

**LARAMIE COUNTY
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT
ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024**



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STAFF AND BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Laramie County Conservation District staff:

- ② Shaun Kirkwood, LCCD Manager - Responsible for the day-to-day management and functions of the Laramie County Conservation District. The coordination, organization, and timelines of meeting all conservation goals and objectives within Laramie County.
- ② Rex Lockman, Wildlife and Range Specialist - Provides technical assistance to landowners on grazing management, grass seeding recommendations, weed issues, problem wildlife, and wildlife habitat improvement.
- ② Dale Beranek, Tree Technician - Responsible for acquiring state and local Living Snow Fence funding, LSF implementation and maintenance. Windbreak designs, drip irrigation, and other program areas.
- ② Kathy Cooney, Financial Coordinator - Responsible for the Laramie County Conservation District's accounts payables/receivables, payroll, monthly budget reports, annual audit, and annual budget.
- ② Jeff Geyer, Water Specialist - Responsible for conserving, enhancing, and sustaining Laramie County's surface and groundwater resources through the promotion of healthy watersheds and sustainable use of water supplies. Responsible for implementing water quality monitoring and BMPs, stream and riparian improvements, aquifer recharge opportunities, and water developments or rehabilitations using grant opportunities or other means.
- ② Clark Young, Tree Specialist - Responsible for community tree health, windbreak designs, acquiring state and local Living Snow Fence funding and other program areas.
- ② LCCD staff, Public Outreach - Responsible for educating and informing the Laramie County community about the responsible use and care of their natural resources through classroom visits, field trips, community presentations, and public events. Staff help to promote public awareness of all Laramie County Conservation District programs and announcements through print, radio, television, and social media platforms.

The Laramie County Conservation District has a five-member Board of Supervisors. These Board of Supervisors serve a four-year term and are comprised of three rural (living outside of a municipality), one urban (living inside of a municipality), and one at-large (either rural or urban).

Board of Supervisors:

- ② Ann Sanchez, Chair (Rural), public outreach of conservation in Laramie County.
Term of office - 2023 to 2026
- ② Tom Farrell, Vice Chair (Urban), oversight of LCCD administration.
Term of office - 2021 to 2024
- ② Kevin Wells, Treasurer (Rural), oversight of wildlife & range conservation in Laramie County.
Term of office – 2021 to 2024
- ② Jay Berry, Secretary (Rural), oversight of forestry conservation in Laramie County.
Term of office - 2023 to 2026
- ② Casey Epler, Member (At-large), oversight of water conservation in Laramie County.
Term of office - 2021 – 2024

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Laramie County Conservation District finances are reviewed monthly by the Laramie County Conservation District, Board of Supervisors, and the LCCD Manager. The Laramie County Conservation District completes an annual certified public accountant audit annually. Results and findings of the LCCD audit are reported by the LCCD to the Wyoming Department of Audit.

The Laramie County Conservation District reports its annual budget to the Laramie County Commissioners, the Laramie County Clerk, and the Wyoming Department of Audit. The Laramie County Conservation District's annual budget is posted on its website for the public. The following is a synopsis of last year's expenditure.

BEGINNING CASH ON HAND JULY 1, 2023-----\$1,177,188.45

Income

Seedling Tree Program-----\$204,176.90
Living Snow Fence Program-----\$36,273.18
Water Program-----\$488,247.74
Wildlife & Range Program-----\$80,466.85
Mill Levy-----\$1,590,054.13
Other-----\$110,737.34

TOTAL INCOME -----\$3,687,144.59

Expenses

Administration-----\$211,142.37
Operations-----\$2,005,271.97
Indirect Cost -----\$241,164.73
Capital Outlay-----\$176,731.27

TOTAL EXPENSES-----\$2,634,310.34

ENDING BALANCE-----\$878,718.98

RESERVE ACCOUNTS-----\$976,562.27

ADMINISTRATION

Accounting:

Preparation of the Laramie County Conservation District 2022/2023 budget was in accordance with state statutes and submitted to the Laramie County Commissioners, Wyoming Department of Audit, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, and the Laramie County Clerk. All monthly, quarterly, and federal government reports are filed by the LCCD in a timely manner.

Funding:

The Laramie County Conservation District relies on the 1/2 mill levy that is before voters every four years. The Laramie County Conservation District utilizes this base funding (\$1,803,339.30) allowing the LCCD to apply for matching grants to increase natural resource conservation.

Meetings and committees:

- 🌀 Wyoming Small Acreage Issues Team
- 🌀 Wyoming Water Development Committee
- 🌀 NRCS State Technical Committee Meetings
- 🌀 Laramie County GIS Executive Meetings
- 🌀 Wyoming Association of Special Districts
- 🌀 LWG-Platte, Goshen, and Laramie Counties
- 🌀 LCCC AG Advisory Committee Meeting
- 🌀 Area II Meeting in Lusk
- 🌀 Pole Mountain Grazing Association
- 🌀 Wyoming Resource Education Days
- 🌀 Cheyenne Greenway Committee Meetings
- 🌀 Rooted in Cheyenne Board Meetings
- 🌀 Wyoming Association of Special Districts

Training:

- 🌀 State of Wyoming Private Funds Division Training
- 🌀 WACD State Convention
- 🌀 WCDEA Winter Training
- 🌀 Pro-Green Expo
- 🌀 WACD Supervisor Training
- 🌀 Greeley Tree Care Workshop

Grants 2023/2024:

- 🌀 Laramie County Public Works: \$10,000.00
- 🌀 Wyoming Department of AG: \$14,458.88
- 🌀 ChangeX/Microsoft: \$209,060.00
- 🌀 Wyoming Water Development Commission: \$447,307.00
- 🌀 U.S Forest Service: \$259,393.98
- 🌀 Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust: \$211,606.00
- 🌀 Meta/FB: \$375,000.00
- 🌀 Muley Fanatics: \$5,000.00
- 🌀 Wyoming Game and Fish Department: \$70,000.00
- 🌀 Great Plains-Native Fish: \$16,191.65
- 🌀 NACD Technical Assistance: \$37,500.00
- 🌀 National Fish and Wildlife: \$32,123.02
- 🌀 Pheasants Forever: \$14,719.44
- 🌀 Curt Gowdy State Park: \$145,000.00
- 🌀 Wyoming State Forestry: \$13,523.18
- 🌀 Cheyenne Women's Civic League: \$5,000.00

WATER PROGRAM

The Laramie County Conservation District has a goal to conserve, enhance and sustain Laramie County's surface and groundwater resources through the promotion of healthy watersheds and sustainable use of water supplies.

- 🌀 The LCCD established a fishing wetland complex in the Cheyenne Business Park Natural Area, adjacent to the LCCD headquarters. Management and advancement of the Natural Area is provided by the Laramie County Conservation District.
- 🌀 The LCCD completed management of 750 linear feet of stream bank on Dry Creek. Completion of the project restores floodplain connectivity and sediment load downstream in Laramie County. Funding for the project came through the WDA/Water Quality Program and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District finalized the permitting process and began implementation/construction of the Dry Creek restoration project, Phase II. The design completely removes Dry Creek from its existing channel to reduce continued erosion and sediment load, while restoring Dry Creek sinuosity and floodplain connectivity to maintain a healthy riparian. Eventually connecting the lower Phase II scope of work to the existing upstream Phase I section, which the LCCD finalized in 2022-23.
- 🌀 The LCCD finalized two riparian pasture projects along Lodge Pole Creek to ensure proper grazing management in and around the riparian areas. The completed project will restore riparian and stream health on this segment of Lodgepole Creek through the creation of a riparian pasture, demonstrating the benefits of a healthy channel to county residents. Funding through private grants, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), WWDC and WWNRT assisted the Game and Fish, Audubon, and the landowner in completing management priorities and implementation.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District initiated the conversion of the Laramie County Conservation District headquarters detention pond into a bio retention basin. Implementation will aid in water quality discharge into Dry Creek. Reduction of water needs through selection of drought tolerant plant species, which will provide diverse habitat for multiple species leading to educational purposes community wide.

WILDLIFE AND RANGE PROGRAM

The Laramie County Conservation District strives to create healthy habitat on both small and large acreage through development, management, and enhancement of native landscape for wildlife, livestock, and people.

- 🌀 The LCCD completed first year vegetation monitoring of 7,500 acres of rangeland, that was sprayed for cheatgrass control in Curt Gowdy State Park and other rangeland on the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests. Aerial herbicide application took place spring of 2023.
- 🌀 In cooperation with Curt Gowdy State Park, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Laramie County Conservation District, aerial spraying of 5,700 acres of cheatgrass in Curt Gowdy State Park was completed. Monitoring of applicable acreage for five years will help identify control measures and best management practices for future applications and grant funding.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District assisted seventy-two Laramie County residents living on small and large acreage in identifying proper acreage and pasture management. Recommendations and education address regional seeding recommendations, noxious weed control, grazing management, pasture health and grazing utilization.
- 🌀 The LCCD's no-till drill was rented out twenty-four times this past year. The goal of the no-till drill is to combat the abundance of weed issues escalating with new subdivision establishment. By seeding disturbed areas promptly, reduction in weed establishment and spread can be reduced.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District continues to assist local permittees in monitoring vegetation production and utilization on the Belvoir (City of Cheyenne) and on the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest. Utilization was monitored on grazing allotments to ensure less than 50% of the vegetation is used by livestock. The LCCD assisted with monitoring 43,000 acres of rangeland.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District assisted the Wyoming Game and Fish Department with its annual Sharp-tailed Grouse surveys. These surveys benefit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in monitoring the population of Grouse in Laramie County.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District completed eight livestock watering projects this past year with funding from the Wyoming Water Development Commission, "Small Water" Development Program. Projects help improve range conditions and environmental purposes.
- 🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District, with help from the U. S. Forest Service, maintained three livestock watering systems on the Pole Mountain area of the Medicine Bow National Forest.
- 🌀 Laramie County Conservation District is working in cooperation with Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society on the Native Pollinator Island Program. This program funded by Change X/Microsoft, provides native wildflower pollinator seed mix to landowners to plant on leach fields in Laramie County. The additional moisture from the leach field will help these wildflowers flourish which will benefit pollinators as well as wildlife.

TREE PROGRAM

Seedling Tree Program:

The Laramie County Conservation District continues to offer low-cost seedling trees to the residents of Laramie County for conservation plantings while providing community outreach in maintaining a healthy tree canopy.

- ② Sold 46,344 seedling shrubs, evergreens, and trees for a total of 1,635,733 since 1988.
- ② Sold/installed 514 rolls of 6-foot-wide fabric mulch. Sold fifty-two rolls of 4-foot-wide fabric mulch.
- ② Completed 156 windbreak/living snow fence Forest Stewardship Plans.
- ② Completed twenty-two drip irrigation designs for water conservation use.
- ② In the spring, eighty-seven private windbreak/living snow fence tree plantings were established. This equals 15,313 shrubs, evergreen and trees planted, or the installation of 107,670 linear feet/20 miles of tree row.
- ② Assisted 273 Laramie County residents with tree related issues including insect, disease, wildlife, watering, and other tree health concerns.
- ② The Laramie County Conservation District Tree Specialist and Tree Technician hosted two tree planting classes and two structure tree pruning classes aimed at the do-it-yourself landscaper. The classes presented by the LCCD, were aimed toward smaller tree stock planting and light duty pruning techniques geared towards the best management techniques for the best long-term results. Forty-three Laramie County residents attended the classes.

Living Snow Fence Program:

The Laramie County Conservation District contracts with both Laramie County Public Works and the Wyoming Department of Transportation to install Living Snow Fences along Laramie County's roads, highways, and interstates for the control of drifting snow. Control efforts keep roads safe and open during winter weather conditions also reducing road maintenance costs and traditional wood fence expenses short and long term.

- ② This past year, two new Living Snow Fence sites were established. The total number of LSF sites throughout Laramie County is 288. At this year's sites, 431 total evergreen trees were planted. Totalling 2,760 feet of tree row installation. This adds .52 miles or 920 feet of road protection to the 37.12 miles of established tree-rows in Laramie County.
- ② Longevity of established LSF tree rows is necessary. This past year, 1,905 feet of livestock exclusion fence was rebuilt to protect the integrity and functionality of the tree rows. Funding was made possible through Wyoming State Forestry and the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Laramie County Conservation District is responsible for the education of Laramie County residents regarding wise use, care, and management of all natural resources. Utilizing public awareness of LCCD programs through in person education, print, radio, television, and social media platforms.

Classroom and field trip instruction:

🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District staff presented a variety of educational programs on natural resources, conservation, outdoor recreation, and related topics. This year the LCCD presented to 734 students. The presentations consisted of classroom visits, field trips and the annual Cowbelles AG Expo.

🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District assisted state FFA representatives in creating a real time scenario for Wyoming State FFA Competition. FFA teams evaluate the scenario and address natural resource concerns then utilize natural resource practices to mitigate issues. FFA teams present findings of scenario to judges for scoring and ranking as part of a week-long competition.

🌀 The Laramie County Conservation District worked with local elementary students in hatching, raising, and releasing Quail chicks. This project helped students understand the life cycle of these birds and their need for habitat. Raised chicks were released into the Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area.

Information program:

🌀 The LCCD website is maintained in-house. Site is at lccdnet.org.

🌀 Natural resource posts are uploaded to LCCD social media accounts monthly.

🌀 The LCCD published a 2023 “highlights” brochure, which was mailed out to every registered voter household in Laramie County.

Public events:

The Laramie County Conservation District participated with a presentation or informational outreach at the following events:

- 🌀 Hosted two “tree planting/pruning” classes
- 🌀 Laramie County Fair
- 🌀 Greenway Committee cleanup along Dry Creek
- 🌀 Rooted in Cheyenne planting day spring and fall
- 🌀 Home and Garden Show
- 🌀 Southeast/Albin Farm Show
- 🌀 Rooted in Cheyenne “tree education” events
- 🌀 Sportsman’s Expo

Laramie County School District Science Fair:

Each year the Laramie County Conservation District staff help judge local science fair events. Last year the LCCD staff judged events at Pioneer Park, Saddle Ridge, and Gilcrest Elementary Schools. LCCD staff assisted with judging at the LCSD #1, All District Science Fair.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Community Enhancement:

The LCCD provided technical assistance, funding, and implementation of up to \$1,000.00 for each of the following Laramie County projects:

- 🌱 The LCCD funded the inventory of 5,075 trees plus website development for the High Plains Grasslands Research Station/Arboretum to aid in the management and revitalization of the property moving forward.
- 🌱 The Pointe Subdivision of Cheyenne: The Laramie County Conservation District provided funding to purchase and install thirteen containerized trees to plant around the main detention pond located in the Pointe.
- 🌱 Laramie County Fairgrounds: The Laramie County Conservation District provided ninety-eight shrubs, and fabric mulch. Planting of the shrubs was by the staff of the LCF and fabric installation by the LCCD.
- 🌱 Meadowbrooke Church: re-established native plants for xeric landscape and water conservation.
- 🌱 Saddle Ridge subdivision of Cheyenne: The Laramie County Conservation District provided area community residents with 262 pollinator plants to be planted and maintained in an open space area perpendicular to the Cheyenne Greenway corridor.

Annual Community Enhancement Funding:

- 🌱 The Laramie County Conservation District provided 1,220 seedling evergreen trees, one, to every second grader in Laramie County. This was funded through the LCCD, Community Enhancement Program.
- 🌱 Through the LCCD Community Enhancement Program, the LCCD supported Rooted in Cheyenne with \$10,000.00 to continue street tree re-establishment in Cheyenne.

Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area:

The LCCD has continued management of the Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area. The natural area is a 101.5-acre parcel along Dry Creek in the LEADS property east of Cheyenne. Plans for the park include natural resource education and demonstration areas.

Projects completed in the Cheyenne Business Park Natural Area in the past year:

- 🌱 Established fishing wetland complex.
- 🌱 Monitored flow on Dry Creek.
- 🌱 Revegetated 750 linear feet of Dry Creek stream bank on south portion of Natural Area.
- 🌱 Mowed walking trails in the Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area.
- 🌱 Completed waste management and public awareness of pet waste in the Natural Area.

Partner in Conservation Awards:

The LCCD awards individuals annually who assist in helping the Laramie County Conservation District fulfill its mission of conservation in Laramie County. This year the Laramie County Conservation District recognized:

- 🌱 Betsey Hale/LEADS - partners in conservation through the LCCD.
- 🌱 Dennis Ellis/Microsoft - partners in conservation through the LCCD.

Laramie County Conservation District

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 Laramie County Conservation District

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