

Cody Conservation District



**conserving
natural resources**
for our future

Resource Management Plan
2024-2028

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Board of Supervisors

Russell Dwyer Bobbie Holder
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Public Notice

Cody Conservation District (CCD)

We are updating our Long Range Plan and would like your input on resource conservation program services provided to the community. Feedback on the plan will be accepted until 2 p.m., December 31, 2023. Check it out on our website at:

<https://www.codyconservationdistrict.com/long-range-plan-feedback>

**Later corrected to December 30, 2023*

The Cody Conservation District’s Resource Management Plan (also known as its Long-Range Plan), was available for public comment from November 13, 2023, to December 30, 2023. In addition to being available on social media, the plan was also available for review in the office and was advertised outside the County Clerk’s Office as a public notice bulletin.

District Mission Statement

The members of the Cody Conservation District Board of Supervisors are committed to improving the quality of life within the district, through good stewardship of land, water, and other natural resources, by providing information and education services to the District’s residents.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Equity and environmental justice refer to behaviors and decisions that recognize and integrate cultural and biological diversity to support sustainable communities in Park County where people can interact in a safe and productive manner with equal opportunities. Adopted in 1890, Article 1, Section 2 of Wyoming’s Constitution states “all members of the human race are equal.” The Cody Conservation District resoundingly supports this truth, and we strive to ensure it is upheld as conservation outreach and programs are implemented. This includes evaluating the delivery of services provided and the Cody Conservation District’s effectiveness in reaching the underserved members of our communities. It also means sustaining environmental conditions that afford everyone the chance to thrive. Equity and environmental justice are inherent in our mission. The Cody Conservation District considers ecosystems that comprise the landscape and the social and cultural diversity of communities located therein. We rely on relationships in the community to fully grasp conservation issues present. To be more effective, we will continuously explore ways to engage all members of our communities and promote representation across the social and cultural spectrum that comprises those communities.

Authority

Conservation District Law is found in Wyoming Statutes (W.S.) § 11-16-101-135 (Districts Law). The Cody Conservation District is a legal subdivision of the state of Wyoming. Pursuant to W.S. §11-16-122 (iv) and (xvi), the Cody Conservation District is authorized to develop plans for range improvement and stabilization, conservation of soil, water and vegetative resources, control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water within the District while considering the customs and culture of residents of the District. Said plans will be filed in the Park County Clerk's Office. Further, the CCD may serve as a cooperating agency with special expertise (W.S. §11-16-122, viii), in federal or state land planning and implementation actions.

Legislative Declarations

The Cody Conservation District is charged with the following:

The actions and programs endorsed by the Cody Conservation District are dictated by the legislative declaration and policies of the Wyoming State Legislature.



(1) AS REPRINTED FROM: W.S. § 11-16-103
Legislative Declarations and Policy

- (a) It is hereby declared that the farm and grazing lands of Wyoming are among the basic assets of the state; that improper land use practices cause and contribute to serious erosion of these lands by wind and water; that among the consequences which would result from such conditions are deterioration of soil and its fertility and the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, resources, dams and ditches; that to conserve the soil, it is necessary that land use practices contributing to soil erosion be discouraged and that appropriate soil conserving land use practices be adopted.
- (b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention for the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and hereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resource, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

- (2)** The above being the charge and direction of the Wyoming Legislature for all Conservation District Boards within the State of Wyoming, the CCD Board of Supervisors, and elected body and local government, is the local leader of the management of lands within the jurisdiction of the CCD and is accountable to the citizens of the District.

The Cody Conservation District Resource Management Plan is a dynamic and adaptive-based plan. Input and collaboration from District residents and other partners is essential as Plan updates are made, particularly where customs and culture intersect with changing patterns in land use and resource management. This Plan shall be recognized when ensuring Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and National Forest Management Act (NFMA), consistency requirements for public land management.

Cody Conservation District Policy

As a conservation district, the CCD strives to make informed resource management decisions and provide sound technical assistance to landowners, locally elected officials, developers, and other natural resource managers. Water resources, soils, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural features and economic, cultural, and natural resource values of the communities within the District must be considered in resource development. To ensure this, the CCD operates with the following practices and procedures in mind:

- (1)** Maintain and improve natural resources in a manner that sustains and improves upon the beneficial uses of those resources while maintaining healthy ecosystems, and supporting public safety, and local economies, customs, and norms for the overall wellbeing of community members in the District.
- (2)** Require federal or state agencies to coordinate with the Cody Conservation District prior to taking official action, scoping a project, or issuing a report on a proposed action. This may be accomplished in part by providing the District proposed purposes, objectives, and estimated environmental and economic impacts of proposed actions in a timely manner.
- (3)** Require land management agencies to consider adjacent lands and the ecological, social, and economic factors and conditions therein, including other area management processes during resource planning on lands under their jurisdiction.
- (4)** Request all governmental agencies legally recognize the Cody Conservation District's Resource Management Plan.
- (5)** Provide information on other state and federal planning decisions via written or oral comments or positions and exercise the option to develop additional alternatives for consideration by the appropriate agency.

History

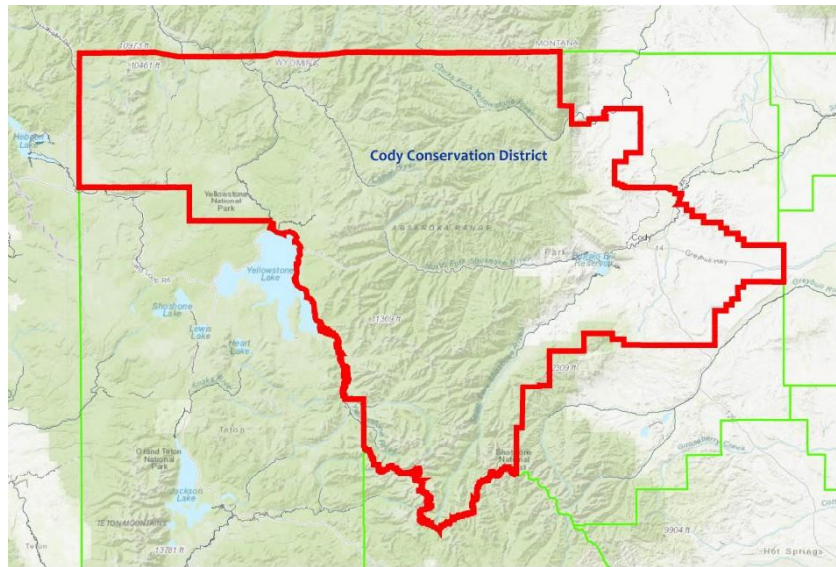


The Soil Conservation District concept began in the Dust Bowl Era of the 1930s in response to severe drought and drastic soil loss. In February of 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt urged all states to pass legislation authorizing locally led soil conservation programs. This need initiated the formation of conservation districts across the United States with the first passage of the Soil Conservation Law in Arkansas in March 1937. The Wyoming State Legislature followed suit by passing the enabling legislation for the formation of local conservation districts in March of 1941.

The Cody Conservation District (CCD), was organized on May 20, 1942. The Cody Conservation District is operated by a five-member Board of Supervisors that are locally elected members of the community and reside within District boundaries. The elected members represent both the rural and urban populations within the District. Three of the five Supervisors represent the rural areas of the District while one represents the urban areas, and one serves as an at-large representative. The Board of Supervisors is a locally elected board charged with the responsibility of representing local people on natural resource issues. A conservation district Supervisor serves the community voluntarily. The District currently employs a Watershed Coordinator and is in the process of filling a vacant position to carry out daily operations and projects authorized by the Supervisors. Seasonal employees and interns are also utilized as funding is available. Primary sources of funding for the District include sales of seedling trees and shrubs, Soils Reports, and local, state, and federal grants. The CCD also pursues funding through foundations and, on occasion, non-governmental organizations. The District will continue to pursue grant funds to provide natural resource conservation programs. However, it should be noted these funds are restricted, meaning they can only be used for the specific purpose(s) it was awarded, thereby limiting the District's ability to more comprehensively address resource concerns within the District. Although the CCD does not currently operate with mill levy funding or receive regular funding support from the Park County Commissioners, the Commissioners graciously make office space available for District operations and in 2023, granted the District a larger space sufficient in size for the District to also house a regional staff person for the Wyoming State Forestry Division. As noted in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement, the CCD offers all programs and technical assistance on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, marital, familial, or veteran status.

Location

The District lies mostly within the Big Horn Basin of northwestern Wyoming. The CCD is one of three conservation districts in Park County; it encompasses the central and western portion of the County, extending into Yellowstone National Park. The Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District (PCFCD) borders the CCD to the northeast, while the Meeteetse Conservation District lies to the southeast.



Elevations range from over 12,502 feet above sea level to 4,208 feet along the Shoshone River where it flows downstream, into the Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District. Annual precipitation ranges from 8 inches to 65 inches in higher elevations. The City of Cody is the only municipality in the CCD and is also the County Seat. Major rural subdivisions exist along the Lower South Fork of the Shoshone River, the Wapiti Valley along the North Fork of the Shoshone River between Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the Shoshone National Forest, and northeast of Cody from the city limits to the boundary with the Powell-Clarks Fork CD. Irrigated lands within the District total 50,899 acres while 3,125,239 acres are non-irrigated. There have been seven additions to the original District boundaries since its formation; the total acreage within the CCD boundaries is 3,176,139 acres, or 4,963 square miles.

Natural Resources

The following sections provide a brief description of the natural resources present within the CCD boundaries. Additional information on these resources is available in Level I Watershed Studies and Basin Planning documents developed in partnership with the Wyoming Water Development Office.



Photo by Quincy Sondeno

Vegetation

The north-facing slopes of higher elevations are dominated by coniferous species including Lodgepole pine, Subalpine fir, Douglas fir and Engelmann spruce. Some aspen can be found interspersed within the forests. South-facing slopes are dominated by grass species include bluebunch wheatgrass, kingspike fescue, Idaho fescue and Columbia needlegrass and Wyoming big sagebrush and antelope bitterbrush.

Basin areas are generally void of the large tree overstories typical in the mountains. Exceptions are planted trees around structures and in shelterbelts. Plains cottonwood, peachleaf willow and Russian olive are among the most common species. Major grasses include western and thickspike



wheatgrass, blue grama, Indian ricegrass, sand reed, and needle and thread. Wyoming big sagebrush, fourwing saltbush, and rabbit brush are common shrubs.

There is a wide variety of riparian habitat found in the Cody Conservation District. Cottonwood and aspen are common overstory species. Willow, water birch, chokecherry, gooseberry, rose, and red-osier dog- wood are common shrubs. A number of grasses and grass-like plants occur in these riparian areas including several species of sedges, rushes, cattails, and reed grasses.

Noxious weeds occur throughout the District. Canada thistle, downy brome (Cheatgrass), hoary cress, yellow toadflax and Russian knapweed are the most widespread. Palmer amaranth is also an invasive weed of concern in Park County.

Sensitive Habitats

Wetland and riparian landscapes occur in saturated soils along streams and waterways in the CCD. This productive habitat serves as travel corridors for many animal species, both as seasonal migratory stops and permanent home territories. Densely vegetated zones provide important thermal cover to protect species from temperature extremes. These habitats also help to collect and filter surface water and in effect purify, redistribute, and protect the District's water.

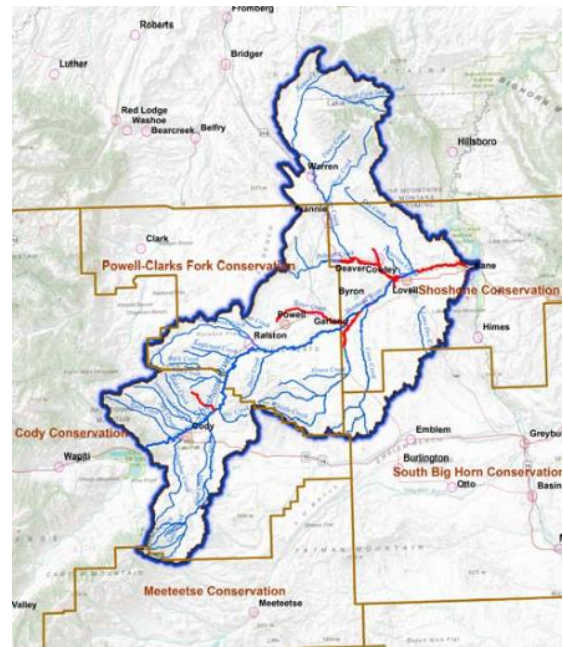




Watersheds

The CCD encompasses three, six-digit hydrologic units, or basins, within its borders- Missouri Headwaters Basin (HUC 100200), the Upper Yellowstone Basin (100700), and the Big Horn Basin (100800). Brief descriptions of watersheds therein follow:

- (1) Located in the Big Horn Basin, the Shoshone River Watershed consists of the South Fork and North Fork of the Shoshone River above the Buffalo Bill Reservoir and the River below the reservoir to the point it flows into the PCFCD.
- (2) A portion of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone, from where it flows into Wyoming from Montana and flows out of the Clarks Fork Canyon into the PCFCD.
- (3) The Dry Creek drainage, a tributary of the Big Horn River which drains the area along the eastern flank of Carter Mountain, between the Shoshone River and the Greybull River.
- (4) Headwaters in the Upper Missouri Basin are confined to the portion of the District boundary that overlaps Yellowstone National Park.

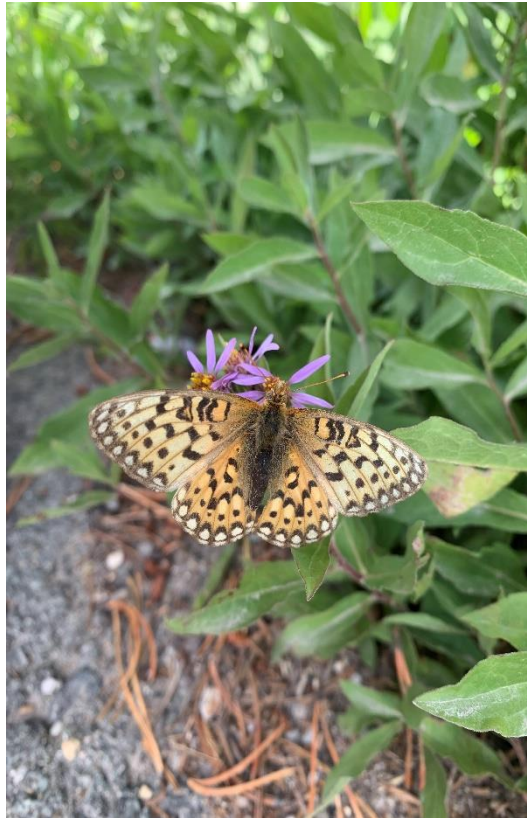


Wildlife

Wildlife is abundant within the CCD and is indeed one of the many amenities of the area. Wildlife habitat types include open water and wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, riparian areas, and forest. The following is a brief list of the Districts commonly observed resident mammal and bird species.

Mammals

Badger Bear
Big Brown Bat
Bighorn Sheep
Bobcat
Bushy Tailed Woodrat
Coyote
Deer Mouse
Whitetail and Mule Deer
Dessert Cottontail
Elk
Fox
Grey Wolf
Least Chipmunk
Little Brown Bat
Martin
Mink
Moose
Mountain Lion
Pronghorn Antelope
Red Fox
Red Squirrel
Striped Skunk
Western Harvest Mouse
Whitetail Jackrabbit
Whitetail Prairie Dog



Birds

American Avocet
American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
Bald Eagle
Belted Kingfisher
Black-capped Chickadee
Canada Goose
Cassin's Finch
Chukar
Common Merganser
Dark-Eyed Junco
Downy Woodpecker
Golden Eagle
Great Horned Owl
Green Winged Teal
Killdeer Mallard
Mountain Chickadee
Northern Flicker
Northern Harrier
Northern Pintail
Pine Siskin
Red Tailed Hawk
Short Eared Owl
Western Meadowlark
Yellow Warbler





Water Resources

Surface water is one of the primary sources of water for consumptive uses within the CCD boundary. The municipal water supply for the City of Cody, as well as other municipalities along the Shoshone River drawn from the Buffalo Bill Reservoir, and treated at the Shoshone Municipal Pipeline water treatment facility on the southwestern edge of Cody. The majority of irrigation activities are also made possible through the availability of surface water in Park County.

Soils

Soil is one of our most basic natural resources. It determines not only what our landscape looks like, but also our ability to adapt and transform that landscape. However, there are limitations and hazards inherent to soil types that occur throughout the District. Some soils are seasonably wet and may retain moisture and as a result can be unsuitable for construction. Sites with higher water tables can also be unsuitable for underground utilities or basements. These soil types can often be found in low-lying areas and along waterways.

Other soils are dominated by shallow bedrock or rock outcroppings that may be unsuitable for



foundations and roadbeds. These soil types can often be found along canyon rims benches, and mountain foothills.

Impervious soils required for some sanitary facilities need detailed evaluations to prevent surface and groundwater contamination.

The District also contains highly erosive soils due to the sedimentary nature of the background geology in the Big Horn Basin. Erosive soils, if disturbed by human activities, may exacerbate potential air and water pollution concerns.

Land Use

Uses

Rangeland
Agriculture
Timber
Mining
Oil & Gas
Water

Federal Ownership
State Ownership
Private Ownership

Approximately 35 percent of the District is rangeland, which is used for a variety of production activities, including agriculture. Many of these agricultural operations supplement range forage with irrigated pasture. The area also supports deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, moose and big horn sheep.

Timber is harvested from the national forest lands, but all of it is shipped north to a large sawmill at Livingston, Montana. Gravel is produced from a number of gravel pits commonly associated with glaciated areas in the District. Other extractive resources including oil and gas are scattered across subbasins in the CCD, particularly in

the Clark area and southeastern extent of the District.

Land ownership in the CCD consists of Federal, State, and Private lands. Federally-managed lands include Bureau of Land Management, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation lands. They account for eighty-eight percent of the total land area. State lands encompass two percent of the land area within CCD boundaries including Wyoming Game and Fish properties, public schools, state parks, cultural resources, historic sites, and state forestry. Private land ownership accounts for about ten percent of the total lands, while water features including Buffalo Bill Reservoir account for less than one percent.

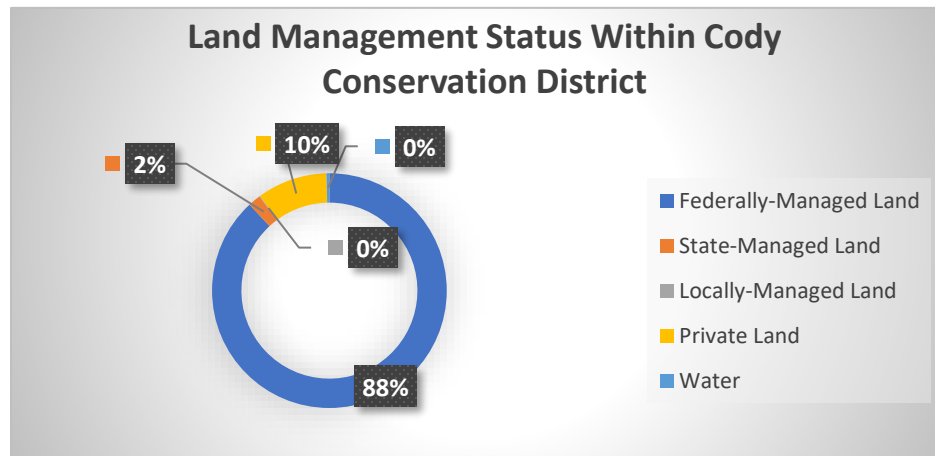


Figure 2. Land Management Status within Cody Conservation District
(Source: SuiteWater November 2023)

Community Enhancement

The District will strive to implement natural resource conservation practices that address soil health and erosion; water quality, quantity, and use; energy conservation, wildlife habitat; and enhancing the natural landscape along public corridors and properties by working with the City of Cody and other agencies and organizations who offer programs that benefit our natural resources. The District will provide education on natural resources and on natural conservation best management practices (BMPs).



CCD Program Areas and Objectives

Education and Outreach

Goal: Participate in and provide conservation outreach and education opportunities to encourage awareness of resource conservation issues of concern and practices that help us address those concerns and protect the natural resources we rely on.

- Provide educational opportunities to the community through seminars, adult and youth-focused events, workshops, tours, and hands-on activities.





- Provide conservation information to the public utilizing our website, various media, and displays at local events.
- Look for opportunities to inform policy makers of local issues, concerns, and opportunities.
- Strive to build stronger relationships with local officials and policy makers for the benefit of natural resources.
- Seek and incorporate public input for program development, assessment, and implementation.

Rural and Urban Land Management/Soil Conservation

Goal: Promotes land uses that are compatible with the natural resources of a given area, including, but limited to soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife. The District encourages the appropriate use of natural resources to address unique challenges of urban and rural living in Park County.

- Promote the protection of prime agricultural land and open spaces.
- Provide educational opportunities to stakeholders to increase range and farmland stewardship. Potential topics include, but are not limited to cover crop and pollinator seed mixes, soil health principles, grazing management, riparian zone management, irrigation management, and small acreage living.
- Provide input to City/County Planning Commission on soil suitability of all new subdivisions.
- Continue implementing a seedling tree program to encourage windbreak and shelterbelt plantings.
- Coordinate with the Park County Weed & Pest Department to assist landowners manage for noxious and invasive weeds.
- Provide financial assistance to landowners to address resource concerns through use of best management practices. This includes partnering with landowners, agencies, and other stakeholders to improve pasture, cropland, and rangeland conditions, water quality, and wildlife habitat.
- Assist with and promote community enhancement programs and urban conservation



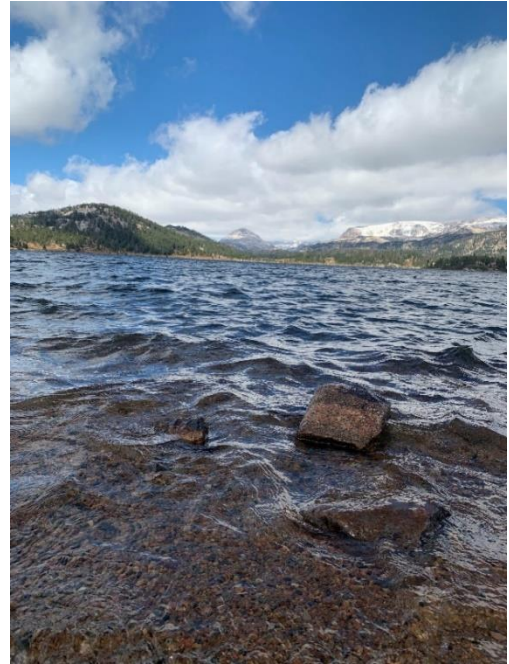
projects.

- Increase awareness of natural resources issues and the relationship within an urban setting.
- Foster a stronger working relationship with the City of Cody to promote and implement natural resource conservation, pollution prevention practices, and urban and community revitalization and resiliency activities.

Water Resources

Goal: Reduce point and nonpoint source pollutants and maintain healthy watersheds while improving agriculture, fisheries, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

- Achieve water resource goals through voluntary, locally initiated and led, scientifically driven watershed-based approaches.
- Participate in watershed and basin development planning.
- Partner with the University of Wyoming and other organizations to further the District's understanding of watershed management issues and potential solutions within the District.
- Secure funding to assist with the implementation of outreach programs, data collection to assess areas adversely impacting human health or wildlife or other water uses, and to demonstrate project effectiveness of practices implemented, and best management practices (BMPs) designed to reduce point and nonpoint source pollution and maximize stream bank stability and riparian health.
- Place an emphasis on pre- and post-project monitoring of projects implemented to better demonstrate the effectiveness of practices implemented and to identify whether additional practices are necessary to address resource concerns.



- Develop a process for promoting and sponsoring projects through Wyoming’s Small Water Project Program.
- Maintain a water quality monitoring program to gather scientifically credible data on local watershed health and to support use attainability and beneficial use support determinations.
- Coordinate with the WDEQ, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, and local officials to address nutrient management where harmful cyanobacteria blooms (HCBs), occur.
- Develop a nutrient monitoring strategy as needed to assist in data collection and promote outreach and practices to reduce nutrient inputs to waters experiencing HCBs.
- Develop and maintain Sampling Analysis Plans (SAPs) to guide monitoring activities in accordance with the WDEQ and other partners to whom data is submitted.
- Cohost educational workshops with irrigation districts, neighboring conservation districts, the NRCS, and others regarding water irrigation systems for the public.
- Coordinate with landowners, irrigation districts, and other stakeholders to improve irrigation delivery systems.
- Support the Shoshone River Partners and other stakeholders through activities to reduce human-induced sediment loading above Willwood Dam and will continue to participate in Willwood Work Group 2 activities to improve sediment management at Willwood Dam.



Forest Health

Goal: Promote the importance of forest management on both private and public lands to improve forest health and resiliency.

- Increase participation in forest planning activities through coordination with state and federal forestry officials. Request cooperating agency status when applicable and necessary.

- Evaluate the benefits of entering into formal agreements with forestry agencies to better partner on forest resource management activities, including stream and habitat improvement projects, resource inventories, road improvements to reduce erosion, and wildland urban interface activities as needed.
- Assess the need to pursue grant funding or other financial opportunities to help landowners implement forest health improvement and hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- Support legislation focused on improving local and state-wide forest health and resiliency.
- Cohost forestry related insect and disease identification and mitigation training in conjunction with state and federal forestry officials and Park County Weed and Pest Department.
- Support Whitebark pine conservation efforts in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.



NPS/Erin Shanahan

Wildlife

Goal: Work with partners to provide the education and resources needed to promote wildlife habitat and population management.

- Promote wildlife and fisheries habitat improvement practices, including projects to improve fish passage and reduce entrainment in irrigation networks.
- Examine and pursue wetland development and stream enhancement or restoration projects to improve water quality and habitat conditions.
- Continue development of a pollinator program and explore opportunities for implementing habitat projects and coordinating with Park County Weed and Pest on pollinator seed mixes.
- Encourage land management practices that allow producers' personal goals to be accomplished while minimizing impacts to wildlife (e.g., wildlife-friendly fencing)
- Implement water improvement projects that include wildlife habitat enhancement components.
- Support interagency efforts regarding the



Sage Grouse Initiative, Big-Game Initiative, and similar wildlife protection plans and working groups that benefit Park County.

- Partner with wildlife agencies to secure grant funding for wildlife improvement projects.
- Request cooperating agency status when applicable for threatened or endangered species that may be impacted within the District boundaries.



Oil, Gas, and Mineral Development

Goal: Stay informed and provide information and recommendations during oil, gas, and mineral development; including planning, operation, and site closures for the conservation and protection of natural resources and community health.

- Remain involved in community and agency discussions regarding local oil, gas, and mineral development projects.
- Provide the County and the applicable agencies with accurate information regarding natural resource conditions, potential benefits, and adverse impacts.
- Attend meetings where monitoring data, environmental protection measures, NEPA compliance, and other topics are addressed for active and proposed oil, gas, and mineral development projects in the County or that may impact local watersheds.
- Continue to stay informed of local and regional oil, gas, and mineral development proposals and projects.
- Request cooperating agency status when applicable.



Section of Oregon Basin (Source: SuiteWater November 2023)

Waste Management

Goal: Stay abreast of local waste management issues and promote the utilization of sustainable local waste management systems.

- Seek funding to provide cost-share on failing septic systems.
- Provide education and outreach about the risks of old septic systems and waste management.
- Promote trash pick-ups, pet waste management, and maintenance of storm drains and road ditches.
- Promote proper waste disposal and recycling efforts.
- Coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation, State Parks and Tourism Department, and local partners to ensure Buffalo Bill State Park campgrounds and boat dock areas are not contributing to cyanobacteria blooms at the Buffalo Bill Reservoir.

Legislation

Goal: Remain informed and inform others of legislative activity and issues at the national, state, and local levels and provide action when necessary, where natural resource conservation is concerned.

- Encourage legislative actions that are in line with Park County's resource management goals and objectives.
- Provide the City of Cody and Park County officials with information regarding natural resource management and resource development issues that could negatively impact the County.
- Provide oral or written comments on legislation, permitting, and other decision-making that would impact Park County as the Board of Supervisors deems necessary.
- Remain informed on legislative actions and offer Park County leaders and residents insight as to the implications of the proposed or enacted legislation on the County.
- Meet annually with locally elected officials and legislators to provide feedback regarding legislation that may impact Park County stakeholders and landowners
- Work with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts and legislators to develop or review natural resources legislation and make changes on the State level as needed.

