

# Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Annual Newsletter

Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Group  
Sheridan County Conservation District

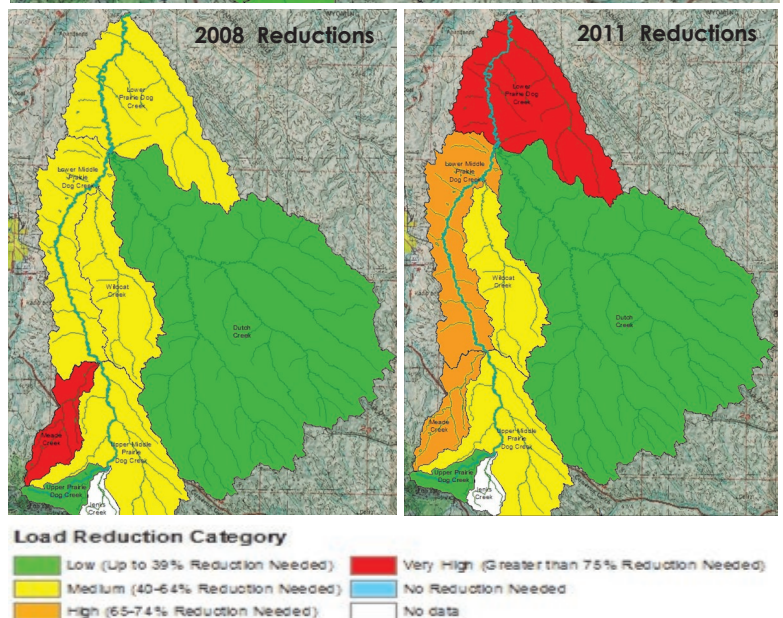
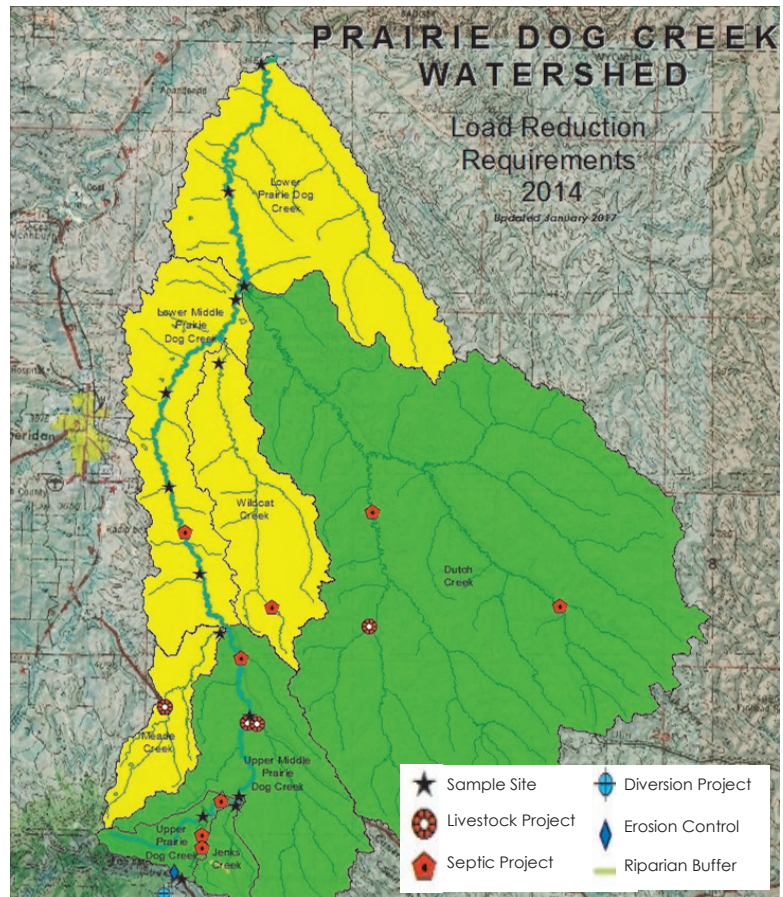
January 2017

In 2007, SCCD initiated a water quality improvement effort on the Prairie Dog Creek watershed, based on requests from local residents. Water quality monitoring occurred in 2007 and 2008 with follow-up monitoring in subsequent years. Monitoring identified levels of bacteria that exceeded Wyoming water quality standards for recreational uses. A watershed plan, developed by residents and approved in 2011, recommended continued monitoring, information and education activities, and implementation of cost-share programs for projects. The plan was updated in 2016 to incorporate new information.

The 2011 Watershed Plan used water quality monitoring information to determine the percent reductions needed for bacteria levels to meet water quality standards. Using a similar process, SCCD has incorporated data collected in subsequent monitoring years to document load reduction requirements in relation to installed improvement projects (See Maps). Reduction figures are based on the average of data collected within the monitoring season. There are 5 reduction categories, including:

- No reduction needed (meets standards);
- Low (up to 39% reduction needed);
- Medium (40-64% reduction needed);
- High (65-74% reduction needed); and
- Very High (greater than 75% reduction needed).

SCCD uses the information from multiple years to help prioritize project requests. Typically, tributary watersheds and lower subwatersheds require higher bacteria reductions than other parts of the watershed. In most cases, reduction requirements have decreased since 2008 and 2011, with all of the subwatersheds in the Low or Medium reduction categories. Continued implementation of improvement projects is necessary to support further bacteria reductions.



## New to the Area: Be Aware of Invasive Grasses

Medusahead and ventenata (North African wiregrass) are invasive annual grasses with extremely aggressive characteristics. They have recently been identified in Sheridan and Campbell counties. The University of Wyoming Extension developed a flyer to provide more information and photos of the grasses. The flyer can be found on the SCCD website at [www.sccdwy.org](http://www.sccdwy.org). If found, please report these grasses to Sheridan County Weed and Pest (752-7930) or UW Sheridan Research and Extension Center (673-2647).



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## Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Steering Committee Meeting

The annual Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Steering Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 16th, at 6:00 p.m.** at the **Prairie Dog Community Center** (702 Highway 14, East of Sheridan). The Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Steering Committee, which is comprised of landowners and interested parties, provides input and recommendations to the SCCD for implementing resource programs within the Prairie Dog Creek Watershed. The meeting is open to anyone living in or interested in the Prairie Dog Creek Watershed. Stay tuned to the District website ([www.sccdwy.org](http://www.sccdwy.org)) and Facebook page for an upcoming agenda. Please come join us on February 16th, your input is always welcome!

### WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD PROJECTS!

Through federal and state grants, the SCCD offers financial assistance for projects that benefit water quality in impaired watersheds. Typical projects include installing fencing or stockwater systems to minimize livestock access to waterbodies, relocating corrals or animal feeding areas away from waterbodies, and replacing eligible septic systems to eliminate sewage discharges. Descriptions of select projects are available on SCCD's website ([www.sccdwy.org](http://www.sccdwy.org)).

If you would like to apply for cost-share funds through one of SCCD's many water quality improvement programs, we encourage you to contact SCCD to determine if the project is eligible and to learn more about the application process. Batching deadlines for project applications are March 1st and July 1st of each year.

### *Good Work in the Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Recognized by WDEQ*

The Sheridan County Conservation District (SCCD), in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local watershed stakeholders, has facilitated active watershed improvement efforts in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed since 2007. Over the past decade, SCCD has:

- implemented a focused water quality monitoring program to address each of the impaired waterbodies
- prepared an implementation plan that addressed the nine essential elements of an EPA Watershed Based Plan
- completed numerous cost-share and on-the-ground implementation activities
- updated the implementation plan based on the results of follow-up monitoring and on-going implementation activities

Upon review of this body of work, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) recognized that not only has the SCCD begun to improve water quality in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed, but SCCD has also completed a number of the elements of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), as required under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

WDEQ plans to take advantage of the work already completed by the SCCD and their partners to meet their Clean Water Act obligation to complete TMDLs for the bacteria-impaired waters in the Prairie Dog Creek watershed. WDEQ plans to work closely with the SCCD and their partners to accomplish this task. As there is no inherent regulatory authority provided through the TMDL program, completion of these TMDLs will not, in any way, alter the SCCD's on-going program of voluntary implementation of watershed activities in the watershed.

WDEQ will be in attendance at our February 16, 2017 meeting to provide a brief presentation and answer any questions.