



## ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

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"If we are bold in our thinking, courageous in accepting new ideas, and willing to work with instead of against our land, we shall find in conservation farming an avenue to the greatest food production the world has ever known—not only for the war, but for the peace that is to follow"

~HUGH HAMMOND BENNETT~

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# About Our District

## Our Mission Statement

"Provide leadership, educate the public, and find the solutions to Natural Resource problems using local grassroots involvement"

## History

Following the devastating days of the "Dust Bowl" caused by over cropping and drought in the Mid Western States, it became very apparent there was a need to conserve soil, water and other natural resources in rural America. In March 1941, the State Legislature passed an enabling act which established Conservation Districts in Wyoming. Conservation Districts were to direct programs protecting local renewable natural resources.

In 1945 the Greybull Valley Conservation District was formed and in 1947 the South Big Horn and Shell Valley Conservation Districts were formed. In 1968, the Greybull Valley and Shell Valley Conservation Districts combined and became the Greybull-Shell Conservation District. In 1977, the South Big Horn and Greybull-Shell Conservation Districts merged and became known as the South Big Horn Conservation District.

The South Big Horn Conservation District Board of Supervisors are elected by the residents of Big Horn County and serve a staggered four-year term. Board of Supervisors attend monthly meetings held on the first Tuesday of the month at 4:00PM at the USDA Service Center in Greybull.

## Who We Are

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Chairman: George Kelso  
Vice-Chairman: Linda Hamilton  
Secretary: Howard Wildman  
Treasurer: Eddie Johnson  
Member: Walt Hibbert

### DISTRICT STAFF

District Manager: Ashley Coenen

### NRCS STAFF

District Conservationist: Laura Galloway  
Range Management Specialist: Curtis Johnson  
Civil Engineer Technician: Chad Foster

### FSA STAFF

County Executive Director: Brenda Miller  
Program Assistant: Mikayla Zimmerman

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# DISTRICT OPERATIONS

- August
  - District Manager met with NRCS to discuss NWQI
  - District Manager participated in interviews for the Greybull FFA/Ag teacher.
  - District Manager attended the SRM tour held on the Big Horn Mountains
  - District Manager attended the Big Horn County Steering Committee meeting
- September
  - District Manager attended “Living with Beavers” workshop
  - District Manager and three Board of Supervisors attended the Area III meeting held in Cody
- October
  - District Manager attended the Greybull School District board meeting and gave an update on the community garden
  - Hosted annual Legislate meeting
- November
  - District Manager and three Board of Supervisors attended the WACD convention held in Jackson, WY
- December
  - District Manager met with the Buff Ranch Committee to discuss the community garden
- January
  - District Manager met with WDEQ and toured sites for recent projects
- February
  - District Manager attended the Soil Health Symposium in Montana
  - District Manager participated in interviews for the Greybull FFA/Ag teacher.
- April
  - District Manager attended the Big Horn Fence Initiative meeting in Worland
- May
  - District Manager attended the Big Horn Fence Initiative meeting in Greybull

The South Big Horn Conservation District is responsible for managing and preserving natural resources within the district boundaries. We work closely with landowners, farmers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the land is used in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner.

The District Manager is responsible for managing budgets, financials, organizing monthly board meetings, attending annual meetings & trainings, overseeing day- to-day operations.

The District oversees Watershed Improvement District's and meets with their Board of Directors quarterly.

The District works with local and state government agencies to secure funding and support for conservation efforts.

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OUT OF THE LONG  
LIST OF NATURE'S  
GIFTS TO MAN, NONE  
IS PERHAPS SO  
UTTERLY ESSENTIAL  
TO HUMAN LIFE AS  
SOIL.

~HUGH HAMMOND BENNETT~

# SHELL VALLEY WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



In 2006 the Shell Valley Watershed Improvement District began discussing options to increase water storage for Shell Valley water users. The Shell Valley Watershed Improvement District requested to expand Leavitt Reservoir, an existing off-channel facility (643 acre-feet). The Reservoir Expansion will have a total capacity of approximately 6,604 acre-feet, of which 4,461 acre-feet will serve as a new active supplemental irrigation supply on top of the original right, leaving a 1,500 acre-foot minimum pool for habitat, fishing and recreational use. Additionally, the reservoir will provide some flood control and, by enhancing stream flow, have the potential to positively influence downstream riparian vegetation for the benefit of fisheries and wildlife.

The Shell Valley WID secured funding through the WWDC in the amount of \$46 million. In 2021, bids were requested to begin construction of the Leavitt Reservoir Expansion. In January 2022, the WID only received one bid and that bid came in 58% higher than the estimated total cost. The WID board had to put the project on hold until they could come up with another solution, which involved going back to the Select water committee & legislation and ask for additional funds. The WID successfully received additional funding in the amount of \$78



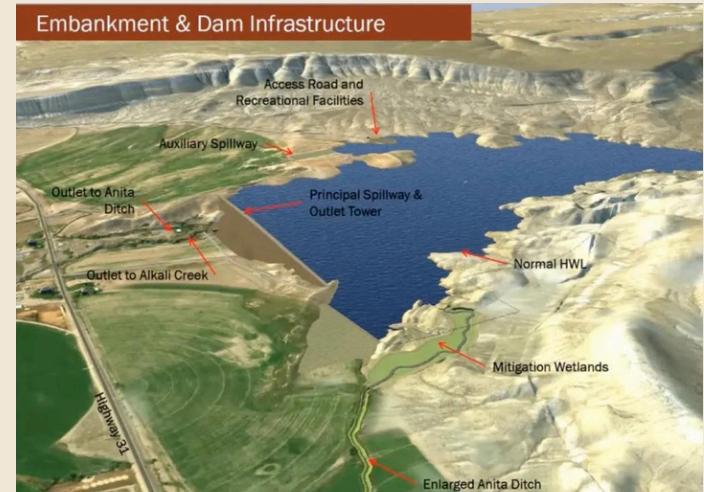
million. In 2023, bidding opened once again with the overall project broken down into four contracts. Contract A is for the construction of the dam, outlet works, wetlands and recreation facilities, Contract B is for the construction of the supply pipeline and associated structures, Contract C is for the construction of the transfer pipeline and associated structures & Contract D covers aggregate processing/import. Six contractors bid on the project. The lowest bids for the four contracts totaled \$77.56 million. The project began in 2023 and is expected to be complete by 2026.

# NOWOOD WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



In 2007, Stakeholders in the Nowood Watershed Drainage approached the Wyoming Water Development Office (WWDO) about concerns of late season irrigation water shortages. In 2008, WWDO contracted Anderson Consulting Engineers (ACE) to begin a Level I Study. The purpose of the Level I Study was to evaluate and describe the Watershed and to develop a Watershed Management Plan. Through the course of the Level I Study, ACE & WWDO developed recommendations for irrigation system conservation and rehabilitation, livestock and/or wildlife upland watering opportunities, grazing management opportunities, other upland management opportunities and stream rehabilitation. The Level I Study concluded that late season water shortages exist. During this study 35 sites were identified for potential storage reservoirs. A Level II, Phase I Study was conducted by Trihydro in 2010 to expand on the Level I Study findings and identified 5 additional potential storage sites.

In addition, the study estimated potential water shortages, estimated water available for storage, investigated and evaluated potential storage locations, and assessed the capability of the highest-ranked storage locations to meet water shortages and provide other Watershed benefits. During this study, Meadowlark Lake & Alkali Creek were ranked the highest for providing late season irrigation storage. In 2012, WWDO contracted Trihydro to complete a Level II, Phase II Study and further evaluate the Alkali Creek storage. The proposed Alkali Creek Reservoir is an off-channel site, filled with spring runoff from Paint Rock and Medicine Lodge Creeks through the enlargement and modification of an existing irrigation ditch. The Reservoir will have a total capacity of approximately 8,000 acre-feet, of which 6,000 acre-feet will serve as a supplemental irrigation supply for the Nowood River Watershed Improvement District, leaving a 2,000 acre-foot minimum pool for habitat, fishing and recreational use. Additionally, the Reservoir will provide some flood control and by enhancing stream flow, have the potential to positively influence downstream riparian vegetation for the benefit of fisheries and wildlife. The project has not yet begun due to the rising cost to build the reservoir and easement delays.



# WATER QUALITY

## PARAMATERS TESTED

- pH
- DO (Dissolved Oxygen)
- Conductivity
- Temperature
- Turbidity
- Total Dissolved Solids
- E.coli.

57 samples were collected at 10 water monitoring sites. Sites include:

- Greybull River (2)
- Dry Creek (2)
- Shell Creek (3)
- Big Horn River (3)



The Big Horn River and its tributaries were listed as threatened or impaired on Wyoming DEQ's 2002 Integrated 305(b) and 303(d) report. Recreation is the designated use that is not fully supported for streams within the district. The cause of impairment for all streams was listed for fecal coliform bacteria. The streams listed as impaired include the Big Horn River, Nowood River, Paint Rock Creek, Greybull River, Granite Creek, Beaver Creek, Shell Creek & Dry Creek. The District Manager along with one NRCS employee collect samples every two weeks during the primary recreation season (May-September).

# CONSERVATION ON THE GROUND

## *Cost Share Programs*

The South Big Horn Conservation districts offers multiple cost share programs to the citizens of South Big Horn County. This includes:

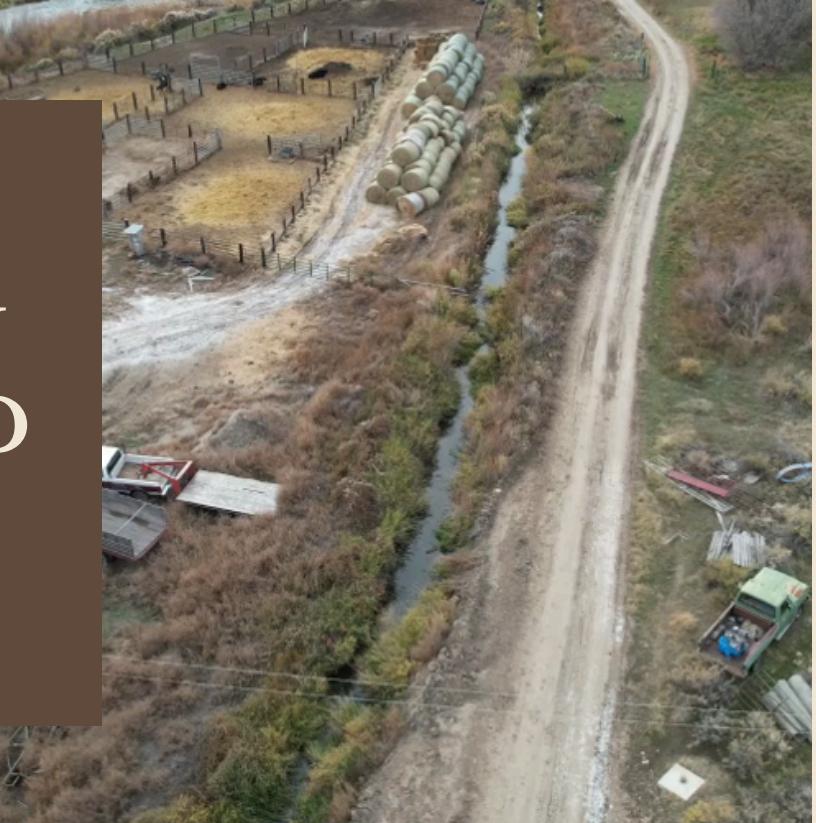
- Wyoming Water Development - Small Water Project Program
  - 50/50 cost share up to \$35,000.00
    - The district currently has 2 contracts with an estimated total of \$162,472.00
      - Project #1 will replace a dirt ditch with approximately 5,490 feet of 12" pipe.
      - Project #2 will replace 1,700 feet of dirt ditch with 15" pipe.
    - Project #3 will replace a dirt ditch with approximately 5,490 feet of 12" pipe.
    - Project #4 will replace a dirt ditch with approximately 7,700 feet of pipe. Install reservoirs and add rock to stabilize the stream bank edge.
- Wyoming DEQ - 319 Program
  - 60/40 cost share
    - The district currently has 3 contracts with an estimated total of \$1,201,038.00
      - Project #1 will replace a diversion structure and install approximately 3,750 feet of 21" pipe to eliminate a severely eroded ditch
      - Project #2 will replace a dirt ditch with approximately 5,490 feet of 12" pipe.
      - Project #3 will replace a dirt ditch with approximately 7,700 feet of pipe. Install reservoirs and add rock to stabilize the stream bank edge.

## *Seedling Tree Program*

The South Big Horn Conservation District provides seedling trees and shrubs for sale from November to April. To reach homeowners in South Big Horn County, the district uses EDDM (Every Door Direct Mail) to distribute postcards. Deliveries of the trees occur at the beginning of May.

During FY24-25 the district distributed 841 seedling trees and shrubs to 17 customers. Our top 5 sellers were Apricot, Plum, Aspen, Hackberry and Common Purple Lilacs.

The district purchased 7 fruit trees (4 Apple and 3 Peach) to plant at the Greybull Buff Ranch.



# National Water Quality initiative



The National Water Quality Initiative is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where farmers can use conservation practices to make a difference. Conservation systems include practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion and lessen nutrient runoff, such as

filter strips, cover crops, reduced tillage and manure management. These practices not only benefit natural resources but enhance agricultural productivity and profitability by improving soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs. State water quality agencies and other partners contribute additional resources for watershed planning, implementation and outreach.

The South Big Horn Conservation District was awarded CTA funds in FY23-24. The project area includes three watersheds; Webster Creek-Greybull River, McKinnie Creek-Greybull River and Kellerman Gulch-Dry Creek. We have been given a one year extension to complete the watershed planning assesment.

## Community garden

In 2023, the South Big Horn Conservation District applied for a Wyoming Community Foundation grant to establish a community Garden in the area. The District Manager met with the Big Horn County School District #3 Board of Directors, Superintendent and FFA/Ag Teacher to partner up and start a garden at the school's Buff Ranch in Greybull.

During FY24-25, we were able to use the vegetables in the school lunch program and donate over 1,000 pounds to citizens of South Big Horn County. Vegetables were given away on a first come first serve basis.

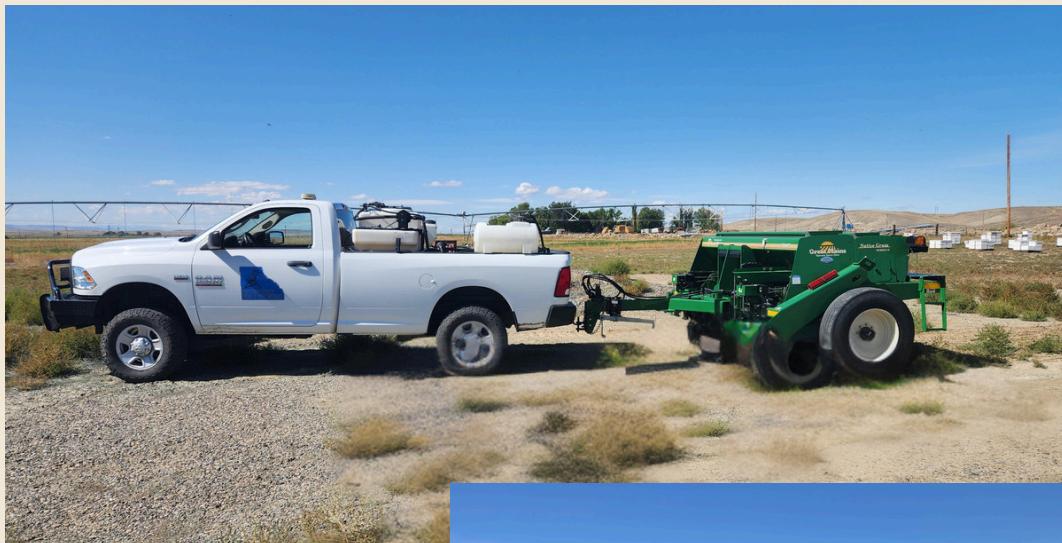


# NO TILL DRILL RENTAL

No-till Drills are used for planting seeds directly into the soil without the need for prior tilling or plowing. Using a no-till drill has many benefits such as reducing soil erosion, reduce soil compaction, reduce soil moisture loss and gives you healthier soil.

In 2024, the South Big Horn Conservation District and Big Horn County Weed & Pest purchased a 10 foot drill to help landowners in Big Horn County. The rental cost for Big Horn County producers is \$15.00/acre with a \$200 minimum. Producers in Washakie and Park County can also use the drill for \$18.00/acre with a \$200 minimum.

During FY25, the drill served 9 producers covering 150 acres.



# Education & Outreach

## 7th Grade Water Monitoring

Ashley and Curtis conducted an outreach session with 7th-grade students from Greybull and Riverside Middle School. The students were educated on water quality and the significance of macroinvertebrates. 49 students attended.

## Lifecycle of a Butterfly

Ashley and Curtis talked about the lifecycle of a butterfly with the Laura Irwin and Greybull Pre-K students. There were 19 students present. Each school was given 10 caterpillars.

## Wildlife Leave No Trace

Ashley and Curtis presented to 8th grade students from five Big Horn County Schools about water quality during the Wildlife Leave No Trace days. 142 students attended and each student received a life straw.

## Soil Health - Dirt Babies

Ashley and Curtis spoke with 29 Greybull Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students about the importance of soil. Students were able to make dirt babies to take home with them.

## Harvest with Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts from Troop 1341 came out to the Community Garden and helped harvest over 400 pounds of vegetables. We had 6 girls participate and each one got to take home some vegetables.

## Earth Days

Ashley, Curtis and Laura presented to 35 Kindergarten students about the importance of trees. Each student took home a Colorado Blue Spruce seedling to plant.

## Career Days

Ashley and Curtis spoke with 215 Greybull Elementary students ranging from Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade about our careers and why they are important.

## UW Ag Days

Ashley and Curtis attended Ag Days hosted by the Big Horn County UW extension. Schools included Cowley, Lovell, Burlington, Greybull and Basin. 215 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students were present.



# FINANCIALS

## FY24-25 Beginning Balance

General Checking	\$	30,939.64
Tree Checking	\$	652.52
Grant Savings	\$	456.88
Tree Savings	\$	2,507.46
Reserves	\$	87,449.69

## FY24-25 Ending Balance

General Checking	\$	36,864.19
Tree Checking	\$	4,322.93
Grant Savings	\$	461.11
Tree Savings	\$	3,161.43
Reserves	\$	88,259.80

## FY24-25 Income

Mill Levy	\$	67,109.37
Misc. Income	\$	11,270.30
WDA Funds	\$	10,464.56
WWDC	\$	44,400.00
WDEQ	\$	77,957.73
WY Community Foundation	\$	5,000.00
Interest	\$	1,026.64

## FY24-25 Expenses

Administration Expenses	\$	46,814.15
Operating Expenses	\$	191,252.57
Indirect Costs	\$	1,125.00





## **ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK 2025-2026**

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# About Our District

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Following the devastating days of the "Dust Bowl" caused by over cropping and drought in the Mid Western States, it became very apparent there was a need to conserve soil, water and other natural resources in rural America. In March 1941, the State Legislature passed an enabling act which established Conservation Districts in Wyoming. Conservation Districts were to direct programs protecting local renewable natural resources.

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# DISTRICT OPERATIONS

## *Goal*

The District Manager and Board of Supervisors will focus on managing and preserving natural resources within district boundaries, in collaboration with landowners and stakeholders.

## *Objective*

To achieve our goal, SBHCD will promote sustainable and environmentally responsible land use, conduct regular soil surveys, monitor water quality, and provide technical assistance to landowners. Additionally, the District Manager will manage the district budget, organize meetings and oversee day-to-day operations. We will collaborate with local and state government agencies to secure funding and support for conservation efforts.

## *Actions*

### **Monthly:**

- Board Meetings (1st Tuesday)
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Prepare Financial Reports
  - Delegation: District Manager
- Attend Nowood Watershed Improvement District Board of Directors meeting (1st Monday)
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Attend Shell Valley Watershed Improvement District Board of Directors meeting (3rd Thursday)
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Submit EFTPS, Wyoming Retirement System
  - Delegation: District Manager

### **Quarterly:**

- Comply with tax reporting requirements
  - Delegation: District Manager
- Meet with the Nowood and Shell Valley Watershed Improvement Districts (January, April, June, October)
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Complete grant reporting requirements
  - Delegation: District Manager

### **Annually:**

- Prepare & Submit final budget to the WDA, DOA, WACD & County Clerk
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Submit base funding requirements
  - Annual Plan of Work/Report
  - One Page Summary
  - Workers Compensation/Unemployment Insurance Certificates
  - Risk Management Practices
  - Proof of Bonding
  - Local Government Liability Pool
    - Delegation: District Manager
- Attend Area III meeting held in Powell, WY
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Prepare and submit F-32 reporting requirements
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Host Legislative meeting
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Attend WACD Convention in Gillette, WY
  - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager

### **Other Tasks:**

- Prepare and submit the Lower Greybull River watershed assessment
  - Delegation: District Manager
- Provide subdivision reviews per statute (W.S 11-16)
  - Delegation: District Manager
- Apply for grants
  - Delegation: District Manager

# WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS



## *Goal*

Maintain our position as the governing entity for the Shell Valley and Nowood Watershed Improvement Districts.

## *Objective*

To achieve our goal the District Manager and Board of Supervisors will stay up-to-date with the expansion of Leavitt Reservoir and the development of Alkali Creek Reservoir; ensure the WIDs provide annual reports and financials to the District Manager and Board of Supervisors for review and analysis; conduct the Board of Directors elections; provide all necessary documentation to the County Clerk and Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

## *Actions*

- Stay up-to-date on current projects within the Watershed District
  - Leavitt Reservoir
  - Alkali Creek Reservoir
    - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Hold quarterly meetings in conjunction with the SBHCD Board of Supervisors meetings
  - October 7, 2025
  - January 6, 2026
  - April 7, 2026
  - June 2, 2026
    - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Attend one tour per year
  - Summer 2026
    - Delegation: Board of Supervisors, District Manager
- Hold SVWID Board of Directors Election for three supervisor positions
  - March 2026
    - Delegation: District Manager
- Request annual reports and financials and submit to WDA
  - February 2026
    - Delegation: District Manager

# WATER QUALITY

## *Goal*

Preserve and protect our valuable water resources

## *Objective*

To achieve our goal, the District Manager alongside NRCS will continue to monitor and assess all streams within the district boundaries to ensure that water quality standards are being met and to identify areas in need of improvement.

## *Delegation*

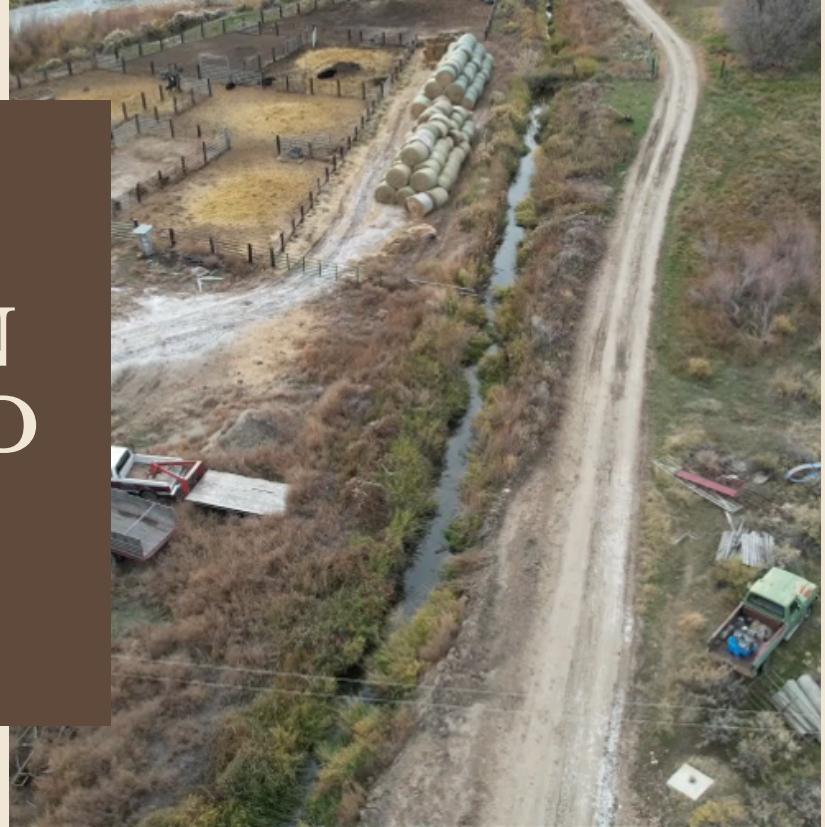
District Manager is responsible for all tasks



## *Actions*

- District Manager will continue to stay up to date on certification through the WACD Water Quality Trainings and comply with state requirements to maintain certification.
- Continue to use the information collected from the Big Horn River TMDL, Greybull River and Middle Big Horn Level 1 studies.
- Continue to gather scientifically credible data (chemical, physical, biological) on seven streams (20 sites) as well as collection of E.coli samples, analyzed in the District office.
- Secure grant funds through WDEQ, WWDC and WDA to assist landowners with improving water quality.

# CONSERVATION ON THE GROUND



## *Goal*

Protect and enhance rangeland, pasture & cropland on public and private lands.

## *Objective*

To achieve our goal, the District Manager will provide landowners with technical assistance and financial incentives to encourage the adoption of sustainable land management practices. Additionally, we will partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to promote the use of best management practices that help to protect soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitats.

## *Delegation*

District Manager is responsible for all tasks.

## *Actions*

- WWDO Small Waters Program
  - Provide technical assistance
  - Assist landowners with 2025-2026 applications
  - Continue to work with current landowners on completion of projects
    - 2 contracts to be completed by October 2025
    - 2 contracts to be completed by October 2026
- Wyoming Department of Agriculture Water Quality & Rangeland Assessment Management Programs
  - Promote Best Management Practices on rangeland & irrigated cropland to reduce erosion and maintain productivity
  - Encourage proper grazing management planning & Water storage development for livestock
    - Notify producers when RFP is available
    - Apply for funding as needed

## ***Actions Continued...***

- Wyoming DEQ Section 319 Program
  - Notify producers when RFP is available
  - Continue to work with current landowners on completion of projects
    - 2 contracts to be completed by November 2026
    - 1 contract to be completed by November 2027
- Seedling Trees & Home Compost Bin Program
  - Purchase seedling trees & shrubs from Schumacher's & One Canopy Nurseries
  - Provide Home Compost Bins to local citizens
  - Continue to distribute order forms through USPS EDDM
    - Order forms available from November 1 - March 31st
    - available online ([www.southbighorncd.com](http://www.southbighorncd.com))
    - available in office
  - Provide assistance
    - Design of windbreaks
    - Selection of tree species based on soil type
    - Provide information pertaining to tree care & planting
  - Support Arbor Day Foundation
    - District Manager to continue to be a part of the Tree Board for the Town of Greybull and assist with the planting of Arbor Day trees
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
  - District Manager to continue Watershed Planning with assistance from NRCS & WACD
    - Watersheds include:
      - Webster Creek-Greybull River
      - McKinnie Creek-Greybull River
      - Kellerman Gulch-Dry Creek
- Promote NRCS Big Game Initiative Program to implement wildlife friendly fences
- Promote & support Russian Olive/salt cedar removal efforts with NRCS, Wyoming Game & Fish and Big Horn County Weed & Pest
  - Assist landowners with replanting vegetative buffers after removal of Russian Olive trees
- Assist NRCS & Big Horn County Weed & Pest with efforts of reducing invasive species
  - Cheatgrass
  - Ventenata
  - Medusa head
- Continue to be a Cooperating Agency with Cody & Worland BLM Field Offices & USFS
  - Management of Wild Horses
  - Greater Sage Grouse Planning efforts
  - Big Horn Forest Service steering committee
- Assist Big Horn School District #3 with the community garden
  - Continue to expand the garden located at the Greybull Buff Ranch
  - Seek funding to help with costs of the garden
  - Meet with the Principal, Ag teacher, and Superintendent on a regular basis
- Promote the use of the No-till Drill
- Promote Well Water testing



# Education & Outreach

## *Goal*

Host educational workshops and seminars with local schools and organizations to promote natural resource efforts and conservation practices.

## *Objective*

To achieve our goal, the District Manager will work with the University of Wyoming Extension, Big Horn County Weed & Pest, NRCS, USFS, WY G&F, and local schools to promote natural resource efforts.

## *Delegation*

District Manager is responsible for all tasks.

## *Actions*

- Continue to monitor and test macroinvertebrates alongside 7th-grade students from Greybull and Riverside Middle School.
- Collaborate with Big Horn County UW Extension to educate 8th-grade students about the principles of Wildlife Leave No Trace.
- In celebration of Earth Day, teach Kindergarten students in South Big Horn County about the significance of trees.
- Take part in the Big Horn County UW Extension Ag Days.
- Provide education on soil health to 3rd-grade students.
- Engage in Greybull Elementary School Career Days.
- Introduce Preschool students to the lifecycle of a butterfly.
- Partner with other agencies to launch a camp for students in grades 4-6.



# Affiliations

*The South Big Horn Conservation District would like to thank those who assist with conservation efforts*

- Big Horn County
- Big Horn County UW Extension
- Big Horn County Weed & Pest
- Big Horn County School District #3
- Big Horn County School District #4
- Big Horn Fence Initiative
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- One Canopy
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Schumacher's Nursery
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- US Forest Service
- University of Wyoming Barnyards & Backyards
- Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
- Wyoming Bureau of Land Management
- Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
- Wyoming Game & Fish
- Wyoming Natural Resource Foundation
- Wyoming Society for Range Management
- Wyoming Water Association
- Wyoming Water Development
- Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust

# Signature Page

We, the Supervisors of the South Big Horn Conservation District, as duly authorized by Wyoming Conservation District Law hereby adopt the fiscal year 2024-2025 Annual Plan of Work as the guide for work priorities in this Conservation District

George Kelso

George Kelso, Chairman, Rural

Linda Y. Hamilton

Linda Hamilton, Vice Chairman, Rural

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Howard Wildman, Secretary, At-Large

Eddie Johnson

Eddie Johnson, Treasurer, Urban

Walter Hibbert

Walter Hibbert, Member, Rural

