

# Big Things Happening in Big Onion

The Big Onion grazing allotment has been the beneficiary of an impressive comprehensive rangeland improvement project in 2022 through collaboration between the Marsh Valley Cattleman Corporation, National Resources Conservation Service, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District. This project was designed to improve the overall health of both private and public land in the area, where grazing conditions have been deteriorating over the last 30 years due to reduced water resources. The Big Onion has been hit with frequent droughts and an ever-increasing brush load demanding more water from the land. As brush and trees have gotten bigger combined with some back-to-back dry years, water was harder to find and was causing livestock and wildlife to concentrate in lower drainage's and smaller areas. Several thousand acres of range in the higher had excellent forage available, did not have water close by, and were miles from reliable water. Elevation and distance from current water sources have hampered animals from making the daily journey to graze in these areas.

This multi-phased project has and will put water where the grazing resources are, spread the animals out over the entire range and allow rangeland managers to effectively manage grazing in a way that improves the overall health of the land. Overall this first phase of this project installed 7.2 miles of high-pressure HDPE pipe, 6 water troughs, removed 12 acres of heavy juniper trees from critical watersheds, installed a pumping plant that will supply water for 1200-1500 head of cattle, installed 3 water storage tanks capable of holding a total of 30,000 gallons of water and fenced off the source of Yellow Dog creek to protect it from livestock damage and they now have a range management plan in place.

The increased availability and quality of water will spread livestock out and keep them less concentrated allowing the overgrazed range to naturally recover while better utilizing the whole range. Spreading out watering facilities to key locations will allow rangeland managers to manage and optimize grazing by targeting where animals graze and the duration of their time grazing in specific areas, which will improve the overall health of the environment.

The concept for this project was envisioned by members of the Marsh Valley Cattleman Corporation and started in the spring of 2020 with the help of the NRCS office located in Pocatello. Together they laid out a plan and proceeded with an application for cost-share funding. Once funding was obtained, through several programs administered by NRCS, ISWCC, and PSWCD, the installation of phase 1 began in July of 2022. Phase 2 will continue next spring with the installation of two more troughs and the connection of the new system to an existing set of storage tanks with 3 more troughs. Phase 3 is currently in the planning process intending to install an additional 15 miles of pipe, 20 more troughs, 300-400 acres of brush removal, and approximately 5 miles of cross fencing to allow for management of grazing on both a macro and micro level.



“This has been a win for the landowners, NRCS, and Portneuf Soil and Water. The cooperation and support have been outstanding. This is an example of where public agencies and landowners can work together to think outside the box and develop a project that will benefit the local area for the next 100 years. We look forward to working with these groups and would also like to be able to work with BLM in the future to improve their parts of the Big Onion as we move forward.” Says Wade Egan from the Marsh Valley Cattleman Corporation. This project was fraught with many challenges including steep terrain and rocks. Water had to be lifted a total of 1050 feet with two pump stations (one electric-powered and one solar-powered) and a robust pipeline had to be built over steep and rocky mountains. Despite these challenges, phase 1 is set to be completed and will be put to work this spring, benefiting the range land and all who get to use it.





## **Meet SSLT – Your Local Land Trust**

### **Land Protection ~ Stewardship ~ Community Conservation**

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to conservation in the 7 counties of Southeast Idaho. Our mission is to protect, connect, and enhance wildlife habitat, working lands, and community spaces now and for future generations. We do this primarily through Conservation Easements – real estate transactions between SSLT and a willing landowner, intended to protect the unique conservation values of a property in perpetuity.

What many landowners in Southeast Idaho may not know, is that we tailor each conservation easement to the needs of the individual. This collaborative process allows each party to reach their conservation goals and forms a partnership for the future stewardship of the protected land. We work largely with active farmers and ranchers because a Conservation Easement allows them to continue their agricultural operation, retain ownership, and receive a financial benefit – either as a result of a donation or in payment for the easement. This can also help families to facilitate transference of property to the next generation, ensuring a continued connection to heritage.

SSLT also works to bring conservation practices directly to our communities. By offering volunteer opportunities, educational resources, sustainable recreation, and programs to help people engage with the natural world in a way that speaks to them.

If you have questions about how a Conservation Easement may benefit you and our beautiful Idaho landscape, please check out our website or reach out to our staff. To stay up to date on our activities and opportunities to get involved, consider becoming a member of our conservation community!

# Farm Service Agency

## CROP REPORTING

Agricultural producers in Idaho who have not yet completed their crop acreage reports after planting should make an appointment with their U.S.

Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) service center before the applicable deadline to avoid any late file fees.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

## DISASTER PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for Producers Facing Inclement Weather

Severe weather events create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. USDA offers several programs to help with recovery on losses to your crops and/or livestock. Contact your local FSA if you have suffered any weather related losses on your crops or livestock.

## DOCUMENTATION

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to after the loss. Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- Production records
- Vaccination/Vet records
- Bank or other loan documents

## MAINTAINING ARC/PLC ACRES

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and non cropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**March 15**— ARC/PLC Deadline

---

**April 1**— Beginning of Primary Nesting Season

---

**July 15**— Spring crop reporting deadline, including fallow/crops left standing and perennial forage and grazing.

---

**August 1**— End of Primary nesting Season

---

**September 30**— NAP Application deadline for fall seeded crops  
Last day to complete mid-contract management for CRP/CCRP/SAFE contracts expiring in 2027

---

**December 1**— NAP application deadline for perennial crops, annual planted mixed forage crops, and honey

---

**December 15**— Crop Reporting deadline for all fall grains





## Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District

214 E. Center St., Suite 10  
Pocatello, ID 83201

Prsrt Std  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #51  
Pocatello, ID

**Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District meets every second Wednesday of each month unless otherwise posted.**

**Our office observes federal holidays.**



## Contact Us:

Give us a call for more information about our projects & programs.

### PSWCD

214 E. Center St., Suite 10  
Pocatello, ID 83201  
(208)339-6023

[portneufswcd@gmail.com](mailto:portneufswcd@gmail.com)

<https://portneufswcd.weebly.com/>