



# Tongue River Watershed Annual Newsletter

Sheridan County  
Conservation District

Tongue River  
Watershed  
Steering Committee

**2012**

This is the fifth annual Tongue River Watershed newsletter, which is being sent to all residents within the watershed. The newsletter is one of several information and education action items to inform watershed residents of water quality work being done to improve water quality in Tongue River and its tributaries (Wolf Creek, Five Mile Creek, Columbus Creek, Little Tongue River and Smith Creek).

## SCCD RECEIVES GRANT FOR TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED SURVEY

The Sheridan County Conservation District, in partnership with Sheridan County, has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and US Environmental Protection Agency under section 205j of the Clean Water Act. The funding from the grant will be used to conduct a stream channel survey and assessment of the Tongue River through Tongue River Canyon. In the summer of 2011, the District was approached by the Sheridan County Public Works Department about requests the County had received to address eroding and unstable streambanks in the Tongue River, specifically as it flows through the Tongue River Canyon. A subsequent landowner meeting indicated that there was interest in pursuing a watershed survey that would focus on physical characteristics of the channel and the floodplain and result in recommendations on the types and locations of potential improvement projects. The channel survey and assessment will be initiated in the Spring of 2013 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

## HELP SCCD IMPLEMENT THE TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED PLAN Funding is Available for Water Quality Improvement Projects

In October of 2012, the SCCD submitted a revised Tongue River Watershed plan to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality for final approval. This plan enables the SCCD to provide cost-share assistance to landowners for projects to address potential bacteria contributions, especially from domestic animals and septic systems. However, we cannot provide assistance unless it is requested. To encourage residents to participate in programs, this year's newsletter highlights some frequently asked questions—if you have other questions, please contact the SCCD/NRCS office.

### Current Goals for Livestock and Septic System Improvements

While developing the Tongue River Watershed Plan, steering committee members came up with goals to try and reduce bacteria contributions. These goals are intended to be met each year, to come up with an overall bacteria reduction of 18% by the year 2017. We need your help to meet these goals for both livestock and septic systems.

Action Item	2013**		2017	
	Goal	Actual Number Addressed*	Goal	Actual Number Addressed*
Action: Replace/repair septic systems	6	0	4	1
Action: Relocate/improve livestock facilities	437	0	436	0

\*Goals for septic systems are in replacements per year. Goals for livestock are in animal units addressed per year. The animal units presented are based on the combined individual numbers for cattle, horse, and sheep where a cow/calf pair is equivalent to 1.0 AU, a horse is equivalent to 1.25 AU, and a sheep is equivalent to 0.2 AU.

\*\*The goals for 2014-2016 are the same as the goals for 2013

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO HELP YOU GET STARTED? Frequently Asked Questions

### How Much Funding is Available Overall?

The current grant has approximately \$200,000.00 to be used in the Tongue River, Goose Creek and Prairie Dog Creek watersheds. The majority of this grant is intended to fund livestock and septic system improvements. We have, in the past, needed to have a sign-up to prioritize water quality work based on available funding. Since we are in a financial position to fund all projects that meet the water quality objective, we strongly encourage landowners to participate now. In the future, if the demand exceeds our funding resources, we may have to re-instate a sign-up.



### How Much Will it Cost?

One of the greatest concerns that landowners have before deciding to participate is "how much is this going to cost?". The SCCD provides cost-share assistance for livestock (relocating corrals, stockwater, grazing management) and septic system improvements along impaired streams in Sheridan County. Typical cost-share assistance for livestock improvements is between 50% and 80%, depending upon available funding. The SCCD offers 50% cost-share assistance for septic system replacements. "In-kind" contributions, including materials and/or labor, can be used as a landowner portion.



Sheridan County Conservation District

1949 Sugarland Drive, Suite 102  
Sheridan, Wyoming 82801

Phone: 307-672-5820

Website: [www.sccdofwyo.org](http://www.sccdofwyo.org)

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Sheridan, WY  
Permit No. 21

#### **How does "In-Kind" apply to the landowner portion of the project expense?**

Program participants are required to pay a certain percentage of their project costs. However, this does not have to be cash. Participants who have time and equipment to do the work could have very little out-of-pocket expense. Regardless of a participant's ability to do all the work by themselves, any "in-kind" work that they can do on their own project will help reduce their overall cost.

#### **What happens if I visit with the SCCD about a project and decide not to do it?**

Landowners are under no obligation to complete a project until a contract is signed. Even then, it is possible to cancel or modify a project or portion of the project. People are encouraged to come into the SCCD/NRCS office to discuss any concerns they may have. We understand there are many factors to be considered and hope to make this process as easy and enjoyable as possible.

#### **What Are Past Participants Saying About the Programs?**

Since 2002, the SCCD/NRCS has helped 25 landowners make livestock improvements and 22 landowners make septic system improvements throughout Sheridan County. Here are what some past participants have said about working with the SCCD/NRCS:



*"I was very happy with this project. Everything about the process was flexible enough to accommodate my needs. The project not only met the objective of addressing the water quality concerns, but also improved the overall working operation of the corrals. It was definitely a 'win/win' situation" —Leroy Taylor;*

*"This project involved fencing off Denio Draw from existing corrals, pastures and an animal feeding facility, thus creating a rather extensive riparian area and enhanced wildlife habitat. . . SCCD and NRCS staff were diligent in their efforts [to] maintain a professional and accommodating working relationship throughout the duration of the project. Their expertise in planning and directing the project was invaluable." —Mike Winterholler;*

*"I strongly believe that these are very good projects\* for Sheridan County, [because] they help improve the watershed and environment. With the help, information, and funding made available, we were able to design the best septic system for us. NRCS and District people helped with the surveying and all of the other required information and were very helpful with the funding of the project" —Jack Fiedor; (\* Note: Jack also completed a livestock project.)*



*"Because of this program we have been able to relocate our corrals away from the creek, develop new water sources for livestock and create a filter type buffer zone where runoff water is cleaned up before entering Big Goose creek. It was a total win/win situation. . . We would urge SMALL property owners to look into this program. The SCCD/NRCS are eager to work with you, and you would be doing yourself a favor as well as improving the water quality in our area." —Rick & Kathy Woods.*