

2023 ANNUAL COMBINED WATERSHED NEWSLETTER

Tongue River, Prairie Dog Creek, and Goose Creek Watersheds



2023 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 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 unable to attend this year, or just have questions or want more information, please reach out.

MEETING SCHEDULE

TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED

MARCH 2; 6:00 PM
RANCHESTER TOWN HALL

PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED

MARCH 9; 6:00 PM
PRAIRIE DOG COMMUNITY CENTER

GOOSE CREEK WATERSHED

MARCH 16; 6:00 PM
SHERIDAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

WATERSHED FRIENDLY ICE REMOVAL

Winter has already brought large amounts of snow and ice across North America this year. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has issued a Winter forecast for the 2022-23 Season, with predictions of colder, wetter conditions for much of the Northern Rocky Mountain Region. As Wyomingites, we are well accustomed to brushing off our cars and shoveling our driveways, but did you know that the approaches we use for ice removal can play a major role in the health of our watersheds?

Any precipitation event (rain, snow, hail) can carry pollutants from streets, sidewalks, and other non-permeable surfaces through storm drains and into our watershed. However, melting snow and ice can be especially harmful, as the Spring melt has the potential to take the cumulative amount of pollutants gathered during Winter, and deliver them en masse into nearby waterbodies.

Commonly referred to as "de-icing salt" or "sidewalk salt", each manufacturer uses a different chemical compound or blend of compounds in their product. Here are four common substances found in de-icing salt, and their effect on watershed health:

Rock salt (sodium chloride)

is the most commonly used but contains cyanide, as an anti-caking agent that can be toxic to underwater life, and is the most harmful for plants.

Calcium Chloride

does not contain cyanide, however, it can also harm plants. Calcium chloride costs about three times more than rock salt, but you can use about one-third as much.

Magnesium Chloride

considered the least toxic deicing salt because it contains less chloride than either rock salt or calcium chloride, making it safer for plants and animals.

Calcium Magnesium Acetate

considered the best overall choice for safely melting ice. It is less toxic than deicers containing chloride, but can cost considerably more than rock salt.



Application Best Practices

- Fertilizer and de-icers containing urea are not recommended for use. Fertilizers introduce large amounts of nitrogen, leading to toxic algal blooms.
- Spread deicer before snow and ice start to accumulate. If a forecast calls for rain, do not apply deicer, as it will be washed directly into storm drains.
- Remove as much snow and ice as possible before applying deicer.
- Follow the label directions. If only a handful of rock salt per square yard is needed, using more isn't more effective, just more expensive.
- Using sand can improve traction on slippery areas.
- If you can anticipate the forecast, cover small areas (such as your steps) with heavy, waterproof plastic, a tarp, piece of plywood, or another cover.

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.



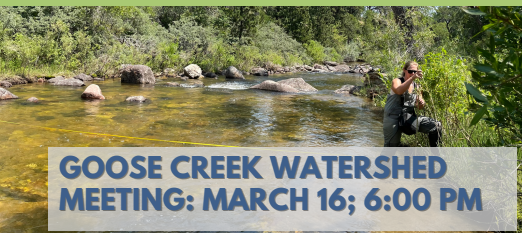


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Permit No. 21

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.

Sheridan County Conservation District
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WHAT'S UP IN MY WATERSHED?



GOOSE CREEK WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 16; 6:00 PM

- The 2021 Goose Creek Watershed Interim Monitoring Project Final Report was submitted to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality for review.
- Bacteria samples were recorded in exceedance of the standard during at least one sampling period at all but the uppermost canyon sites on Big Goose and Little Goose Creek.
- Water temperatures above 20°C were observed in all except the uppermost sites.
- The USDA National Water Quality Initiative Readiness Phase Report for the Upper Big Goose Creek Watershed has been submitted. Once approved, USDA EQIP program dollars will be earmarked to install eligible practices in the project area.

RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 1 irrigation improvement (Gillespie Ditch)

PENDING REQUESTS

- 1 septic replacement (Big Goose Creek)



PRAIRIE DOG CREEK WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 9; 6:00 PM

- The 2020 Prairie Dog Creek Watershed Interim Monitoring Project Final Report was approved by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality in May and is available on our website (sccdwy.org).
- Bacteria concerns were present during at least one sampling period at all sites and across all sample periods at some sites.
- Sampling in 2023 is planned at five mainstem sites and three tributary sites, including Wild Cat Creek, Meade Creek, and Jenks Creek.

RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 1 stockwater (Lower Prairie Dog Creek)
- 1 corral modification (Meade Creek)
- 2 septic replacements (Prairie Dog Ditch, Meade Creek)

IN-PROGRESS PROJECTS

- 1 stockwater/fencing (Lower Prairie Dog Crk)

PENDING REQUESTS

- 1 septic replacement (Dutch Creek)



TONGUE RIVER WATERSHED MEETING: MARCH 2; 6:00 PM

- Partnered with the Sheridan Community Land Trust for a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member to assist with 2022 monitoring.
- Sampling in 2022 was completed at 13 sites, including six mainstem sites on the Tongue River, and one each on Prairie Dog Creek, Goose Creek, Wolf Creek, Fivemile Creek, Little Tongue River, and Smith Creek.
- Demonstrated macroinvertebrate collection and habitat assessments for Sheridan College Survey of Natural Resources Management class.
- The 2022 Tongue River Watershed Interim Monitoring Project Final Report is in progress. Preliminary results will be reviewed at the watershed meeting.

RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- 1 septic replacement (Tongue River)

PENDING REQUESTS

- 1 septic replacement (Tongue River)

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