



Hot Springs Conservation District

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Thermopolis, Wyoming
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**Land Use and Natural
Resource Long Range
Management Plan**

2022-2026

Board of Supervisors

James Andreen, Chairman
James Wilson, Vice Chairman
Thomas Moore, Treasurer
Kevin Dickey, Secretary
Chip Axtell, Supervisor

History and Introduction

The Hot Springs Conservation District (HSCD) was formed in the fall of 1946 to assist and represent the citizens of Hot Springs County. The HSCD, by statutory authority, has assumed the responsibility of leading information and education programs and providing technical and financial assistance to the constituents of Hot Springs County to conserve our natural resources and to protect the quality of life of our citizens.

The HSCD serves as a liaison between local landowners, resource users and state and federal government agencies to address natural resource issues and water quality concerns. The District is responsible for providing the leadership and establishing programs to meet the needs for the conservation of natural resources.

A Conservation District is responsible for providing leadership for the conservation of natural resources within its boundaries. District Supervisors are charged with setting workload priorities, establishing annual plans, annual reports, budgets and the long-range planning to meet the natural resource needs of the District.

Hot Springs County is a small, rural county situated in north central Wyoming's Big Horn Basin with a surface area of about 2,022 square miles. Topography varies from high, rugged mountainous terrain of the Absaroka Range, Owl Creek and Bridger Mountains occupying the western and southern portions of the County to rolling plains and alluvial valleys in the northern portion. The Big Horn River runs through the County encompassing major watersheds including Red Creek, Buffalo Creek, Owl Creek, Grass Creek, Cottonwood Creek, Gooseberry Creek and Kirby Creek.

Most of the County is comprised of rangeland, with a smaller portion of irrigated lands for crops, hay, and livestock grazing. As with many rural Wyoming areas growth of smaller acreages and subdivisions are becoming more prevalent.

Mission Statement

To develop and implement programs to protect and conserve soil, water, prime and unique farmland, rangeland, woodland, wildlife, energy and other renewable resources.

Help stabilize the local economy and resolve conflicts in land use. Provide leadership for the conservation of Hot Springs County soil and water, protect the agriculture resource base, promote wise use of water and all other natural resources, preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect the tax base and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of this State and Hot Springs County through "a responsible conservation ethic."

Legislative Authority

Wyoming Conservation District Law, Title 11, Chapter 16

11-16-103. Legislative declarations and policy.

(a) It is hereby declared that the farm and grazing lands of Wyoming are among the basic assets of the state; that improper land use practices cause and contribute to serious erosion of these lands by wind and water; that among the consequences which would result from such conditions are the deterioration of soil and its fertility and the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams and ditches; that to conserve soil, and soil and water resources, and prevent and control soil erosion, it is necessary that land use practices contributing to soil erosion be discouraged and that appropriate soil conserving land use practices be adopted.

(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and thereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

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The HSCD is governed by a five-member board of supervisors elected during the general election by residents of Hot Springs County as a subdivision of state government. Each board member elected serves a four-year term and serve without pay. The locally elected Supervisors are made up of three rural, one urban and one at-large person. They are elected to staggered four-year terms, with two positions elected at a general election and three positions at the next general election. A Supervisor must reside within the boundaries of their District and be a resident of Wyoming.

Goals and Objectives

Specific objectives for implementing our mission are described in this plan of work. We, the Supervisors of the HSCD, duly authorized by the Wyoming Conservation District Law, do hereby adopt the Long-Range Plan for the years 2022-2026 as the guide for work priorities in this Conservation District.

Summary of Goals

- 1. Maintain a dialog with the public:** Continually seek and incorporate public input for program development, implementation, and assessment; allow ample opportunity for constituents to voice concerns about natural resources.
- 2. Locally led conservation:** Promote services related to conservation needs unique to the citizens of Hot Springs County.
- 3. Education:** Promote an accurate and balanced understanding of conservation issues and best management practices.
- 4. Water quality and water conservation:** Monitor water quality and endorse activities that improve water quality in Hot Springs County through watershed planning and act as a liaison between government agencies and landowners.
- 5. The use of trees and shrubs to conserve soil and water:** Promote the planting of trees and shrubs as conservation tools by providing information and technical expertise.
- 6. Range quality and soil conservation:** Encourage range and pasture stewardship through technical assistance, outreach programs, and cooperation with landowners and appropriate agencies.
- 7. Wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation:** Encourage wildlife habitat conservation and improvement while maintaining wildlife viability through education and cooperation with private and public stakeholders.
- 8. Watershed Planning:** Continue to assist Watershed Planning boards with conservation projects and direction.
- 9. Oversee two Watershed Improvement Districts (WID):** Continue to oversee the Cottonwood/Grass Creek and Red Lane WID's in accordance with State statutes.
- 10. Permanent Funding:** Pursue permanent funding through a mill levy process to ensure funding for matching dollars for conservation projects and for personnel to manage these projects.

Strategies for Meeting Goals

1. Maintain a dialog with the public: Continually seek and incorporate public input for program development, implementation, and assessment; allow ample opportunity for constituents to voice concerns about natural resources.

- Comply with all open meeting laws and encourage public participation in Board meetings.
 - Submit meeting notices to websites including the Chamber of Commerce and the HSCD webpage and Facebook.
 - Maintain records of interactions with the public to ensure accountability.
- Provide opportunities for community input regarding District programs and services.
 - Invite public comments on issues and projects

2. Locally-Led Conservation: Promote services related to conservation needs unique to the citizens of Hot Springs County.

- Provide support to citizens and businesses of Hot Springs County to help acquire funding through cost share programs.
- Provide leadership and assistance in developing watershed plans within the County.
- Seek and provide assistance to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel.

- Support the sustainable use of natural resources on private and public lands in Hot Springs County.
- Promote best management practices in land uses.
 - Maintain on-going communication and partnerships with local, state and federal agencies.

- Review and provide input on proposed actions of state and federal agencies pertinent to Hot Springs County.
 - ❖ Review proposed Forest Service, BLM, and other public land actions and provide input as needed.
 - ❖ Review proposed Department of Environmental Quality permitting actions and provide input as needed.
 - ❖ Provide input to state and federal agencies on land management policies as needed.

- Support the development of sustainable and renewable energy resources in Hot Springs County.

- Provide support for City/County beautification efforts in order to enhance local economy.

3. Education: Promote an accurate and balanced understanding of conservation issues and best management practices.

- Educate public on the role of the Conservation District
- Provide news and information through the HSCD website.
- Provide educational opportunities in the schools.
 - ❖ Make Ag in the Classroom toolboxes available to educators when desired.
- Educate in conservation techniques.
 - ❖ Annual Fourth Grade Outdoor Education Day with NRCS, Weed and Pest, BLM, HSCD Board of Supervisors, Game and Fish and local landowners

4. Water quality and water conservation: Monitor water quality and endorse activities that improve water quality in Hot Springs County through watershed planning and act as a liaison between federal agencies and landowners.

- Provide leadership and educational programs for water conservation.
 - Maintain communication and offer input to local and state officials for conservation and development of water resources.
 - Offer assistance to public for water conservation efforts.
 - Develop and participate in other water conservation programs as needed.
- Continue to monitor surface water quality and collect credible data according to Sampling and Analysis Plans approved by Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).
- Cooperate with landowners, DEQ, industry and public land agencies to address water quality impairments on 303(d) listed water bodies in the county.
 - Continue to actively participate with Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality with the development of the TMDL (total maximum daily load) on the Big Horn River.
- Offer assistance to private and public sector for implementing practices that reduce non-point source pollution and improve surface water quality.
 - Act as a liaison between NRCS and cooperators in implementing best management practices.
 - Help obtain funding for implementing these practices through grant programs.
 - Work with government entities to educate public on ways to reduce pollution to surface and ground water.
- Communicate water quality and quantity issues to the public and work to bring stakeholders together to improve the watershed as a whole.
 - Hold public meetings and post on HSCD website to report on water quality and quantity status.
 - Assist watershed advisory groups to improve watershed conditions cooperatively.

5. The use of trees and shrubs to conserve soil and water: Promote the planting of trees and shrubs as conservation tools by providing information and technical expertise.

- Promote tree and shrub plantings as conservation tools.
 - Provide educational material about tree and shrub planting maintenance, gardening, xeriscaping ideas and other requests concerning living plants.

6. Range quality and soil conservation: Encourage range and pasture stewardship through technical assistance, education and outreach programs, and cooperation with landowners and appropriate agencies.

- Cooperate with the appropriate agencies in recruiting cooperators and implementing Farm Bill programs.
- Cooperate with the Hot Springs County Weed and Pest for the control of noxious weeds and pests.
- Provide educational opportunities on weed management

- Provide outreach programs and technical assistance to the public.
 - Promote management practices for erosion control on private and public lands.
 - Provide information to prevent soil erosion caused by various industrial and agricultural land uses.

- Promote sustainable use of natural resources on private and public lands.
 - Work with state and federal agencies to promote sustainable grazing on public lands.
 - Work with state and federal agencies to promote sustainable forestry practices on public lands.

7. Wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation: Encourage wildlife habitat conservation and improvement while maintaining wildlife viability through education and cooperation with private and public stakeholders.

- Work toward recruiting cooperators and reviewing applications with NRCS for programs that preserve and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Cooperate with agencies and partners to provide input on threatened and endangered species in Hot Springs County.
- Promote management practices for wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation for threatened and endangered species in Hot Springs County.

8. Watershed Planning: Continue to be an active participant in watershed planning and small waters programs with WACD, WWDC and the Department of Agriculture.

9. Oversee two Watershed Improvement Districts: Continue to oversee the Red Lane and Cottonwood/ Grass Creek WID's and conduct WID elections as directed by state statutes.

10. Permanent Funding: Pursue permanent funding through a mill levy process to ensure proper funding for matching dollars for conservation projects and for personnel to manage these projects.

- Pursue funding from the Hot Springs County Commissioners in lieu of mill levy.
- Pursue other grant funds for special projects.

Partnerships

Hot Springs County Landowners and Producers
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
University of Wyoming Extension Office
Hot Springs County Weed and Pest
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
Bureau of Land Management
Farm Service Agency
Private Industry
Hot Springs County Commissioners
Hot Springs County Clerk
Hot Springs County Assessor
Hot Springs County Planner
Wyoming Game & Fish Department
Wyoming State Forestry
Wyoming Agriculture in the Classroom
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
University of Wyoming
Shoshone National Forest
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Big Horn Basin RC&D
National Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Senators
Wyoming Representatives
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Senators
U.S. Representatives
Wyoming Water Development Commission
Wyoming Natural Resource and Natural Resource Trust
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Wyoming State Engineers Office
Red Dirt Master Gardeners
Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce



Resolution of Adoption

This Land Use and Natural Resource Long Range Management Plan, as prepared and written by the HSCD Board of Supervisors and HSCD staff is hereby adopted as the official program of the Hot Springs Conservation District.

The HSCD Board of Supervisors have approved the Hot Springs Land Use and Natural Resource Long Range Management Plan for 2022 -2026.

Specific objectives for meeting the goals described in this plan of work were open for public comment from April 13, 2021 through May 25, 2021. (Six weeks) Public comments received and taken into consideration.

This plan is hereby adopted and approved by the undersigned:

James Andreen, Chairman

James Wilson, Vice-Chairman

Thomas Moore, Treasurer

Kevin Dickey, Secretary

Chip Axtell, Supervisor