

# Conservation Pathways

Spring 2013

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## Important Dates to Remember

### May 2013

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) National Conference  
May 7-9, 2013; Scottsdale, Arizona  
For more information:  
<http://www.nafws.org/events/national-conference.html>

### June 2013

Deadline to Apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for FY2014  
June 1, 2013  
For more information, contact your local NRCS Field Office  
<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/index.html>

Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) Annual National Training Program  
June 3-7, 2013; Spokane, Washington  
For more information:  
[www.saige.org](http://www.saige.org)

Noxious Weed Awareness Week  
June 17-23, 2013  
For more information:  
<http://www.mtweed.org/>

Montana Range Days  
June 24-26, 2013; Havre, Montana  
For more information:  
[www.cartercd.org](http://www.cartercd.org)

### July 2013

Montana Youth Range Camp  
July 8-12, 2013; Ekalaka, Montana  
For more information:  
<http://dnrc.mt.gov/carrd/camps/rangecamp/default.asp>

### August 2013

North American Envirothon  
August 4-9, 2013; Bozeman, Montana  
For more information:  
<http://www.envirothon.org/>

more important dates on page 6

## A Note from the State Conservationist

Greetings from Bozeman,

In my role as state conservationist for NRCS Montana, I have opportunities to work with many other groups and governments in a variety of capacities. The State Food and Agriculture Council is one of those duties where I am able to formally meet with the tribal governments here. The State FAC of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is made up of the heads of each agency that serves the producers in every state. This year, the chairmanship rotated to NRCS, so I serve as the chair of the State FAC, and the district conservationists across Montana serve as the chair of their local FAC.

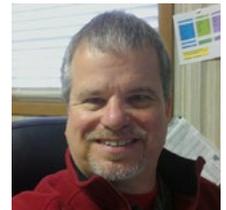
This year, our efforts include preparation of a strategic plan for delivering USDA assistance on the seven American Indian reservations in Montana. In March we met with Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne officials. In addition to NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and Risk Management Agency have been a part of those discussions. We have asked for specific input regarding our assistance to tribes, and have asked how we can more effectively reach individual farmers and ranchers within those reservations.

Traveling with me to the council meetings this year is Jerry Shows (it rhymes with cows), our new assistant state conservationist for operations. Jerry replaced Carrie Mosley, who was selected as the NRCS state conservationist for New Jersey. Jerry will also be helping the Tribal Conservation Issues subcommittee set up its meetings in conjunction with the NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee. In addition to that staff change, Lance Lindbloom is our new tribal liaison on the Rocky Boy Reservation.

On the financial front, you have likely noticed that the federal government has been dealing with some fiscal issues over the past few months. We await a final 2013 budget, and are hopeful for improved and streamlined conservation programs to deliver if a new Farm Bill is passed this year. In the meantime, we are busy finalizing financial assistance contracts, designing conservation practices, and writing new conservation plans for the future.

Thanks for your patience and understanding as we endeavor to meet your conservation needs.

Joyce Swartzendruber  
NRCS State Conservationist in Montana



Jerry Shows



## NRCS Signs Montana's First Tribal Wetlands Reserve Program Contract with Fort Belknap

*Scott Morton, NRCS District Conservationist, Fort Belknap*

On March 7 2013, the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) entered a 198.7-acre tract into a 30-year Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The WRP is a voluntary conservation program that offers landowners the means to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands on their property through permanent easements, 30-year easements, or land treatment contracts.

The area enrolled in WRP is located close to Lake 17 in the southwestern part of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Reservation, which will help increase wildlife habitat area for waterfowl. This achievement could not happen without the joint efforts between Ducks Unlimited, tribal council members, NRCS, and the Bureau Indian Affairs. Big thanks go out to Ducks Unlimited's conservation specialist, Abby Rokosch, FBIC Councilman, Andy Werk, and everyone that worked hard to help to make this WRP happen.

*The area enrolled in WRP is located close to Lake 17 in the southwestern part of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Reservation.*



# Montana Civil Rights Advisory Committee

## The Montana Civil Rights Advisory Committee

(MCRAC) serves as an advisory body to the State Conservationist to promote and assist with the NRCS's Civil Rights program implementation. The committee helps ensure equality for all employees, customers and partners.

### Special Emphasis Programs

focus special attention on certain specific groups as a result of a particular law, regulation, and/or Executive Order. Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) are also members of the Montana Civil Rights Committee.

### Helping People Help the Land

#### Non-Discrimination Policy

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

#### To File an Employment Complaint

If you wish to file an employment complaint, you must contact your agency's EEO Counselor within 45 days of the date of the alleged discriminatory act, event, or in the case of a personnel action. Additional information can be found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_file.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_file.html).

#### To File a Program Complaint

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9419, by fax at (202) 690-7442, or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

#### Persons with Disabilities

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and you wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities, who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.), please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

#### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

For any other information dealing with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues, persons should either contact the USDA SNAP Hotline Number at (800) 221-5689, which is also in Spanish, or call the State Information/Hotline Numbers.

#### All Other Inquiries

For any other information not pertaining to civil rights, please refer to the listing of the USDA Agencies and Offices.

January 2013



**Lisa McCauley**  
Chair  
Federal Women SEPM  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6970



**Denise Wiedenheft**  
Vice Chair  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgende SEPM  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6926



**Seanna Sparks**  
Secretary  
American Indian/Alaska Native SEPM  
Hardin FO  
406-665-3442 Ext 101



**Daniel Pratt**  
Representative, Bozeman Area  
Roundup FO  
406-323-2103 Ext 102



**Allison Milodragovich**  
Representative, Great Falls Area  
Choteau FO  
406-466-5722 Ext 115



**Kathy Meidinger**  
Representative, Miles City Area  
Terry FO  
406-635-5381 Ext 108



**Joel LaLiberty**  
Representative, Missoula Area  
Whitehall FO  
406-287-3215 Ext 301



**Kris Berg**  
Representative, State Office  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6849



**Julie Tesky**  
Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6908



**Lakeitha Rena Ruffin**  
Black SEPM  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6854



**Andrew Johnsrud**  
Disabled SEPM  
Scobey FO  
406-487-5366 Ext 104



**Madeleine Cantu**  
Hispanic SEPM  
Columbus FO  
406-322-5359 Ext 102



**Carol Hilliard**  
Veteran SEPM  
Broadus FO  
406-436-2321 Ext 101



**Jerry Shows**  
Title VI Advisor  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6967



**Bart Huber**  
Title VII Advisor  
Bozeman SO  
406-587-6957





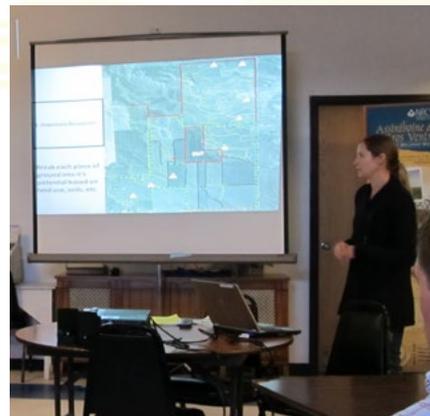
## Fort Belknap Field Office Participates in Mid-Winter Fair

The Fort Belknap Indian Community held the 45th Annual Mid-Winter Fair Feb. 4-9, 2013. The fair theme was “One Nation under Our Creator” and the fair colors were red, yellow, black, and white. This community event is held every year in February and gives the community an opportunity to engage in the following: educational activities; cooking contests; a traditional powwow; arts and crafts shows; run run/walk; fiddle, jig, and waltz contest; stick game tournament; and honoring of their youth and elders.

The Fort Belknap NRCS employees teamed up with Indian Nations Conservation

Alliance (INCA) to put together a wealth of information for the community. Scott Morton, NRCS district conservationist for Fort Belknap, and Mena Limpy-Goings, INCA’s tribal outreach coordinator and part-time NRCS Earth Team volunteer, displayed information geared toward conservation planning, working with NRCS, Pathways student intern program, and many other topics related to conservation.

This is the second community event this year that NRCS and INCA have held for both local producers and anyone interested in agriculture. A technical workshop was held on Jan. 24, 2013 at the Fort Belknap Agency.



Marni Thompson, NRCS



Joey Kill Eagle and Bud Walsh

## Little Big Horn College (LBHC) Students Tour Spring Creek Mine



A group of students from Little Big Horn College, along with employees from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), recently toured the Spring Creek Mine in southeast Big Horn County. Their focus for the tour was to see the reclamation efforts that the mine has made and their involvement in sage-grouse habitat conservation.

Spring Creek Mine is located in southeastern Montana near the town of Decker, just east of the Crow Reservation boundary. The mine is currently operated by Cloud Peak Energy.

The tour was organized by Bruce Waage, NRCS/Bureau of Land Management sage-grouse specialist, and Gabe Johnson, environmental engineer, Cloud Peak Energy.

The group was first given a presentation by Keith Walters, the mine's technology manager, that included some background information on the mine and how it currently operates. Next, the tour guides fitted everyone with safety apparel, so the actual tour of the mine and reclamation sites could begin.

The first stop was to see the different implements and equipment the mine operators use to seed native grasses, shrubs, and forbs on the newly reclaimed areas. After inspecting this machinery, the group then looked at the work that has been completed at the Spring Creek Mine.

The tour group was shown various areas within the mine that were in different stages of reclamation, from the sites that were seeded 10 to 20 years ago to the newly seeded sites and the sites that are to be seeded in the spring of 2013. The job of reclaiming these acres to resemble native rangeland that supports native sage-grouse in the area is not an easy task. The students from LBHC were shown a few successes and a few challenges in sage-grouse conservation.



If you or anyone you know would like to be added to the mailing list for the Montana NRCS' Conservation Pathways Newsletter, please send your name and mailing address to:

USDA-NRCS  
Attn: Conservation Pathways  
724 Third Street West  
Hardin, MT 59034

Or Email:  
seanna.sparks@mt.usda.gov

# Cover Crop Questions . . . Answered!

Seanna Sparks, NRCS District Conservationist, Hardin

*According to the Montana NRCS conservation practice standard, the purpose for a cover crop is to:*

- Reduce erosion from wind and water.
- Increase soil organic matter content.
- Capture and recycle...nutrients in the soil profile.
- Promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use.
- Increase biodiversity.
- Suppress weeds.
- Manage soil moisture.



*A cover crop mixture seeded in July 2011 north of Lodge Grass, Mont.*

Minimize and reduce soil compaction. So, after looking at the purposes for a cover crop, you might have a few questions, such as:

## *Why would I want to seed a cover crop?*

For the reasons stated above, incorporating cover crops into your cropping rotation can be an excellent tool in achieving a sustainable level of soil health on your operation. Cover crops can also provide additional forage to livestock, so long as the grazing does not remove more than half of the production weight of the cover crop.

## *What species can I include in a cover crop mix?*

Most plant species fall into one of four categories: cool-season grasses (winter wheat, barley, durum, oats, etc.), warm-season grasses (corn, sorghum, sudangrass, etc.), cool-season broadleaves (lentil, pea, alfalfa, radish, etc.), or warm-season broadleaves (safflower, sunflower, soybean, etc.). When considering the different species for a cover crop mix, take a close look at your existing cropping rotation. Has the majority of your rotation included small grains such as winter wheat? If so, you might want to take a look at incorporating warm season grasses, and cool and warm-season broadleaves.

Before selecting any plant species, it is important to look back into your herbicide application records, as the residual effect of previously applied herbicides can negatively impact certain species you may want to include in your cover crop mix. On the other extreme, some plant species can be difficult to terminate and may not be a good choice considering your historical cropping rotation. For example, rye is not a good species to include in a cover crop on fields that grow small grains, as it can become a volunteer weed (*Managing Cover Crops Profitably*, 3rd Ed.).

A mixture of plant species is vastly preferable over seeding one species as a cover crop. Ideally, a mixture of seven to ten species has shown to be the most economical and productive.

## *When would be a good time to seed a cover crop mix?*

While the timing for planting cover crops is determined largely by the types of plants in the seeding mixture (cool season, warm season plants), the current management of the field also plays a role. For instance, if you have dryland crop that may be in its fallow year, spring or early summer might be a good time to seed a cover crop. On dryland or irrigated crop, it might be possible to seed a cover crop following the harvest of wheat. According to the Montana cover crop practice standard, it is important that “the cover crop is planted as early as possible and be terminated as late as feasible to maximize plant biomass production [while] considering crop insurance criteria, [and] the time needed to prepare the field for planting the next crop...”

## *Who can help me plan a cover crop mix?*

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office is ready and able to assist you in planning a cover crop mix, as well as working with you to address other resource concerns on your farming or ranching operation!

## Important Dates to Remember

### November 2013

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference  
October 31 - November 2, 2013; Denver, Colorado  
For more information:  
[www.aises.org/nationalconference](http://www.aises.org/nationalconference)

### December 2013

Intertribal Ag Council Membership Meeting  
December 9-13, 2013; Las Vegas, Nevada  
For more information:  
<http://www.indianaglink.com/symposium.html>

## Tribal Field Office Directory

### **Browning Field Office**

Phone: 338-3153; FAX: 338-3529  
Blackfeet Tribal Headquarters  
P.O. Box 1169  
Browning, MT 59417-1169  
Serves: Blackfeet Reservation

*District Conservationist-* Anne Stephens,  
Email: [anne.stephens@mt.usda.gov](mailto:anne.stephens@mt.usda.gov)

### **Crow Agency Field Office**

Phone: 638-9102; FAX: 638-9101  
8645 South Weaver Drive,  
Student Union Building (SUB), Room 205  
P.O. Box 699  
Crow Agency, MT 59022

*District Conservationist-* Jeremy Not Afraid,  
Email: [jeremy.notafraid@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jeremy.notafraid@mt.usda.gov)

### **Fort Belknap Field Office**

Phone: 353-8488; FAX: 353-2228  
158 Tribal Way, Suite D 353+last 4  
Harlem, MT 59526

*District Conservationist-* Scott Morton,  
Email: [scott.morton@mt.usda.gov](mailto:scott.morton@mt.usda.gov)

*Soil Conservation Technician-* Blake Stiffarm,  
Phone: 353-8350,  
Email: [blake.stiffarm@mt.usda.gov](mailto:blake.stiffarm@mt.usda.gov)

### **Lame Deer Field Office**

Phone: 477-6494; FAX: 477-8431  
East Boundary Drive  
P.O. Box 330  
Lame Deer, MT 59043-0330

*Tribal Conservationist-* Kathy Knobloch,  
Email: [kathy.knobloch@mt.usda.gov](mailto:kathy.knobloch@mt.usda.gov)

### **Pablo Field Office**

Phone: 675-2700; FAX: 275-2804  
Tribal Land Department  
42487 Complex Boulevard  
Pablo, MT 59855-0871

*Tribal Conservationist-* Herb Webb ext. 1245,  
Email: [herb.webb@mt.usda.gov](mailto:herb.webb@mt.usda.gov)

### **Poplar Field Office**

Phone: 768-3566; FAX: 768-3373  
500 Medicine Bear Road  
Box 1027  
Poplar, MT 59255-1027

*Fork Peck and  
Turtle Mountain Tribal Liaison-*  
Paul Finnicum, Phone: 768-3964  
Email: [paul.finnicum@mt.usda.gov](mailto:paul.finnicum@mt.usda.gov)

### **Rocky Boy Field Office**

Phone: 395-3138; FAX: 395-8005  
P.O. Box 27  
Rocky Boy, MT 59521  
Serves: Chippewa Cree Tribe

*District Conservationist-* Lance Lindbloom  
Email: [lance.lindbloom@mt.usda.gov](mailto:lance.lindbloom@mt.usda.gov)

  
**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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