

Celebrating our
70th Anniversary
1953-2023

*Serving Butte and Southern
Custer Counties since 1953*

BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mark and Paige Telford Receive Regional Hugh Hammond Bennett Award

Mark and Paige Telford of Arco were awarded the regional Hugh Hammond Bennett Award in February. The Telford's were nominated by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District for their commitment to conservation, civic involvement, soil health practices, and conservation innovation. Growing potato, hay, grain and livestock in Butte County, the Telford's have participated in multiple Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs to conserve natural resources on their operation. The Telford's have participated in NRCS special wildlife initiatives and have retrofitted livestock fences to be more wildlife friendly and they rotate their grazing schedule to benefit sage-grouse and other sensitive wildlife. The Telford's have been a leader in soil health practices and implement a five-year crop rotation plan on their potato fields, plant cover crops, and utilize compost. They have also displayed self-driven conservation efforts through participation in research programs to learn more about preventing potato virus Y and



Mark and Paige Telford

research to conserve water in livestock watering systems. Furthermore, a portion of their potato fields have been USDA certified organic since 2017. Mark has served on the Butte SWCD board of supervisors for nine years and has been instrumental in bringing federal funding into the District to install irrigation efficiency improvement technology on area farms. Mark has been an early adopter of no-till drilling practices and was involved with helping the District purchase a no-till drill to rent to area producers. He has also served 12 years on the Idaho Potato Board's research and education committee. During this time, he advocated for the University of Idaho Extension

Agent position of a Potato Specialist. This position received funding for several years following its inception by the Idaho Potato Commission. The Hugh Hammond Bennett awards are named for the founder of the soil conservation service and acknowledge agricultural producers and professionals for their outstanding efforts to promote and implement natural resource conservation practices. Congratulations Mark and Paige!

Winter Meeting Held

The Butte SWCD and UI Extension of Butte County co-hosted an educational meeting for area landowners in February. Topics covered included hügelkultur gardening presented by Amber Beck, cheatgrass



Winter Meeting

management presented by Lincoln County UI Extension agent Carmen Willmore, NRCS program update presented by NRCS Arco Team Lead Jesse Fullmer, cloud seeding presented by Kala Golden of IDWR, and soil moisture meter data analysis presented by UI Butte County Extension agent David Callister.

Arbor Day Celebrated



District employees handed out 260 blue spruce seedlings to area residents on Arbor Day. The seedlings were

provided by the Idaho Forest Products Commission and the Butte SWCD.



Arbor Day in Arco

LOR Foundation Grant Awarded

The LOR Foundation awarded the Butte SWCD with a \$9,774.76 grant to study the effectiveness of shadeballs placed on livestock water troughs to reduce water lost to



Shadeballs for Water Conservation

evaporation. The study will take place both at a control site where evaporation will be measured, and at a field site where field performance and livestock and wildlife interactions will be observed. The study will run through the Fall. For more information on the

LOR Foundation, visit <https://lorfoundation.org/>.

New Addition to the NRCS Team

Jeff Theobald recently joined the NRCS Arco team as a soil conservationist. Jeff is from Mesa, Arizona and recently graduated from BYU-Idaho with a degree in Fisheries, Range, and Wildlife. Jeff said his favorite part of the job is meeting with producers in the field and helping them develop a conservation plan to improve their operation. Jeff will be working in Butte, southern Custer and Blaine Counties. Welcome Jeff!

LWG Meeting Held

A preliminary local working group meeting was hosted by the Butte and Blaine SWCD's on May 3rd. An overview of last year's meeting and projects was given. Discussion was made on natural resource concerns and priorities for funding. We appreciate all the

landowners and partner agencies who attended!



May Local Working Group Meeting

District Joins the CoCoRaHS Network

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network is a nationwide network of volunteers who measure precipitation. The data is reported online and can be accessed by anyone. In our District, there are two observers in Butte County and zero in Custer County. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or would like to view the data, visit <https://www.cocorahs.org/>.

Stewardship Week Activities and Annual Poster Contest

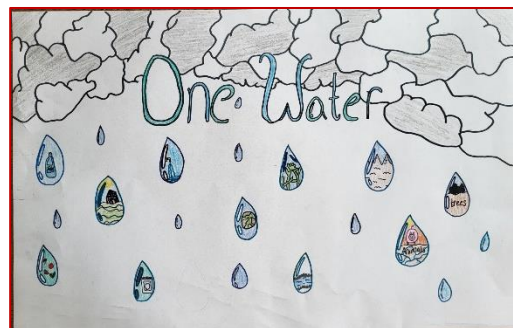
District employees Mindy Hawley and Sara Zollinger presented educational information to the Arco and Mackay 6th grade students

relating to this year's National Association of Conservation District theme "One Water". The theme showcases the importance of watersheds and how activities conducted within a watershed can affect other aspects in the watershed. Students were provided with poster boards to complete a sketch of their vision of "One Water". Posters were judged by the District board members and winners were awarded a cash prize. This year's winners were:

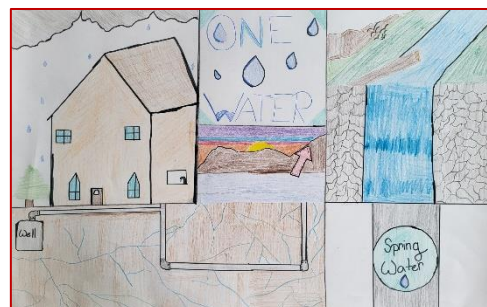
1st Place: Harlie Wanstrom

2nd Place: Jordynn Huckaby, and 3rd place Amaya Lowry.

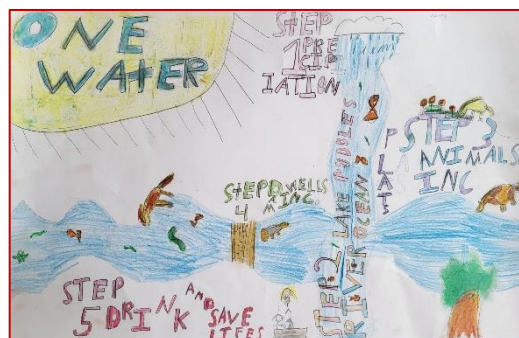
Congratulations and thank you to each student who entered our contest and to Mrs. Kimball and Mrs. Nalley for letting us visit their classrooms.



1st Place



2nd Place



3rd Place

No-Till Drill Available for Rent

12' drill with the capacity to plant grass, grains, and wildflowers.

\$12/acre, \$100/day minimum

To reserve, contact Randy Purser 208-589-3831

Butte SWCD
P.O. Box 819
Arco, ID 83213

Butte SWCD Board of Directors

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Walt Johnson	Member
Hayden Isham	Member

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Sara Zollinger	NACD Technician

NRCS Staff

Jesse Fullmer	Team Lead
Berett Rosenkrance	Range Mgm't Specialist
Jeff Theobald	Soil Conservationist

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BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Partnership Improves Big Game Migration Route

A recent project in the Big Lost River Valley near Arco showcases how partnerships can be utilized to make a project more successful together than any one agency could have accomplished alone. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had previously worked together to retrofit and/or remove fences in the pronghorn migration route near Arco and saw the need to expand the area and work with other agencies and landowners to achieve their conservation goals.

The opportunity came during a local working group meeting hosted by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). During the local working group meetings, private



IDFG Habitat Biologist Brett Gullett presents migration information at a landowner meeting in 2021 hosted by the Butte SWCD

landowners and conservation agencies can come to the table and strategize on natural resource concerns in the area. These meetings led to a large-scale project with private landowners and conservation agencies to benefit wildlife along the migration route near Arco.

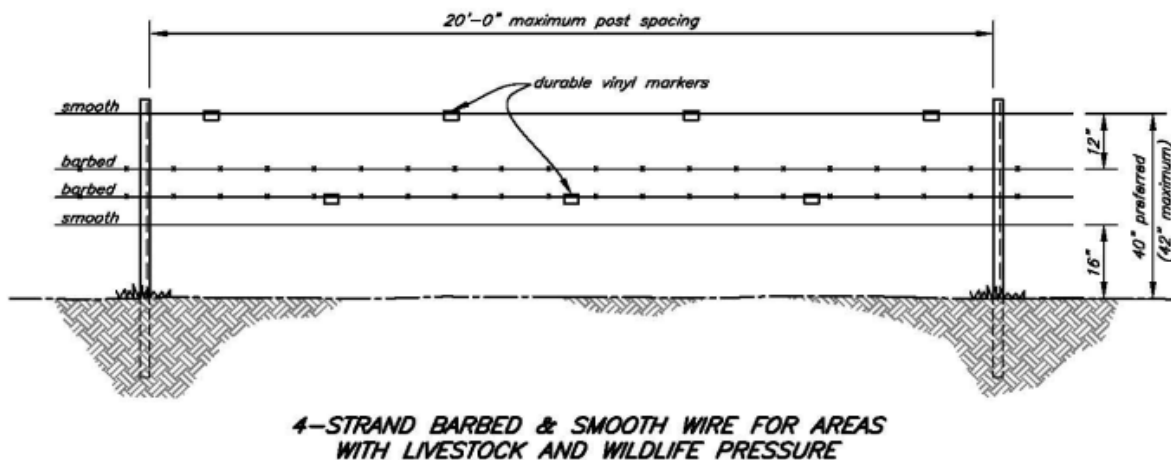
The IDFG worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide technical and financial assistance to help private landowners with the retrofit/removal process. The project focused on retrofitting fences to wildlife friendly specifications or removing unneeded fences to benefit all big game species in the area as well as being visually marked for sage-grouse and other desert birds since the route encapsulates designated core and important sage-grouse habitat. With a \$20,000 grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) as well as IDFG funds, the IDFG was able to increase the financial assistance for private landowners participating with the NRCS as well as assist landowners who did not have an NRCS contract. Idaho Fish and Game Biologist Habitat Brett Gullett stated that, “The project benefited from partnerships with multiple agencies. The NRCS was able to dedicate program funds as well as use their relationships with the area producers to promote the project.” Additionally, the IDFG funded the purchase of a cattleguard (installed gratis by the Butte County Road and Bridge) that allowed the BLM to remove 1.4 miles of fence. In 2023, the Butte SWCD was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the RMEF to increase the cost-share incentive for private landowner fence retrofit/removal

projects. In 2022 and 2023, the NRCS worked with private landowners to retrofit and/or remove 110,000 feet of fence, benefitting 9,400 acres.

Furthermore, the US Fish and Wildlife Service donated fence markers that were installed by private landowners and volunteers from the Upper Snake Master Naturalist group to make the fences more visible to wildlife.

The migration route extended onto the Craters of the Moon National Monument (CRMO) where the National Park Service (NPS) was able to work with bordering landowners to retrofit and/or remove fences along the monument’s boundaries. In 2023, the NPS partnered with crews from the Utah Conservation Corp to retrofit 7.5 miles of fence to wildlife friendly specifications. National Park Service wildlife biologist Todd Stefanic stated that, “The goals of the project were originally driven by the pronghorn migration and meant to remove barriers to their movement but have since grown to eventually make all CRMO boundary fences wildlife friendly for all wildlife.”

Standard Wildlife-Friendly Wire Fence Drawings



Wildlife Friendly Fence Specifications, NRCS

FOR RENT:

NO-TILL DRILL

\$12/acre, \$100/day minimum

Has capacity to seed small grains, grasses, and wildflowers

Contact Randy Purser to schedule 208-589-3831

Fish Screens Installed in the Little Lost

Five fish screens were recently installed on the irrigation system managed by the Blaine County Canal Company in Howe. The screens will prevent fish in the Little Lost River from entering the irrigation



Fish Screens Near Howe

pipeline system. The screens were purchased in part by a \$3,000 grant from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation awarded to the Butte SWCD.

Natural Resource Camp

This year the Butte SWCD provided a scholarship for nine area youth to attend the University of Idaho's Natural Resource Camp. Students included Trista Hawley from Custer County and Kaylee Stone, Journie Landon, Brodie Reynolds, Teagan Babcock, Randy

Andersen, Taine Hollist, Garrett Waymire and Scarlett MacConnell (missing from picture) from Butte County.

The camp was held at the central Idaho 4-H camp near Ketchum in June.



Butte and Custer County NRC Students

The campers spent a week near beautiful Sun Valley exploring and studying Idaho's natural resources. This is a hands-on camp providing campers the opportunity to learn about wildlife, forestry, soil, range land, and water. They also enjoyed outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, volleyball, archery, survival, target shooting, and fireside sing-alongs.

Sara Zollinger Joins NRCS Staff

Our recent technical assistance grant employee, Sara Zollinger, has joined the NRCS staff as a soil conservationist. Sara will continue to work with landowners to

establish conservation plans and complete NRCS contracts. Sara was able to complete most of the required training to become a NRCS Certified Planner while working for the Butte SWCD as well as earning additional college credits needed for NRCS employment. Congratulations Sara!

Custer County Fair Fun

The Butte SWCD joined in the Custer County Fair fun by handing out conservation program information and goodies!



We would like to thank Pickle's Place, Ivie's Foodliner, the Walt Johnson Family, Lost River Electric, Butte County and Custer County for their financial support of the Butte SWCD!

*You're Invited to the
Butte SWCD's Annual
County Tour 2023
August 22nd
9:00am – noon
Moore Park*



Stops Include:

- Seasonal High Tunnel
- Irrigation Ditch Linings
- Water Quality Program for Agriculture Project – (pivot conversion, wildlife planting, and rock rip rap)

Lunch Provided:

*RSVP by August 15th
by calling or texting*

208-423-8911





Butte Soil and Water Conservation District and
Blaine Soil and Water Conservation District

Locally Led Working- Group Meeting

Locally-led work group meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be a part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within our County

You're invited to:

- ✓ Review performance of past year's projects
- ✓ Help shape plans and priorities for the future
- ✓ Connect with partners and new audiences to seek opportunities to leverage partnership funds
- ✓ And learn about other NRCS programs that may be beneficial to you

Carey City Hall

20482 Main St., Carey

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

September 7th, 2023

**Lunch Provided! Please
RSVP by September 1st**

**Carpool option: call 208-
423-8911**

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BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation Tour Highlights NRCS and WQPA Conservation Projects

The District’s Annual Conservation Tour was held in August and featured conservation projects funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) in the Moore and Arco area. Participants visited Susan Cortazar’s seasonal high tunnel installed with NRCS funding in 2018. Susan shared information on the advantages and challenges of gardening in a high tunnel. The group



*Butte SWCD Board Member
Mark Telford, center,
Discusses Potato Virus Y*

then visited a newly installed irrigation ditch liner project along the Timbered Dome irrigation canal. Local producers who use the system along with NRCS Team Lead Jesse Fullmer provided information on the lining process, maintenance, and the water savings provided by the liner. At the next stop, Butte SWCD board member Mark Telford showed a research trial plot along a potato field that is designed to reduce potato virus Y carried by aphids from entering adjoining fields. The fields are surrounded by a cover crop buffer

that provide aphids a zone to clean their system before entering an adjacent field. The buffer zones were in full bloom and abuzz with pollinators. The tour proceeded to the Nichols’ farm to look at irrigation improvement projects partially funded by the ISWCC’s Water Quality Program for Agriculture funds. Derek Nichols was on site to share the history of the farm and how the improvements make the farm more water efficient. As part of the project, a wheel line system was removed and replaced with a center pivot and an open irrigation ditch was converted into pipeline. The project also addresses erosion along a creek bank by the installation of rock rip rap. The tour concluded with lunch provided by the Butte SWCD. We appreciate the landowners who shared their projects with us, to everyone who participated, and to Jesse Fullmer for being an excellent tour guide!



WQPA Irrigation Efficiency Project



Susan Cortazar's Seasonal High Tunnel in Full Production

Weed Spotlight

Scotch thistle, *Onopordum acanthium*, is a noxious weed found in every county of Idaho. The thistle can reach up



NRCS Team Lead Jesse Fullmer displays a Scotch Thistle at the 2023 Conservation Tour

to 8 feet tall and disperse thousands of seeds that can survive up to 39 years. The most effective control measure is to spray herbicide on the young rosette before the leaves develop its protective “hairy” covering. Mature plants can be cut down and the base sprayed with herbicide. Flower heads should be removed and placed in a bag for disposal or burning to prevent seeding out after the plant has been cut down. If you have scotch thistle on your property and need help with

removal, contact your county weed department.

6th Grade Natural Resources Tour

In September, forty-three 6th grade students from both Butte Middle School and Mackay Elementary gathered at the lower sportsman’s access area to participate in a natural workshop sponsored by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District. The students attended presentations by the Salmon-Challis National Forest, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, Natural Resource Conservation Services, South Custer Fire District and Butte County’s University of Idaho Extension Office.

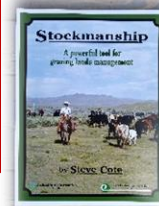


NRCS employees Berett Rosenkrance and Sara Zollinger share plant identification information with students

DEQ Grant Award

The District was awarded their first Idaho DEQ State Agriculture grant to carry out water quality/quantity best management practices. The \$250,000 award will be utilized to install irrigation pipeline on the Blaine County Canal Company’s (BCCC) irrigation system in the Little Lost River Valley near Howe. The funding will allow the BCCC to extend an open irrigation ditch to pipeline conversion project already completed through an NRCS contract. The pipeline system will make more efficient use of irrigation water, allow more water to stay in the Little Lost River, and once the entire system is complete, reduce sedimentation in the river system. The project is estimated to be completed by Fall 2024.

Looking for a Christmas gift for the rancher in your life? We have copies of Steve Cote’s *Stockmanship Manual* for \$20 (+\$3 S&H per copy). Visit www.butteswcd.org for an order form or call the office at 208-423-8911.



HO! HO! HO!

Speech Contest Winners

The District's annual speech contest followed the National Association of Conservation District's theme of "One Water" and was held in October. The theme focuses on the interconnectivity of all water and the conservation of ground and surface water resources. This year's winners were Eliana Cecil (1st) and Tannabe Cecil (2nd). The winner(s) received a cash award and competed at the Division level in Idaho Falls where Eliana Cecil won first place. Eliana will compete against the Division winners at the State Speech Contest in Boise during the November Idaho Association of Conservation District's Annual Conference.



Sisters Eliana and Tannabe Cecil won 1st and 2nd place in the annual speech contest

New District Staff

The District welcomed Timothy Barnes to our staff in October. Timothy will be filling the National Association of Conservation District's technical assistance grant position



Timothy Barnes

role. With a background in engineering, Timothy will be working with and attending trainings by NRCS engineers to gain the ability to provide engineering services for producers in the Butte and Blaine SWCD's. Timothy received his bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering from New Mexico Tech in Socorro, NM. Timothy lives near Arco with his wife Stephanie and daughter Rebecca.

Joint Local Working Group Meeting Held in Carey

The Butte and Blaine SWCD's held a joint local working group meeting in September. The focus of the meeting was for area producers and partner agencies to meet and discuss how the NRCS will prioritize federal funding in the area in the next fiscal



LWG meeting. Photo Credit: Blaine SWCD

year.

This year's priorities are:

- 1.) Source water depletion
- 2.) Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
- 3.) Inefficient irrigation water use
- 4.) Bank erosion from streams, shorelines, or conveyance channels
- 5.) Pest Pressure
- 6.) Plant productivity and health
- 7.) Inadequate livestock water quality, quantity, and distribution
- 8.) Soil: Aggregate instability

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." – Aldo Leopold

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BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Jesse Fullmer Named District Conservationist of the Year

Jesse Fullmer was recently awarded the R.N. Irving District Conservationist of the Year Award at the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation District's annual conference in Burley. The Irving Award is named for R. Neil Irving who served as Idaho's first State Conservationist and was instrumental in passing the State Soil Conservation District Law and organizing Idaho's soil conservation districts from 1938-1959. Jesse was nominated by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District for his achievements in natural resource conservation and going above-and-beyond his daily duties to assist landowners in their conservation goals. Jesse has been with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for 16 years and has been the District Conservationist in the Arco NRCS field office for nine years, covering the Butte SWCD and the Blaine SCD areas.

He and his team manage over 100 landowner conservation contracts and gain around 40 new contracts each year. His office holds 75% of the NRCS easements in the State as well as half of the State's Conservation Stewardship Program contracts.



Butte SWCD Board Chairman Randy Purser and DC of the Year Jesse Fullmer

Landowner's willingness to participate in NRCS programs has been attributed to Jesse's leadership in revamping the conservation district's local working group (LWG) process and encouraging landowner participation. Jesse has worked with the LWG attendees to fund special project initiatives for installing Low Elevation Spray

Application nozzles for pivots in 2018-2019. Jesse has also worked with landowners and Butte County in 2017-2019 to address flooding and erosion issues during heavy runoff years. Furthermore, this past year, Jesse and the LWG attendees drafted a special initiative for retrofitting/removing fences in the pronghorn migration route in the Butte and Blaine conservation districts to make them more wildlife friendly. His leadership in working with partner agencies brought USFWS and Idaho Fish and Game monies and guidance to bolster this project even further and was very successful.

Additionally, Jesse worked to bring joint chiefs funding into his coverage area and will be working with the Forest Service to complete this project in the Blaine SCD.

The Butte SWCD board of director's listed Jesse's extraordinary contributions to our conservation district and "going the extra mile" as his work on irrigation efficiency improvement projects in our District. Jesse has worked with the Big Lost River Irrigation District to bring them to the table as a partner in these projects. Irrigation board chairman Byron Pehrson stated, "Jesse is always willing to help people and will bend over backwards to help. He will do what it takes to get the job done."

Jesse and his team brought the first Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart monies into Butte County in 2019 to complete the County's first ditch-to-pipeline conversion project. Jesse has worked with groups of landowners to create organized water entities to help them address their irrigation improvement needs.

Jesse attends every conservation district board meeting and participates in District events such as the annual 6th grade natural resources tour and Envirothon. Butte SWCD Board Chairman Randy Purser stated, "Jesse has been an asset to our District's landowners. The technical assistance he provides to help producers reach their conservation goals is solid. He has also been able to bring in additional NRCS funding when it was needed for special projects and natural disasters."

Furthermore, Jesse goes above-and-beyond by serving on committees such as the NRCS civil rights committee. NRCS State Conservationist Curtis Elke stated, "Jesse serves as the Idaho NRCS Civil Rights Chairman making sure all our customers are treated equally, fairly and have access to all our programs. Also equal employment opportunities for all our staff, assuring we have a great working environment for all our staff. Under Jesse's leadership, the Civil Rights Committee developed an interview guidance document for all NRCS Idaho hiring officials making sure we are interviewing all applicants in a consistent and ethical manner. I sure enjoy working with Jesse and the passion he demonstrates in all he does every day."

Zollinger Awarded Scholarship

Sara Zollinger, the technical assistant for the Butte SWCD was awarded an educational



Randy Purser and Sara Zollinger

scholarship by the District to take additional college credits needed for employment with the NRCS. Sara is currently filling the technical assistance role funded by the National Association of Conservation District technical assistance grant. She works in the Arco NRCS office assisting with contracting and helping landowners with conservation planning. One of the goals of the grant is to provide employees with the experience necessary to transition into federal employment. Sara holds a B.S. in animal science and recently completed a semester of additional courses with the

scholarship focusing on soil science. Congratulations Sara!

Annual Meeting Held

The Butte SWCD held their annual meeting on December 16th, 2022. The meeting highlight was recognizing Jesse Fullmer for his District Conservationist of the Year award. District board members and staff also received hats highlighting the 70th anniversary of the District.

70th Anniversary

The Butte SWCD turns 70 years old this year. Incorporated in 1953, the SWCD has provided a



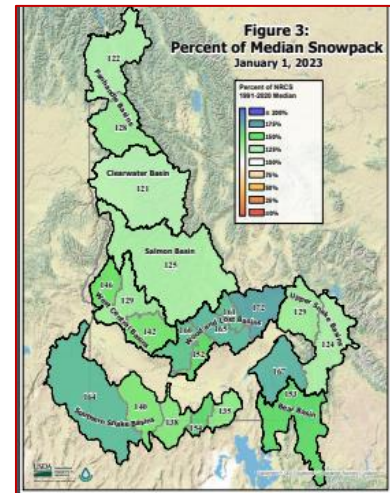
The 1992 Board of Supervisors

local voice for federal conservation funding within the District boundaries. Water conservation has been a priority for the District since its inception and has been the focus of numerous projects over

the last 70 years. In celebration of our anniversary, the SWCD plans to host several events open to the public as well as holding a social media campaign to highlight past projects and photos. To receive these updates, “like” the District’s facebook page @ButteSoilAndWaterConservationDistrict.

Snow Survey

The NRCS’ Snow Survey program is underway! Data collection sites are located at Bear Canyon, Copper Basin, Dry Fork,



Map generated by the NRCS

Hilts Creek, Lost-Wood Divide, Smiley Mountain, Stickney Mill, Meadow Lake, and Moonshine. The District submits the data once a month to the Arco Advertiser, but current

conditions can be found at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/wcc/home/quicklinks/states/idoaho/>.

History Website Now Live

The District has compiled a collection of natural resource related studies and research projects conducted in the Big and Little Lost River Valleys into one location: www.bswcdhistory.weebly.com. Items were collected from several organizations, including the Butte SWCD, Idaho Department of Water Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Idaho Department of Natural Resources. Historical photos can also be found on the website along with past drought declarations for Butte and Custer Counties. If you have any documents you would like to add to the website, please contact our office at 208-423-8911 or e-mail at butteswcd@outlook.com



1961, overlooking east fork dam site on the Big Lost River



1985, Butte SWCD signage installed



1985 Flood Control Project in the Little Lost River Valley



1978 Cooperator of the Year Lynn Metcalf



1964 Board Supervisor Jess Amy

The Butte SWCD Board of Supervisors meets the third Thursday of each month. Visit www.butteswcd.org to obtain a current copy of the agenda and for the meeting location.

February 16, 2023
9:00am-Noon

You're Invited to Butte SWCD's Annual

WINTER MEETING

TOPICS & SPEAKERS

- Hügelkultur: A Low-cost Method to Achieving New Levels of Gardening Success – Amber Beck (9:00 a.m.)
- Interpreting Soil Moisture Meter Data – David Callister, UI Extension
- Cloud Seeding 101– Kala Golden, IDWR
- Field Management of Cheatgrass – Carmen Willmore, UI Extension
- NRCS Programs Update – Jesse Fullmer, NRCS

**FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC**

**Butte County Business
Center**
159 N. Idaho St., Arco

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I **University of Idaho**
Extension

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