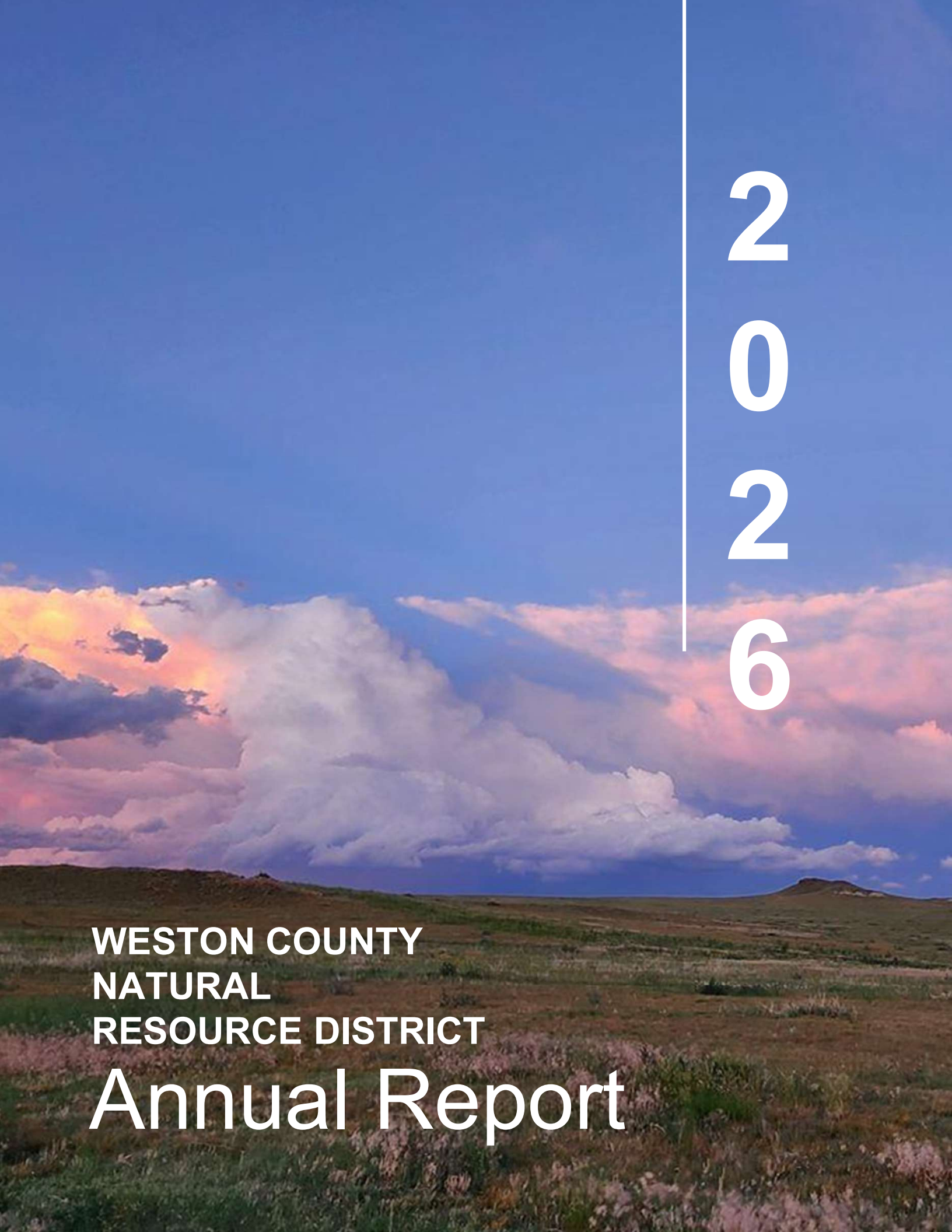


2026

WESTON COUNTY
NATURAL
RESOURCE DISTRICT

Annual Report

Locally Led Conservation

WCNRD BOARD

David Tysdal
Chairman

Tom Streeter
Supervisor

Emily Hartinger
Secretary/Treasurer

Gene Norman
Supervisor

Tucker Hamilton
Vice-Chair



DISTRICT STAFF

Caleb Carter
District Manager

Erin Darlington-Whitcher
Office Administrator

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

VISION

Develop engaged communities and landowners who take ownership of, and promote the conservation of, our natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations

The Weston County Natural Resource District (WCNRD) is a locally governed special district with a clear mission: to champion the sustainable stewardship of Weston County's natural resources through voluntary conservation efforts.

Since 1961, WCNRD has empowered private landowners with education, technical assistance, and cost-share programs across a wide range of initiatives—including forest health, rangeland and water conservation, wildfire preparedness, waste reduction, and wildlife habitat enhancement. Our work also extends beyond the land: we collaborate with local municipalities and Weston County to strengthen urban agriculture and support the urban forest, cultivate community gardens, and bolster local food systems.

As a cooperating agency in the federal planning processes, we actively engage with federal partners and provide informed comments on proposed regulatory changes—ensuring that local voices are heard in national conversations.

GOVERNANCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The WCNRD is led by a dedicated five-member volunteer board, elected by district members to serve four-year terms. This grassroots leadership model ensures that our conservation strategies remain locally driven and responsive to the needs of our community.

We're proud to serve Weston County and deeply value your input. Whether you're a landowner, a community partner, or simply passionate about conservation, we welcome your ideas and involvement as we continue building a resilient and thriving natural environment—together.

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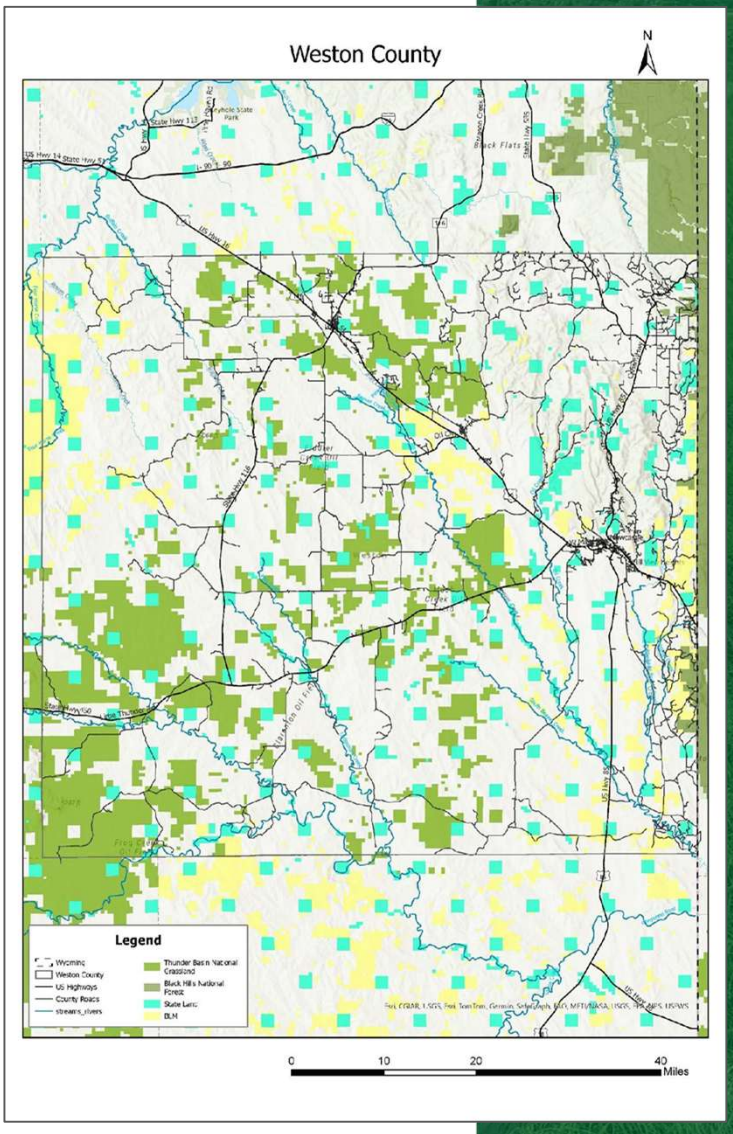
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Serving Weston County since 1960!

Photos by WCNRD staff unless otherwise specified.

Timeline of Conservation

1930's
Dust Bowl and Great Depression sweep across the country

1935
President Roosevelt signs Soil Conservation Act creating the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)

1937
USDA drafts Standard States Soil Conservation Districts Law. President Roosevelt sends to governors

1941
State Legislature passed an enabling act, which established conservation districts in Wyoming.

1961
Beaver Skull Soil and Water Conservation District is formed

1971
Portion of Buffalo Belle Conservation District added to Beaver Skull Soil and Water Conservation District

1973
Portion of Upper Cheyenne River Conservation District added to Beaver Skull Soil and Water Conservation District

1988
District members vote in favor of a 1 mill tax

1994
The District name is changed to the Weston County Natural Resource District, based on a suggestion from a local work group meeting
&
Soil Conservation Service (SCS) becomes the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

2003
Board passes rule that makes funding for cost share projects only available to district members paying into the mill levy



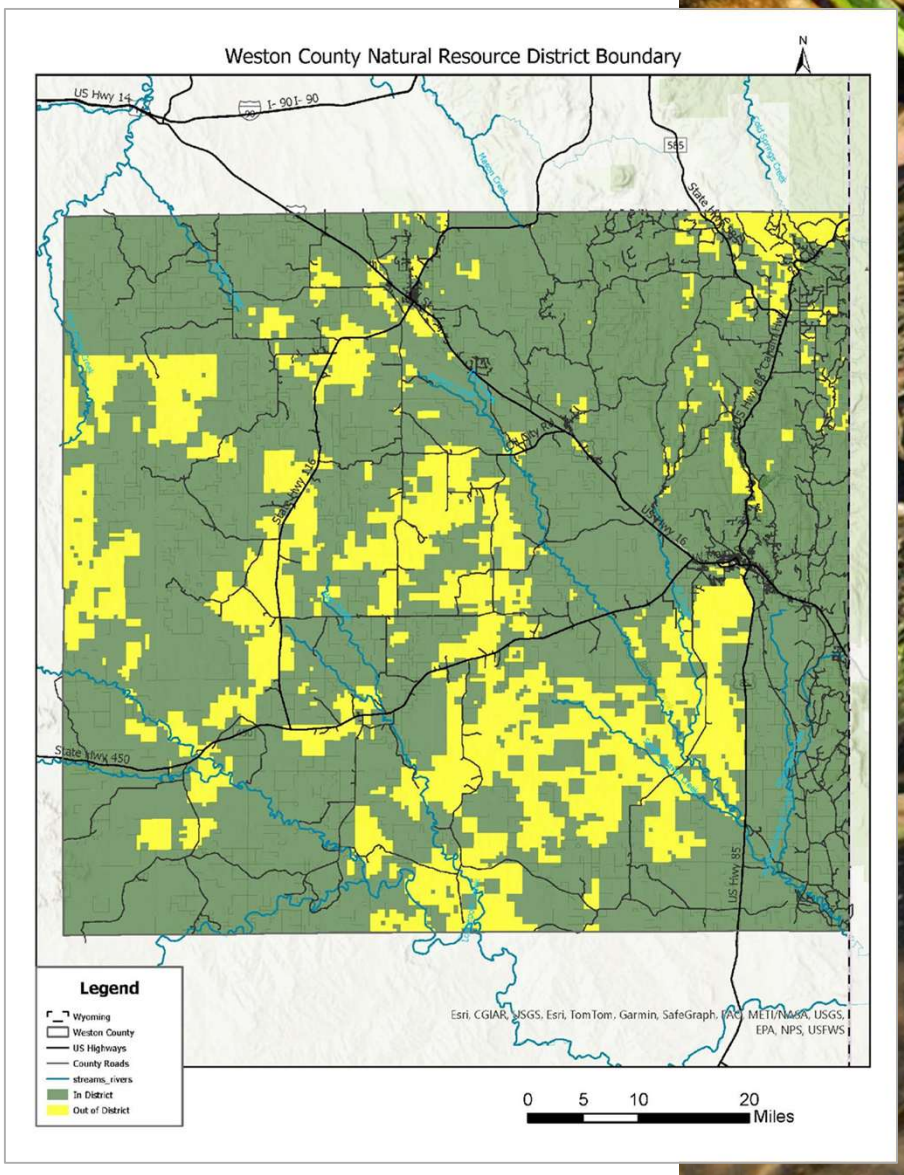


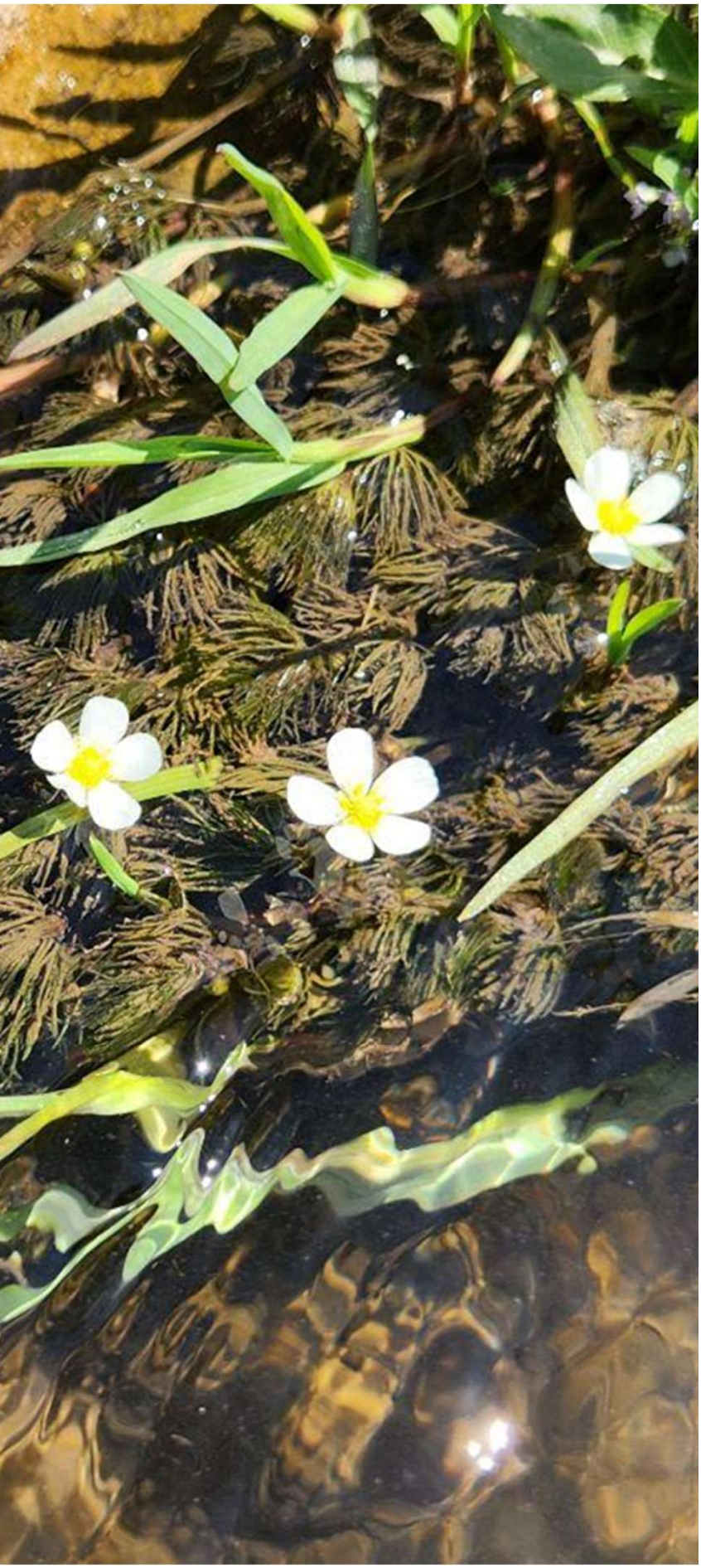
District Boundary

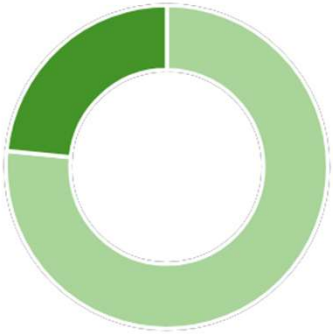
A CHECKERBOARD SITUATION

In 1961, the Beaver Skull Soil and Water Conservation District boundary comprised lands east of highway 85, north of highway 16 to Upton, north along highway 116, and along Arch Creek Road to the county line. At the time of formation, landowners inside this area could opt out, while landowners outside this area could opt in.

Since this time, the district boundary has grown through voluntary land additions, leading to a checkerboard boundary. In 1994, the name of the district was changed to the Weston County Natural Resource District. Currently, the District boundary includes just over ¾ of the county.







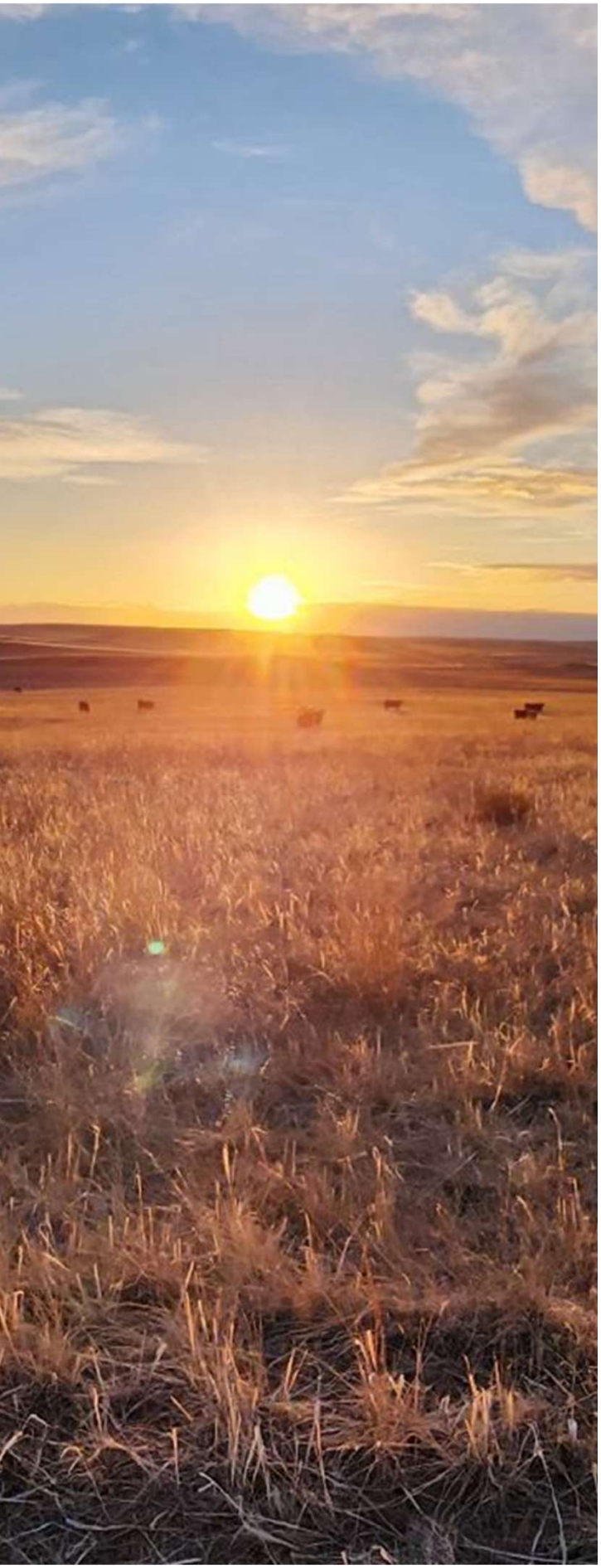
LOCALLY FOCUSED CONSERVATION

SUPPORT CONSERVATION, JOIN THE DISTRICT

District members pay into the mill levy and are able to take advantage of district programs as well as grant and technical assistance. More importantly, they support conservation efforts in the county, the region, and the state.

If you are interested in joining the district , please contact us for more information.

Taxes paid to the district are equal to approximately $9.50 per $100,000 of valuation of an individual's property



District Operations

In 2025, the District continued to build relationships, actively engaging with organizations that share our mission and values. These strategic partnerships have allowed us to expand our reach, strengthen our initiatives, and work collaboratively toward shared objectives. By aligning with like-minded entities, we've laid the groundwork for more impactful and sustainable progress in the years ahead.

Some of these important partners include:

- Wyoming Game and Fish
- Mule Deer Foundation
- Pheasants Forever
- Montana Conservation Corps
- Northeast Wyoming Sage Grouse Working Group
- Thunder Basin Grassland Prairie Ecosystem Association
- Wyoming Community Foundation

REPRESENTATION

The board and staff also represented the district at the following meetings, events, and trainings over the past year:

- Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) Area 1 meeting
- WACD annual convention
- Wyoming Conservation District Employee Association (WCDEA) Employee Training
- 2026 Newcastle Arbor Day celebration
- National Association of Conservation District (NACD) annual convention
- NACD 2026 Spring Fly-In in Washington DC
- Northeast Wyoming Virtual Fence Symposium
- BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) update cooperating agency meetings
- Black Hills National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP) revision cooperating agency meetings
- Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Operation Committee (COC) meetings
- National Association of Conservation District Employees Association (NACDEA) annual meeting and training
- Grants Management Office Grant Summit and Regional grants training

PARTNERSHIPS

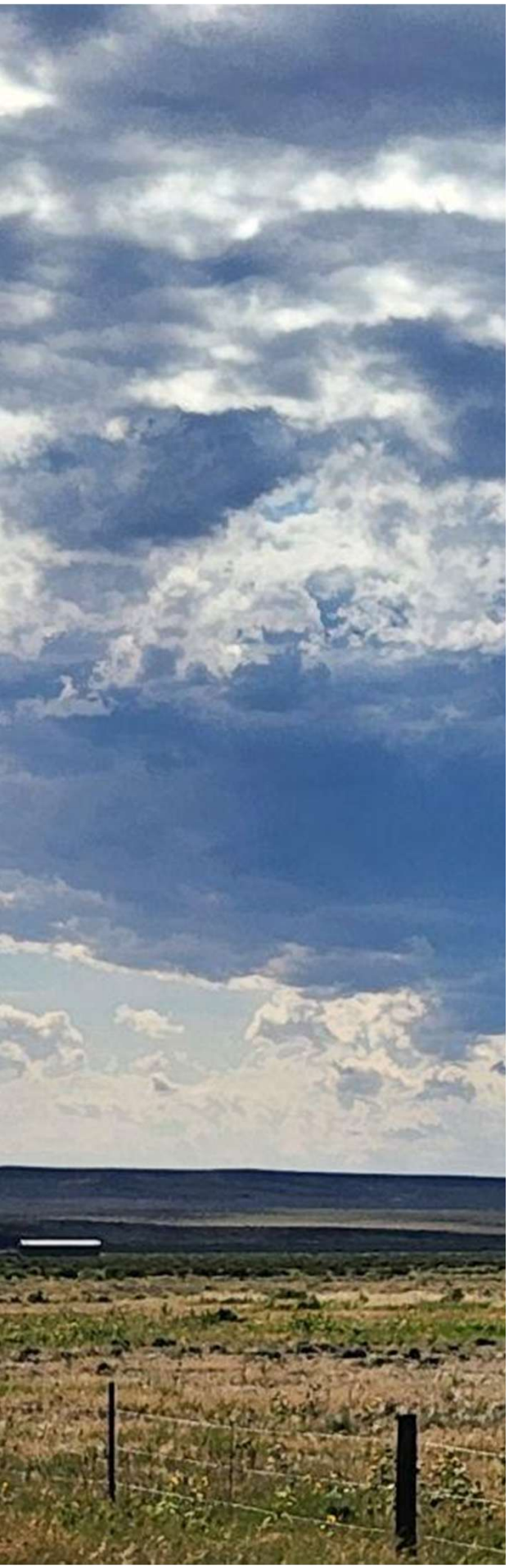
Conservation is about partnerships. In addition to the many partnerships the district has with landowners and land managers, district staff and board members have also represented the district with the following groups:

- Thunder Basin National Grassland Working Group
- University of Wyoming Extension Small Acreage Initiative Team
- Newcastle Tree Board
- Black Hills Resilient Forest Partnership
- Northeast Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Collaborative
- Northeast Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Collaborative Steering Committee
- Elk Mountain cheatgrass project working group
- Newcastle Farmers Market board
- NRCS State Technical Committee (STAC)
- NRCS STAC forestry subcommittee
- National Association of Conservation District forestry subcommittee





In coordination with the Campbell County Conservation District, the WCNRD has helped host the Black Hills Natural Resource Youth Camp since the mid-90s. This year around 75 campers attended the 3-day camp.



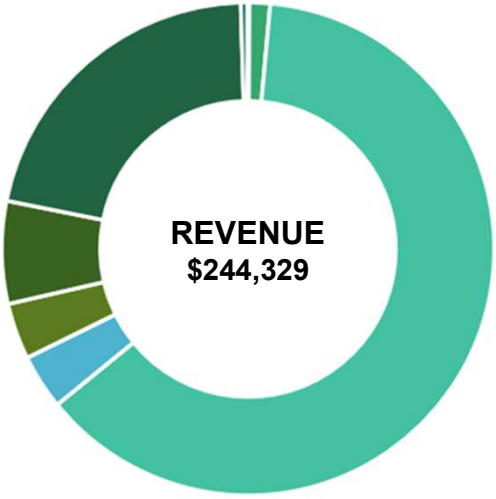
Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

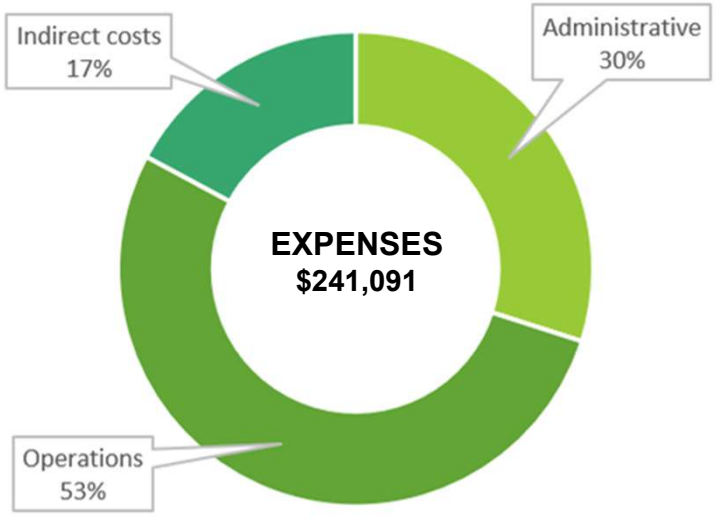
JULY 1, 2025 TO JUNE 30, 2026

As a publicly funded entity, the Weston County Conservation District remains committed to the responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Transparency, accountability, and impact are at the core of our financial practices, ensuring that every dollar supports programs that benefit both our community and the natural resources we are entrusted to protect.

The District's primary source of funding continues to be the mill levy, which provides essential support for administrative operations and the wide range of conservation programs we offer. In addition to sustaining core services, these funds serve as critical matching contributions for grant opportunities—allowing us to leverage additional resources and bring more conservation dollars directly to the ground in Weston County.

Through careful budgeting and strategic partnerships, we strive to maximize the value of every investment made in our mission.


REVENUE
$244,329
Administrative (interest, sales tax, donations)
City/Town
County Aid
Mil Levy
State
Contract
Sale of goods


Indirect costs
17%
Administrative
30%
EXPENSES
$241,091
Operations
53%



FY 2025

2,700
TREES & SHRUBS SOLD

130
ACRES THINNED

8,880
ACRES IMPROVED

3,000
FT PIPELINE

4 STOCK TANKS

2 MILES OF FENCE REPLACED

2 LTBPR SITES MONITORED



In Review



7 StoryWalk Books

4 Community Education Classes

1,100 Event Attendees

2,800 Newsletters & Magazines sent

$76,250
SPENT ON PROGRAMS

$108,750
GENERATED MATCH

7 COMMENT LETTERS

104 Feral Cats Treated

Vaccinate, Spay/Neuter, Euthanize



Rangeland Health

The WCNRD partnered with the Inyan Kara Grazing Association to fund the relocation of approximately 2 miles of fenceline on National Grassland. The previous fenceline was inefficient and caused areas in both pastures to be underutilized. Moving the fenceline to follow the existing ridgeline resulted in no substantial loss of acreage to either pasture and more efficient use of both pastures. Additionally, the fence was estimated to be around 90 years old, making repairs difficult. The new fence was built with modern materials and following NRCS specifications.







Continued Site Monitoring

Time-lapse cameras were installed at 2 of the structures built during the 2025 Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Workshop. The structures were inspected and documented several times throughout the year. Footage from the time-lapse cameras and 1-year later photos were uploaded to the District website.







Water Resources

IMPROVING STOCK WATER DISTRIBUTION

From day one, one of the main projects of the WCNRD has been stock water distribution. As livestock won't wander far from water, having available water appropriately distributed across a large pasture can help tremendously in grazing distribution.

The district provides funding through its Conservation Cost Share program, as well as other outside grant programs, including the Wyoming Small Water Projects Program. In FY2025, the district assisted with several stock water projects including new wells and pipeline extensions to existing systems. Often the limiting factor in being able to split up large pastures into smaller pastures is the availability of water.

The district cost shared on:

- 2 new wells
- 2 solar installations
- 4 new stock tanks
- 3000 ft of pipeline

While these projects took place primarily on private land, some also included state owned lands, and all projects are adjacent to both BLM and/or US Forest Service lands as well. The expansion of water sources also benefit the wildlife in these areal, in addition to the livestock.

WELL WATER TESTING

Each Spring and Fall, the WCNRD holds a well water testing day. District members order water sampling kits and collect the sample, while the WCNRD transports the samples to the laboratory in Gillette and covers 100% of the cost of analysis. In FY2025, 11 community members took advantage of this program.



Forest Health

TREE SALES

The district offers an annual tree sale to encourage living snow fences, wind breaks, and wildlife and riparian plantings. Providing seedling trees in bundles offers an affordable option for landowners. The district offers deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs in bundles, as well as potted trees and shrubs. In 2024, the district implemented online sales. This has continued to be a popular way to order trees as well as other items from the distinct. Approximately half of this year's tree orders were placed online.

This year, purchases by two landowners accounted for 63% of our total tree sales. One project was continued work on an ongoing cost-share project to improve a riparian area.

FOREST HEALTH & WILDFIRE MITIGATION

The forests of the Black Hills, while resilient and quick to regenerate, require consistent and proactive management to sustain ecological health and minimize wildfire risk. In Weston County, where nearly 70% of forested acreage is privately owned, technical and financial support remains essential to empower landowners in implementing effective stewardship practices.

In FY 2025, the WCNRD pursued grant funding for future forestry projects. We were able to secure over $350,000 in funding for future projects. Additionally, 130.4 acres were treated across a single property.



Land Use Planning

COOPERATING AGENCY

One of the important roles of the WCNRD is to represent the county residents in the federal planning process. In August, the WCNRD provided comments on the BLM's Newcastle and Nebraska Resource Management Plan.

COMMENT LETTERS

- Wyoming State Forestry - Emergency Fire Suppression Account
- Wyoming State Forestry - Wildland Fire Module
- BLM - Newcastle and Nebraska RMP/FEIS
- BLM - Buffalo Field Office RMP
- BLM - Rescission of the Land Conservation Rule
- Waters of The United States updated definition
- United States Forest Service - Rescission of the Roadless Rule



Education & Outreach

Virtual Fence Symposium

In coordination with multiple partners, the WCNRD helped host a Virtual Fence Symposium. Approximately 150 participants attended a series of presentations and roundtable discussions by producers, manufacturer representatives, and agency representatives.





Education & Outreach

Education is also an important part of conservation. It helps raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for our natural resources. The WCNRD has been working to increase its involvement in educational opportunities and to get more name and brand recognition. The district had a presence at local events and hosted numerous educational presentations to engage with the public on natural resource issues.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH EFFORTS

JULY

- Hosted Pie and Ice Cream Social at the Weston County Fair

AUGUST

- Hosted booth at Madness on Main event in Newcastle
- Met with Newcastle High School students to discuss science fair projects
- Began installation of Centennial Park StoryWalk

OCTOBER

- At 4th Grade Ag Day, hosted by Saddles and Sirloins FFA Chapter, staff presented on natural resources and wildlife habitat
- Halloween trunk-or-treat and StoryWalk

NOVEMBER

- Grand opening of the Centennial Park StoryWalk in Newcastle, attended by children and teachers from the Weston County Children's Center

DECEMBER

- Hosted an Open House at the district office
- Mentored science fair students at the Newcastle High School

JANUARY

- Assisted with the Virtual Fence Symposium held at the Cam-Plex in Gillette, WY
- Judged the Northeast Wyoming High School science fair

FEBRUARY

- Had a booth at the Newcastle High School Career fair, with NRCS, about careers in natural resources

APRIL

- Participated in Arbor Day celebration at Roby Park in Newcastle
- Presented on pollinators and native flowers at the Weston County Library, gave participants native flower seed mix

MAY

- Community education class on pollinators

JUNE

- Hosted the 2026 Black Hills Natural Resource Youth Camp
- Held community education class on raised beds and lasagna gardening

StoryWalk

District Supervisor Tom Streeter, FSA County Executive Director Sherie Hilgenkamp, and District Manager Caleb Carter add the final touches to a StoryWalk frame. The WCNRD secured a $10,000 grant from the Wyoming Community Foundation to purchase materials for this project. 28 frames were installed along a walking path in Centennial Park in Newcastle, and since the grand opening in November, 7 books have been displayed.



Arbor Day

Newcastle Mayor Tyrel Owens and City of Newcastle Arborist Travis Peterson plant a Manchurian Ash tree at Roby Park during the Arbor Day celebration.

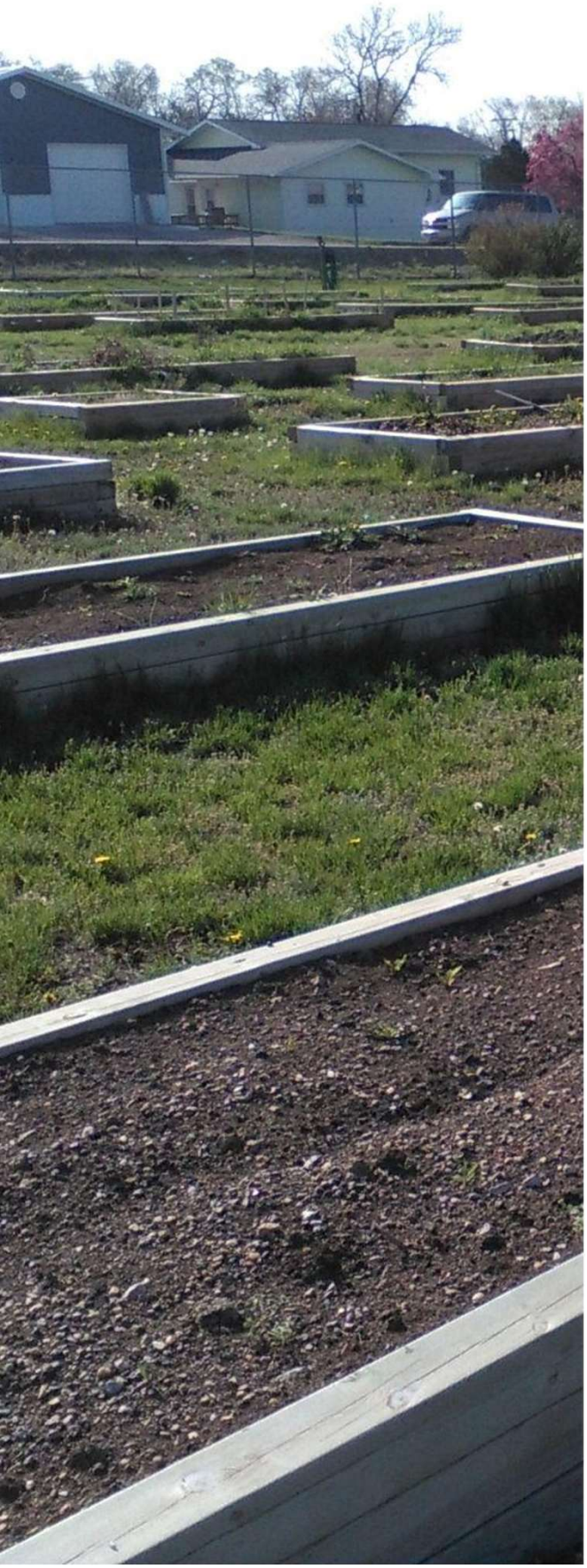


Pie and Ice Cream Social

WCNRD supervisors and staff served pie and ice cream to members of the community during the Weston County Fair.



Urban Agriculture



COMMUNITY GARDEN

Since its inception in 2009, the Newcastle Community Garden—born from a partnership between WCNRD and Senior Services—has nurtured both crops and community. But after 17 years, the original raised beds are deteriorating, and the cost of lumber has made replacement a daunting prospect. Last year, WCNRD intern Ben Carter made a prototype of a new style of raised bed. This year, we asked Community Garden users to provide feedback on the new style of bed.

In May, WCNRD hosted a work day to clean up and repair beds in the Community Garden. In June, supplies to replace an older bed were purchased and members of the community donated materials to fill several new beds.



ARBOR DAY 2026

The WCNRD was able to participate in the Arbor Day celebrations again this year. The Newcastle Tree Board planned the event and prepared the planting site. The WCNRD provided 3 different varieties of lilac - Common, Villosa, and Little Leaf - and 36 seedlings were planted in the corner of the park. The City of Newcastle installed a drip irrigation system to ensure plant survival.

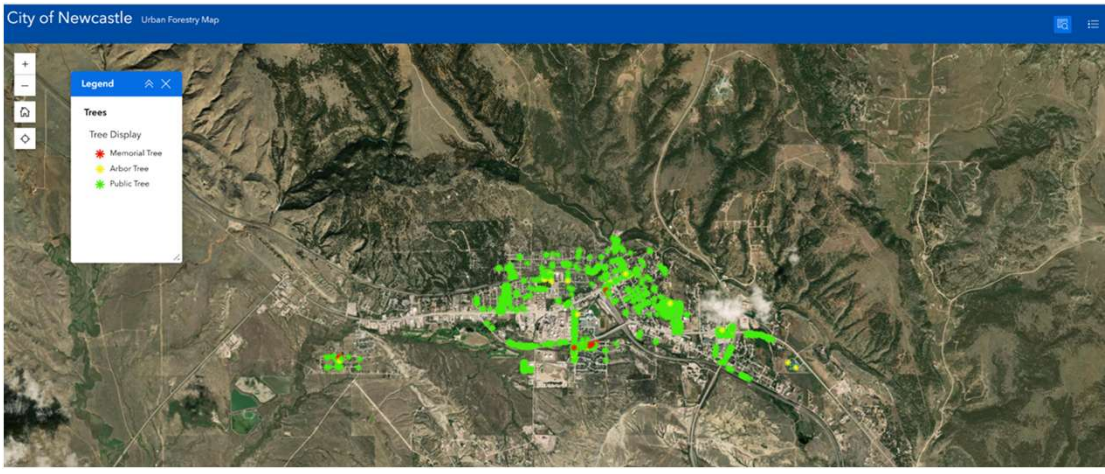


NEWCASTLE URBAN FORESTRY MAP

The City of Newcastle also celebrated their 32nd year as a Tree City USA community. This award is given to communities that prioritize their urban forest through time, money, and community built around promoting trees in the urban landscape. The community is blessed to have many committed individuals that help keep our community beautiful and healthy by promoting, planting, cultivating, and growing our urban forest.

For more information on specific trees planted on public property within the City of Newcastle go to www.newcastlewyoming.com/parks-recreation. There you can view a map of the trees which include those planted for Arbor Day as well as Memorial Trees. If you open the map while within city limits it will show where you are on the map as well. It is like taking a tour of the city's trees! Clicking or tapping on the tree icons will also provide more info including variety and scientific name, as well as planting date, pictures, etc. for some as well. The city's Bill Kolhbrand Arboretum is also included, which is located along Stampede Street.

TREE CITY USA



Waste Management

HAZARDOUS WASTE DAY

The WCNRD hosted Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day in June. As the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day event had to be postponed the previous two years, WCNRD worked diligently to make sure the event took place this year. A major part of this effort included educating the community about what waste was actually considered hazardous. By reducing the amount of non-hazardous waste collected at Hazardous Waste Day, we hoped to reduce the cost of event.



One waste management issue that WCNRD staff identified was a lack of publicly-available information about the local landfill, including rates and what types of waste is accepted. Coordinating with the recently established Weston County Solid Waste District, WCNRD staff helped to create a poster explaining what waste could be taken to the landfill, what waste could be disposed of with special treatment or advanced notice, and what waste was legitimately hazardous waste. This poster was included in our second quarter newsletter and is now available on the District's website.







Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day Totals:

- 2,130 lbs electronics
- 1125 lbs paint
- 268 gallons flammable solvent
- 256 lbs aerosol cans
- 227 lbs fluorescent bulbs
- 235 lbs batteries
- 619 lbs pesticides
- 54 gallons antifreeze
- 12 lbs fire extinguishers



WCNRD also collected donations to the local food bank. $300, 244 lbs of food, and 34 lbs of non-food items were collected and delivered to the BREAD Office in Newcastle.



Paul Eitel

Wildlife

FERAL CAT PROGRAM

In 2025-26, the WCNRD continued our partnership with Alley Cat Rescue of Newcastle and Salt Creek Veterinary Clinic to help provide funding for the treatment of captured stray cats in the county. Salt Creek Vet provided rabies vaccinations, spay/neuter treatments, and euthanasia for seriously ill feral cats at cost, and the District covered the cost.

Alley Cat Rescue of Newcastle works solely as volunteers and through donations. With assistance from WCNRD, Alley Cat Rescue was able to apply for and finally received nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. This will help them to qualify for grants and other funding to match with district funds.

For FY2025, WCNRD provided funding for approximately 104 feral cats to be sterilized and vaccinated.



GET INVOLVED
It starts with you, WCNRD can help!

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(307) 746-2701 x4

Weston County
Natural Resource District