

Weston County Natural Resource District



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ANNUAL REPORT 2022



MISSION

To provide leadership in conserving the natural resources in the Weston County Natural Resource District by providing information, education and technical assistance to meet the needs of the users

"I consider the soil conservation districts movement one of the most important developments in the whole history of agriculture."
Hugh Hammond Bennett

"One of the best, and certainly the most promising, of the devices yet invented by man for dealing democratically and effectively with maladjustment in land use, as well as for carrying forward positive programs of desirable conservation, and for maintaining the work, is the soil conservation district."
— Hugh Hammond Bennett



DISTRICT OPERATIONS

The Weston County Natural Resource District (WCNRD) is a local governmental subdivision of the state as defined and established by Wyoming Statute. It is one of 34 Districts across Wyoming.

The District is governed by a locally elected Board of Supervisors. They are unpaid volunteers and provide local guidance in addressing conservation issues. Supervisors are residents of the district elected by local citizens to serve staggered four-year terms. Per Wyoming statute, the supervisor positions include three rural, one urban, and one at-large. Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month and are open to the public.

BOARD & STAFF

Emily Hartinger
Secretary/Treasurer

Tom Streeter
Supervisor

Tucker Hamilton
Vice-Chair

David Tysdal
Chairman

Caleb Carter
District Manager

Gene Norman
Supervisor



Partnerships

As District Manager, Caleb served as a representative on the following:

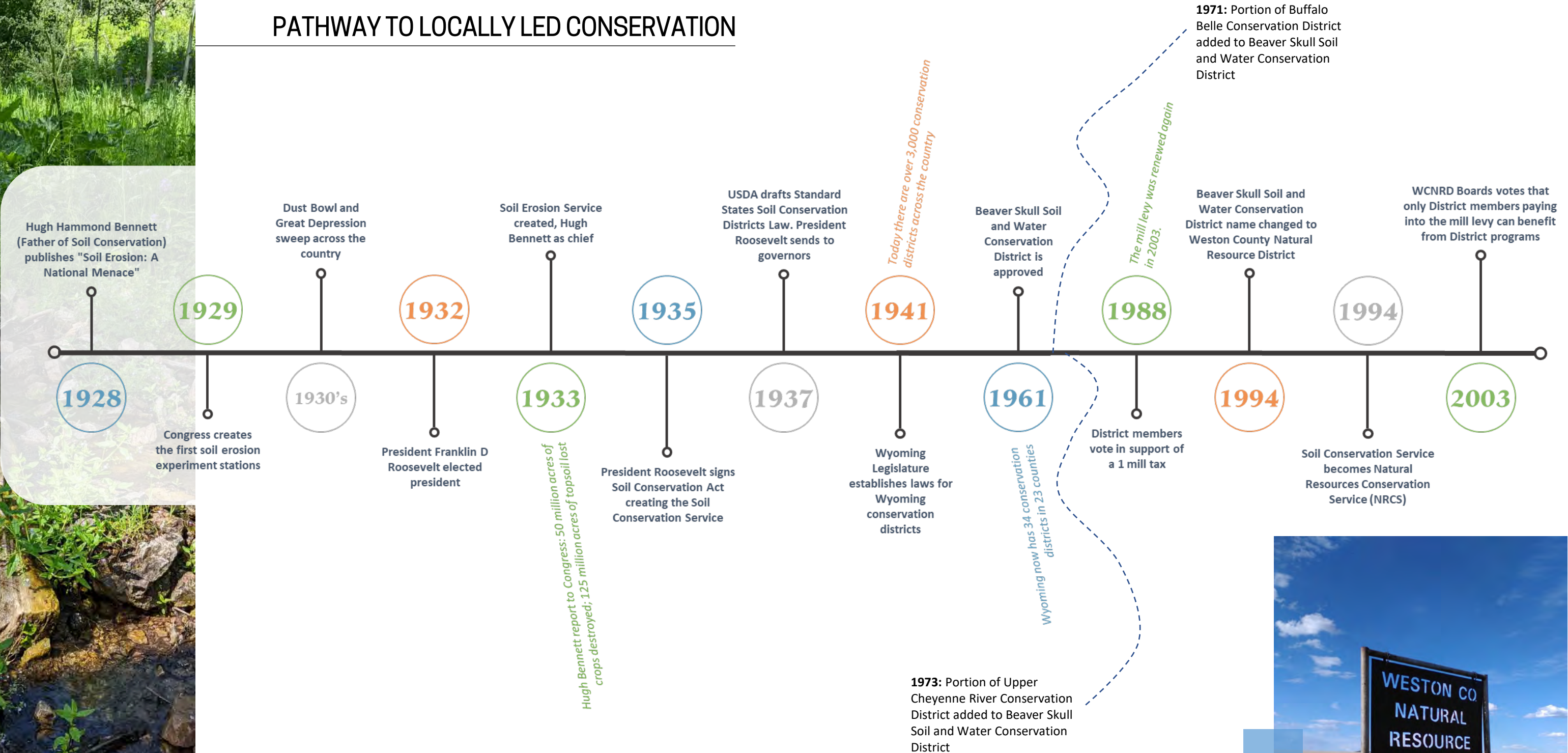
Thunder Basin National Grassland Working Group
University of Wyoming Extension Small Acreage Initiative Team
Wyoming State Forestry Good Neighbor Authority
Weston County Natural Resource Management Plan Review Committee
Weston County Community Garden
Newcastle Tree Board
Black Hills Forest Resiliency Committee Meetings
Northeast Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Collaborative
BLM Natural Resource Plan update
Black Hills National Forest Plan update

Meetings

As District Manager, Caleb attended the following meetings:

NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting (STAC)
WACD Area 1 meeting in Ranchester
WACD Annual Convention in Cody
WCDEA Annual Training in Casper
NRCS Local Work Group meeting in Sundance

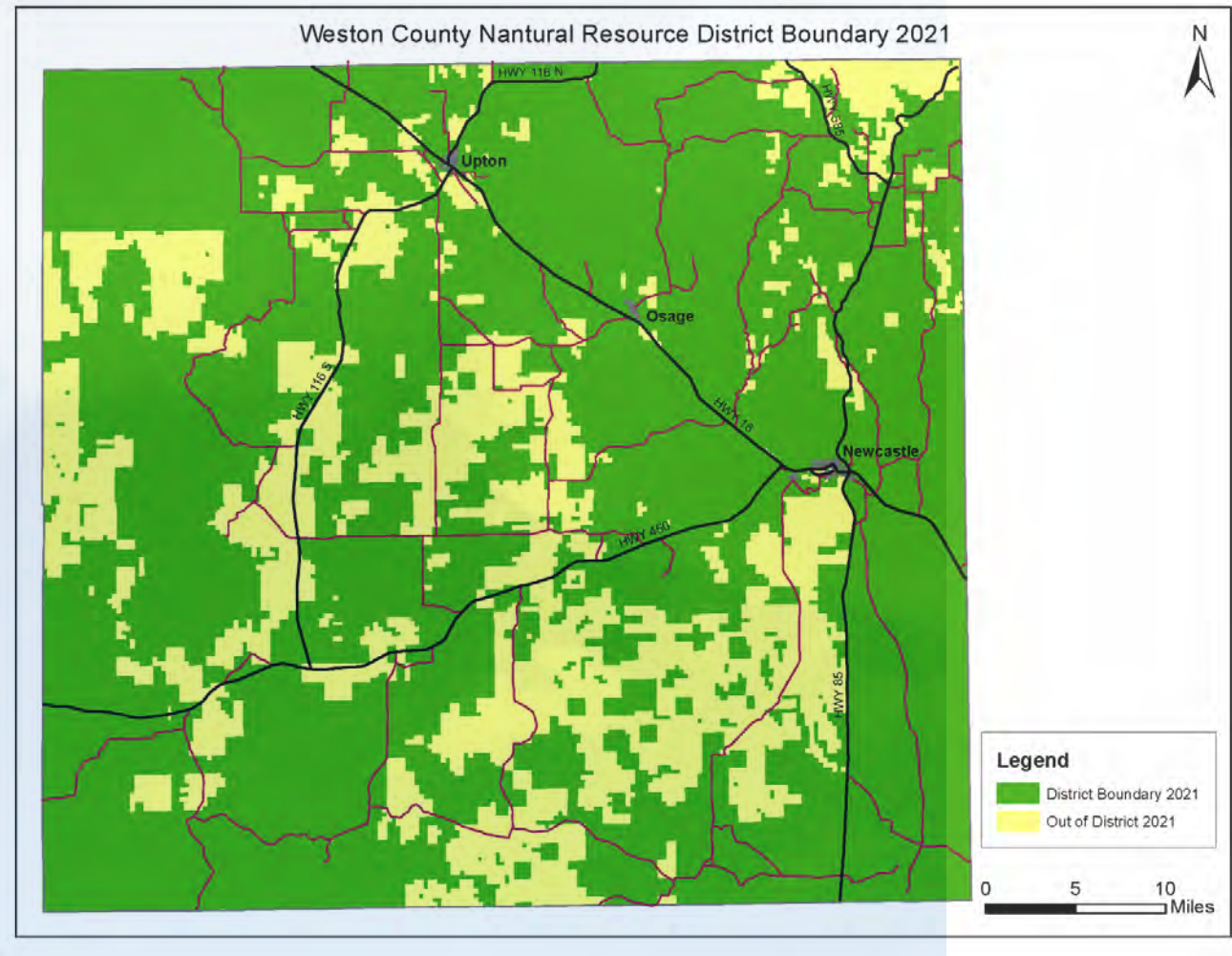
PATHWAY TO LOCALLY LED CONSERVATION



A DYNAMIC BOUNDARY

The original District boundary included land within Weston county lying east of Highway 85 and north of Highway 16. Landowners inside this area at the time of creation in 1961 had the option to opt out of the district. Additionally, landowners outside this area were given the opportunity to opt in.

Since then, landowners have been able to voluntarily add their land into the District. This has led to a checkerboard boundary, as not all landowners in Weston County are in the District.



Mill Levy

In 1987, the Wyoming Legislature authorized conservation districts to impose a tax of up to 1 mill, subject to approval by voters.

District Mill Levy

District members approved a mill levy in the Weston County Natural Resource District in 1988. This is the main source of funding for the District, funding several grant and cost share programs. Because of this, District programs are only available to District members. Except for the following programs that are available to all Weston County residents:

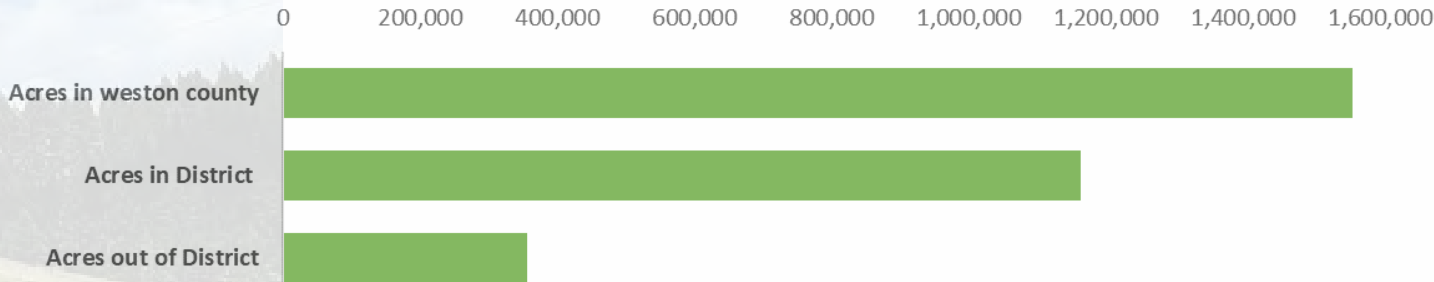
- Annual Household Hazardous Waste Day
- Black Hills Natural Resource’s Youth Camp (*WCNRD pays for any Weston County youth to attend*)
- Events & workshops

Cost Of District Membership

A mill levy is one dollar for every \$1,000 in accessed value. The portion of property tax District members pay to the WCNRD equates to approximately \$9.50 per \$100,000 in property valuation annually.



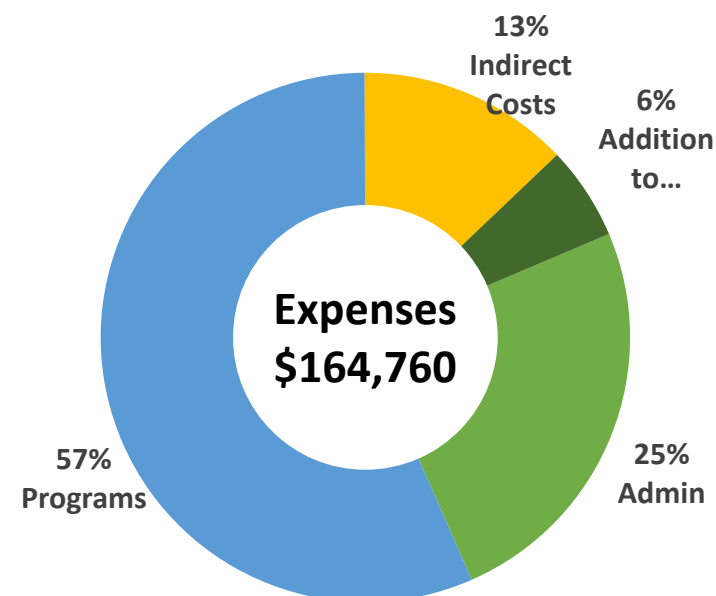
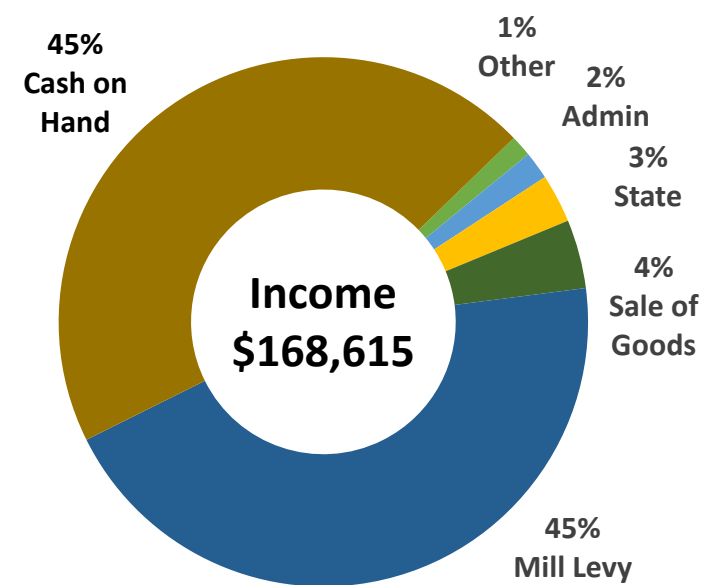
Breakdown of Acres In and Out of the District



FUNDING

The District saw a decrease in spending this fiscal year. This is due to not receiving funds from Wyoming State Forestry for forest health projects and the board also holding onto funds to use as match to bring in new grant sources in the future.

Fiscal Year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022



Water Projects

Over 29,000 feet of pipeline installed through cost share programs
3 new wells
7 new stock tanks
Over 16,000 acres improved through water project



Forestry Program

2,898 trees sold
33 acres of fuel treatment in progress
10 trees planted in Upton park



Education Program

31 Weston County kids attended BHNH Youth Camp at Mallo
Held Grazing workshop looking at economic leverage of grazing principles
Taught soil health principles to home school groups



Hazardous Waste Collection Day

Collected over 9,000 pounds and 300 gallons of waste
70 lbs of food collected for the Bread Basket

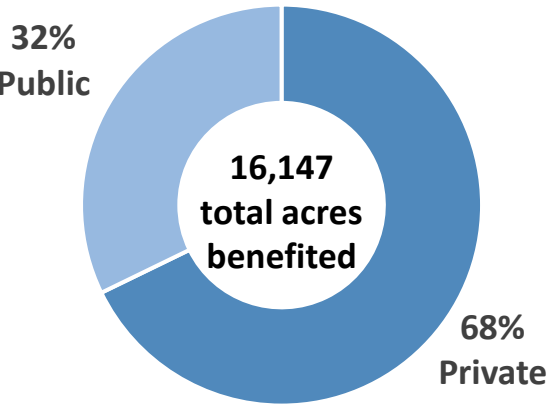
ANNUAL SUMMARY

The District strives to return the investment made by district members by leveraging local funding to create useful cost share programs to benefit county residents and our natural resources.



Improving Range Through Water

Improving rangeland health is directly related to water in Weston County. Improving water distribution helps better distribute livestock grazing and provides water for wildlife. District water projects benefited over 16,000 acres on both private and public lands.



Mitigating Erosion

Erosion resulting in separation of flood plains from riparian and mesic habitats has been identified as a major contributor to range degradation. WCNRD and Wyoming Game and Fish have partnered and secured funding to host a workshop and create demonstration projects to promote the use low-tech structures as a mitigation tool.

Plan to host a workshop in summer 2023

Wildlife Habitat Improvement

The WCNRD and the Crook County Natural Resource District sought and were awarded a grant from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust to improve mule deer and sage grouse habitat through forestry projects.

- ✓ FORAGE AND BROWSE FOR MULE DEER
- ✓ REDUCE CONIFER ENCROACHMENT IN SAGEBRUSH

RANGELAND HEALTH & WILDLIFE HABITAT

Water quantity and distribution, improving native vegetation, improving riparian areas, livestock management, soil erosion, and sustaining wildlife habitat are all major concerns for rangeland health.

WATER RESOURCES

Water is the key to life and improving both water quality and quantity are important components of the conservation districts mandate. One of the most limiting factors in effective livestock grazing, as well as wildlife, distribution in Weston County is access to reliable water sources. A big part of the District’s efforts have been in developing more reliable water sources by converting windmill powered wells to solar power, adding pipelines to increase distribution of stock water, as well as the drilling of new wells.

The District Funded Eight Water Projects



The District also provided technical assistance for several projects to ensure proper design and function

Small Water Projects

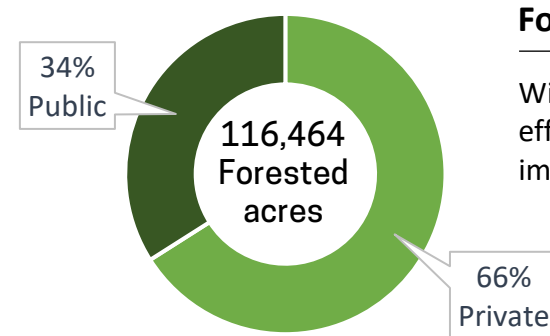
The completion of the Beaver Creek Watershed Study in 2019 was the last Watershed Study needing completed in Weston County. This funding opens up the opportunity for funding through the Wyoming Small Water Project Program.





FOREST HEALTH

Dense and overstocked timber has led to pest outbreaks and an increase in the severity of wildfires. Proper timber management, forest thinning, and defensible space are major concerns in these areas.



Forested Land Ownership in Weston County

With so much private forested acres in Weston County, District efforts to help landowners properly manage their forests is important in helping maintain health forests.

FUEL MITIGATION

In 2021 the District took over coordination of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) grant from the Weston County Fire Protection District.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE
FUEL TREATMENTS
FUEL BREAKS

6 33 ACRES
PROJECTS
Started or ongoing in 2022

*In partnership with Crook County, the District was awarded a \$400,000 grant from Wyoming Wildlife & Natural Resource Trust to begin in 2022. **Leveraging local funding as match!***

Thinning Projects

With the loss of the Wyoming State Forestry money that the District has been using to combat the mountain pine beetle and more recently thinning projects to promote healthy forests, the District began looking for other sources of funding.

Community Tree Grant

Each year the District offers a 60/40 cost share up to \$500 to encourage community tree plantings.

Planted in **10**
Upton **TREES**





Outreach

- **Quarterly Conservation Clamor newsletter** reaching over 500
- **Quarterly Barnyards and Backyards magazine** reaching over 300
- **Booth at fair for family night:** participants made Nature Journals and learned how to document their surroundings.
- **Donated 20 hackberry trees and golden currant shrubs** to the Bent Sprockets Cave Man Fun Run
- **Science Fair:** consulted on science fair project & served as high school science fair judge

Education

Grazing Workshop

ECONOMIC LEVERAGE OF GRAZING PRINCIPLES, featuring Dallas Mount, CRO of Ranching for Profit. Partners included Audubon Rockies and Bird Conservancy



Black Hills Natural Resource Youth Camp

The District covered the cost of attendance for 31 youth from Weston County!



Soil Health Activities

Taught soil health principles and practices to local homeschool groups



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

"In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only that what we understand, and will understand only that what we are taught." — *Baba Dioum, Sengal*

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Community members are willing to properly dispose of hazardous waste but often don't have the means and it can often become a burden financially as well

Hazardous Waste Collection Day: Fall 2021

AMOUNT	ITEM COLLECTED
2,991 Gallons	Paint
1,529 Gallons	Paint thinner, etc.
295 Gallons	Batteries
170 Gallons	Aerosol cans
67 pounds	Flammable liquids
210 Gallons	Pesticides
220 Gallons	Light bulbs
2,913 Pounds	Electronics
216 Gallons	inorganic acids
210 Gallons	Inorganic base
250 Gallons	Bulk liquid fuels

Other Stats

Food donations to the Bread Basket: 71 lbs.
Money donated: \$700
11 volunteers
81 cars came through

Expanding Waste Collection Efforts

Began discussions with Upton Town Council to expand collection day to Upton as well. Considering maybe every third year holding an additional event in Upton.

Partners

City of Newcastle
Weston County
Farnsworth Services



The District also offered Septic Maintenance Cost Share assistance to district members

