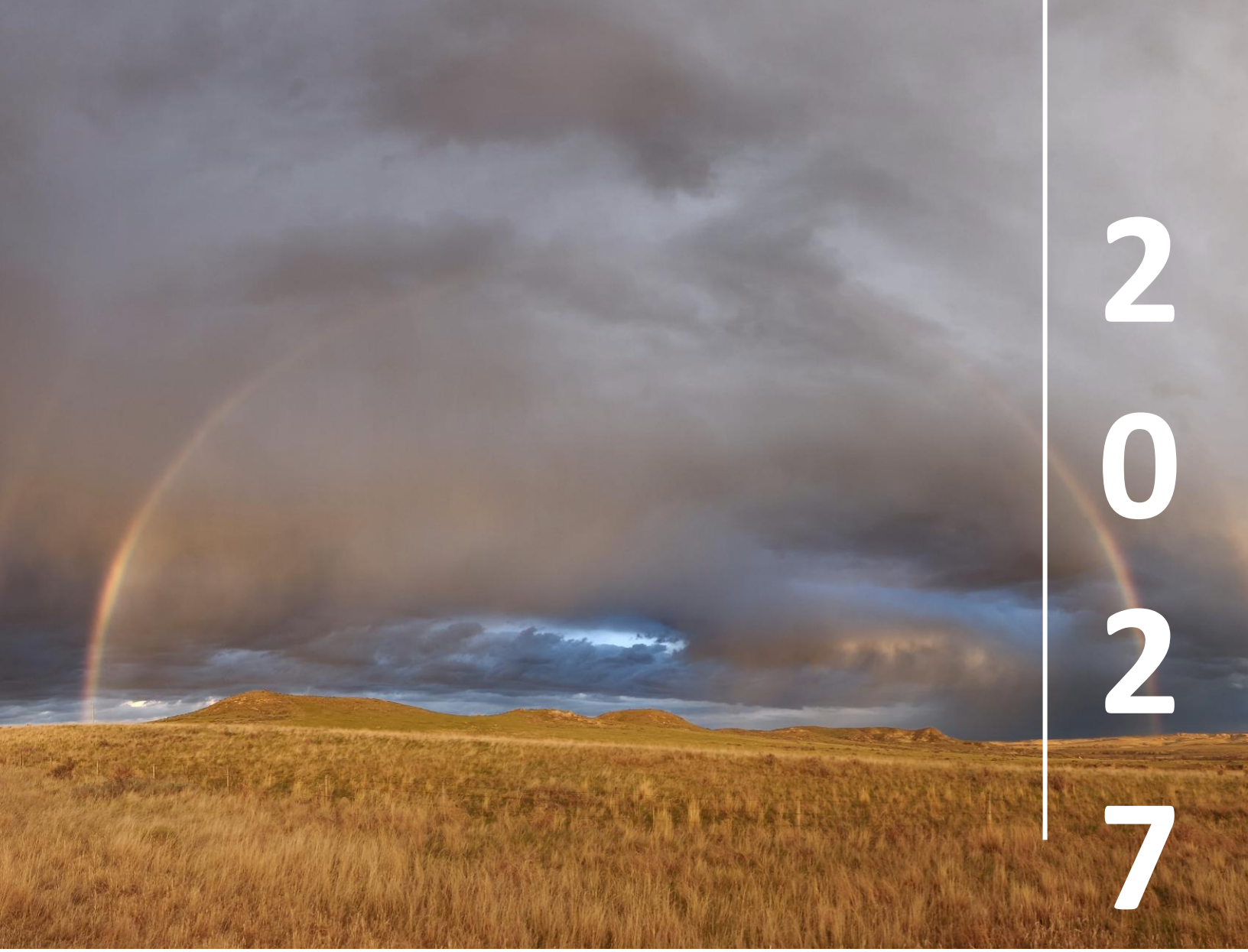



WESTON COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT

# Annual Plan of Work

## JULY 2026-JUNE 2027

Weston County
Natural Resource District

## District Operations

The Weston County Natural Resource District serves as the local lead on conservation efforts. The District coordinates with landowners and local, state, and federal entities to conserve the soil, water, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural resources of Weston County. The District leverages local funding to subsidize the budget and expand opportunities for conservation and provides technical assistance to ensure projects are feasible and effective, bringing together the human, financial, and technical resources needed to address current and future challenges.

### Goals

1. Maintain the credibility, recognition, and acceptance of the WCNRD through competent personnel and timely and professional service
2. Improve and expand conservation efforts and programs by seeking partnership opportunities with local, state, and federal entities
3. Seek financial stability by diversifying funding sources
4. Continue to increase membership in the District

### Ongoing

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Uphold a sense of accountability and responsibility among current and prospective Board members and staff through being prepared for board meetings, involved in District events and activities, and informed about local, state, and national current affairs | Board/Staff |
| | Continue to maintain an effective partnership between WCNRD and the Weston County NRCS office | Staff |
| | Work with local media to publicize programs and meetings | Staff |
| | Explore and continue partnerships with local and state agencies and organizations that may provide options for natural resource protection | District Manager |
| | Summarize NACD, WACD and other federal, state, and local organization updates for board members | District Manager |
| | Participate in relevant trainings to stay up to date on current issues, funding opportunities, and best practices. | Board/Staff |
| | Hold regular staff meetings | Staff |
| | Evaluate and distribute roles/responsibilities as needed between staff | Staff |
| | Meet with County Commissioners, City of Newcastle, and Town of Upton | District Manager |
| | Use incentives, promotional items, and sponsorships in public events to increase recognition of WCNRD's logo and name among the community. | Staff |
| | Augment traditional grant funding sources with other creative approaches that expand the scope and type of projects and assistance offered. | Staff |
| | Represent Wyoming on the NACD Forestry Subcommittee | District Manager |
| | | |

## District Operations Tasks

| Timeline | Actions | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| July | Approve Annual Plan of Work<br>Hold budget hearing<br>Submit final budget report to state and county clerk's office | Board<br>District Manager/Board<br>Staff |
| September | Attend Area 1 meeting<br>Review WACD sunsetting policies<br>Submit nominees for WACD & WCDEA awards & any resolutions<br>Complete Annual Report & submit to WDA and WACD | Staff/Board<br>Staff/Board<br>Staff/Board<br>Staff |
| October | Finish compiling WCNRD policy and procedures manual<br>Review compiled policy and procedures manual | Staff<br>Board |
| November | Hold biannual election for district supervisors<br>Attend WACD Annual Convention | Staff/Board |
| December | Review annual plan of work<br>Seek funding sources and partners to support the development and publication of the Good Neighbor Guide | Staff<br>Staff |
| January | Perform bi-annual staff evaluations<br>Dispose of records based on records retention policy | District Manager/Board<br>Staff |
| February/ March | Review WCNRD policies & procedures annually, or as needed<br>Submit funding requests to county, City of Newcastle, and town of Upton | Board<br>Staff |
| April | Begin budget work for next fiscal year<br>Update Annual Plan of Work<br>Coordinate and hold annual Local Work Group meeting with NRCS | Staff<br>Staff<br>Staff |
| May | Present draft budget to board and hold special budget meeting | Staff/board |
| June | Perform bi-annual staff evaluations | District Manager/Board |



## Range & Water Resources

Effective range management is based on the relationship between vegetation and water availability, including both precipitation and the distribution of stock water. Improving both water quality and quantity is an important component of the conservation district's mandate. One of the most limiting factors for effective livestock grazing and wildlife distribution in Weston County is access to reliable water sources. A major focus of the District has been developing more reliable water sources by converting windmill-powered wells to solar power, extending pipelines to improve the distribution of stock water, and drilling new wells.

**Goals**

1. Assist in maintaining and improving the quality and quantity of water sources within all watersheds in the District
2. Expand water availability for livestock and wildlife through cost share and technical assistance
3. Reduce the loss and degradation of rangeland from erosion

### Ongoing

| | |
|---|---|
| Prepare permitting, implementation, and finalization for reimbursement of small water projects | District Manager |
| Provide assistance on range projects that improve ecological conditions and rangeland health/productivity through grazing management and/or animal distribution through stockwater development, fencing, or other practices | District Manager |
| Coordinate with NRCS to provide technical assistance to ensure project design and implementation align with best management practices | District Manager |
| Identify projects that would be a good fit for the Wyoming Small Water Projects grant | District Manager |
| Promote erosion prevention structures through education, demonstration, implementation, and monitoring | Staff |
| | |
| | |

## Range & Water Resources Tasks

| Timeline | Actions | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| August | Identify and tour small water project sites<br>Host tour of erosion structures from workshop | District Manager<br>Staff |
| September | Draft applications for the Wyoming Small Water Projects program | District Manager |
| October | Host bi-annual well and cistern water testing day | Staff |
| November | Submit small water project applications to Wyoming Water Development | District Manager |
| December | Submit end of year grant reports to the State | District Manager |
| January | Seek funding for additional erosion and stream improvement projects | District Manager |
| February | Assess status of small water projects | District Manager |
| March | Promote Groundwater Awareness Week and Wyoming's Know Your Well Day | Staff |
| April | Host bi-annual well and cistern water testing day | Staff |
| May/June | Host range monitoring workshop | Staff |
| | | |



## Forest Health

Though there has been and continues to be commercial logging in Weston County, many forested acres have become dense and overstocked. This has contributed to heightened pest outbreaks, including mountain pine beetle, and increased the incidence and severity of wildfires. Proper timber management, forest thinning, and defensible space against wildfire are major concerns in these areas.

Newcastle, Upton, and Osage are all included within the forest area. These urban areas, as well as numerous subdivisions in forested rural areas near Newcastle and Upton, require defensible space protection and face the same concerns with disease and insects as traditional forested land.

### Goals

1. Promote best management practices in forest management to produce healthy forests with reduced susceptibility to disease, insect pests, and severe wildfire
2. Encourage conservation tree plantings to improve wildlife habitat, mitigate wind and snow issues, and stabilize riparian areas

### Ongoing

| | |
|---|---|
| Seek opportunities to fill the vacant forester position | Board/Staff |
| Provide education and technical assistance to landowners to properly manage their forest, reduce threats, and to better meet management goals. | Staff |
| Seek funding to provide financial incentives to landowners to properly thin forested acres | Board |
| Seek funding to provide financial incentives to help landowners develop defensible space to protect structures and property from wildfire | Board/Staff |
| Provide landscape fabric for purchase | Staff |
| Provide general tree planting and care information, and assist with tree selection and design assistance for tree plantings | Staff |
| Encourage and support community tree planting and beautification projects through the Community Tree Grant | Board |
| Promote reseeding following pile burning to reduce thistle and other invasive plant establishment | Board/Staff |
| Meet with landowners to evaluate their wildfire mitigation readiness and provide technical support on future efforts | District Manager |
| Seek match funding to assist with forest health projects | District Manager |

### Monthly

| | |
|---|---|
| Review Community Tree Grant applications for funding | Board |
| Attend Newcastle Tree Board meetings | District Manager |
| Attend Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership meetings | District Manager |
| Attend NACD Forestry Subcommittee meetings | District Manager |

## Forest Health Tasks

| Timeline | Actions | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| June/July | Monitor living snow fence sites for damage | District Manager |
| August | Meet with landowners and discuss possible forestry projects<br>Allocate funds to forestry projects from forestry grants | District Manager<br>District Manager |
| September | Begin work on forestry projects | District Manager |
| October | Inspect forestry projects as they progress | District Manager |
| November | Annual tree sale begins | Office Admin |
| December | Work to update county wildfire protection plan (CWPP)<br>Submit grant year-end reports | District Manager<br>District Manager |
| January | Identify grant opportunities to increase wildfire preparedness around our communities by treating the wildfire urban interface | District Manager<br>District Manager |
| February/ March | Continue monitoring forestry projects | District Manager |
| April/May | Distribute trees from tree sale | Staff |



## Outreach & Education

Educating the public about the importance of conserving our natural resources is as important as our conservation efforts. This includes educating residents and future generations about the importance of our natural resources and their conservation to foster an understanding of and appreciation for the natural resources all around them. Fostering appreciation can lead to a sense of stewardship, even if they don't participate in the District's conservation programs themselves.

### Goals

1. Raise awareness within the general public of conservation efforts and ongoing programs and projects
2. Improve appreciation of natural resources and foster a sense of responsibility and stewardship through information and outreach programs
3. Foster regular and positive relations with local media sources, including the News Letter Journal, The Weston County Gazette, KASL Radio, and others

### Ongoing

| | |
|---|---|
| Update website and social media to keep district members informed about upcoming programs and opportunities. | Office admin |
| Meet with community groups to better understand their concerns and identify opportunities to partner on conservation projects | Board/Staff |
| Utilize local newspapers, radio, and other means to advertise programs and events | Staff |
| Publish quarterly newsletter to help inform district members about upcoming programs, current issues and concerns, and to promote active conservation efforts | Staff |
| Identify partners to help draft the Black Hills to Grasslands Good Neighbor Guide as a reference for residents new to living on rural properties in Weston County | Staff |
| Continue the transition from a predominantly physically mailed newsletter to a predominantly electronic newsletter | Staff |
| Participate in local events to promote natural resource conservation as time and staffing allows | Staff |
| Maintain the StoryWalk® at Centennial Park | Office Admin |
| Host educational classes on natural resource topics with EWC Community Ed program | District Manager |

### Tasks

| Timeline | Actions | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| Summer 2026 | Host gardening series of classes | Staff |
| November | Host Beef Symposium | Staff |
| | | |

## Outreach & Education Tasks

| Timeline | Actions | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| June/July | County Fair: host ice cream social | Board/Staff |
| August | Participate in local STEM mentoring program through the Newcastle High School<br>Host tour of the erosion workshop project site | Staff<br>Staff |
| September | Attend 4th graders' Ag Expo | Staff |
| October | Author Barnyards & Backyards magazine articles | District Manager |
| December | Host open house at office | Board/Staff |
| January | Judge the high school science fair | District Manager |
| February | Attend the high school career fair | Staff |
| April/May | BHNR Youth camp planning<br>NACD Stewardship week | Staff<br>Staff |
| June | Black Hills Natural Resources Youth Camp | Staff |



## Waste Management

Part of conservation is preventing the pollution of our natural environment. Proper disposal of waste materials can help prevent contamination of our water, soil, and air. And, while district members are willing to properly dispose of hazardous waste, they often don't have the means, and it can often become a financial burden as well. They also often don't know what can be thrown away and what needs to be properly disposed of. Septic systems are also a concern and can contaminate groundwater when not properly maintained.

### Goals

1. Reduce hazardous waste entry into landfills in the county
2. Increase awareness and maintenance of septic systems

### Ongoing Efforts

| | |
|---|---|
| Provide a septic cost share program to encourage regular and proper maintenance and inspection of septic systems. | Board |
| Educate the community on proper storage and disposal of hazardous waste materials | Staff |
| Evaluate alternatives to hosting an annual hazardous waste collection day, or alternative funding | Staff/Board |
| Include information about proper maintenance and care for septic systems and the districts septic cost share program in the newsletter | Office admin |
| Work with new Solid Waste District on the transfer of the compost pile management | District Manager |
| Encourage home composting and utilization of the solid waste district compost pile once transferred | Staff |

## Urban Agriculture

The use and benefits of our natural resources are not limited to rural areas. Residents of urban settings also use these resources and face challenges related to water availability, soil health, and waste management. The WCNRD serves our urban district members by providing educational programs, offering cost-share on conservation products that help reduce their reliance on municipal services, and answering questions, including those about gardening challenges, tree and shrub pests and diseases, and planting recommendations.

**Goals**

1. Identify urban conservation opportunities that can help residents reduce reliance on municipal services, including water and waste management services
2. Provide educational programming specific to urban agriculture

**Ongoing**

| | |
|---|---|
| Assist with maintenance and upkeep of the community garden | Staff |
| Serve on Newcastle Farmers Market board | District Manager |
| Partner with the city of Newcastle and the Bent Sprockets on the Backyard Park and promote natural resource conservation in the development of the park | Staff |
| Answer lawn, garden, and tree questions from people who come into the office | Staff |
| | |
| | |



## Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife face many challenges, including unreliable water sources, dwindling habitat, overgrown forests, and the loss of sagebrush habitat. As wildlife habitat occurs on private, state, and federal lands within the District, cross-boundary conservation efforts facilitated by the District are extremely important.

### Goals

1. Promote practices that improve wildlife habitat in District programs, plans, and projects
2. Enhance efforts by state and federal agencies in managing wildlife

### Ongoing

| | |
|---|---|
| Cooperate with landowners and agencies in wildlife habitat improvement projects and management | Board/Staff |
| Work with Wyoming Game and Fish, landowners, and other interested parties in developing plans to address elk overpopulation issues in Wyoming | Staff |
| Provide wildlife escape ramps for free to landowners | Staff |
| Finalize designs for new recycled HDPE wildlife escape ramps to be distributed free to landowners | District Manager |
| | |

## Land Use Planning

The WCNRD has far-reaching and important responsibilities to its constituents, as described in state statutes, which protect their "health, safety and welfare." That responsibility includes cooperating with federal agencies on all federal planning and rulemaking affecting local communities, the county, or the state. As a cooperating agency, the District helps shape the federal planning process to protect access to and use of public lands, as well as the natural resources present on them.

The WCNRD also supports the conservation of natural resources during the federal planning process by providing comments on proposed subdivisions in the county. The District also supports the development of local recreation opportunities to help increase the general public's appreciation for and understanding of our natural resources.

### Goals

1. Encourage proper development with consideration of potential impacts to natural resources
2. Advocate for local needs and interests, and our natural resources, in the federal planning process
3. Encourage preservation and enhancement of the viewshed and recreational opportunities for residents of Weston County as well as tourists

### Ongoing

| | |
|---|---|
| Maintain a Land Use and Natural Resource Management Plan, which qualifies the District to act as a cooperating agency in federal planning under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) | Staff |
| Request cooperating agency status for Weston County Natural Resource District on issues that affect the natural resources where the District has expertise | Staff |
| Provide written documentation to the Weston County Planning Board on soil suitability, erosion control, sedimentation, and flooding problems for proposed subdivisions in the county | Staff |
| Advocate open spaces concepts and principles, and the retention of agricultural lands in production | Board/Staff |
| Work with local, state, and federal entities to preserve, promote, and develop public access areas for recreation, including hiking and biking trails, fishing and hunting access areas, and off-road recreation | Board/Staff |
| Provide comment on the Black Hills National Forest Management Plan Revision | Board/Staff |



# 2026-2027 Annual Budget

| | |
|---|---|
| Estimated Cash on Hand- 7/1/2026 | $66,907 |
| Estimated Emergency Reserve- 7/1/2026 | $135,263 |

**Projected Revenue:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Anticipated Cash and Revenue *(grants, unanticipated revenue, sale of goods, sales tax)* | $ 245,224 |
| Mill Levy Requested | $ 150,000 |
| **Total Projected Revenue:** | **$ 452,131** |

**Projected Expenditures:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrative Budget *(salaries, office supplies, postage, board travel, training)* | $ 72,573 |
| Operations Budget *(conservation projects, forestry education and outreach, wildlife, etc.)* | $ 330,507 |
| Indirect Costs Budget *(insurance, payroll taxes, worker's comp.)* | $ 49,050 |
| ***Total Projected Expenditures:** | **$ 452,131** |

*Includes carryover funds for committed projects and grants

## Board Approval

We, the supervisors of the Weston County Natural Resource District, as duly authorized by Wyoming Conservation District Statute, hereby accept and adopt this 2026-2027 Annual Plan of Work, August 12, 2025, as a guideline for work priorities in the District.

This Plan of Work guides the Weston County Natural Resource District in implementing the goals and Actions identified in our Long-Range and Natural Resource Management Plans (available on our website at www.westoncountynrd.org).

To stay current on natural resource issues, members of the District will attend the annual Area 1 meeting and the Wyoming Association of Conservation District (WACD) convention. In addition, board members and staff regularly communicate with the County Commissioners and other local and state elected officials to discuss natural resource issues in the county. Every effort is also made to pursue funding from grant sources and to leverage local funding to help accomplish our goals.

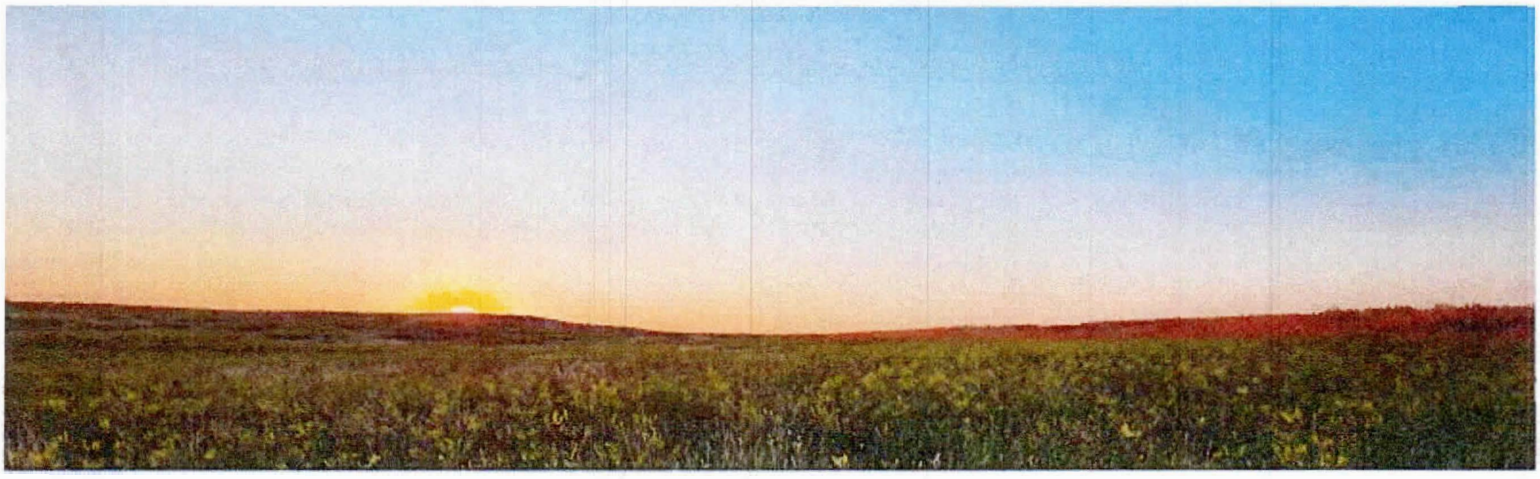
David Tysdal, Chairman

Tucker Hamilton, Vice-Chairman

Emily Hartinger, Secretary/Treasurer

Gene Norman, Supervisor

Tom Streeter, Supervisor



## Partners

We appreciate the support of the following agencies and organizations, which are instrumental in assisting the District in carrying out its programs and activities.

Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Wyoming State Forestry Division
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Natural Resource Conservation Service
City of Newcastle
Newcastle Area Chamber of Commerce
Farm Service Agency
Weston County Commissioners
Weston County Weed and Pest
Wyoming Refining Company
Weston County Fire Protection District
Weston County Senior Services
National Wild Turkey Federation
Wyoming Association of County Commissioners
Saddle and Sirloins FFA Chapter
Upton FFA Chapter
Weston County School District #1
Weston County School District #2
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Town of Upton
Upton Chamber of Commerce
University of Wyoming
Wyoming Honor Conservation Camp
Inyan Kara Grazing Association
Weston County Senior Services
Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust
University of Wyoming Small Acreage Team
Wyoming Water Development Commission
University of Wyoming Extension

It is the policy of the Weston County Natural Resource District to uphold a program that ensures high standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and conduct and ensures a safe and healthy workplace free from discrimination or harassment of any kind

**Weston County Natural Resource District**
1225 Washington Blvd, Ste 3
Newcastle, WY 82701
(307) 746-2701 x4
wcnrd@westoncountynrd.org




*Photos provided courtesy of Caleb Carter, Austin Sommerville, Tanner Jenks, Erin Darlington-Whitcher, and Tom Streeter*

*Pictures cannot be reused without written consent*

Weston County
Natural Resource District




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