
Laramie County Conservation District Long Range Plan 2020-2024



**CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES
NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE**

**Laramie County Conservation District 11221 U.S. Highway 30
Cheyenne WY 82009
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MISSION STATEMENT:

Provide Laramie County citizens with the necessary information and technical assistance to support sustainable production from soil and water resources, control flooding, improve air and water quality, increase wildlife habitat, protect the county's tax base, and to protect, and promote the health, welfare and safety of Laramie County residents.

OVERVIEW:

The following Long Range Plan was developed to provide guidance to the Laramie County Conservation District for the next five years.

AUTHORITY:

The Laramie County Conservation District (LCCD) pursuant to W.S. 11-16-122 (iv) and (xvi) of the Wyoming Conservation Districts Law is authorized to develop plans for the Laramie County Conservation District and to file said plans in the office of the Laramie County Clerk.

LCCD is a local governmental subdivision of the state as defined and established by the Wyoming Statutes at Title 11, Chapter 16, et seq., entitled – “Wyoming Conservation Districts Law.” The people of Laramie County elect the five member Board of Supervisors of the LCCD during the general election by popular vote. The elected members represent both the rural and urban populations within Laramie County. The Supervisors are the only locally elected board, charged specifically with the responsibility of representing local people on natural resource issues. A Conservation District Supervisor serves the community voluntarily.

LEGISLATIVE DECLARATION:

The LCCD is guided by the legislative declarations and policy of the Wyoming State Legislature with the following charge:

AS REPRINTED FROM: W.S.S. 11-16-103 Legislative Declarations and Policy:

It is hereby declared that the farm and grazing lands of Wyoming are among the basic assets of the state; that improper land use practices cause and contribute to serious erosion of these lands by wind and water; that among the consequences which would result from such conditions are the deterioration of soil and its fertility and the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams and ditches; that to conserve soil, and soil and water resources, and prevent and control soil erosion, it is necessary that land use practices contributing to soil erosion be discouraged and that appropriate soil conserving land use practices be adopted.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention for the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and hereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

The above being the charge and direction of the Wyoming Legislature for all Conservation Districts within the State of Wyoming. The LCCD Board of Supervisors, an elected body and local government, is the local leader to the management of lands within the jurisdiction of the LCCD and is accountable to the citizens of the district.

HISTORY:

90 years ago, when dust clouds from the Great Plains darkened the Eastern skies, our nation was in peril. Today, our land is in far better shape than it was in the Dust Bowl era in the 1930's through the cooperation between local conservation districts and many other agencies assisting local landowners with natural resource conservation planning.

As a result of the Dust Bowl, the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 was created to develop and implement nationwide soil erosion control programs. The creation of the Soil Erosion Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS) soon followed.

The Wyoming State Legislature recognized the need for an independent local unit of government which would assist landowners and resource users, as well as, provide leadership in natural resource management. As a result, legislation was enacted in 1941, enabling the formation of local conservation districts and the election of conservation district supervisors.

Four years later on January 26, 1946, the Eastern Laramie County Conservation District was formed. The Frontier Conservation District, which served western Laramie County, later followed in 1968. The two districts joined together in 1988 forming the Laramie County Conservation District to represent the entire county.

LCCD programs and administration is supported in part by a ½ mill levy, which is voter approved. Other funding comes from grants, program sales, and agreements. The ½ mill levy was first approved in 1988 General Election, and has subsequently been renewed every four years thereafter.

The focus of the LCCD has shifted from primarily working to reduce and prevent soil erosion to now addressing other important natural resource management needs. This includes protecting and improving water quality and quantity, establishing wildlife habitat, improving grazing management, tree and vegetation establishment, land use planning, natural resource education, conservation in our urban and suburban areas, and supporting and administering recycling and energy conservation programs.

DISTRICT DESCRIPTION:

Location- Laramie County is located in the southeast corner of Wyoming, encompassing approximately 2,688 square miles. Bordering counties to the west include Albany County, Platte and Goshen Counties to the north, Nebraska to the east and Colorado to the south. Laramie, Wyoming is approximately 45 miles west of Cheyenne along Interstate 80, and Casper, Wyoming nearly 180 miles north via Interstate 25.

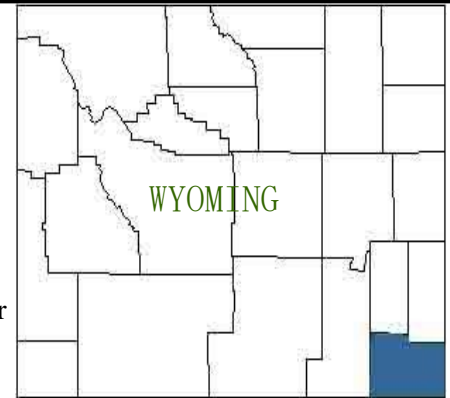
Physical setting- Laramie County sits on the western edge of America's Great Plains. The county's rolling plains rise westward to the foothills of the Southern Laramie Mountain Range.

Elevations- This elevation ranges from 5,100 feet above sea level in the east and northeast to 7,600 feet in western Laramie County.

Watersheds- Horse Creek, Lodge Pole Creek, Crow Creek and the very headwaters of Chugwater Creek are located in Laramie County. Several other minor creeks and draws feed into the major creeks mentioned above. A majority of the county's landform drains into the South Platte River Basin, while the northern quarter drains into the North Platte basin.

Climate- The mean temperature is 47°F, with lowest temperatures occurring in January and the highest temperature occurring in July. Average annual precipitation is just over 15 inches, with the majority received in the late spring.

Soils- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has published two soil surveys for Laramie County. The Soil Survey of Laramie County, Eastern Part was published in 1983, the Western Part was published in 2001. Both soil surveys contain information that can be used in land-planning programs. They have predictions of soil behavior for selected land uses. The surveys also highlight limitations and hazards inherent in the soil, improvement needed to overcome limitations, and the impact of selected land uses on the environment.



Municipalities- Cheyenne, Wyoming's capitol city and the county's major population center, is located at the intersection of Interstates 25 and Interstate 80. Other incorporated towns include Albin (northeast corner), Pine Bluffs (east near the Nebraska state line), Burns (20 miles east of Cheyenne, along I-80.), and Carpenter (10 miles south of Burns). Several other unincorporated towns include Meriden (along US Hwy. 85, in the northeast), Little Bear (north of Cheyenne along I-25), Horse Creek, Happy Valley, and Granite Canyon (in the western Laramie Foothills).

Land Use- 11% of Laramie County is publicly owned (local, state and federal) including city, town properties, state lands, state parks and federal facilities (such as F.E. Warren Air Force Base).

Agricultural- 80% of the land in Laramie County is used as rangeland and cropland (64% rangeland). The production of crops, on both irrigation and dryland, accounts for nearly 20% of all county land uses (existing primarily in the eastern one-half of the county).

Wildlife- Laramie County has an abundance and wide variety of wildlife within its boundaries. The limiting factors for wildlife continue to be water and winter cover. The LCCD continues to work on these and other wildlife issues through various programs; keeping in mind a multi use philosophy and installing wildlife friendly practices.

FUTURE LAND DESCRIPTION:

Both surface and groundwater sources continue to decline within the district. There is a need to develop new strategies to conserve water resources to continue agriculture uses, promote sustainable development, and supply future needs.

Healthy soils continue to be the key to improving the productivity and sustainability of our landscapes. Outreach efforts will continue to provide soil health education and technical assistance to landowners.

Trees continue to be an important tool in meeting conservation goals within the district. Plans will continue to provide low cost seedling trees to meet the following needs: home and livestock windbreaks, living snow fences, riparian buffers, and wildlife habitat.

Range continues to be the most abundant resource within the district. As such it is important to maintain this resource in a productive sustainable manner. Plans and best management practices need to be continued to address multiple use pressures, including development, agriculture, wildlife, recreation, and energy development.

The people of Laramie County continue to be our most valuable resource. Education programs need to expand to facilitate the transfer of new technologies in conservation practices.

PROGRAM POLICIES

ADMINISTRATION:

General policy:

Provide local leadership on natural resource issues and the management of lands within the Laramie County.

Guidelines:

The LCCD board will develop and approve plans and reports that will carry out the conservation priorities and goals of the district.

The LCCD board will determine staffing needs, develop an annual budget and an annual plan of work to provide guidance and funding to help accomplish the Districts conservation goals.

The LCCD board will provide oversight of staff and expenditures of the LCCD to ensure proper use of resources and tax base monies.

The LCCD board will communicate with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, The Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, the Laramie County Commissioners and other agencies as appropriate to accomplish the goals of the LCCD.

The LCCD board will provide guidance on Farm Bill activities and other national, state and local natural resource programs as appropriate to help accomplish the goals of the LCCD.

The LCCD board will continue to seek new technologies that improve customer service by enhancing performance of district programs.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM:

General policy:

The LCCD is committed to providing natural resource conservation educational opportunities to Laramie County residents of all ages that stress multiple use and voluntary conservation practices. The LCCD will also continue to work to increase the natural resource conservation awareness of all Laramie County residents.

Guidelines:

The LCCD will provide Laramie County schools with natural resource conservation education programs as requested.

The LCCD will provide educational opportunities through teachings, seminars, workshops, and tours.

The LCCD will provide conservation information to the public, utilizing all media sources, brochures, and displays at local events.

The LCCD will support conservation education events such as the Wyoming Resource Education Days (WYRED), the Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resources Science Institute, Laramie County Ag Expo, A.S.K (after school kids), B.E.A.S.T (Bringing Enrichment and Sports Together), Outdoor Expo, Project Learning Tree and any Conservation Camps that promote stewardship of natural resources.

The LCCD will coordinate with other entities to deliver a consistent conservation message, such as; Wyoming Ag in the Classroom, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyoming Game & Fish, Project Learning Tree, LCSD #1 and #2, private sector educators, local/state agencies, and organizations.

The LCCD will promote conservation through annual contests and events such as poster contests, science fairs, Soil and Water Stewardship Week, World Water Monitoring Day and Arbor Day celebrations.

WILDLIFE AND RANGE PROGRAM:**General policy:**

The LCCD recognizes that livestock are the most effective tool in managing multiple use rangeland ecosystem. The LCCD endorses efforts to utilize scientific grazing principles and favors the development of grazing systems and improved practices.

Guidelines:

The LCCD will provide technical assistance to landowners on developing grazing systems, rangeland monitoring programs, weed control management and seeding recommendations on rangeland.

The LCCD will continue to offer technical assistance to develop water resources for livestock and wildlife. The LCCD will offer landowners assistance in finding cost share for wildlife related projects. The LCCD will work with landowners, other agencies, and non-governmental organizations to promote grazing and wildlife habitat within their plans.

The LCCD will work with agencies and landowners to address Endangered Species Act issues and Wyoming Game and Fish concerns on listed species and species of concern.

The LCCD will continue to gather information on rangeland and wildlife abundance and health.

TREE PROGRAM:**General policy:**

The district is committed to the establishment of conservation tree plantings and living snow fences in Laramie County.

Guidelines:

The LCCD will provide technical assistance in the establishment, maintenance, and health of tree plantings in Laramie County.

The LCCD will make low-cost seedling trees available to the local community for conservation plantings.

The LCCD will assist with the design of tree planting projects to protect livestock, enhance energy conservation, provide wind protection of homes and other buildings, erosion reduction, improve water quality, create buffers and increase wildlife habitat within Laramie County.

The LCCD will provide services not offered by the business community to help with planting and survival of plantings.

The LCD will continue to work with the Laramie County Public Works, Wyoming Department of Transportation and other interested parties to install living snow fence plantings to control blowing and drifting snow along public travel routes within Laramie County.

Provide information and technical assistance on private forest lands management, and housing communities bordering forested land.

WATER PROGRAM**General Policy:**

The purpose of the LCCD water program is to conserve, enhance and sustain Laramie County's surface and groundwater resources.

Guidelines:

The LCCD supports a voluntary, watershed based planning process to address water quality impairments and stabilize groundwater uses in the county.

The LCCD feels that water resource goals are best met through voluntary, locally initiated and led, scientifically driven, watershed-based approaches that recognize state and private property rights. The watershed approach for addressing water resource goals should recognize and provide for multiple uses including; agriculture production, human consumption, healthy aquatic systems, recreation, and other uses based on the capabilities of the watershed.

The LCCD supports the use of credible data when making use attainability and beneficial use support determinations.

The LCCD will provide technical assistance to Laramie County crop producers on water conservation measures.

The LCCD will provide technical assistance to urban and rural residents on developing low water use landscapes.

The LCCD will work to stabilize the High Plains Aquifer to continue to provide for all groundwater uses within Laramie County.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:**General policy:**

The LCCD board will identify areas of special conservation needs and develop projects and programs to meet those needs.

Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area- The LCCD will provide management of this area to promote conservation education and recreation opportunities to Laramie County residents

Community Enhancement- The LCCD supports providing natural resource enhancement projects on publicly accessible lands through volunteer efforts with schools, churches and other community groups.

Subdivision Reviews- The LCCD will provide technical assistance and education to agencies and developers to reduce erosion and protect water quality on subdivisions and developments

Recycling- The LCCD will provide technical assistance and education to promote waste volume reduction through recycling activities such as household hazardous waste collection, Blue-bin Recycling Program, yard and livestock waste composting, and waste to fuels projects.

Energy Conservation- The District will provide technical assistance and education to promote alternative energy sources and reductions of fossil fuels through conservation measures.