinson - Board Secretary

Coalition of Local Governments – Liaison for SWCCD

Cooperating Agency to the Hiawatha EIS Programmatic agreement - Serves as the liaison for the District.

Rawlins Field Office Visual Resource Management Plan and ACEC.

Rawlins Resource Management Plan

Continental Divide Creston EIS – District Liaison  
TranWest Transmission Line EIS – District Liaison

Energy Gateway South Transmission Line EIS – District Liaison

Rock Springs Resource Management Plan (RMP) Cooperator

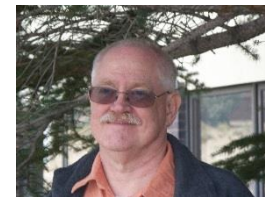
Sage Grouse Revision EIS - District Liaison

Ashley National Forest Motorized Travel Plan and Forest Revision- Serves as the liaison for the District

Daley Allotment Memorandum of Understanding, (MOU)

Serves as the liaison between the affected conservations districts, Rawlins Field Office, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

Tri-State MOU - Sweetwater Wyoming, Moffat County Colorado, and Daggett County Utah State NRCS for Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. - Serves as the liaison for the District.



## Henry Bliss - Board Treasurer

Board Treasurer

Computer/IT

Website Design

Co-Lead Bitter Creek

## Bob Slagowski - Board Rural Supervisor



Cedar Mountain Grazing Association – Serves as a member and liaison for the District

Local Sage Grouse Working Group –

serves as a liaison for the District

People’s Canal and Sheep Creek Canal – Serves as a member and liaison for the District

## District Staff - Special Thanks & Awards

### Karen Pecheny - District Clerk



Administrative Duties, which include - Administrative daily, monthly, quarterly, and annual records, budgets and financial reports for the District. She attends Board, Area V, committee, staff meetings, Conventions and various applicable training. Education and Outreach Coordinator and Tree Program Coordinator.

### Justin Caudill - Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) - Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI)



Justin is the Ag Program Coordinator for the WDA and WLCI, along with his full work load, he regularly attends SWCCD Board Meetings. The District appreciates his hard work, updates on projects, and help in finding funding sources, grant writing and wiliness to research. The District gives special thanks to Justin and everything that he brings to the District.

### Dennis Doncaster - Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Hydrologist



Dennis is the hydrologist for BLM, and has helped the District with water quality projects on Bitter Creek and the Bitter Creek Drop Structure Project. Dennis continues to attend and support the Bitter Creek Watershed Advisory Group (BKWAG) and its efforts for cleaner water. The District gives special thanks to Dennis for his knowledge and expertise.

### Bonnie Hueckstaedt, Farm Service Agency (FSA)



SWCCD congratulated and recognized **Bonnie Hueckstaedt** on her recent retirement and leadership after many years with the Farm Service Agency. The District wishes Bonnie a relaxing and happy retirement. Wishing her good health, good luck and great success in her retirement.

### Stephanie Anderson, Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, Program Coordinator

SWCCD congratulated and recognized **Stephanie Anderson**, WLCI Coordinator, on her dedication and leadership to the Initiative and wish her the best on her new work with the Ashley National Forest Service. You can find Stephanie at her office which is located in Manila, Utah.



# Thanks to our Cooperators

Anadarko  
Associate Board Supervisors  
Big Sandy Working Group  
Bitter Creek and Killpecker Creek  
Watershed Advisory Group  
BKS Environmental  
BP of America  
Bureau of Reclamation  
City of Green River  
City of Rock Springs  
Coalition of Local Governments  
Colorado State Forest Service  
Nursery  
Congressman Lummis  
Conservation Restoration and  
Seeding  
Department of Agriculture  
EnCana  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Farm Services Agency  
Farson Feed Store  
Environmental Design Engineering  
Farm Service Agency  
K.C. Harvey  
Lincoln County Conservation District  
Little Snake River Conservation  
District  
Muley Fanatic Foundation  
National Association of Conservation  
Districts  
Natural Resource Conservation  
Service  
Questar Exploration and Production  
Representative Cynthia Lummis  
Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce  
Rock Springs Grazing Association  
Rocky Mountain Survey  
Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge  
Senator John Barrasso  
Senator Mike Enzi's Office

Southwest Wyoming Industrial  
Association Sweetwater County  
Star Valley Conservation District  
State Grazing Board – Dick Loper  
Sublette County Conservation  
District  
Sweetwater County Agriculture  
Producers  
Sweetwater County Libraries  
Sweetwater County Commissioners  
Teton County Conservation District  
Trout Unlimited  
Uinta County Conservation District  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Geological Survey  
University of Wyoming  
Vermillion Ranch Limited  
Partnership  
W. Wyoming Community College-  
Green River Center  
Wexpro  
Wyoming Agriculture in the  
Classroom  
Wyoming Association of  
Conservation Districts  
Wyoming Department of Agriculture  
Wyoming Department of  
Environmental Quality  
Wyoming Department of  
Transportation  
Wyoming Game & Fish Department  
Wyoming Governor's Office  
Wyoming Landscape Conservation  
Initiative  
Wyoming Livestock Board  
Wyoming Natural Resource  
Foundation  
Wyoming State Engineers Office  
Wyoming State Forestry

Wyoming State Lands and  
Investments Board  
Wyoming State & Trust Lands  
Wyoming State Planning Office  
Wyoming Water Development  
Office  
Wyoming Wildlife and Natural  
Resource Trust

**SWCCD Facebook Page and  
check out the Website  
[www.swccd.us](http://www.swccd.us)**

SWCCD has a Facebook Page. We hope  
you'll decide to "Like Us" and join by visiting  
Sweetwater County Conservation District.



# Fiscal Year 2015 Budget

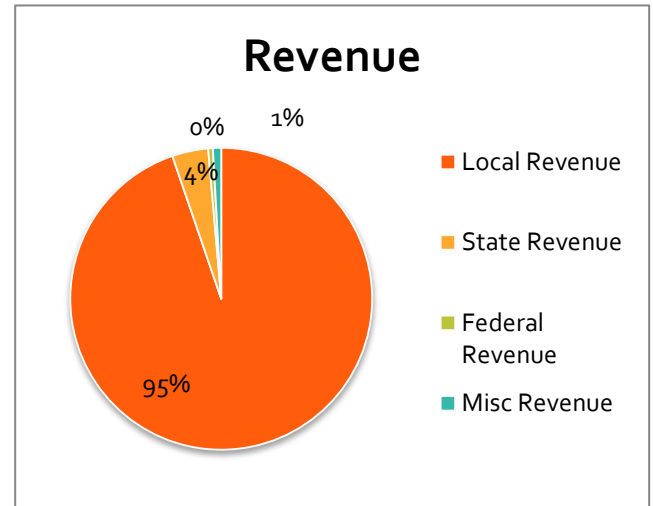
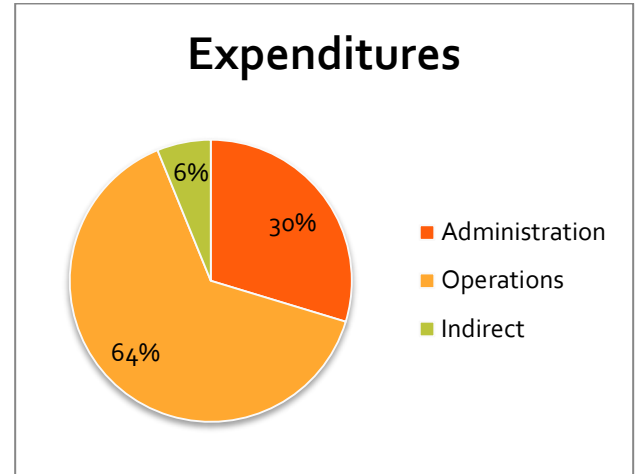
## Expenditures

Administration	\$99,260.00
Operations	\$214,469.00
Indirect Costs	<u>\$20,625.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$334,354.00</b>

## Revenue

Local Revenue	\$320,800.00
State Revenue	\$13,088.00
Federal Revenue	\$1,681.00
Tree Revenue	<u>2,993.00</u>
Subtotal	\$338,562.00

Cash On Hand	\$48,750.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$387,312.00</b>



The Annual Budget Hearing for the Sweetwater County Conservation District was held on Tuesday, July 21, 2015 at 10:00am.



Justin Caudill, WDA

Jean Dickinson, Bob Slagowski, Henry Bliss,

Tom Burris, Mary Thoman, Supervisors

Karen Pecheny, Staff