

DISTRICT DIRT

PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Fall 2024

Local Common Sense Conservation



Photo Credit: Preston Kiehl



The Petroleum County Conservation District encompasses the county's 1,071,000 acres and the board is comprised of five county elected officials and two appointed city officials. This board is tasked with the education and conservation of the county's natural resources.

The Petroleum County Conservation District through education, outreach and program and project development works hard to put local common sense natural resource conservation on the ground and to educate the current and future producers and landowners on natural resource conservation all while helping them to continue sustainability in their businesses.

The Petroleum County Conservation District regularly partners with other conservation districts, watershed groups, stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, as well as some NGO's and nonprofits to put conservation on the ground.



Eastern Heath Snails found in Fergus County



The Fergus Conservation District announced the detection of Eastern Heath Snails in the Lewistown area. This is the first detection of the snail in Fergus County. This invasive species, native to Europe, poses a potential threat to local agriculture and natural habitats.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture - APHIS confirmed the discovery after a report was sent to the Montana Invasive Species Council in late July. Subsequent sampling at the reported site revealed an established but isolated population.

First detected near Belt, MT in 2012, this snail has since spread into Chouteau, Cascade, and Judith Basin Counties. Unlike native terrestrial

snails, this species exhibits massing behavior; to escape ground heat they climb vegetation, propane tanks, materials, or vehicles. This behavior allows the snail to be easily transported by people to new areas.



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**Petroleum County
Conservation
District**

PCCD BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ralph Corbett



Ralph with his wife Carol

Ralph grew up and went to school in Cascade, Montana.

After graduation, I joined the Navy for four years. He spent his enlistment aboard the USS Mount Katmai, an ammo cargo ship, making three trips off the coast of South Viet Nam. They transferred all types of ammo, from small arms ammunition to 16" shells for the battleship New Jersey, plus bombs and rockets for planes on aircraft carriers.

One of the highlights of my service time was watching the New Jersey fire a broadside salvo of all nine 16" barrels at once. Another highlight was the chance to watch "Puff the Magic Dragon," a specially equipped AC-47, fire a burst from a Gatling-style gun, and watching the red streak start from the plane and go to the ground. One of every five rounds was a tracer.

When he got out of the service, he went to Montana State for three years. During the college era, he worked summers for the U. S. Forest Service, building trails into the Bob Marshall Wilderness area.

After that he got ranch jobs here in the Winnett area. He first worked for Pete Dobson and then for Ken Welter on the ranch and in the pellet mill. He met his wife, Carol Ann Schaeffer, while working for the Dobson's.

The opportunity came up to apply for a job on the county road crew, and he spent 30 years in that capacity. He spent some years on the town council and became certified as a water/wastewater operator for the town, because there needs to be a certified person available at all times. He continues to be the back-up operator. Ralph has been on the PCCD Board for 13 years.



Ralph getting a Hunters Education Award



Ralph in action at a basketball game

Ralph loves big game hunting and venison is one of his favorite foods. A couple of his hobbies are reloading and copper and aluminum salvaging. Another hobby, photography, turned into more than just a hobby.

Ralph likes Winnett because it is a small community, even though it is the county seat of Petroleum County. Being small, most of the people care about and look out for each other.

UPDATE ON PALMER AMARANTH & WATERHEMP IN MONTANA

By Noelle Orloff, Associate Extension Specialist and Schutter Lab Diagnostician



Photo; Inga Hawbacker, MSU Extension

INTRODUCTION.

Palmer amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*) and waterhemp (*A. tuberculatus*) are annual species that have limited known distribution in Montana. If they become established, they will have a large economic impact on Montana agriculture. These plants have biological characteristics that allow them to readily develop herbicide resistance, and both species have biotypes in the United States known to be resistant to multiple herbicide modes of action. Both are also very competitive with crops in the right situation. Palmer amaranth is a restricted seed species in Montana, meaning seed known to be contaminated cannot be sold in the state.

IDENTIFICATION.

Palmer amaranth and waterhemp have many close relatives in Montana, making identification challenging. Watch for pigweeds (*Amaranthus* species) that look different than common species such as redroot pigweed (*A. retroflexus*). Palmer amaranth and waterhemp are usually taller than common pigweeds, and have longer, skinnier inflorescences (photo, top right). Visual identification also involves determining whether flowers on a plant are all male or all female (dioecious – likely Palmer amaranth or waterhemp), or if there is a mix of both on the same plant (monoecious – likely a common pigweed). When Palmer amaranth or waterhemp is identified visually by the Schutter Lab, we confirm its identity via PCR testing services. For more information about identifying these species, see the factsheets at the links below.

SITUATION IN MONTANA.

There are two known records of Palmer amaranth occurring in Montana. In September 2023, several flowering Palmer amaranth plants were found growing in a field in Daniels County, and they were removed from the field prior to seed production. Earlier in 2023, one male plant was found in Toole County growing under a bird feeder: likely a contaminant in bird seed. Two waterhemp populations have also been detected in recent years. One population was found in an irrigated durum field in Roosevelt County in 2020, and a few plants were spotted and removed from a sugar beet field in Prairie County in 2021. The Montana Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension are working together to raise awareness of these plants, advise affected growers on management, and to limit further spread and establishment.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT PALMER AMARANTH OR WATERHEMP

Contact your local Extension office or agronomist if you suspect you have found either of these species or if you have questions about their identification. You can also visit the [Palmer amaranth task force webpage](#) for more information and to report suspected populations.

NARRATIVE FROM THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE:

“The Montana Department of Agriculture recommends using caution when moving around equipment or purchasing seed and feed, especially when it is from Palmer amaranth infested states. There is a zero tolerance for Palmer amaranth seed in Montana stated in ARM 4.12.3011 and the Palmer Amaranth Task Force is willing to help landowners identify and manage all populations.

Local county weed district, MSU Extension agent, or the Montana Department of Agriculture. Leave the plant in the ground so it can be correctly identified, take plenty of pictures, record GPS coordinates, and arrange for a site visit as soon as possible. Identification is difficult, so most suspected plants are genetically tested. For additional resources and contact information, visit the Early Detection, Rapid Response webpage here: agr.mt.gov/Noxious-Weeds.”



Photo; Inga Hawbacker, MSU Extension



RIVER RENDEZVOUS EVENT

Over 30 participants gathered in Townsend, Montana for this year's Missouri River Conservation Districts Council's (MRCDC) River Rendezvous. It was a beautiful day, needing a jacket at first and then warming up to sunshine and blue skies. There were three stops, with multiple presenters throughout the day. We started at Six-O-Six Holdings mining site located up Confederate Gulch. We learned about their mining operation and the large reclamation project they did three years ago, reclaiming a perennial flowing stream. This is also the location of a big, 310 Law dispute that set precedent for future conservation district jurisdiction.



Six-O-Six Holdings mining site



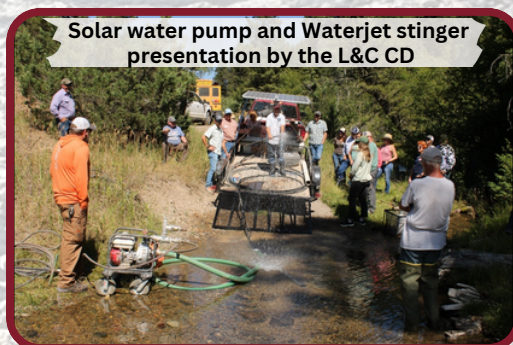
Diamond City History Presentation

We moved onto visiting Hidden Hallow Hideaway Cattle and Guest Ranch. Here, we learned about the history of Diamond City and the gold rush and learned how to pan for gold in their creek flowing through the headquarters. Unfortunately, we struck out!

Our last stops were further to the north, going up into White Gulch. It was cool to see a 20-year-old reclamation site. There was bountiful forage and vegetation along the creek that was reclaimed, and as we learned and got to see, an abundant population of the Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Montana's state fish, due to the reclamation work and conservation work that has been done by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and their partners to save this trout species population.



Westslope Cutthroat Trout



Solar water pump and Waterjet stinger presentation by the L&C CD

While in White Gulch, participants saw demonstrations of a solar water pump and waterjet stinger that Lewis and Clark Conservation District have put together for their willow reclamation projects. The waterjet stinger is used to plant willows along streams, while the solar pump can be used to help the new plantings get well rooted in their first year, increasing survival rates.

MRCDC thanks everyone who helped with this year's River Rendezvous, particularly Broadwater Conservation District. Hope you can join us next year!

~by Molly Masters, MRCDC Coordinator



LADIES DAY ON THE RANGE

Ladies Day on the Range was held at Laura Kiehl's ranch SE of Winnett, on June 6th. It was well attended with 16 ladies partaking in the day's activities. There were five presenters at the event. Allison Martin (Musselshell Watershed Coalition Coordinator) kicked off the event in the morning by doing a presentation on the EZ Ject lance, and discussing eradication of woody invasive species such as Saltcedar and Russian Olive. Michelle Grocke (MSU-Bozeman Extension Agent) discussed Agriculture related mental health issues and ways to cope with stress. She dug into understanding the triggers of stress, and gave the group suggestions of strategies to deal with day-to-day stresses. She provided the ladies with handouts that included tools, and exercises, and went through a "Mental Wellness Menu" checklist. After lunch, Megan Hoyer (Yellowstone County Weed District Coordinator) and Pam Schwend (Carbon County Weed District) put on an entertaining rendition of noxious weed eradication, followed by a field trip on the Kiehl ranch identifying noxious weeds, and discussing how to differentiate between native and noxious weeds. The final presenter was Sara Degn (Fresh Hopped Farms). She discussed side practices/income on ranching properties to help with sustainable living in rural communities, diversifying conservation with other options for growing commodities other than hay, wheat, barley, etc., for supplemental income to support the ranch. After her discussion, Laura Kiehl showed everyone her thriving hops crop, and discussed all that is involved in starting and maintaining the hops in an everchanging environment in eastern Montana. Thank you to all who attended, and also to our five presenters!

6TH ANNUAL WINNETT ACES PASTURE GOLF TOURNEY - AUG 24



2ND ANNUAL KID'S AG & CONSERVATION EDUCATION DAY - SEPT 4



We had 17 presenters attend and 7 stations at our annual Kid's Ag & Conservation Education Day event. Topics included: Bees, Soil, Fire/Fire Engine, Invasive Species, Wildlife, Fish, and Dinosaur Fossils. Presenters were from Culbertson, Glasgow, Billings, Lewistown, Red Lodge and Winnett, and agencies in attendance were Winnett ACES, NRCS, MSU Extension, BLM, FWP, CEMIST, MT Department of Ag, MISC, Carbon County Weed District and the Dinosaur Cowboy from Garfield County.

WANTED

Eastern Heath Snail



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Snail is white with brown spiral bands & is smaller than a dime.
- Climbs vegetation, fence posts, propane tanks, and other upright objects to escape ground heat.
- Often groups in large numbers called massing.

IMPACTS

- Degrades grain, canola & pulse crops.
- Vector for plant & animal diseases.
- Contaminates hay bales.
- Shells plug swather decks & machinery.

PREVENTION

- Check and remove snails from vehicles and equipment.
- Remove trash, litter, and debris that provide hiding places.
- Mow vegetation to 5 inches or less.
- Don't move dirt or gravel infested with snails or eggs.

REPORTING

Report suspected Eastern Heath Snails to your local Montana State University Extension Office or to Montana Department of Agriculture at (406)444-9066

A multi-stakeholder work group has been established. Plans to mitigate the Lewistown population of Eastern Heath Snails are currently under development and a public meeting will be held on September 12th at the Eagles Lodge in Lewistown, from 6:00pm - 8:00pm to raise awareness and discuss plans moving forward. Stakeholders are asking that the public report suspected Eastern Heath Snail sightings to their local county extension office and to be diligent when transporting equipment and materials to ensure no snails hitch a ride.

For more information, please contact the Fergus Conservation District at fcd@midrivers.com or 406-708-3001.

More information about the Eastern Heath Snail can be found by scanning this Quere Code:



Announcements & Notices

DISTRICT 411

310 PERMITS are required:

If you are planning any project including the construction of new facilities or the modification, operation, and maintenance of an existing facility that may affect the natural existing shape and form of any stream, its banks or its tributaries. Any private entity or non-governmental individual that proposes to work in or near a stream on public or private land must obtain a 310 permit prior to any activity in or near a perennial stream.

When in doubt please call the Conservation District Office @ 429-6646 ext. 104 for more information.

VARMINT CONTROL CLASS




BY MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11, 2024
1PM - 4PM *In Winnett*

THE PETROLEUM COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER
207 EAST MAIN STREET
WESLEY ROOM

THIS IS A **FREE** CLASS. APPLICATORS WILL ALSO RECEIVE 3 CREDITS TO GO TOWARDS THEIR APPLICATORS LICENSE!

NOTE:
You do **NOT** need to have an Applicators License to attend this class. **Open to all!** Come and learn about effective varmint control methods.

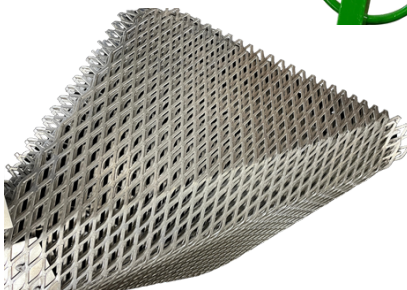
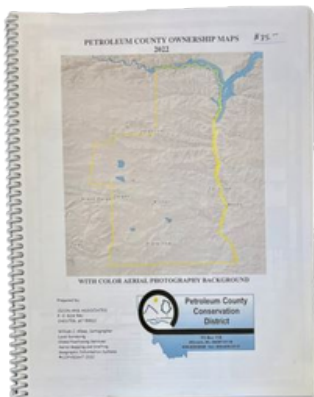


3 CLASSES (3 CREDITS TOTAL)

- PRAIRIE DOGS CONTROL
- MICE CONTROL
- RACCOON CONTROL

PRESENTER:
Stephen M. Vantassel, MT Dept. of Ag

Items for Purchase or Rent at the PCCD



FOR RENT

Tree Planter
Fabric Layer
Level & Tri-pod
Flow Meter
Rangeland Monitoring Bag
No-Till Drill

FOR SALE

2022 & 2023 Land Ownership Maps
Fabric rolls (by roll/foot, depend on size) & fabric staples
Wildlife Escape ramps
Sage Grouse Fence Markers
Gate Closers

****Call the CD Office for availability of all items. Prices are subject to change****

The public is always invited to the Conservation District meetings. Regular meetings are held each month at the USDA/PCCD office up on the hill. Meeting time is usually the last Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. Look for notices posted around Winnett.

All PCCD and NRCS programs are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, nation of origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Petroleum County Conservation District Board

JC King - Chairman, Elected Supervisor

Brenda Brady - Vice-Chairman, Elected Supervisor

Laura Kiehl - Treasurer, Elected Supervisor

VACANT - Elected Supervisor

Ralph Corbett - Urban Supervisor

Rodney Rowton - Rural Supervisor

Butch Arthur - Urban Supervisor

VACANT - Associate Supervisor

PCCD – NRCS Office Staff

Trish Smith - PCCD Administrator

Katie Lund - PCCD Fiscal Manager

Loyd Bantz - District Technician

Reba Ahlgren - NRCS District Conservationist

Mike Lucas - NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist

Allison Martin - MWC Coordinator

Molly Masters - MRCDC Coordinator

Brent Smith - CEMIST Program Manager

If you are interested in joining the PCCD Board, have rental/sale or 310 permit questions, please reach out to the CD:
petroleumcd@macdnet.org, 406-429-6646 ext 104

**For more up to date information on events and meetings please check out the District's:
Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/Petcocd55>
OR Website @ PetroleumCD.org**

Postal Patron

petroleumcd@macdnet.org

(406) 429-6646 ext. 104

PO Box 118 Winnett, MT 59087-0118

Petroleum County Conservation District

