

Volume 27, Issue 1

January/February 2024



CONVERSE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
CCCD EXPRESS

Converse County Weed and Pest Grower's Meeting Recap

If you missed the Converse County Weed & Pest meeting have no fear! We were there and are happy to share all of the great information they provide with you. CCWP hosts this meeting every year in December to keep producers current with the latest helpful information on weed and pest management. Even if you don't need to renew your license, it's a great opportunity to learn about changes in laws, or new management strategies to get the most out of your land.

Jacey Arndt presented to the group on the invasive grasses, Ventenata and Medusahead. Both grasses are highly problematic invasive species that the Weed and Pest monitors closely. These grasses have been previously found in the county, and can be very damaging to rangeland health. While known patches have been controlled, keeping an eye out for more is very important. These grasses spread quickly, so rapid management is needed to keep them from taking over a landscape.

An area that has been taken over by invasive annual grasses has a higher susceptibility to fires, is more likely to be taken over by other problematic weeds, will have degraded soil cover and health and is less hospitable to livestock and wildlife. What small forage they provide is low in nutritional value, and unpalatable to animals. If you would like to learn more about how to identify these grasses, contact Jess.

Jerimiah Vardiman spoke with attendees about Alfalfa weevil management. Increasing numbers of weevils have developed resistance to insecticides, making control more difficult. An ideal control plan would be to rotate methods of control, but chlorpyrifos has been banned by the EPA, weevils are resistant to pyrethroids, and using only indoxacarb could result in the weevils developing resistance to it as well. Alternative management methods, such as starving the weevils of food by cutting early or allowing fields to dry out between crops, are being explored but are not as effective as we would like. To successfully manage Alfalfa weevil, monitoring is key. Producers would benefit from identifying the weevils, and tracking their numbers.

Kurt Bohrer updated the group about his new Ag Drone Service. He will be available to hire for insecticide and herbicide application of chemical in traditionally difficult to treat areas. He is also able to aerially seed areas for reclamation projects. The ability to treat places that are hard to reach will be a great step in long lasting control of problematic weed species on a landscape scale. Kurt can treat roughly 40 acres per hour with his drones, and can get approval to treat areas within restricted air spaces.

There are areas of the county that are predicted to have high grasshopper populations. If you noticed hoppers last summer and are worried about them in the upcoming year, please contact the Weed and Pest as soon as possible. Grasshoppers need to be controlled early in the season.

We bid farewell to Cheryl Schwartzkopf, who is retiring as the District Manager.
Best Wishes Cheryl!

If you have any questions about this information, need to renew your applicators license, or about pest control on your place, the Weed and Pest can be contacted at 307.358.2775

WWW.CONSERVECONVERSE.ORG



Good day all! NRCS Wyoming has went to county level funding as opposed to funding at the division level for 2024. In the past allocations for Converse County has been split between Natrona and Niobrara counties as well, in what was previously called Division 6. Divisions determined their priority resource concerns together, which was not always an easy feat given that these three counties are vastly different from one another. Due to this, I feel it prudent to assess what Converse County residents believe to be our priority resource concerns for our county alone. This will help guide our ranking of applications and help us determine what applications and projects the residents of this county think should receive funding over

others. To help with this process, I would appreciate it if you could take the survey linked through the QR code above, or the URL

<https://forms.microsoft.com/g/EhflKEc6P3>

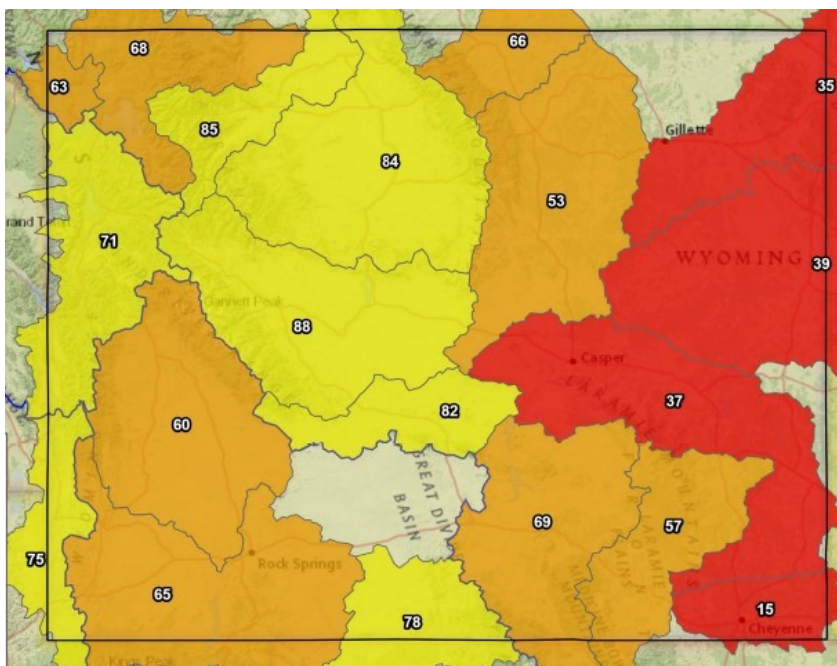
As always, if you have a project that you would like to discuss with the NRCS Field Office, or any questions you have please feel free to reach out to Kaitlin Hasler, District Conservationist Converse County at 307-258-0490 or at kaitlin.hasler@usda.gov

Snotel Update

This water year (Oct. 23—Sept. 24) has been a little dryer than average so far. It

is still too early to tell what winter snowpack will bring for the upcoming irrigation season. The current reading for the Lower North Platte River basin is 37% of median. Last year at this time it was at 83% of median. Historically, the wettest months of the year are February through May, which still leaves time to increase snowpack for the Lower North Platte, as well as the rest of Wyoming.

The Conservation District places the weekly snow reports, as well as monthly water supply outlooks on our website, under the current news tab.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE'S EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

2024 Compost Bin Purchase Program

Converse County Conservation District is excited to promote backyard composting by offering the Home Composter for sale again! **Pre-orders are being accepted now and must be received by our office January 26, 2024! Call in or fill out the form on the composter page of our website to place an order.** Kitchen Katchers are also available for pre-order.



About the Home Composter Bin

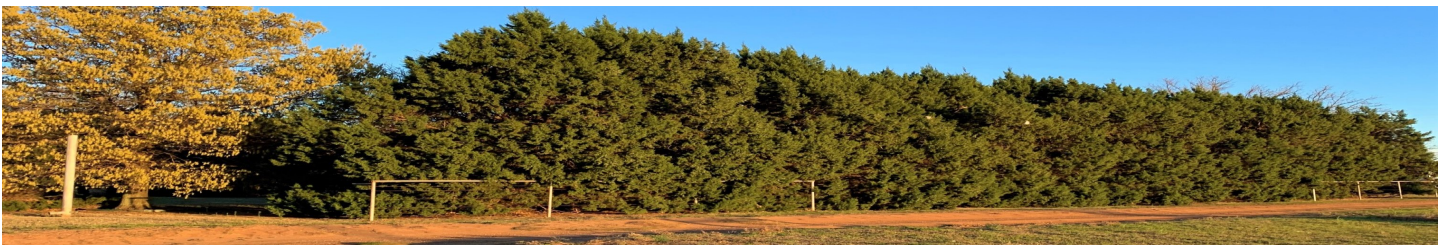
Made in North America of sturdy, yet lightweight, 100% recycled plastic Two-piece construction of sides allows for easy transporting (fits in most trunks/back seats) Large capacity: 17 cu. ft./holds 125 gallons (largest composter by comparison). Dimensions: 30" H x 32" diameter. Wide opening at the top—easy to add, view and manage materials. Lockable lid to deter pests and won't blow away. Sliding doors on each side to monitor the status of, or to harvest, compost. Not available in stores! These can only be purchased through Converse County Conservation District or a participating conservation district in your community.

Compost is the dark, crumbly, earthy smelling material produced by the decomposition of organic materials such as food scraps and yard trimmings. When added to soil, compost sequesters carbon, improves plant growth, conserves water, reduces reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and helps prevent nutrient runoff and soil erosion.

Studies indicate that 23 to 83 pounds per household per month could be diverted through home composting.

For every 10,000 households composting at home, between 1,400 and 5,000 tons per year could be diverted from curbside collection, with potential savings in avoided disposal costs alone ranging from \$72,000 to \$250,000.

Source: ILSR, Yes! In My Backyard: A Home Composting Guide for Local Government pg. 6



Seedling Tree Sales

Seedling tree sales are open. Our order form is available on our website, by stopping by our office, or we can mail one to you on request. We can also take tree orders over the phone. Our order form is updated regularly, and some tree species have already sold out. If you are interested in placing a tree order, we would encourage you to get it in as soon as possible. Tree sales are open through April. All trees that are available this year are bare-root bundles of 25.



NATRONA/CONVERSE FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Natrona/Converse County Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

Natrona County U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over, and the ballots have been counted.

Laura J. Miles of Casper was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) 3 and Donald Blackburn of Douglas was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) 4, the alternate for (LAA) 4 is Richard W. Lisco.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently elected county committee members will take office in January 2024 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, and they are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

Nearly 7,800 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the Natrona County FSA office at 307-261-5436 Ex.2.

Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them up-to-date.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. For the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock

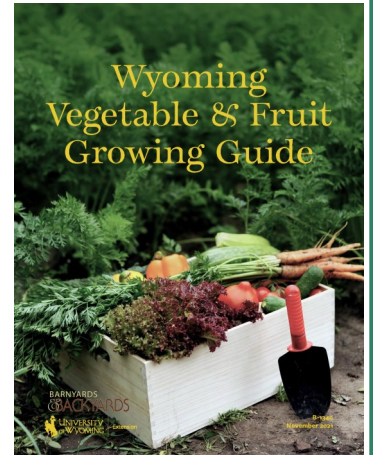
Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your Natrona County USDA Service Center at 307-261-5436 Ex. 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Winter Reading



As we enter a slower time of year, we should all have a little more time to do some reading. We have a few copies of the fall publication of Barnyards & Backyards left in our office, quite a few copies of the Wyoming Vegetable and Fruit Growing Guide, and a variety of other great publications. Barnyards & Backyards are an amazing resource for Wyoming specific information that is helpful to both new and old residents of Wyoming. They also have an online library that covers a wide variety of information. If you would like to pick up a copy of their magazine or guide, stop into our office. If you would like a hard copy of an article that is online, we are happy to print one for you!



Follow them on Facebook for fun publications and notifications about upcoming live seminars!

Barnyards and Backyards can be found at <https://www.uwyo.edu/barnbackyard/index.html>

State Convention Update

Conservation District Employees and two Board Supervisors attended our state convention in Dubois in November. Sharon Lovitt is one of the Area II directors for WACD, and she continued to do her part in shaping conservation goals for the State of Wyoming.

Congratulations to Ava, Abigail, and Flint Ostrander! Each of these amazingly talented students won the state poster contest in their grade division! Thank you for continuing to make Converse County a winner!

Converse County Conservation District won first place with it's annual report! It is available on our website if anyone would like to check it out.

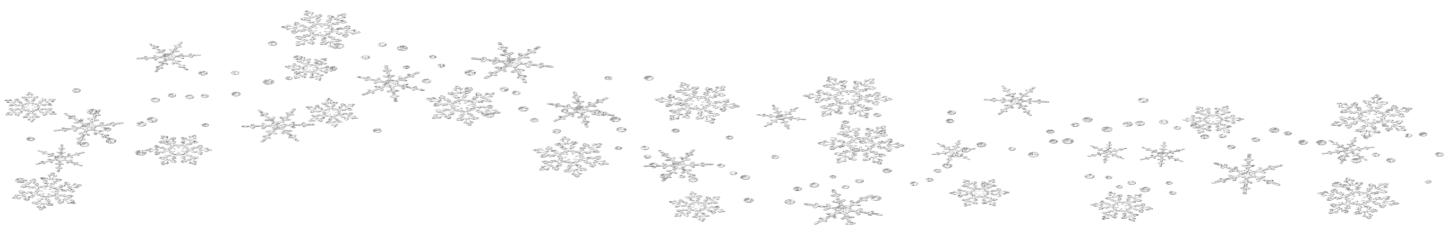
January/February Calendar of Events

JANUARY

- 1—Office Closed—New Year's Day Observed
- 15—Office Closed—MLK Jr. Birthday
- 18—CCCD Board Meeting

FEBRUARY

- 14—Valentine's Day
- 15—CCCD Board Meeting
- 19—Office Closed—Washington's Birthday



Postage Paid

Douglas, WY

Permit No. 13

**Converse County
Conservation District**

911 S. Windriver Drive

Douglas, WY 82633

Phone: 307-624-3164

michelle.huntington@wy.nacdnet.net

Hours: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Board of Supervisors

Stan Mitchem, Chairman

Shelly Falkenburg, Vice Chairman

Sharon Lovitt, Secretary/Treasurer

Patti Taboga, Member

Susan Downs, Member

District Staff

Michelle Huntington, District Manager

Anna Gray, Program Assistant

NRCS Staff

Kaitlin Hasler, District Conservationist

Dana Harris, Farm Bill Specialist

Todd Schuldies, CET

Converse County Conservation District

911 S. Windriver Drive

Douglas, WY 82633

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

ATTEND A CCCD BOARD MEETING

The Converse County Conservation District holds Board Meetings the third Thursday of each month starting at 4:30 p.m. We welcome your input, ideas, questions, and concerns regarding our projects and programs! Meetings are open to the public pursuant to Wyoming Statute 16-4-403.

Tree Programs

Worried about tree limbs hanging over your property? The Conservation District and the City of Douglas both have cost-share programs that can aid in the removal of hazardous trees.

The Conservation District's Community Canopy Program will cost-share 50% up to \$4,000 on the removal or trimming of trees that provides a public benefit. The most common public benefit that we see is safety—Preventing dangerous limbs from hanging over property, powerlines, sidewalks, streets and alleys. Please note that applications must be heard and approved by our board of directors before any work can be done on the trees. All we need for the process to begin is a filled out application (available on our website) and a copy of a quote from a licensed contractor. Applications are heard every month at our regular board meetings. They must be submitted by the Friday before the meeting to be heard.

CCCD cannot cost share on boulevard trees (Trees that are found between the sidewalk and the street). The City of Douglas does have a cost-share program that will pay for half of the trimming/removal of boulevard trees, not to exceed \$1,000.

Their application form is available on their website. The City of Douglas also cost-shares 50% up to \$200 on the planting of a new tree in the boulevard.

For questions about our Community Canopy Cost-Share program, please contact our office.