



**Sublette County
Conservation District**

LONG RANGE PLAN

2003-2008



Table of Contents

Forward.....Page 3

Sublette Co. Land Ownership and Land Use..... Page 4

History.....Page 5

Information and Education.....Page 6

Soils.....Page 7

Rangeland.....Page 9

Irrigated Pasture and Hayland.....Page 10

Water.....Page 11

Forests.....Page 12

Wildlife.....Page 13

District Operating Policies.....Page 14

Adoption of SCCD Long Range Plan.....Page 15

Forward

The purpose of this document is to set the long range direction and objectives of the Sublette County Conservation District.

The Board of Supervisors of the Sublette County Conservation District, in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, has taken the initiative to take the lead and contribute their time, effort and expertise towards the goals set forth in this document. The District will be the local voice in the stewardship of natural resources of Sublette County.

The responsibilities of the District have increased dramatically over the past several years. Although traditionally the focus of the Sublette County Conservation District is agriculture, the District continues to receive requests for and perform subdivision reviews, provides assistance to small acreage landowners whose income is not derived from agriculture. The District also provides assistance to companies and consultants associated with oil and gas development, provides assistance to consultants retained by companies and provides assistance to absentee landowners. Our scope of work has broadened to include groundwater and surface water quality monitoring, conservation education, cooperating agency status in federal project issues and development of natural resource policy.

This document will serve as a guide for short term planning and monitoring of the District's progress, and will change when necessary. This document also provides an inventory of land use and land inventory in Sublette County.

Sublette County

Land Ownership and Land Use

LAND OWNERSHIP

◆ Total Area	3,158,344 acres
◆ Private	590,493 acres
◆ State School	113,950 acres*
◆ Game & Fish Habitat Lands	8,958 acres
◆ BLM	1,269,857 acres*
◆ Forest Service	1,162,789 acres*
◆ Bureau of Reclamation	4,452 acres (Source: GIS Data Set)
◆ Other (includes street easements, city/county property, DOT, churches, etc.)	10,333 acres

* Source: Sublette Co. Assessor GIS

There are approximately 175 operating ranches within Sublette County Conservation District. In addition, there are over 400 small acreage landowners living on parcels ranging from 2-40 acres. This number continues to increase due to the subdividing of larger parcels.

LAND USE

◆ Federal Rangeland	1,327,559 acres
◆ Non-Federal Rangeland	543,210 acres
◆ Irrigated Pasture and Hayland	141,796 acres
◆ Federal Forest Land	1,061,089 acres
◆ Non-Federal Forest Land	28,398 acres
◆ Other	7,842 acres
◆ Water	8,038 acres
◆ Permanent Snow Cover	6,714 acres
◆ Rock and Tundra	33,698 acres

History

The Sublette County Conservation District was formed on October 15, 1986 when the members of the Big Piney Conservation District and the Pinedale Conservation District voted to combine into a county wide District.

At the request of the county ranchers, the original Big Piney and Pinedale Conservation Districts were legally organized in December of 1941 under Wyoming Statutes sections 11-234 to 11-250 known as the “Wyoming Soil and Water Conservation District Law”. They were the first and second Districts formed in Wyoming.

Conservation districts are organized to provide for the development, conservation and protection of natural resources. As a legal subdivision of the Wyoming State Government, the District Board of Supervisors consists of a policy making group elected by the people on general ballot. Five supervisors, each serving a 4-year term, perform their duties without compensation. The Sublette County Conservation District meets the second Tuesday of each month. Meetings are open to the public.

The Sublette County Conservation District (SCCD) works in close partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work with individuals; groups; and local, state and federal units of government interested in natural resource conservation. The SCCD and NRCS also work together on ranch planning, area-wide watershed plans, water quality monitoring activities and wildlife habitat enhancements.

Information and Education

Sublette County's children are the future and need to be nurtured and given an opportunity to understand and appreciate the natural cycles that exist around them. The Sublette County Conservation District programs will include classroom demonstrations, sponsoring outdoor classrooms, field trips, youth conservation camps and educational projects. The District will keep abreast of new educational programs as they become available so that our children will have the best natural resource educational opportunities possible. Along with providing educational opportunities for Sublette County's children, the District will produce a monthly article in local newspapers that will offer information to the general public about District activities, events, and where the District will be going in the future.

OBJECTIVES/GOALS

- ◆ To provide the children of Sublette County with opportunities to learn about natural resources and natural resource conservation
- ◆ To better inform the general public through a monthly article in local newspapers
- ◆ To develop a web site
- ◆ To provide weekly snow pack updates throughout the winter and spring months

Soils

The soils of the District are many and varied. This variety stems mainly from the differences in parent material and the range in precipitation. Annual rainfall ranges from about 7 inches in the LaBarge area to greater than 20 inches in the mountains. Soils of the Green River Basin, The Wyoming Range, and the Bondurant area are developed largely from alkaline sedimentary rock. Soils east of the Green River from the US Forest Service boundary south to the Boulder area are developed from more acid igneous and metamorphic materials of the Wind River Range. The deepest soils tend to be in valleys within the foothills. Mountain soils tend to be shallow to moderate depths to gravel or bedrock (20-40") due to high levels of salts in the subsoil or high water tables. The irrigated soils of the District are largely on stream terraces and bottom lands. Major management concerns are proper application of water, fertility and salinity.

- Special thanks to Ron Reckner and Daryle Bennett, USDA-NRCS, for assistance on this section.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Initiate a progressive soil survey under the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program on both private and public lands by 2003
- ◆ Complete the soil survey within six years after commencing
- ◆ Produce a resource inventory of soils information useable for a number of different applications including but not limited to:
 - Land assessment evaluation tool to be used by the County Assessor to assist in the determination of the productive capacity of agricultural lands
 - Project and subdivision proposals by County Planning and Zoning Administration
 - Identification of potential flood hazard areas
 - Identification of potential gravel sources
 - Identification of sensitive riparian areas
 - Identification of soils as baseline data for mapping ecological sites
 - Reclamation plan development by oil and gas companies

- **Used in design of improved irrigation systems, including sprinkler systems**
- **Identification of construction properties of soils, including road base material, sources of sand, gravel and topsoil**
- **Identification of soil suitability for building site development, including buildings with and without basements**
- **Identification of soil suitability for sanitary facilities, including septic tank absorption fields**
- ◆ **Enable decision makers, such as land owners, county officials and federal officials to make decisions based on sound scientific knowledge of land capabilities and suitability limitations**
- ◆ **Provide GIS-compatible digital files of soil maps, soil characteristics and suitability ratings for various uses**
- ◆ **Provide an electronic version of the published report on CD-ROM available to the public**

Rangeland

The largest land use in the District is rangeland. Seventy percent of all non-federal land in Sublette County is classified as rangeland. Rangeland in the District includes the following four precipitation zones: 7-9 inch zone, 10-14 inch zone, 15-19 inch zone, and 20 inches and over zone. The rangeland landscape is predominantly a sagebrush steppe. Livestock grazing is the major agricultural use of rangeland. It also provides critical habitat for vast numbers of antelope, elk, moose, mule deer, sage grouse and non-game species.

- Special thanks to Bill Christensen and Daryle Bennett, USDA-NRCS,
for assistance with this section.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Conduct tours and promote demonstration plots at Soda Lake and plantings on private lands to evaluate the suitability of various grasses for use in early spring pastures
- ◆ Work with US Forest Service, BLM, State of Wyoming and individual landowners to coordinate range improvement by using Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) techniques
- ◆ Promote various methods of brush management
- ◆ Improve grazing distribution and flexibility by promoting and assisting livestock producers with stock water developments
- ◆ Encourage control and management of invasive and noxious weeds on grazing lands

Irrigated Pasture and Hayland

There are approximately 141,796 acres of irrigated pasture and hayland in the District. Native hay is the principle crop grown under flood irrigation. This hay varies widely in composition from high quality introduced grasses to stands comprised entirely of rushes and sedges. The average hay yield for the District is slightly over one ton per acre for flood irrigated and 3 tons per acre under sprinkler. Alfalfa or alfalfa/grass mixes are typically grown under sprinklers.

About 3,000 acres of alfalfa are grown in the District. Over the past ten years and continuing at the present time, the use of sprinkler irrigation is increasing. A maximum of two cuttings can be harvested which usually yield between 1 to 2 tons per acre per cutting.

- Special thanks to Daryle Bennett, USDA-NRCS, for assistance with this section.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To improve the quality and quantity of forage on pasture and hayland by recommending the most efficient methods for each producer.
- ◆ To improve flood irrigation systems through on-field reorganization, infrastructure replacement (pertaining to aging and outdated structures), individual headgates and more functionally and ecologically sound in-stream diversions (improved river bedload and fish passage)
- ◆ To help locate and develop additional storage in an effort to provide adequate water for pasture and hayland
- ◆ To encourage the Wilderness Act be amended to allow for the development of water storage facilities
- ◆ To encourage control and management of invasive, noxious weeds on irrigated pasture and hayland

Water

Water is one of the most valuable resources in the Sublette County Conservation District. Snowfall in the Wind River, Gros Ventre, and Wyoming ranges, along with more than 1,000 glacial lakes located on the western slopes of the Wind River Range are the source of the District's abundant water supply. Water flows from the District through the Green, Big Sandy and Hoback Rivers. The geology of the area provides for excellent groundwater storage and late season stream flows. Surface water in Sublette County appears to be in satisfactory condition.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To move water from the streams to pasture and hayland as efficiently as possible
- ◆ To find better and more efficient ways to store water
- ◆ To encourage landowners to manage for healthy, diverse, well-functioning watersheds
- ◆ To establish baseline water quality data which will include physical, biological and chemical parameters (for specific parameters see SCCD document "*New Fork River Water Quality Monitoring Program Annual Report for the 2000 Sampling Season*"). The sampling area within Sublette County includes the New Fork watershed, a portion of the upper Green River watershed and a portion of the upper Hoback River watershed.
- ◆ Encourage livestock producers to use best management practices associated with animal feeding operations (corrals) near live streams or other water bodies

Forests

Privately owned forests in the District consists of narrow strips of Lodgepole Pine, Cottonwood and Willows along creeks, and patches of Aspen and Pine in the uplands. Forests are primarily used for recreation, wildlife habitats, livestock grazing and timber harvesting.

The bulk of the forestland in the Bridger Teton Nation Forest is used for recreation, livestock grazing and wildlife. Limited timber harvesting as a forest management tool has resulted in poor forest management and negatively affected the economic stability of Sublette County.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To provide landowners with soil information, sources of planting stock, species recommendations and technical help in establishing private forests and timber lands
- ◆ To encourage federal and state agencies to use timber harvesting as a sound, scientific management practice
- ◆ To encourage federal and state agencies to make more areas accessible to the public for firewood and timber harvesting

Wildlife

Wildlife populations are plentiful in the District. Species include antelope, deer, elk, fox, coyotes, moose, big horn sheep, black bears, grizzly bears, wolves, and mountain lions. Waterfowl, raptors, game birds, predatory birds inhabit the area. Fishing opportunities abound in the many lakes and streams.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To provide assistance to land owners for improving wildlife habitat on private lands
- ◆ To encourage the limitation of wolves, grizzly bears, mountain lions and other predators in Sublette County
- ◆ To promote responsible wildlife management

District Operating Policies

The Sublette County Conservation District has a number of policies to guide the District Supervisors and staff in carrying out their responsibilities.

1. The District Supervisors recognize and fully accept their responsibility for carrying out administrative, financial, and other affairs of the District.
2. The District will establish cooperative relationships with all individuals, organizations, and agencies having an interest in, or a responsibility for, natural resource conservation, watershed enhancement, or other District related programs.
3. The District will enter into formal agreements and Memorandum of Understanding with local, state, and federal agencies as necessary in order to implement projects, programs, and activities within the District that are consistent with its mission and goals.
4. The District will prepare an Annual Plan of Work to serve as a guide in implementing its projects and programs for that fiscal year. This plan will be periodically reviewed throughout the fiscal year.
5. The District will prepare an Annual Report (based on the Districts fiscal year) in which the Districts activities and accomplishments will be noted.
6. The District will encourage all cooperators to develop a conservation plan to permit application of needed practices in an orderly manner.
7. The District will constantly monitor all new state and federal legislation in order to determine if and how the legislation effects the Districts projects, programs and cooperators.
8. The District has a “Public Information Release Policy” which describes the procedure for release of data

Adoption of the Sublette County Conservation District Long Range Plan

On this date, July 15, 2003, the Supervisors of the Sublette County Conservation District, as duly authorized by the Wyoming Conservation District Law, hereby adopt this Long Range Plan for the years of 2003-2008.

Darrell D. Walker, Chairman

Lee Shafer, Vice Chairman

Lance Koppenhafer, Secretary/Treasurer

Brad Bousman, Member

VACANT

Amendment to the Adoption of the Sublette County Conservation District Long Range Plan

On this date, _____, 2005, the Supervisors of the Sublette County Conservation District, as duly authorized by the Wyoming Conservation District Law, hereby amend the July 15, 2003 adoption of this Long Range Plan for the years of 2003-2008.

Darrell D. Walker, Chairman

Brad Bousman, Vice Chairman

Lance Koppenhafer, Secretary/Treasurer

Colin Barney, Member

Craig Scharf, Member