# 2023 ANNUAL COMBINED WATERSHED NEWSLETTER

Tongue River, Prairie Dog Creek, and Goose Creek Watersheds

SHERIDAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## 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.

# 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

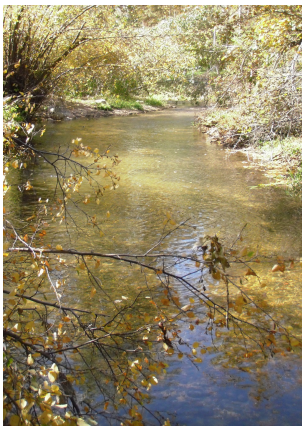
- Partnered with the Sheridan Community Land Trust for a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member to assist with 2022 monitoring.
- Sampling in 2022 was completed at 13 sites, including six mainstem sites on the Tongue River, and one each on Prairie Dog Creek, Goose Creek, Wolf Creek, Fivemile Creek, Little Tongue 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 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, & Unplugged

## City of Sheridan Goose Creek Restoration



The City of Sheridan 1135 Project consists of ecosystem restoration along Big Goose Creek, Little Goose Creek, and Goose Creek in Sheridan, WY. Ecosystem restoration construction activities that have been completed are the addition of structures such as rock riffles, j-hook structures, rock revetments, and boulder clusters. The structural enhancements will provide habitat and shelter for fish and other aquatic organisms. The riparian improvements at Thorne-Rider Park, Sheltered Acres Park, and Washington Park included excavation, replacement of topsoil, plantings and adding a new drainage structure. These improvements are part of the wetlands and floodplain habitat restoration to increase connectivity of upstream and downstream reaches. Planting of wetlands vegetation for these areas will take place in the spring. In-stream improvements currently underway in Mill Park include adding grouted drop structures to reduce the existing gradient across the entire length of the structure. This improvement will open a migratory pathway connection for fish. Work is expected to be completed by mid-summer. The General Investigation Study for the concrete channel going through downtown kicked off with a public meeting in January. Information gathered will be used to help evaluate potential improvement options for the creek in this area with consideration given to flood risk management and restoring nationally significant fish and wildlife habitats within and along Little Goose Creek.

### 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. A public meeting is anticipated in late February, followed by a selection process to secure a consultant for compiling existing data and gathering new information. The intent is to have a team in place by early May so that any field evaluations can be completed this season. 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.

*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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