



Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Annual Newsletter

Sheridan County
Conservation District
Prairie Dog Creek
Watershed
Steering Committee

2012

This is the third annual Prairie Dog Creek 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 Prairie Dog Creek and its tributaries.

PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED INTERIM WATER QUALITY MONITORING RESULTS FOR 2012

Results from Prairie Dog Creek watershed monitoring in 2011 were similar to those in 2007. The primary regulatory concern in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed is *E. coli* bacteria concentrations in excess of Wyoming water quality standards for primary contact recreation. Although bacteria concentrations were typically higher in the lower portion of the watershed, all sampled sites had at least one 30-day geometric mean that exceeded the Wyoming water quality standard. With few exceptions, all sites on Prairie Dog Creek showed a decrease in bacteria concentrations from 2007 to 2008, which was followed by an increase in 2011. Bacteria concentrations decreased an average of 5% for May/June sample periods and 7% for July/August sample periods from 2007 to 2011. Water temperatures were recorded in excess of 20° C in portions of the watershed. Although there are no numeric standards for Sediment and Turbidity, Prairie Dog Creek contains high levels of sediment, which may contribute to bacteria concerns.

HELP SCCD IMPLEMENT THE PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED PLAN Funding is Available for Water Quality Improvement Projects

In February of 2011, the Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Plan (PDWP) was approved by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. 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 Prairie Dog Creek 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 10% by the year 2015. So far, these goals are not being met for either livestock or septic systems.

Action Item	2011		2012**	
	Goal	Actual Number Addressed*	Goal	Actual Number Addressed*
Action: Replace/repair septic systems	1	0	3	1
Action: Relocate/improve livestock facilities	298	0	298	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 2013-2015 are the same as the goals for 2012*

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 Prairie Dog Creek, Goose Creek and Tongue River 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.



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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.