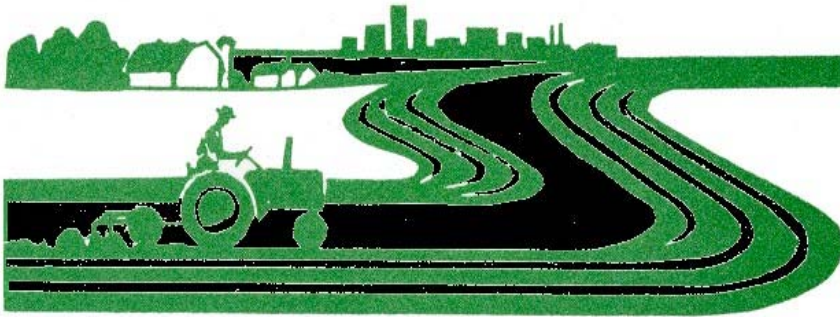


Sheridan County Conservation Notes



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Sheridan County Conservation District

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- Applying Fertilizer—Precisely!
- New conservation Stewardship Program Signup Announced for Montana
- New Dredge Works the Missouri River
- Land Ownership Maps Available Just in Time for Hunting Season

It is best to read the weather forecast before praying for rain. ~Mark Twain

Sheridan County Conservation District meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month in the Conference Room of the USDA Building. The public is welcome to attend. For time and date verification, please call our office at 765-1801 ext. 101, or go to sheridan.mt.nacdnet.org

Your comments are always welcome and appreciated. Please let us know what you think. Just Drop us a note at: 119 N. Jackson Plentywood, MT 59254 or email us at judy.benson@mt.nacdnet.net

Applying Fertilizer—Precisely!

Monica Friedrich District Conservationist



“Precision Ag” is a term that is becoming more common in our corner of the world. But what exactly do we mean when we use it?

For purposes of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), we are talking about variable rate fertilizer application. In 2009, six Sheridan County producers participated in this program, and another six have signed up for 2010. Several are doing this on their own, without EQIP benefits.

How does the practice/program work? Producers who are applying precision ag practices through EQIP follow this procedure:

1. Work with NRCS to apply for and develop an EQIP contract for cost share to apply Precision Ag. Maximum enrollment is 500 acres.
2. Hire a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to develop the zone maps (based on soils and potential yield) for changes in fertilizer amounts to be applied throughout a field. NRCS provides names of those who can provide this service, and pro-

(Continued on page 2)

Froid Research Farm Tour Draws Big Crowd

One of the largest gatherings to-date attended the Froid Research Farm Tour On June 25th with well over 100 area producers and USDA and Conservation District employees and board members present.

The event was held at the Research farm, located 8 miles north of Culbertson and included speeches on agricultural topics, a tour of the research plots on the farm, and a steak supper provided by the Sheridan and Roosevelt County Conservation Districts.

Speakers at the event included Kathi Montgomery, an energy specialist from MT DEQ, a mini-seminar about re-



On the Tour

newable energy; Sheridan Electric Cooperatives' On-farm Wind Generator Projects presentation; Dawson County MSU Extension Agent Bruce Smith with a delectable presentation about the Farm to Table project, Dawson County's locally-grown food initiative; and Joyce Swartzendruber, the new NRCS State Conservationist, who provided an update on

(Continued on page 2)



Electric Wind Generator

(Continued from page 1)

- vides funds to pay the TSP.
3. Arrange for soil sampling to confirm, fine-tune fertilizer prescription to be applied by zone.
 4. Get your GPS equipment working on your tractor! This can be the most frustrating and time consuming step. NRCS doesn't pay for equipment or upgrades; however, the payment per acre for applying the fertilizer can be used towards this cost as needed.
 5. Apply fertilizer according to prescription provided by TSP and downloaded into GPS software. Again, this doesn't always go smoothly, as all software varies by company, and tech support is usually needed from the company.
 6. Use yield monitors on your combine to determine how well the variable rate application worked. This step is optional under the EQIP contract, but provides extremely valuable information as to whether this process is worthwhile.
 7. Soil test after harvest and/or before spring seeding in order to fine-tune fertilizer application for the following year. EQIP doesn't pay for continued fertilizer application, but will for soil testing and yield monitoring for up to 3 years.

One of the critical items we've noticed in working with this program is how yield goals are viewed by both the TSP and the producer. The intent of the program as viewed by NRCS is to maximize yield according to soil and field potential. For example, we expect that more production is feasible from lower, wetter areas in the field versus hilltops with thin soil. Therefore, we would advise more nutrients in the lower areas. This has not always been the case in the prescriptions we've seen, based on nutrients already available on the soil test. Harvest yield monitoring should provide interesting data to show if this worked, or wasn't as useful as hoped for.

(Continued on page 3)

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NRCS activities.

On-farm tour stops included: the hay barley for forage plots; the camelina planting depth impact project; corn grain yields and seeding rates; and a unit study on alternate vs. stacked-rotation of durum, flax, and canola or peas.

The crowd enjoyed a delicious steak, grilled once again by RCCD Chairman Buzz Matelin and a dinner with all the trimmings. The meal was hosted by Roosevelt and Sheridan County Conservation Districts.



Buzz Grilling Steaks



NEW CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM FIRST SIGN-UP ANNOUNCED FOR MONTANA

Bozeman, Mont., Aug. 6, 2009—United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced a continuous sign-up period beginning August 10 for the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), with the first sign-up period cut-off date of September 30. CSP is a voluntary program encouraging agricultural and nonindustrial private forestry landowners to enhance conservation efforts.

The new CSP is open to all farmers, ranchers, and nonindustrial private forest landowners in Montana. "This is a great opportunity for Montana producers to enhance conservation activities," says Steve Hedstrom, President of the Montana Association of Conservation Districts. "This is an important new opportunity for Montana that benefits our land and the producers who participate." Operators must establish land records with USDA through the local Service Center office.

Congress, in the 2008 Farm Bill, renamed and completely revamped the former Conservation Security Program to improve its availability and appeal to producers. Eligible lands include cropland (including hayland), rangeland, pastureland, nonindustrial private forestland (a new land use for the program), and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Eligible applicants may include individual operators, legal entities, and Indian tribes. Applications must be submitted by September 30 to be considered for funding in Montana's first ranking period. To apply for the newly revamped CSP, potential participants are advised to use a self-screening checklist first to determine whether the new program is suitable for them or their operation.

"Those operators who have been using effective conservation practices should be able to take the self assessment and determine if they are likely qualified," says NRCS Montana State Conservationist Joyce Swartzendruber. The points for program selection are determined by the baseline of conservation stewardship already met and, more importantly, what extra conservation measures operators are willing to do to address additional resource concerns. A higher point score will be achieved on cropland by adding a resource-conserving crop (a perennial grass, legume, or grass/legume grown for use as forage, seed for

(Continued on page 3)

Equipment for Rent

The Sheridan County Conservation District has equipment you can rent or buy.

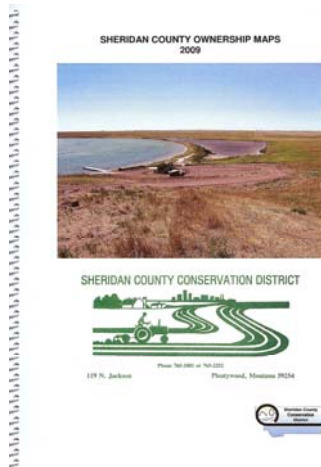
You can purchase: Location flags or Paul Brown Moisture probes.

You can rent the 15' Aerway Range Renovator. Or the 12' John Deere Grass Drill.

The renovator rents for \$5/acre+\$25 per day, and the drill for \$4/acre+\$25 per day.

Contact our office for information at 765-1801, stop in at 119 N. Jackson in Plentywood or email judy.benson@mt.nacdnet.net.

Sheridan County Ownership Maps Available



New, updated ownership maps of Sheridan County are now available at the Sheridan County Conservation District office 119 N. Jackson in Plentywood.

The maps come in booklet (\$30) and wall (\$20) versions as well as glove box size (\$20). The maps are also available at select area businesses.

THANK YOU

To all our Conservation Friends for supporting the "Sheridan County Conservation Notes". Without your contributions it would be very difficult to publish a newsletter of this caliber.

(Continued from page 2)

Producers who have tried it on their own believe it has saved them money in fertilizer purchase, which is one of the goals of the program. NRCS wants to see proper application of nutrients to reduce pollution potential to water sources, either surface or ground.

Precision Ag seems to be the next conservation activity getting a toe-hold in our part of the world. Sheridan County is already known for growing alternative crops, and minimum or no-till systems, with very little summer fallow observed in the countryside. Hopefully it is a practice which will provide benefits to our natural resources and producer's pocketbooks as well!

Visit Us on the Internet

Logon to the Sheridan County Conservation District web site at: <http://sheridan.mt.nacdnet.org>.

New Dredge Works on the Missouri River

Keenan Engelke demonstrated how the



dredge, owned by the Roosevelt and Richland County Conservation Districts, worked for a crowd of 20 spectators under the bridge just south of Culbertson.

The group was gathered as part of an NRCS field tour of various locations including several irrigation pump sites and no till fields in Richland and Roosevelt counties.

Among those present were special guests David Pratt from the NRCS area office in Miles City and Joyce Swartzendruber, the new state conservationist from the state office in Bozeman. Swartzendruber also spoke to local producers a few days later at the Froid Research Farm Tour.

(Continued from page 2)

planting, or green manure, or a high residue producing crop, or a cover crop following an annual crop) to improve the existing rotation. An example could be a year of a forage crop or a seasonal cover crop within the existing rotation.

After the self-screening, the producer's current and proposed conservation practices are entered into a "Conservation Measurement Tool" (CMT). That function will be performed at the local NRCS field office; however, a list of the questions to be asked in the CMT process is available for advanced pickup at the local field office by applicants, allowing them to prepare answers and schedule a return appointment to have the answers entered into the CMT.

After the applications are ranked, NRCS field staff in Montana will conduct on-site field verifications of preapproved participants based on the CMT information.

Once the potential participant has been field-verified and approved for funding, a conservation stewardship plan must be developed. USDA is finalizing the program's policies and procedures. The CSP interim final rule, published in the Federal Register, is open for public comment through September 28.

For additional information, contact your local NRCS field office or go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp on the Montana NRCS Web site.

Helping People Help the Land
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CONSERVATION DATES

Jul.	4	Independence Day
	14	District Board meeting—10:00 am
Aug.	11	District Board meeting—8:00 am
Sept.	7	Labor Day—Office Closed
	8	District Board meeting—7:00 pm
	22	First day of Autumn

Visit Sheridan County Conservation

District's Web Site at:

<http://sheridan.mt.nacdn.net>

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

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