

The Pipelining

South Platte Natural Resources District
Newsletter

Fall 2009
 Volume 15, Number 4

SPNRD Accepting Pooling Applications

The deadline to turn in a pooling application to the SPNRD is January 30, 2010.

Pooling arrangements were created to help producers better manage the water they use on all their certified irrigated tracts rather than just on a per-tract basis. A pooling arrangement allows a producer who owns or operates multiple tracts to tie those tracts together and spread the allocation over all the acres.

The total water allowed will still follow current allocations. A pooling arrangement does not mean the pooled tracts will have a greater allocation than what is set for the subarea.

Requirements to apply for a pooling arrangement include: Each potential pooled tract must have used 60% of the allocation (example: In a 16" per acre per year allocation or

See **POOLING** page 2

Top Stewards Recognized For Efforts

Each year staff members from the South Platte NRD, Natural Resources Conservation Service and UNL Extension gather to nominate people within the District who excel in the areas of caring for natural resources and also sharing with others the information they've gleaned as stewards.

The nominations are forwarded to the SPNRD Board of Directors for approval, and those chosen are honored each fall at the SPNRD/NRCS Conservation Awards Banquet.

The practice began in the 1950s, when the Soil & Water Conservation Service honored top conservation farm operators in each county. After Natural Resources Districts were formed, they took over the program.

In 1995, the District awards were expanded, and those who excelled in planting and caring for trees, managers of grassland, and educators strong in environmental teaching could also be nominated. In addition, the Nebraska Association of

Resources Districts also awards resources excellence on a state-wide basis, as does the Omaha World Herald.

2009 Conservation Farm

The award is based on an operation's total farm plan which incorporates conservation and best management practices.

This year, Beyer Farms of Sidney is the award recipient. The family's farming success spreads over generations, and the family has long been on the cutting edge when it comes to caring for the land.



Beyer Farms
 2009 Conservation Farm Award

The late James Beyer was one of the first area farmers to accept and implement conservation tillage practices, and was recognized for his use of terraces in the 1960s. His son Vern, who now heads the family operation, says part of his father's philosophy was not just to maintain the land, but to improve it so it was better than before.

Family members involved in today's op-
 See **TOP STEWARDS** page 7

Mountain Pine Beetle Appears In District Ponderosa Pines

Tree owners and specialists alike were surprised late this summer by the appearance of yet another threat to area trees when evidence of the Mountain Pine Beetle began to show in a number of places.



Photo: Colorado State Forest Service

The Mountain Pine Beetle was known to be in the southern Panhandle this spring when Ponderosa Pines in Banner County showed damage. At that time, tree specialists hoped the beetles, which thrive in densely populated forests, might slow their spread.

Mountain Pine Beetles have devastated forests across the West, where more than four million acres are estimated to have been infested in Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Washington. In the South Platte NRD the effects won't be as visually dramatic as in forested areas, but could still be hard-hitting.

"We're seeing them particularly in older Scotch Pines in a number of landscapes," says Galen Wittrock, SPNRD assistant manager and tree specialist. So far, Wittrock says most of the beetle evidence has been in the Kimball and

See **PINE BEETLE** page 6

Tree Problems Highlight Importance Of Diversity

Recent problems affecting a number of tree species have highlighted the need for landowners to follow sound planning practices, no matter what their needs.

"We encourage people to plant a variety of trees, especially in large plantings," says Galen Wittrock, SPNRD assistant manager, who also runs the District's tree programs. "When a single species or type of tree (for instance, only ponderosa pine) is used and a threat comes along, it can affect the entire planting."

See **DIVERSITY** page 2

Differing Methods Used For Reduction Of Depletions

The South Platte NRD is continuing to work on solutions that could allow the District to reduce depletions to the Platte River and local ground water systems.

The reductions are necessary steps the District must take to protect the future of the area's ground water resources, and also to bring it into compliance with state law and agreements designed to protect wildlife habitat and endangered species.

Under the Nebraska Ground Water Management Protection Act, the state's natural resources districts with areas designated as fully- or overappropriated are required to work with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) to develop integrated management plans to manage the state's ground water and surface water resources.

All of the South Platte NRD was designated as either fully- or overappropriated in 2004. Part of the requirements under LB962 is that the District's overappropriated areas, which include the South Platte River Basin including Lodgepole Creek and Sidney Draw, must be returned to fully appropriated status. One step in accomplishing that, is the District must reduce water use to the same levels as in 1997.

Early work gave the District a big jump on reducing depletions and meeting long-term requirements. While finalizing the District's Integrated Management Plan

Diversity Important Part Of Tree Plans Continued from Page 1

Wittrock says one good example is that in one local setting, a Scotch Pine infected by Mountain Pine Beetles stands next to a blue spruce, which is not susceptible.

"Proper planning can't stop all problems, but when one turns up, such planning can help make the overall affect less dramatic," Wittrock says.

Wittrock and other experienced spe-

Pooling An Irrigation Management Tool Continued from Page 1

48"/acre over the allocation period, each tract must have pumped 28.8"/acre, for an 18/54" allocation the 60% is 32.4"/acre.); all pooled tracts must be within the same county and within the same subarea and must have gone through a complete allocation period.

A variance can be requested if you are

with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, estimates show that at this point the District's water use results in overall accretions (inflows to the stream).

Even so, those estimates show that in a number of years the accretions will be depletions if nothing further is done.

In order to further reduce depletions and meet requirements, the District, along with other NRDs, state and federal agencies, have developed a number of programs that can further reduce depletive effects. To accomplish this, funds through the SPNRD and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) have been used to retire irrigated uses.

Through the programs, irrigated uses are retired in a number of different ways. Program funding allows land owners to change the land use while at the same time maintaining some form of profitability. Uses may change to dryland crops, grassland or wildlife uses.

A number of factors decide qualifications for program eligibility. Among those are crop history, intended future use, and proximity to the stream and the changes' affects on projected stream depletions.

Producers in close proximity to Lodgepole Creek and the South Platte River may have an additional option in their efforts through the Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project (PBHEP), funded

cialists can help plans that can help ensure that proper trees are used effectively, while maintaining as much diversity as possible to lower the possibility of serious problem.

To get information on tree diversification or to develop a plan, contact Wittrock, NRCS, UNL Extension, the Nebraska Forest Service or a certified arborist.

interested in pooling but do not meet the mentioned rules.

To find out more about pooling arrangements, eligibility or to file an arrangement contact Kyle at 308-254-2377 or kliebig@spnrd.org. Applications and more information can be found at www.spnrd.org.

by Platte Basin NRDs, The Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Games and Parks Commission, and NDNR.

PBHEP is based upon the state's involvement in the Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program (PRRIP), developed by agreements with Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming and the U.S. Department of Interior, which is designed to develop a recovery program for endangered species in a critical habitat area on the North Platte River. PBHEP's goals are to reduce depletions to the Platte River and enhance stream flows needed by threatened or endangered species.

PBHEP will also provide funds to allow landowners added stability as they change irrigated cropland to other uses. It is intended to be used in conjunction with other District, state and federal programs.

To learn more about the programs, contact the South Platte NRD or go to the District Website.

SOUTH PLATTE



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 For the latest NRD news and program updates, visit our Website at www.spnrd.org

Additional Funding Provides Buffer Strip Option

Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land maintained in permanent vegetation. The buffers can be used in a systems approach to manage soil, water, nutrients, and pesticides for sustainable agricultural production, while minimizing environmental impact.

The Nebraska Buffer Strip Program was implemented in January 1999 through fees assessed on registered pesticides. Cropland adjacent to perennial and seasonal streams, ponds, and wetlands can be enrolled in buffer strips, which are designed to filter agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.

This year, Nebraska received additional funding for its buffer strip program and funds remain available on a first come, first served basis.

Two kinds of buffer strips are eligible - filter strips, which are narrow strips of grass; and riparian forest buffer strips containing trees and grass. The minimum widths are 20 and 55 feet, respectively;

the maximum widths are 120 and 180 feet, respectively.

The program is designed to be used in conjunction with the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), or other programs, however it can be used by itself, as well. Rental rates are calculated as follows:

- For irrigated cropland where CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs are also used, rental rates are \$250 per acre minus payments from the other programs.

- For irrigated cropland where CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs are not used, the rental rate is \$225 per acre minus any other program

payments.

- For non-irrigated cropland enrolled in CRP, CREP or other governmentally-funded programs, the rental rate is equal to 20% of the average CRP soil rental rate.

- For non-irrigated cropland without CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs, the rental rate per acre is equal to 120% of the average CRP soil rental rate plus \$5 per acre, minus the payment from any other programs.

- In no case may payments from all programs exceed \$250 per acre.

To obtain more information on the Buffer Strip Program or begin the application process, contact the South Platte NRD or your NRCS office.



Board of Directors Approves Revamped Flow Meter Maintenance Plan

By Kyle Liebig
Water Resources Coordinator

At the September Board of Directors Meeting, the Board voted unanimously to approve a new Flow Meter Maintenance Plan that includes not only cost-share assistance for regular maintenance, but also assistance on flow meter repairs and flow meter replacements.

The previous maintenance plan was put into place in 2007 and required all flow meters to be properly maintained once every three year period by a SPNRD certified



contractor. Flow meter owners qualified for a \$30.00 cost-share payment if all requirements were met.

The new plan still requires all flow meters to be properly maintained once every three years, but now the SPNRD

can help defray the costs of expensive repairs. In extreme cases, assistance for a new flow meter purchase is available through the replacement program.

Maintenance and repairs will still be based on a three year period, with no single flow meter receiving more than \$150.00 every three years for a combination of maintenance and/or repairs. The maintenance cost-share amount is still set at \$30.00 and the replacement cost-share is set at 50% of the cost, up to \$300.00.

The replacement portion of the program is aimed at producers who have had difficulty keeping flow meters operational over the last several years. To qualify for flow meter replacement cost-share, the flow meter will have to meet certain requirements

such as: the existing flow meter can no longer be covered under the manufacturer's warranty; has become inoperable twice in the previous three years and/or the repairs are equal to or greater than 50% of the cost of a new flow meter; and the replacement meter must be replaced with an SPNRD board-approved mechanical flow meter.

Replacement flow meter cost-share will be available to all meters meeting the requirements, with no one meter location receiving replacement cost-share more than once every ten years. The replacement cost-share amounts will be based on a maximum amount of 50% of the county average of \$1,335.42, based on NRCS guidelines. Figures are reviewed annually and replacement cost-share amounts follow those guidelines.

To find out more about the program please visit www.spnrd.org, or call the office at 308-254-2377.

South Platte NRD personnel will be taking flow meter readings within the District through the end of the year. Once your meter has been read this year, there will be a yellow zip tie marker at the meter.

SPNRD Board Lowers Budget And Tax Request

At its September meeting, the South Platte Natural Resources District board of directors approved its fiscal year 2010 budget, lowering the District's property tax request slightly from last year.

"We were able to leverage our budget dollars and lower tax demands with wise use of a number of grants, as well as responsible use of our funding," SPNRD General Manager Rod Horn told the board while reviewing the District's budget numbers.

For fiscal year 2010, the SPNRD tax request is \$820,356.00. That results in a 7.16 percent lower tax levy across the District's coverage area of Kimball, Deuel and Cheyenne Counties. The NRD levy is .050485 per \$100.00 actual valuation, meaning the owner of a house valued for tax purposes at \$100,000.00 would pay \$50.49, or less than a dollar per week, for the NRD's annual tax request.

The District's \$2,530,153.00 overall budget is three percent lower than a year ago as well. Despite those drops, the percentage of funding for projects and programs that directly benefit constituents rises to 59.2 percent for FY2010. Some examples of those include tree programs, ground water management projects and programs, and educational programs.

Personnel costs are second among SPNRD spending requirements, using 23.44 percent of the budget, followed

by general administration costs (6.93%), necessary cash reserve (5.19%), capital outlay expenditures (2.78%), Clean Harbors Citizen's Monitoring (CMC) Committee (1.87%), and debt service

expenditures (0.57%), hazardous waste each year. Much of the CMC budget is for consulting services by MILCO Environmental Service, Inc., which assists the committee in monitoring the facility.

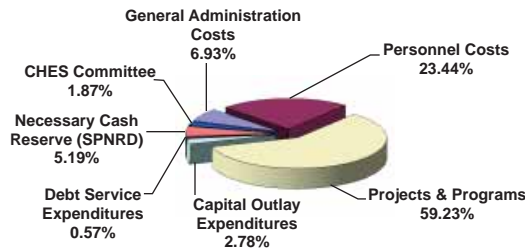
Board members also put their stamp of approval on additional grant applications that would be used to help fund future District projects and programs.

The first would install additional monitoring wells and perform related geophysical surveys within the District to gather information on aquifers in areas where additional data is needed. The added monitoring wells and water level and quality information gained would provide invaluable insight for future ground water management needs in protecting ground water resources.

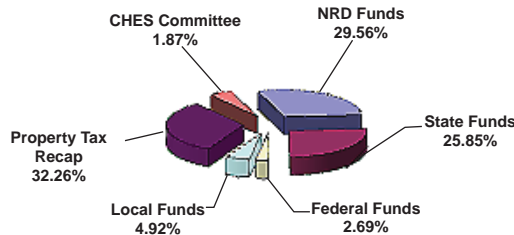
Another application, sought in cooperation with the North Platte and Upper Niobrara White NRDs, is aimed at keeping Panhandle CRP grassland conservation values intact. The project's intent is to maintain the benefits of CRP grassland by working with producers to maintain expiring (or are set to expire in the future) CRP acres in grass. The goals would be implemented through a number of cost-share opportunities making it easier for landowners to keep the grassland productive.

See BUDGET page 6

FY2009-2010: TOTAL BUDGET OF REQUIREMENTS



FY2009-2010: REVENUES BUDGETED



expenditures (0.57%).

The CMC Committee's \$119,989.00 budget is developed separately from the SPNRD budget, but they are included together in the state's budget formula. The CMC Committee is a group of local residents who monitor the environmental impact of the Clean Harbors Environmental Services Inc., an incinerator operation five miles south of Kimball, which disposes of about 45,000 tons of

No-Till Winter Conference Set For December At Gering Civic Center

The South Platte NRD is working with other agencies in the Panhandle No-Till Partnership to host the No-Till Winter Conference in Gering.

This year's event is slated for Dec. 1-2, 2009 at the Gering Civic Center. The conference will include expert no-till speakers, demonstrations, and exhibits.

Session topics will include No-till: More than Just Avoiding Tillage, No-till and Irrigation Water Savings, Forage Cocktails in the Panhandle, Value of Residue, CRP to No-till, No-till and Insurance, the Carbon Cycle, Enhancing Forage-Based Livestock Operation, and No-till and Grazers. A producers'



panel discussion will allow you to ask knowledgeable no-till producers about their experiences with no-till farming practices.

The two-day conference includes lunch, catered breaks, and an evening social with informal discussion. Registration is \$75, and must be made by November 20.

Booth space and sponsorship are still available. Booths are available for \$250, which includes free advertising and one free pass for the exhibitor to the two-day conference.

Advertising is also available in the conference brochure that will be given to all conference participants.

More information about booth space, sponsorship, schedule, speakers and registration is available by contacting the Panhandle RC&D, 1517 Broadway Suite 101 in Scottsbluff, NE (308) 632-1311, or going to www.panhandlerrcd.com.

The Skills Of Tomorrow's Stewards

Natural Resources Districts, NRCS, UNL Extension Host Resources Competitions

CHAPPELL – Creek Valley High School took grand champion team honors at the Area 1 Range Judging Contest held here September 15, 2009. In capturing the regional crown, Creek Valley's senior division team was led by Individual Grand Champion Nels Anderson.



Area 1 Range Judging Senior Grand Champion team members from Creek Valley High School are from left, Nels Anderson, Ashley Schievelbein, Cody Meyer and Aaron Ward. Three of the team members, Meyer, Ward and Schievelbein, have gone to the Nebraska Youth Range Camp using the SPNRD scholarship program.

Three of Creek Valley's senior team members won ribbons on the way to the championship, with Ashley Schievelbein following Anderson by taking third place, and Cody Meyer finished seventh.

In the Junior Division, Scottsbluff I was the purple ribbon team winner, with member Teyvyn Baldwin earning the individual purple.

About 52 percent of Nebraska's land is in grasslands (comprising either range or pasture), more than any other land category. The range judging contest allows students to

test their knowledge of plants, resources management and other skills in the field. The contest was sponsored by the South Platte NRD, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Deuel County Cooperative Extension, and the NE Section of the Society for Range Management.

Ribbon Winners from the South Platte NRD

Senior Team Ribbon Winners: Grand Champion, Purple Ribbon, Creek Valley (Nels Anderson, Ashley Schievelbein, Cody Meyer and Aaron Ward); Red Ribbon, Kimball (Lawrence Burns, Krystal Wilke, Katherine Ganskow and Cody Simms).

Junior Team Ribbon Winners: Blue Ribbon, Kimball (Preston Lukassen, Colton Snyder and Andrew Barrett); White Ribbon, Creek Valley (Forrest Hendrickson, Shelby Selby, Luke Cavalli and Clarice Ford).

Senior Individual Ribbon Winners: Grand Champion, Purple Ribbon, Nels Anderson, Creek Valley; Red Ribbon, Ashley Schievelbein, Creek Valley; White Ribbon, Lawrence Burns, Kimball; Green Ribbons: Krystal Wilke, Kimball; and Cody Meyer, Creek Valley.

Junior Individual Ribbon Winners: Red Ribbon, Preston Lukassen, Kimball; Green Ribbons: Colton Snyder, Kimball; and Forrest Hendrickson, Creek Valley.

West Region Land Judging

Scottsbluff High School took top honors in the 2009 Western Region Land Judging contest held Oct. 7 in Scotts Bluff County.

Land Judging is a high school competition that challenges students to gain a better understanding of soil structure and land evaluation. Land judging enables each participant to learn how to recognize the physical features of the soil, determine land capability for crop production, and evaluate management practices needed for proper stewardship.

Fourteen teams from Scottsbluff, Bayard, Alliance, and Kimball with 54 individuals competed in this year's contest. Kimball's Login Modlin was the best individual place winner from the SPNRD, finishing with a blue ribbon.

The North Platte Natural Resources District hosted this year's contest in cooperation with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service of Scottsbluff, Bridgeport and Oshkosh.

The judging site, located on pasture and dryland crop ground in southwestern Scotts Bluff County and managed by Platte River Basin Environments, Inc., challenged students to identify surface texture, permeability, slope, and determine what would be the best land practice for each of the four soil profile pits.



More than 80 students from western Nebraska spread across the landscape east of Chappell to test their skills at identifying range plants and conditions. The event was one of two fall contests held in the region for students learning about resources management.

Pine Beetle *Studying The Affects Within The Southern Panhandle* Continued from Page 1

Potter areas. Wittrock feels that while the District doesn't have the dense forests that help the beetle's movement, high winds may have been another ally in our area.

Like other tree problems seen in the last couple of years, experts say the Mountain Pine Beetle's success throughout the west is linked to unusual weather changes and events.

"The Mountain Pine Beetle is an opportunist," says Doak Nickerson with the Nebraska Forest Service. "It follows on the heels of drought."

Mountain Pine Beetles develop in pines, particularly ponderosa, lodgepole, Scotch and limber pine. During early stages of an outbreak, attacks are limited largely to trees under stress from injury, poor site conditions, fire damage, overcrowding, root disease or old age.

Mountain Pine Beetle normally has a one-year life cycle. A key part of this cycle is the ability of Mountain Pine Beetle (and other bark beetles) to transmit bluestain fungi. Spores of these fungi contaminate the bodies of adult beetles and are introduced into the tree during attack. Fungi grow within the tree and assist the beetle in killing the tree.

Natural controls of Mountain Pine

Beetle include woodpeckers and insects such as clerid beetles that feed on adults and larvae under the bark. However, during outbreaks these natural controls often fail to prevent additional attacks.

Extreme cold temperatures also can reduce Mountain Pine Beetle populations.

For winter mortality to be a significant factor, a severe freeze is necessary while the insect is in its most vulnerable stage; i.e., in the fall before the larvae have metabolized glycerols, or in late spring when the insect is molting into the pupal stage. For freezing temperatures to affect a large number of larvae during the middle of winter, temperatures of at least 30 degrees below zero (Fahrenheit) must be sustained for at least five days.

Although much is generally known about the Mountain Pine Beetle, some of that information has been contradicted in Panhandle observations. Foresters, entomologists, and tree specialists have seen an apparent change in the beetle's life cycle.

At a workshop in the Wildcat Hills, the specialists were surprised to find that the beetles had gone through an estimated one and one-half year life cycle. Those attending also saw evidence that many of

the trees may be successfully fighting the attacks, where it had been originally believed their mortality rate was higher.

"The entomologists from Colorado were surprised," says Wittrock of the information gathered at the site. "In some ways we now have more questions than we had before."

Two main questions are on most people's minds as they look toward the future health of susceptible pine species. First, is there is hope for infected trees. Second, if there is a successful way of preventing the beetle's spread.

"At first, we thought all the infected trees would be lost," Wittrock says. "We're still not sure, but it looks like there is at least hope that some could possibly survive. We really don't know right now, we'll have to wait and see."

In the meantime, owners of susceptible trees may have a chance at preventing attacks. Trees can be sprayed with a mixture of chemicals

registered for such use. Wittrock says the preventative spray is generally effective for one season, discouraging Mountain Pine Beetles from attacks. Such preven-



Pitch tubes

tative sprays would need to be undertaken each year.

For more information on options available, contact Wittrock at the South Platte NRD.

This report includes information from the Colorado State Forest Service, Nebraska Forest Service and U.S. Forest Service.



Evidence of a pine beetle attack include popcorn-shaped masses of resin, called "pitch tubes," on the trunk where beetle tunneling begins. Pitch tubes may be brown, pink or white.

Budget *Uses Grant Funds To Maximize Program Opportunities* Continued from Page 4

The final grant application, if approved, would allow for aerial geophysical surveys of water formations in the South Platte, North Platte and Twin Platte NRDs. The information gained would increase the knowledge of ground water throughout the region and be used to update hydrogeologic data the NRDs depend upon for ground water management and protection.

Information gained through the projects and programs financed by the grants assists SPNRD board members as they consider management options through the Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations and Integrated Management Plans on both the District and Basin-wide levels. In September, the newly approved Basin-Wide management plan went

into effect, as did related changes to the overappropriated section in the District IMP. Changes to the Districtwide rules also went into effect on September 14.

Further information on the District's budget, projects and programs can be obtained by contacting the SPNRD office at 551 Parkland Dr. in Sidney, calling 308-254-2377 or going to the District Website at www.spnrd.org.

eration include James' widow Freda, and several of their children and spouses. They include Vern and Kathy Beyer, Joe and Tamara Beyer, Nancy Beyer, Mary Beyer, and Mike and Melinda Beyer.

Beyer Farms' current operation includes irrigated and dryland crop ground, as well as range land for cattle grazing. Crops include corn, millet, wheat and alfalfa.

One of the factors leading to their nomination for the Conservation Farm Award is their leadership in no-till farming practices.

Like many other no-till practitioners, the Beyers' no-till beginning came as a cautious experiment. It began when the family noticed less spring weed pressure on ground that had been sprayed the previous fall. As they expanded the practice, they also noticed a great time savings.

After attending no-till conferences, Mike urged family members to consider the benefits of no-till. They agreed to try, but like others they found making the switch wasn't always easy.

"About three to five years into no-till you wonder what you're doing (by taking on the practice)," says Mike. "You get itchy about the feeling you've got to hook on to a piece of iron.

"It's tough to make the jump," he says. "But we got to a point where we said we're going to do it or get out."

Mike says after the seventh year, things began to look better, "and now we know what we're doing is right."

Evidence of that comes in a number of forms. The most visible is that wind erosion is no longer a concern. Water erosion has also disappeared except in the most extreme circumstances. Mike also says the soil's condition has improved with greater amounts of humus, and standing water is not a concern.

In irrigation practices, they have utilized the EQIP program to convert a number of center pivots from high pressure systems to low pressure systems, and all of their center pivots have drop heads.

During the drought of the early 90s, the family also took advantage of EQIP funding to convert some of their irrigated crop

land to dryland. Today, they irrigate about a third of what they had previously, and are very careful with water and nutrient management. They monitor the soil's water profile, and nutrient testing is routine.

On rangeland, the Beyers use rotational grazing, always mindful to move cattle between pastures without overgrazing. To help with that, they are currently in the process of piping water to different pastures.

By placing water in strategic places, they can avoid having cattle cross range already grazed, further reducing the pressure on that ground.

2009 Tree Planter/Caretaker

If you ask Barney Steger about making a conservation tree planting, the first piece of advice he'll give you is "you really don't want to start at the beginning of a drought."

Barney planted and maintains a windbreak around the family farmstead north of Chappell, but his true dedication and tenacity shines through on three extensive Continuous Conservation Reserve projects. Five rows were planted in blocks almost 2.5 miles long. Trees and shrubs totaling 8,275 were originally planted in the project area, which now protects crop land and provides abundant shelter for wildlife.

The projects are impressive enough, but he makes his mark as a caretaker willing to go above and beyond normal effort.

In the first few years following the planting, the project was hampered by wet heavy snow that laid trees over, loss from drought, and a bad batch of trees. Additionally, an intense wind one year resulted in hundreds of trees being buried by eroded soil.

Entering such a project, most people realize such factors can have an effect, although maybe not on the scale Barney saw. By the fifth year following the original planting, Steger had put in more replacement trees (by hand) than the number in the original planting.

By the time the project was well on its way, Barney had transported 17,168 trees to his property for planting.

"I think I had every neighbor kid within

30 miles planting trees at some time," says Steger, who speaks matter-of-factly about maintaining the projects' integrity.

"Trees are like a good fence," he says, "once in a while you have to repair them."

2009 Environmental Educator

Entering Jane Ahlschwede's classroom in Gurley early in the school year, it's immediately evident that environment is a major theme.

Posters displaying information about and materials from several of the world's biomes are hung on the walls, made by students as part of their assignments. Those posters are the most visible part of what the 2009 Environmental Educator does with students as she works with them.



Jane Ahlschwede

"My overall desire is to install an enthusiasm in my students for the things around them," says Jane. "I want them to get excited."

In each part of her lesson plan, Jane strives to present students with pertinent information and facts, and also how that information can be used in their day to day lives. Examples include how a drippy faucet can easily be overlooked, yet when students add up the total amount of water used, how quickly those small drips represent a lot of water.

When students begin learning about soil, Jane works with NRCS' specialists, who help with the units and show the young people what it means from a practical stand point. They learn soil types, about soil fertility and conservation.

In all those lessons, be it soil, water or other units, students learn practical ways to wisely use and conserve the resources around them.

And that's not just a lesson for the students. Jane has led by example as a big part of the school's recycling program. Among the things she works within that program is re-use of non-sensitive paper. By using such paper for scratch paper throughout the school, they have cut down on the overall amount used.

"Everything we do affects our natural resources," says Jane, who helps her students learn to be the best stewards possible.



This vibrant conservation planting is evidence of dedication by 2009 Tree Planter/Caretaker Barney Steger

The Pipeline

South Platte Natural Resources District

Newsletter

South Platte Natural Resources District
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Mountain Pine Beetles develop in pines, particularly ponderosa, lodgepole, Scotch and limber pine.

One good thing is that, like in the Potter Park, a Blue Spruce (right) can be next to a Scotch Pine attacked by beetles and not be affected.

Look inside to find out more about the Mountain Pine Beetle's arrival in the area, possible preventions for your trees, and how diversity in tree planting can help avoid devastation from various tree problems.

Visit the Website at

www.spnrd.org

Or contact our staff for help with your natural resources management needs.

