



Conservation Clamor

WESTON COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT

December 2023

What's Happening?

There's a lot going on at WCNRD! Here's a look at some of the district's current programs and opportunities:

Classes

Newcastle @ district office

Raised Garden Beds - 2/15 @ 6 p.m.

Weeds in the Garden - 3/14 @ 6 p.m.

Drip Irrigation - 4/11 @ 6 p.m.

Register online or call the EWC office
307-746-3603

Upton @ high school

Windbreaks and Living Snowfences - 3/7 @ 7 p.m.

Trees for Weston County - 4/4 @ 7 p.m.

Call 307-468-2495 to sign up

Sales

Seedling Trees - Orders due 4/3.

Compost Bins - Pre-orders due 12/22.

Bat Boxes - On hand and available for purchase

Landscape Fabric- On hand and available for purchase

Cost-Share Programs

Conservation Cost-Share - 50% up to \$7500 cost-share on projects that improve or conserve natural resources

Septic Maintenance Cost-Share - \$100 cost share on septic maintenance

Grants

Community Tree Grant - funds 7 projects up to \$500 each, to encourage planting trees on public property

Wildfire Mitigation Grant - in partnership with the Fire Protection District, funds fire mitigation through fuel load reduction on private property

Outdoor Education Assistance Grant - provides funding for schools and youth organizations to provide hands-on outdoor learning experiences that focus on natural resources and/or agricultural activities

Check out our website for more information

www.westoncountynrd.org

Home Ignition During Wildfire

Research has proven that the most common way that homes are ignited during a wildfire is not from the usual source, which is often assumed to be the wildfire itself. Rather, it is most common to have homes, or flammable materials near homes, ignite from embers or small flames caused by embers. Embers are burning pieces of airborne wood and/or vegetation that can be carried more than a mile through the wind and can cause spot fires and ignite homes, debris, and other objects.

There are steps that homeowners can take to prepare their homes for a wildfire and minimize the likelihood of home ignition. Refer to the checklist for tips on what can be done. Beyond the immediate surroundings of the home, the district has a grant that can assist homeowners in preparing their property by thinning trees and removing fuels. Contact the district office for a free property evaluation and for more information on cost-share opportunities.

HOME IGNITION ZONE CHECKLIST

SIMPLE STEPS FROM ROOF TO FOUNDATION TO MAKE A HOME SAFER FROM EMBERS AND RADIANT HEAT

- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration
- Reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8 inch metal mesh screening
- Clean debris from exterior attic vents and install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening to reduce embers
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors - mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles - anything that can burn
- Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches

VISIT FIREWISE.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS

Image by NFPA, with funding from USDA Forest Service

Board of Supervisors

David Tysdal dtysdal.wcnrd@gmail.com
Chairman, Rural

Tucker Hamilton thamilton.wcnrd@gmail.com
Vice Chairman, Rural

Emily Hartinger ehartinger.wcnrd@gmail.com
Secretary/Treasurer, Rural

Gene Norman gnorman.wcnrd@gmail.com
Supervisor, Urban

Tom Streeter tstreeter.wcnrd@gmail.com
Supervisor, At-Large

District Staff

Caleb Carter ccarter.wcnrd@gmail.com
District Manager (307) 746-3264 ext. 4

Erin Whitcher westoncountynrd@gmail.com
Administrative Assistant

District Hours
7:30 am to 4 pm—Monday-Friday

The USDA is an equal opportunity
provider and employer

NRCS Field Office

Hours: 7 am to 3:30 pm (307) 746-3264 ext. 3

Paul Eitel paul.eitel@usda.gov
District Conservationist

Austin Sommerville asommerville@nwtf.net
National Wild Turkey Federation
Cooperative Forester



Find us online!

Be sure to check out our new website for all your updates and WCNRD news. You can find forms to sign up for programs, event details, and much more!

westoncountynrd.org

You can also connect with us on social media:

 facebook.com/westoncountynrd

 instagram.com/westoncountynrd

Mission Statement

“Providing leadership in conserving the natural resources in Weston County by providing information, education and technical assistance to meet the needs of our users.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Board Meeting	December 12 th , 3 @ District Office
Composter Pre-Orders	Due December 22 nd
Tree Sale	Ends April 3 rd
Holiday Vendor Show	December 9 th @ Newcastle Lodge and Convention Center
WCNRD/NRCS/FSA Open House	December 21 st , 9-3 @ Forest Service Building Conference Room

We are accepting orders for the

2024 SEEDLING TREE SALE



Order and pay online, pick up a paper order form at the WCNRD office or download one from our website.

www.westoncountynrd.org/shop/

www.westoncountynrd.org/seedling-tree-sale/



Did you know the WCNRD also offers the Barnyards and Backyards magazine that we send out quarterly? Any district member is welcome to sign up to get one mailed to you !

If you're interested in getting the magazine call: 307-746-3264

HAZARDOUS WASTE DAY RESULTS

- Electronics.....2615lbs
- Batteries.....59lbs
- Paint.....1616gal
- Lightbulbs.....175lbs
- Automotive Fluids.....440gal
- Toxic Solids.....158 lbs
- Toxic Liquids.....171gal



That's over 3000 pounds and 2200 gallons of hazardous waste kept out of our landfills!

- Carloads.....50
- Food Donations.....175lbs
- Monetary Donations.....\$375
- Cost to District.....\$12,322.97



Turn Trash into Treasure By Composting

By Erin Darlington-Whitcher

Composting has been growing in popularity, and for good reason. Daily, we each discard an average of one pound of food waste. One-third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted each year, and most of that winds up in landfills. Approximately 14% of US methane emissions are from food waste rotting in landfills, and 20-30% of household waste is compostable material. Composting is a way to turn part of that waste into a useful resource.

While it's not difficult to start composting, it does take some forethought. First, you need to decide where you will keep the compost, and how large the pile will be. It is recommended that the pile be at least one cubic yard. While you can compost in a container as small as a 5-gallon bucket, piles smaller than a cubic yard typically don't heat up enough to work efficiently. Next, you need a way to contain the compost within that space. You can make your own container from just about anything, though you should consider the durability of the material; if it will be outdoors year-round, it should be made of material that won't become brittle and break down after a season or two. Of course, there are commercially made bins that are specifically designed for composting, but they are not required.

Picking the right location for your compost is important. You don't want runoff from the compost making its way into a well, cistern, stream, or pond, so the pile should be created where runoff from it will not contaminate water sources. You also need to keep the compost moist, so you'll want a water source nearby. The pile should be protected from the sun and wind so that it doesn't dry out too quickly. The pile should not touch trees or wooden buildings, as they may start to decay along with the compost. If you are going to be using the compost in your garden, you may want the pile close to the garden. If appearance and pest control are important factors for you, you may consider composting in a container, which is more visually appealing than a pile and can keep animals and insects out of the compost.

Once you have found a place to make your compost pile, the next step is adding the right materials to it. Plant-derived kitchen scraps, crushed eggshells, coffee and tea grounds, grass clippings, shredded paper, shredded cardboard, wood scraps, sawdust, plant stalks, twigs, and dried leaves are all compostable. Cooked food can be added in small amounts. Avoid adding meat and other animal products, dairy products, produce stickers, pet feces, fats, oils, grease, glossy or waxed paper, treated or painted wood, diseased or pest-infested plants, aggressive weeds, weeds with seeds, or dryer lint. The smaller your compostable materials are, the faster they will break down, so it's recommended that you chop up or shred larger items. Having the right ratio of nitrogen and carbon helps speed up the composting process. More information can be found in the link below.

For more information on composting, visit <https://www.uwyo.edu/barnbackyard/resources/composting.html> or scan the QR code for a Barnyards and Backyards article.



**Need your septic tank pumped?
We have a cost-share program for that!**

It's recommended that you pump your septic system every 3-5 years.
We offer a cost-share to help defray the costs of septic maintenance.

Check our website for more information.

<https://westoncountynrd.org/septic-maintenance-2/>





BIOPLASTICS, BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC, AND COMPOSTABLE PLASTIC

What Do These Labels Actually Mean?

Bioplastics: non-petroleum based plastic, generally made from plant material

PLA (polylactic acid) is typically made from the sugars in corn starch, cassava, or sugarcane. PLA can look and behave like polyethylene (plastic films, packing, and bottles), polystyrene (Styrofoam and plastic cutlery) or polypropylene (packaging, auto parts, textiles).

PHA (polyhydroxyalkanoate) is produced by various microorganisms. Naturally occurring PHA-producing bacteria have been found in many marine conditions, including deep seafloor soil. PHA is often used for medical applications such as sutures, slings, bone plates and skin substitutes, as well as single-use items like straws, food packaging, and garbage bags.

Biodegradable: can be degraded naturally by microorganisms, leaving no visible or toxic residue

All plastics degrade over time, but on a span of hundreds or thousands of years, and they break down into harmful microplastics and leach chemicals in the meantime. "Biodegradable" suggests a shorter time frame to degrade into CO₂, water, and minerals with the help of naturally occurring organisms and enzymes. The ability of PLA bioplastics to degrade quickly relies on the material being in the right environment; if the material is not exposed to the right temperatures, level of oxygen, level of sunlight, or other conditions, it will act the the same as traditional plastic, taking hundreds to thousands of years to degrade. PHA plastics degrade in a process similar to cellulose or wood, and can degrade in both aerobic and anaerobic conditions, as well as in marine conditions.

Compostable: can be degraded in a particular environment at the same rate as other organic materials

All compostable plastics are biodegradable, but not all biodegradable plastics are compostable. To make things more confusing, most current "certified compostable" PLA plastics are actually only compostable at commercial composting facilities, in conditions that are not found in nature, landfills, or backyard composters. In addition, many compostable products, especially paper products, are treated with PFAS, aka "forever chemicals", meaning even if you can compost these products at home, the compost will be contaminated with these chemicals.

There are some home-compostable, non-toxic products available.

The organizations that certify products as compostable are working on developing standards for a "home compostable" certification for the US. For now, the majority of products that are "certified compostable" are only compostable at commercial facilities and will not break down in home composters. Several companies are developing the capabilities to mass produce PHA plastic products, but they are not yet widely available in stores. In the meantime, if you are looking for products that are home-compostable, be sure to read the label or product description thoroughly. Since truly biodegradable/home-compostable products are fairly rare, the companies that produce them usually make that feature obvious on the label. Most of the home-compostable products that are currently available are made from wood, bamboo, paper, paper pulp, or plant fiber.



TUV Certified Home

This product is certified as Home Compostable by TUV Austria.

Examples of Austrian and Australian Home Compostable certification labels. The U.S. does not currently have an equivalent certification.



Home Compostable



Read the fine print! Most "Certified Compostable" products are only compostable in industrial/commercial facilities.



Composter Sale

Interested in purchasing a compost bin? The District is participating in a group purchase program, organized by Recycling Connections. The program is a nationwide annual bulk order of Home Composter bins, which are only available through organizations like WCNRD.

The bins are made from 100% recycled material and have a capacity of 17 cubic feet. The bin is easy to assemble, has two sliding doors that allow access to finished compost, and comes with a copy of "The Composting Cookbook".

For more information on the Home Composter bins, visit <https://bit.ly/bin-info> or scan the QR code.

In-District Cost: \$75

Out-of-District Cost: \$95

If you are interested in purchasing a composter, **please place your order by December 22nd.**

Bins are expected to arrive mid-April.



Home Composter Bin Order Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Bins: _____



Holiday Open House

We would like to show our appreciation to our customers and the community. Come celebrate the season with us and learn about the programs we offer.

Join us in the Conference Room
December 21st, 9 am–3 pm
Hosted by NRCS, WCNRD, and FSA



The Weston County NRCS staff are preparing for a monumental year after receiving full allocations of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) monies, with initial allocations for WY sitting at an additional \$16,534,000 split across our Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). There is also an additional \$4,081,550 in Technical Assistance (TA) that was not included in the previous figure, to help us hire new staff and implement these new funds. We are currently accepting FY 24 IRA, CSP, and EQIP applications, and a deadline has not yet been established. Remember, IRA applications must contain Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) practices. A list of these practices can be found online at the NRCS website.

We are also currently accepting applications for our regular EQIP and CSP pools at both the county and state levels. This year, WY NRCS is returning to the individual County Allocations. We do not have a current funding estimate for Weston County yet.

If you have any questions, or if you have a project you would like to work on, please reach out to the Weston County NRCS Field Office at 307-746-3264x3





Weston County Natural Resource District

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westoncountynrd@gmail.com

**Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
Rate
Newcastle, WY
Permit No. 52
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Meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month
at 3:00p.m. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

The Weston County Natural Resource District is an equal opportunity employer

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