

# 2022 ANNUAL COMBINED WATERSHED NEWSLETTER

Tongue River, Prairie Dog Creek, and Goose Creek Watersheds



## 2022 ANNUAL WATERSHED MEETINGS

The SCCD typically holds annual watershed meetings for each watershed in February or March to provide updates on watershed activities and gather input on water quality monitoring, improvement programs, and other activities. Meetings in 2021 were cancelled due to COVID 19 concerns. While situations continue to evolve, SCCD has scheduled meetings for 2022. Meetings will include updates on completed projects and activities, monitoring plans and/or results, upcoming activities, and other information about programs and opportunities. SCCD values the opportunity to engage directly with stakeholders in each watershed. If you are uncomfortable or unable to attend this year, or just have questions or want more information, please reach out.

## MEETING SCHEDULE

**PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED**  
MARCH 3; 6:00 PM  
PRAIRIE DOG COMMUNITY CENTER

**TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED**  
MARCH 10; 6:00 PM  
RANCHESTER TOWN HALL

**GOOSE CREEK WATERSHED**  
MARCH 17; 6:00 PM  
SHERIDAN YMCA MEETING ROOM

## LIVING ON THE LAND: HOW LAND-USE ACTIVITIES MAY IMPACT WATER QUALITY



Whether you live on one acre or one thousand acres, it is important to be a good steward of the land. Many streams and rivers in Sheridan County have been identified as having elevated levels of bacteria. Humans, domestic animals and wildlife are all potential contributors to bacteria concerns in local waterways. Implementing best-management practices on your property can help improve the water quality on your property and for downstream users. Maintaining healthy vegetation in riparian areas and uplands also prevents establishment of noxious and invasive weeds and grasses and improves land quality and habitat.

### RURAL RESIDENTS/LIVESTOCK OWNERS

Proper management not only improves the aesthetic quality of your property, it can also benefit water quality. Reducing runoff across overgrazed areas and other packed surfaces prevents pollutants, like sediment and bacteria, from entering waterways. Encouraging livestock, including horses, to spend time in upland areas reduces the amount of animal waste in streams.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Locate corrals, shelters, and feeding areas, even winter ones, away from streams
- Minimize access to streams with fencing and placement of water/supplements
- Maintain vegetated buffers between grazed or cropped areas and streambanks
- Provide alternative water sources in upland areas to encourage movement
- Manage riparian areas separate from uplands to encourage native plant growth

### URBAN/RURAL SUBDIVISIONS

Water quality and natural resource issues can also be impacted by residential properties. Directing runoff from bare ground or impervious surfaces, such as driveways and roads, will keep trash, oils, sediment, and pet waste out of local waterways. Proper installation, maintenance, and operation of septic systems keeps untreated sewage from entering streams.



### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Maintain vegetated buffers between mowed/burned areas and streambanks
- Allow grasses, forbs, and woody species to grow naturally in buffer areas
- Keep pollutants, such as pet waste, off the ground surface, especially near water
- Avoid feeding waterfowl and other birds/wildlife near streams
- Maintain septic systems with regular pumping; replace if necessary

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Through federal, state and other grants, the Conservation District offers assistance for projects that benefit water quality. Typical activities include: installing fencing and/or water systems, relocating corrals or feeding areas, and replacing eligible septic systems.

As with any grant program, there are certain requirements. The District currently operates under two main funding cycles, one in the spring and one in the fall. The purpose is to ensure that funding and personnel are being used for high priority projects in the most effective way possible. After the application deadline, the Board will prioritize and allocate funding. Among other things, projects will be ranked based on their potential water quality benefit and readiness to ensure timely completion.

It isn't necessary to wait until a funding cycle to begin; projects that are ready to go will rank higher than one that still requires significant planning. If you have something in mind, contact us to start the process.



# WHAT'S UP IN MY WATERSHED?



**GOOSE CREEK WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 17; 6:00 PM**



**PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 3; 6:00 PM**



**TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 10; 6:00 PM**

## WATER QUALITY SAMPLING

- Partnered with Sheridan Community Land Trust for a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member to assist with 2021 monitoring
- Monitoring was completed at 17 sites in 2021, including: 3 on Goose Creek, 4 on Big Goose Creek, 4 on Little Goose Creek, and one each on Soldier Creek, Beaver Creek, Rapid Creek, McCormick Creek, Kruse Creek, and Jackson Creek.
- Bacteria concerns existed at all but the uppermost sites on Big Goose and Little Goose during at least one sampling period.
- Water temperatures above 20°C were observed in all except the uppermost sites.

## RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 2 bank stabilization (Big Goose Middle)
- 1 seepage mitigation (Little Goose Middle)
- 1 drain conversion (Big Goose Middle)
- Installation of 12 Gutter Bins in Sheridan

## PENDING REQUESTS

- 2 septic replacements (Middle Little Goose)

## WATER QUALITY SAMPLING

- The 2020 Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Interim Monitoring Project Final Report was approved by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality in November and is available on our website (sccdwy.org).
- Bacteria concerns existed during at least one sampling period at all sites and across all sample periods at some sites.
- Sampling in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed is scheduled again in 2023
- Water temperatures above 20°C were observed in all but the uppermost site

## RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 1 water/fencing (Lower Middle Prairie Dog)

## IN-PROGRESS PROJECTS

- 1 water/fencing (Lower Prairie Dog Creek)
- 1 corral modification (Meade Creek)

## PENDING REQUESTS

- 1 fencing/water (Lower Prairie Dog Creek)
- 1 septic replacement (Meade Creek)
- 2 septic replacements (Upper Prairie Dog)

## WATER QUALITY SAMPLING

- The 2019 Tongue River Watershed Interim Monitoring Project Final Report is available on our website (sccdwy.org).
- Partnered with Sheridan Community Land Trust for a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member to assist with 2022 monitoring
- Sampling in 2022 is planned at 13 sites, including: 6 on Tongue River and one each on Prairie Dog Creek, Goose Creek, Five Wolf Creek, Five Mile Creek, Columbus Creek, Little Tongue River, and Smith Creek
- Samples will be spaced to enable early, middle, and late flow season comparisons.

## RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 1 bank stabilization (Lower Tongue)
- 1 bank/ditch stabilization (Wolf Creek)
- 3 bank stabilization (Little Tongue)
- 1 septic replacement (Tongue River)
- 2 water/fencing (Lower Tongue)

## PENDING REQUESTS

- 1 septic replacement (Middle Tongue)

**WATER QUALITY DEMONSTRATIONS:** Ag Expo, Sagebrush Outdoor Lab, Sheridan Day Program, Highland Park Field Day, and Unplugged

## Frog Creek Partner's Gutter Bins

As part of our on-going commitment to water quality, SCCD sponsored the installation of four storm drain filters (Gutter Bins) through Frog Creek Partners. On behalf of an anonymous donor through the Wyoming Community Foundation, SCCD coordinated placement of another eight. District staff contributed costs associated with coordination through Frog Creek Partners. Bin locations were selected by Frog Creek Partners based on communication with City of Sheridan Staff and ease of installation. Three are located on Big Goose Creek, near Kendrick Park, four are on Little Goose Creek along Coffeen Avenue, and one is located at Mill Park near where Big Goose Creek and Little Goose Creek come together.

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## LOOKING FORWARD



## Hume Draw Assessment

In partnership with the City of Sheridan, the District was recently awarded funding through the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to develop an improvement plan for Hume Draw and associated ponds and wetlands. The project will include an evaluation of the current condition as it relates to concerns with algae, sediment, and invasive species. The District will work with the City and other partners to secure a consultant for compiling existing data and gathering new information. Additional data may include documentation on areas of concern, pond depth and streamflow analyses, habitat assessments, water quality sampling, and other surveys. Information will be used to develop a plan that describes existing conditions and outlines proposed alternatives to serve as a basis for future discussion. The proposed alternatives will be geared towards direct improvements to the Hume Draw system and potential benefit to water quality in Goose Creek. The funding comes through the US Environmental Protection Agency under Section 205j of the Clean Water Act and is expected to be available in the fall of 2022.

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The mission of the Sheridan County Conservation District is to protect Sheridan County's land and water quality through assistance programs, information and outreach, monitoring, and planning.