



2017 Transboundary Grasslands Workshop

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History of Conservation Districts

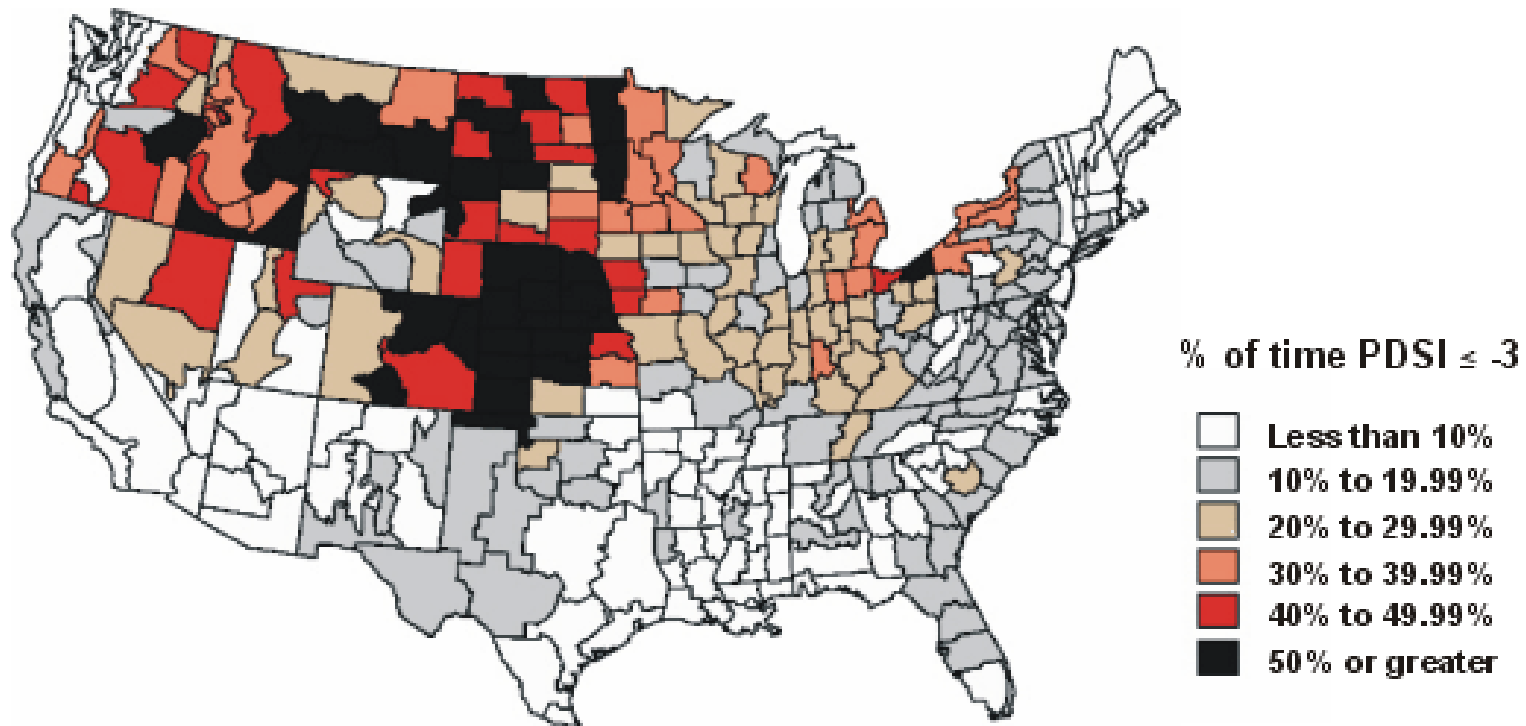
- Early 1930s, the Dust Bowl.
- Severe and sustained drought, soil began to erode and blow away
- Huge black dust storms blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside.



Palmer Drought Severity Index

1930–1939

Percent of time in severe and extreme drought



SOURCE: McKee et al. (1993); NOAA (1990); High Plains Regional Climate Center (1996)
Albers Equal Area Projection; Map prepared at the National Drought Mitigation Center

On May 12, 1934, a major storm hit the plains, later to be described by Bennett as a turning point in the battle to get public attention to the erosion problem:



- Congress unanimously passed
- **Soil Conservation Act of April 27, 1935.**



The Key to Success:

- Three-fourths of the continental United States is privately owned, and 59% in Montana.
- Congress realized that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private land.

CD's become reality in Montana

- Caught on across the country with district-enabling legislation passed in every state.
- MT passed the Montana Conservation District Law (76-15-101) in 1939.
- Today, there are 58 conservation districts in MT.



Conservation District Authority

MCA 76-15-102. Declaration of policy. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

CDs main functions:

- Conduct local activities to promote conservation of natural resources.
- Activities vary from district to district, generally include on-the ground conservation & education projects.
- CD have authority to pass land use ordinances to protect natural resources.
- Administer The Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act, aka “The 310 Law”.

Locally, Who are We?

- Conservation Districts are made up of local, elected board members called Supervisors
- Appointed Urban Supervisors
- Associate Supervisors (non-voting)
- Administrators
- Phillips Conservation District has over 175 Years of “Local Ecological Knowledge”, one Supervisor serving 60 years!

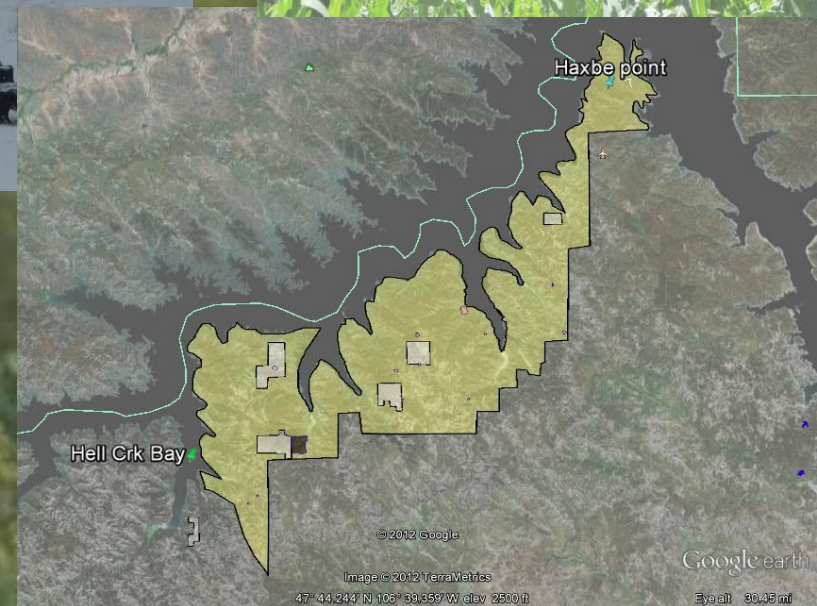
What We Do...

- Demonstration Projects
- Cover Crop Projects
- Education
- Grazing Management Pilot Projects
- Urban Conservation and Small Acreage
- Saline Seep Reclamation
- Water Quality
- Water Reservations
- Conservation Equipment
- Land Use Regulations (ordinances)
- 310 Stream Permitting

Demonstration Projects

CD's promote, sponsor and lead Demonstration projects to learn and educate producers, agencies and general public.

- Sponsoring projects such as:
 - Cover Crops
 - Bale Grazing demonstrations
 - Grazing Management Pilot Projects
 - Weed control demonstrations/projects



Rolling Rivers Trailer Education

Rolling Rivers Trailers are stream tables on wheels that can demonstrate not only stream dynamics but watershed principles as well.

- River energy:
- Riparian areas:
 - Turn the water on full force as in a flood situation and the riverbank begins to break down and collapses even faster. This demonstrates the principles of healthy versus unhealthy riparian areas.
- Floodplains
- Non-point pollution:.
- Effects of diversion:



Conservation Education

CD's address conservation issues to both youth and adult audiences by:

- Sponsoring **kids'** conservation field days and annual camps. Some of these include:
 - Creek & Critters
 - Montana Envirothon
 - Flood awareness
 - Ag Days
 - Ag Appreciation Week
- Sponsoring **adult** education such as
 - Realtor Workshops
 - Governors Range tour
 - Conservation days
 - Spring Crops Tour
 - Irrigation Tour
 - Irrigation Efficiency workshop



Urban Conservation & Small Acreage

With the rapid increase in subdivided acreages, and the resource issues associated with these small tracts, districts have recently taken on a new role. Below are some examples:

- Hosting workshops and producing educational materials for new landowners;
- Operating recycling programs; and,
- Pooling of technical expertise from various agencies to provide services like soil surveys and water disposal information to planning commissioners, municipal officers, and others.

Resource Conservation Advisory Council (RCAC)

- Governor-appointed council of conservation district supervisors
- Has served the Conservation Districts Bureau since 1980
- Main focus of the council has been to review grants and advise
- DNRC how to best manage the funding provided to CD's
 - Reviews programs & grants such as:
 - 223 Grant program
 - CD Administration grants
 - 310 and Legal assistance funds

Saline Seep Reclamation

What is a saline seep? You may have seen white, powdery-looking spots in the low areas of fields. These spots are seeps, and they have adverse effects on water quality, wildlife, and other resources, not to mention agricultural production.

Conservation district supervisors in 33 counties make up the membership of the Montana Salinity Control Association. This internationally recognized organization headquartered in Conrad, Montana provides expert technical assistance in the reclamation and control of saline seeps in agricultural areas.

*Montana Salinity Control Association
Jane Holzer (406) 278-3071
www.montanasalinity.com*



Water Quality

Districts:

- Are the local contact for the control of non-point source (NPS) pollution.
- Conduct projects demonstrating NPS pollution control practices.
- Prefer voluntary, education, and incentive-based approaches to regulatory approaches.
- Work with state and federal agencies (for the most part, the DEQ & EPA) to identify problem areas and prioritize treatment. Recently, the manner in which these problems are addressed has become the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL's) for impaired streams in Montana.



Whitmore Ravine, Cascade Co.

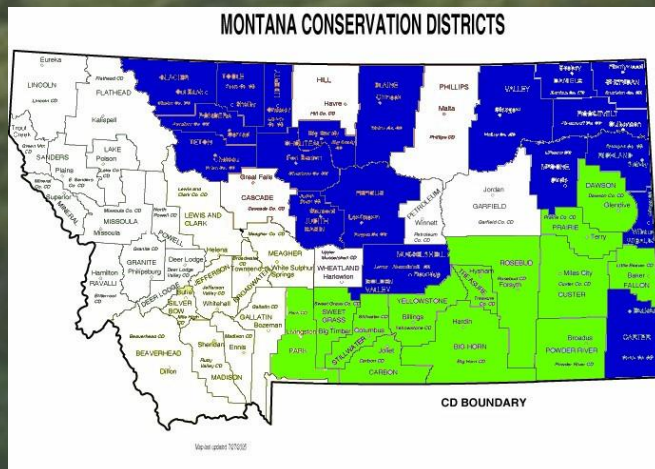


Water Reservations

Conservation districts in Montana are able to reserve water for future beneficial use. Currently, 31 conservation districts hold water reservations throughout the Yellowstone, Little Missouri, and Missouri River basins. Each of these districts administers its reservation for use by individuals within the district. Applications for reserved water use can be obtained from the applicable conservation district.



Big Horn	Basin	Blaine	Carbon	Carter	Chouteau
Custer	Daniels	Dawson	Fallon	Fergus	Glacier
Judith	Liberty	McCone	Musselshell		Park
Pondera	Powder River		Prairie	Little Bvr	Richland
Roosevelt	Rosebud	Sheridan	Stillwater	Sweet Grass	
Teton	Toole	Treasure	Valley	Wibaux	Yellowstone



Conservation Equipment

In order to promote conservation practices, districts demonstrate and rent out a wide array of equipment to land users, including:

- Tree Planters;
- Fabric Layers;
- Weed Sprayers;
- Weed Baggers;
- Conservation Tillage Drills;
- Grass Seeders; and,
- Tree Chippers



Tree planter



Grass Seeder

Local Watershed Councils, and Coordinated Resource Management Efforts

They all mean the same thing--local folks getting together in a collaborative, consensus-based process to tackle local and regional natural resource management issues on a river basin or watershed basis.

Conservation districts often draw people and resources together to catalyze or assist in the development of these efforts.



Federal Conservation Programs

Conservation districts work very closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) to provide local direction for the administration of federal conservation programs. Some of these programs are:

- The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP);
- The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP);
- The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP); and,
- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).



Fire rehabilitation Efforts/Coordination

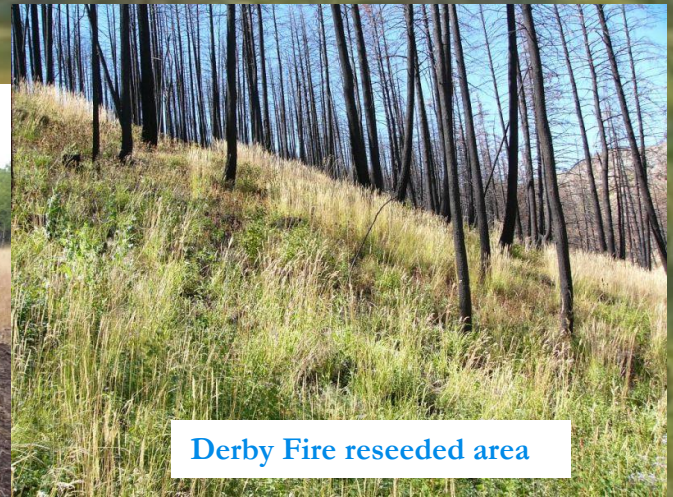
Conservation districts in areas of Fires become involved and are the liason between the fire fighting agencies/crews and the landowners. CD's also coordinate reseeding efforts, become the local source of information, and seed distribution to landowners.



Bundy Fire damage



Suppression line rehabilitation



Derby Fire reseeded area

Operation of Conservation Districts

What do CD's do?

The 310 Law (75-7-101)

The Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act, also known as "The 310 Law", is administered by the Conservation Districts.

- Any person proposing a project which is a physical alteration or modification that results in a change in the state of a natural, perennial-flowing stream or river, its bed, or its immediate banks in or near a perennial stream.

- A district supervisor and representatives from the appropriate agencies inspect the site to make sure the integrity of the stream is maintained.

- 310 permits are then approved/denied based on the inspection and the scope of the project.



a guide to	
STREAM	
PERMITTING	
in Montana	
PERMITTING TIPS	
HOW TO USE A GUIDE TO STREAM PERMITTING IN MONTANA	
A. MONTANA NATURAL STREAMBED AND LAND PRESERVATION ACT (310 Permit)	
B. MONTANA STREAM PROTECTION ACT (SPA 124 Permit)	
C. MONTANA FLOODPLAIN AND FLOODWAY MANAGEMENT ACT	
D. FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT (404 Permit)	
E. FEDERAL RIVERS AND HARBORS ACT (Section 10 Permit)	
F. SHORT-TERM WATER QUALITY STANDARD FOR TURBIDITY (318 Authorization)	
G. MONTANA LAND-USE LICENSE OR EASEMENT ON NAVIGABLE WATERS	
H. MONTANA WATER USE ACT (Water Rights/Change Authorizations)	
I. MONTANA WATER USE ACT (Water Reservations)	
J. STORM WATER DISCHARGE PERMIT AUTHORIZATION	
K. STREAMSIDE MANAGEMENT ZONE LAW	
L. OTHER LAWS THAT MAY APPLY	
CREDITS	



And Much More!!!

Questions?

**Thank you for this opportunity to share
with you what CD's are!**