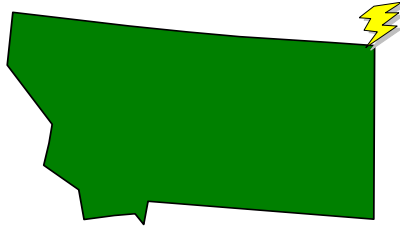


Sheridan County Conservation Notes

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KOCHIA CONTROL



"Kochia Control" -now that sounds like an oxymoron. Maybe those two words should not be used in the same sentence! Kochia is one of those weeds that gets beat down but keeps coming back. Some fields are cleaner than

others for kochia after due diligence. However, top weed managers using herbicide and cultural controls can still have a kochia problem if the neighbors let their kochia grow and roll off their fields. Kochia is especially hard to control if saline areas are present because kochia thrives there due to lack of competition from cereal grains, and the ground is typically constantly wet allowing for continuous germination of seeds.

There are many reasons for lack of kochia control in small grains. Kochia may emerge late, after some post-emergent herbicides have been applied. Also, many kochia populations throughout Montana have developed resistance to ALS inhibiting herbicides (Harmony Extra, Express, Ally, Finesse, etc.) and dicamba (Banvel and Clarity). Drought conditions contribute to the lack of control as well, since crops are less competitive, and some producers reduce input costs by cutting herbicide use and other control strategies.

Kochia plants produce an average of 24,000 seeds/plant and the root system can go down six feet to access moisture and nutrients. Because more than 90 percent of kochia seeds do not survive more than one year in the soil, the amount of seed produced in the fall largely equates to the number of seedlings that will emerge the following spring. Therefore, if effective post-harvest herbicide treatments are applied, there is very good potential to minimize kochia seedling populations the following year.

What are the most effective herbicide treatments for preventing kochia seed production?

Timing is everything. Roundup Ultra@ at 1.5 pt/A applied in Early September reduced kochia seed production by 92 to 97% at Huntley, Fort Benton, and Havre, MT in 2001. Similarly, Gramoxone Extra@ at 2 pt/A reduced kochia seed production by 92 to 99% when applied in the same time period. Spartan@ is used as an alternative to sulfonylurea resistant plants. It is applied in the fall after freeze up to provide residual control in the spring.

When is the best time to apply herbicides after small grain harvest?

Herbicides should be applied when kochia plants have developed sufficient leaf tissue (approximately 6-to-14-inch-tall kochia regrowth), and weather conditions are favorable. If herbicides (especially paraquat) are applied too early, there is not enough leaf area for herbicide absorption and poor control can result. If herbicide application is delayed too late (mid-September), kochia will have already produced viable seed and cool conditions may reduce herbicide efficacy (especially glyphosate).

In general, the end of August or early September appears to be the best time to apply either systemic (glyphosate, 2,4-D) or contact (paraquat) herbicides. However, the date of crop harvest and the weather conditions following harvest will affect kochia regrowth. Therefore, optimal timing will vary from year to year and site to site.

Kochia seeds will always be present in the soil, but with timely applications of herbicides and good record keeping populations can be kept in check. Post harvest control will have long-term benefits in subsequent crop years, and it makes for good neighbors. Your chemical dealer or local agronomist can assist in the decision making process in battling this serious problem.

(continued on Page 2)

The information used in this article was taken from a portion the Montana State University MONTGUIDE titled Post-harvest Kochia Management in Small Grains, publication number MT200213 AG 10/2002. The complete publication is available at your local extension service office or on the Internet. Newer data is being distributed this fall showing the merits of Spartan@ as a fall-applied herbicide to control kochia and some other broadleaf weed the following year in crop or in fallow. Spartan@ has some soil pH and organic matter restrictions so check that out first.



New Volunteer Begins Work for EPRCD on Alternative Energy Development

By David Brockes

Until this past May (2003), my interest in alternative energy resources was at best a passing thought. An opportunity then came to take the "Energy from the Farm" bus tour with Montana Secretary of State Bob Brown. Needless to say, it was an eye-opening experience and stirred some real interests, particularly in the area of wind.

I approached Mike Carlson, EPRC&D Coordinator, about that time and inquired about the possibility of doing volunteer work through his office related to wind energy, and how we might be able to generate interest and usage throughout Montana to benefit our school programs, farmers, ranchers, and businesses.

Our goals are to try and assist by monitoring specific areas to establish wind generation feasibility on State School Sections and with individuals who may be interested in establishing wind power. Other goals include researching regulations, grant and other funding possibilities, procuring "loaner equipment", and providing general information regarding wind energy in general. Working with other agencies or interested groups and becoming an additional resource will, of course, be a basic function. Another possibility could be to establish a newsletter of some kind that could be distributed throughout our region.

While my time has been very limited over the past couple of months, I hope to dedicate much more energy and time to making myself available to answer questions and assist in any way possible. I look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with and for alternative energy.

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The Montana Salinity Control Association, known as MSCA, is a satellite program of 34 conservation districts for saline soil and water reclamation. It started in 1979 on a pilot basis in nine counties and has expanded to cover most of eastern Montana. Saline conditions are manifested in salt-encrusted soil that reduces or prevents vegetative growth; these white areas are known as saline seeps or discharge areas. The recharge area is the surrounding region that creates the saline conditions, and the size is not easily quantified. MSCA provides a ground water assessment and site-specific reclamation plans for individual landowners, and groups in small and large-scale watersheds.

The reclamation process improves soil conditions and protects the State's ground water, streams and other aquatic resources. At one time, there were over 300,000 acres of formerly productive land that had become salinized. Land-use changes can bring much of that land back into production. The ground and surface water that becomes degraded from salt is actually more important and that reclamation is not as readily achieved.

Montana Salinity Control Association receives funding that is administered by the MT Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and competes for federal grants to address non-point source pollution. In addition, MSCA generates a portion of their revenue through charges or user-fees from the producers and groups. The reclamation process also contributes to the economic prosperity of the State's agricultural sector by improving production and bringing federal dollars to the local economy.

The information from a MSCA ground water investigation is utilized to qualify specific land (recharge areas) for USDA cost-share and incentive payments. MSCA has been instrumental in tailoring national conservation practices to solve saline problems. Since 1989, MT has received \$51,580,560 from USDA to implement saline reclamation measures. The Conservation Title of the 2002 Farm Bill is estimated to increase funding to Montana by five-fold over the next five years, so this is not a good time to be cutting back on the local participation.

Since the MSCA program began, about 928 saline sites have received site-specific recommendations. There are 80 projects in progress or waiting for technical and financial assistance. The federal conservation agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, does not have the technical staff and equipment to provide saline reclamation. NRCS relies on MSCA and Montana conservation districts for this technical assistance because it can be completed more timely and more cost-effectively.

MSCA is also involved in nine watershed-level saline projects. The size of projects ranges from about 5000 acres to over 600,000 acres. EPA has provided \$895,000 for technical assistance to watershed-level saline projects where it would be difficult to charge individual producers. Once again, when the recharge areas are identified, then the land and producers can qualify for USDA programs.

The saline seep reclamation program is an excellent example of a locally-led conservation program that coordinates the technical and financial resources of individuals, and groups from the county, state and federal level. Please support MSCA and all the conservation programs funded by the State General Fund and Coal Tax Shared Account. For more specific information, contact Jane Holzer, Program Director, at the MSCA office in Conrad, MT. MSCA has a field team with broad-based technical backgrounds that serves all 34 conservation districts.

Special/ educate/2003 MSCA information



Bozeman - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has set a cutoff date of February 15, 2004, for applications to be considered for conservation program funding in 2004.

“To simplify the application process for all of our conservation cost-share programs, we set one application deadline for all programs in 2004,” said Dave White, NRCS state conservationist for Montana. “By setting the cutoff date in February, we hope to notify applicants of program acceptance well before the field season starts.”

- The application cutoff date applies to the following programs:
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Grassland Reserve Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round, however, applications must be made by the Feb. 15, 2004, cutoff date to be considered for funding in 2004. Applications made after the cutoff date will be considered for funding in 2005



Bozeman -- Livestock producers with small dry lot animal feeding operations who work voluntarily with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop and implement an animal waste treatment plan will fulfill Montana requirements for managing waste and will not have to obtain a permit under the federal Clean Water Act or Montana’s Water Quality Act.

NRCS recently reached an agreement with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to clarify how the agency would work with livestock producers with an operational capacity of fewer than 300 head of beef cattle (or animal equivalent).

“We believe this approach represents a win-win for all involved,” said Dave White, NRCS state conservationist for Montana. “Producers benefit from having a low-cost option for modifying their operations and get peace of mind in the regulatory area. The environment and society benefit from improved water quality and fish and wildlife habitat.”

Specifically, NRCS reached the following agreement with DEQ:

For livestock producers with fewer than 300 head of beef cattle (or animal equivalent) who remove their cattle from having direct access to state waters and who meet approved NRCS treatment plans and do not discharge wastes through a natural or man-made ditch or flushing system, the state will consider the producer as having fulfilled the requirement for “all reasonable land, soil, and water conservation practices” under state law. This means the producer will not have to obtain a permit under the Water Quality Act as long as the producer meets and maintains NRCS standards.

NRCS will work with landowners to develop the most cost-effective and least intrusive solution possible. This may include the use of buffers or the re-configuration of boundary fences to exclude access to state waters. NRCS’s goal will be to develop solutions on-site whenever possible.

The agreement between NRCS and DEQ is timely because the 2002 Farm Bill places a high priority on helping ranchers meet or avoid the need for regulation. NRCS will be offering both financial and technical assistance to help producers develop and implement treatment plans for animal feeding operations (AFOs).

“This agreement is significant in Montana because historically, most corrals were built near water sources and most of them were built decades before the Clean Water Act or the Montana Water Quality Act,” White said.

In addition, White said, all NRCS client information is confidential. In the 2002 Farm Bill, Congress specifically added language that ensures confidentiality of NRCS field office records.

For more information, visit your local NRCS field office at 119 N. Jackson in Plentywood, 406-765-1801, or see the NRCS Animal Feeding Operations Factsheet.

CONSERVATION DATES

JANUARY

- 13 SCCD Board Meeting
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February

- 10 SCCD Board Meeting
- 12 Lincoln's Birthday
- 14 Valentines Day
- 16 Presidents Day
- 22 Washington's Birthdday



Visit Sheridan County Conservation District's web page at :
<http://sheridan.mt.nacdnet.org>

Our services and programs are provided without regard to race, national origin, sex, age, handicap, or religious affiliation.

NOTICE

NO PERSON MAY COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION ON ANY PROJECT FACILITIES OR APPROPRIATE WATER PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT BY THE DISTRICT AND RECEIPT OF A RESERVED WATER USE AUTHORIZATION. THIS IS TO PROTECT THE POTENTIAL IRRIGATOR FROM INVESTING MONEY IN A SYSTEM FOR WHICH LEGAL USE OF THE WATER CAN NOT BE APPROVED AND THUS CAN NOT BE USED