



BUTTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Serving Butte and Southern Custer Counties since 1953

6th Graders Learn About Natural Resource Conservation

Forty-six 6th grade students from Butte Middle School and Mackay Elementary gathered at the Lower Sportsman's Access Area for an enriching natural workshop sponsored by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District. The day was filled with educational presentations from various organizations, including the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, Department of Environmental Quality, South Custer Fire District, and Butte County's University of Idaho Extension Office.

Cassi Wood from Trout Unlimited, in collaboration with the Salmon-Challis National Forest and Idaho Department of Fish and Game, guided students in identifying fish species from the Big Lost River. Students had hands-on experience netting live fish and identifying them.



David Hilliard from the Bureau of Land Management fascinated students with reptiles and local rock fossils, while Destiny Locke from the Department of Environmental Quality educated them about pH balance in water through interactive chemistry experiments.

David Callister from the University of Idaho Extension Office demonstrated how different soils affect water penetration. Jackie Ingram from the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission introduced students to the four groups of rangeland plants and engaged them in a survival game.



After a lunch provided by Butte SWCD at the Mackay Dam, Ken Day from the South Custer Fire

Station showcased fire engine operations and Personal Protection Equipment, allowing students to use the fire hose.



Blister Beetles in Forage Crops

Blister beetles produce the toxic substance cantharidin, posing risks to hay producers and livestock. Cantharidiasis, or blister beetle poisoning, occurs when livestock consume hay with cantharidin, irritating their gastrointestinal and urinary tracts, especially in horses, which can be fatal. Hay harvesting techniques, such as hay conditioners, increase blister beetle mortality, incorporating them into hay. Crushed beetles release cantharidin oil, contaminating hay even without their visual presence. Mowing, crimping, cutting, raking, and baling contribute to beetle deaths, but may remove bodies, making visual hay inspections unreliable. Blister beetle larvae often prey on grasshopper larvae, linking their outbreaks. Alfalfa near rangeland faces higher infestation risks. Effective management includes reducing weedy hosts and harvesting alfalfa before it blooms. Early and late hay cuttings can avoid peak beetle activity, reducing contamination risks. For

more control methods, visit our Extension office.

*Source: Colorado State University Fact Sheet No. 5-524

Cecil Wins State Speech Contest

Josiah Cecil of Mackay emerged victorious in the State level speech contest at the 80th Annual Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts conference in Idaho Falls.



Josiah Cecil with board members Walt Johnson and Todd Perkes

The event, themed "May the Forest Be With You Always," was set by the National Association of Conservation Districts to underscore the importance of forest conservation. Josiah's journey to state victory included wins at both the District and Division levels, showcasing his exceptional speaking skills. His speech earned him not only the top honor but also a cash prize. Congratulations to Josiah for his outstanding accomplishment and for advocating the vital

message of forest conservation.

Flanigan's Honored at Annual IASCD Conference

Chris and Jackie Flanigan were honored with the prestigious 2024 Idaho Grassman Award at the 80th Annual Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts conference in Idaho Falls. The award recognizes exceptional management practices of forage crops and aims to educate the public about sustainable agriculture. Nominated by the Butte Soil and Water Conservation District, the Flanigan's were celebrated for their dedication to sustainable agriculture.



Jesse Fullmer, Jackie and Chris Flanigan

Jesse Fullmer, the Arco Natural Resource Conservation Service Team Lead, presented the award, highlighting the Flanigan's efforts to reduce invasive weeds through strategic grazing, repair

streambanks, and heal the water cycle on their ranch. Their commitment to working with wildlife, ensuring adequate food and cover, was also commended. Fullmer praised Chris's passion for land stewardship, stating, "He enjoys being on the land, watching it improve and change for the better, and is not afraid of sharing the things he is doing. He is the standard that all other Grassman of Idaho should be judged."

What We're Reading

In the 2018 study "Modeling the impact of aquifer recharge, in-stream water savings, and canal lining on water resources in the Walla



Pipeline project, Butte County

Walla Basin", Jacob Scherberg and his team explore the multifaceted benefits of converting unlined irrigation canals to pipelines. The research focuses on how such conversions, combined with managed aquifer recharge, can significantly

enhance water management in semi-arid regions. The study predicts that replacing unlined canals with pipelines can improve stream flows and stabilize groundwater storage levels, particularly during the critical summer months. This approach not only supports agricultural productivity by ensuring a more reliable water supply but also benefits local ecosystems. Increased summer river flows can enhance fish habitats and other ecological functions. Moreover, the research underscores the importance of strategic infrastructure improvements, highlighting how coordinated efforts in water management can lead to more sustainable and resilient water resources. By integrating modern engineering solutions with natural water cycles, the study provides a comprehensive model for addressing water scarcity and promoting environmental health. Scherberg's findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and water resource managers, emphasizing the dual benefits of such initiatives for both human

use and ecological preservation.

Butte SWCD Supports Pipeline Projects

To the members of our community,

For several years, public input from our local working group meetings has consistently identified water quantity as the #1 priority. In response, the Butte SWCD and the NRCS have been funding new pipeline projects each year. Additionally, our District has written and managed grants to further support these conversions. Scientific data supports these pipeline projects as effective water-saving practices, showing significant increases in river water flows. Our goal with these pipeline projects is to keep farming a viable career in our valley, support farming families and communities, maintain water in our rivers, improve aquatic habitat, and bolster groundwater storage. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to our shared success.

Sincerely,
Butte SWCD Board of Supervisors

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emailing butteswcd@outlook.com!*

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