



Portneuf Soil & Water Conservation District

2024 Newsletter

Powers of a Soil & Water Conservation District



1940 Board Supervisors Left to Right: E.R. Buehler, E.A. Gray, F.M. Cooper, Lyndon Green, Luther E. Wilson

One of the first local conservation districts formed in 1940, Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD) was created to serve all of Bannock County. One of the first work plans of the district identified problems that regularly impacted the area, such as seasonal flooding, irrigation water shortages, and erosion. As a result of the PSWCD, many local farmers use a variety of conservation practices today. The PSWCD uses many educational tools to help increase landowners, urban residents, and public officials' awareness of environmental problems in the county. Today, PSWCD continue to work with local partners to ensure the resources of Bannock County last long into the future.

What do Conservation Districts Do? What can Portneuf SWCD do for me?

As a governmental subdivision of the state and a public body PSWCD helps cooperate with other agencies to implement projects that entail the implementation of BMPS and other practices that conserve resources in Bannock County. PSWCD works with partners to carry out preventative, control, improvement measures for flood prevention or conservation of water within the district.

If you have a project that needs support, you can submit a proposal to the board at the monthly meeting, where the board will review and discuss the project. The conservation district also has educational materials available for the public and has a variety of programs towards conservation work or equipment rental for projects. If you are needing assistance or would like to discuss your project, reach out to us.

Message From Our Chairman

Water is one of our most important and most shared resources. Last winter we experienced an unprecedented influx of water, and while we are grateful for it, the years of drought in our area has not been alleviated, nor will it prevent future drought. It is vital that we protect and conserve our water resources and increase our resource resiliency for years to come. Last year we had the honor of contributing to projects that increased water quantity and quality through brush removal, fencing off streams, and piping open canals. Any contribution big or small can make a significant and positive difference which is why we've decided to continue our focus on water conservation for 2024. If you are in need or aware of a project that increases or protects our water resources please contact us, so that we might contribute to your project or guide you to resources to make your project successful.

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A Year in Review: Projects and Events of 2023

Swan Lake Creek Forage Kochia Project

This project was funded by Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commissions Water Quality for Agriculture program and dedicated landowners. Ten acres of native range species kochia were established in a bare area where junipers were removed back in 2020. This will prevent erosion, improve water quality and forage quality. Seeding was completed in March 2023, and seedlings were spotted throughout the area in June 2023.

Ninemile Fuels Reduction Project

Completed June 2023, this project treated 171 acres through mastication along Ninemile and Brush Creek Southeast of the City of Downey. These activities will reduce the spread of fire, restore rangelands, and increase water quantity throughout the area.

Living on the Land Workshops 2023

After a 2-year hiatus, the Portneuf Watershed Partnership was able to bring back the Living on the Land Workshops series, where local experts gave presentations on various environmental health topics. Plans have already begun for March 2024 to make these workshops better than ever.

Zoo Idaho Endangered Species Day 2023

Over 500 kids of all ages attended this event to learn about endangered species through hands on activities. Everyone had a blast participating in our activity which taught them about the water cycle and all the different forms water can take.

Portneuf Valley Environmental Fair 2023

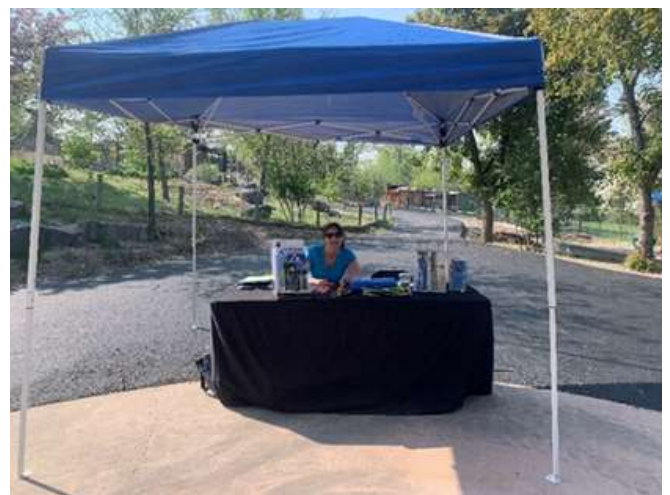
The fair was a great success even with cold wind and bit of snow fall! Over 60 vendors and 3,500 residents attended this event. We enjoyed seeing so much interest in environmental health and we especially enjoyed hearing from you! Be sure to stop by and visit us in 2024!

Yellow Dog Creek Project

This project improved stream bank stability and water quality on Yellow Dog Creek. The project included Juniper tree removal, new fence and watering facility installation. The project was completed in the summer of 2023.

Idaho Envirothon 2023

We want to give a shoutout to our local teams at Pocatello High School. They worked incredibly hard, and it paid off with 1st place in 1 of 5 divisions for both teams. They did great this year! If you or an educator you know is interested in starting a team, contact us.



Charity Staggs, PSWCD Administrator, at Endangered Species Day 2023

Cohn Creek

In partnership with Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Arimo Corporation is working to restore Cohn Creek. In Spring of 2023, Arimo Corporation reached out to PSWCD and the NRCS about the restoration of perennial flowing stream called Cohn Creek. The stream health had deteriorated due to farming practices common to the time but are no longer used today.

This project will stabilize the streambank with riparian vegetation, remove three aquatic organism passage barriers and move the irrigation diversion. Together these activities will allow restoration of the natural channel of Cohn Creek.

Work on the project is currently ongoing and expected to be completed in June 2025. For more information about the project, visit the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District website: <https://portneufswcd.weebly.com/>



A measurement of the eroding bank on Cohn Creek



An Upstream View of Cohn Creek

Hawkins Irrigation Pipeline

The Hawkins Irrigation Canal stretches from Hawkins Reservoir, along Hawkins Creek, and flows into Marsh Creek. The system is used as irrigation storage for many families in the area. Currently, the irrigation system that is in place has been used since the 1890s. The system is 5 miles of open earth, which leads to significant water loss due to evaporation and ground leakage. There is also significant erosion and risk of contamination due to livestock in the area.

With the help of the NRCS and their EQUIP Program, IDEQs Ag BMP program, PSWCD, and the dedicated landowners, work has begun. The Hawkins Irrigation Pipeline project is a multiphase project that will convert the open ditch irrigation to a gravity fed buried pipeline and add two water control structures.

For Wade Egan, the project developer, the most exciting aspect of this project is the increase in water efficiency, energy savings, and ease of operation. In addition, the project will be good for the local environment. According to Mr. Egan, "This project is something that should have been done 25 years ago, however, with some really good cooperation between NRCS, PWSCC, IDWR, March Center Irrigation, and local landowners this project has really come together." He has found that the biggest challenge with the Hawkins Irrigation Pipeline will see is that this is a big project with a lot of partners that are involved.

Despite this, the project is coming along nicely and the NRCS has been tremendously supportive of the project and has done a great job on the engineering work needed for this project. It is projected that phase two of the project will be completed in the summer of 2024. The work began in August of 2023 and is going well. More information about the project can be found on the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District website: <https://portneufswcd.weebly.com/>



Hawkins Reservoir

Big Things Happening in Big Onion

Mud springs & Dead Horse Project

While an unusual name for a project, Mud Springs & Dead Horse describes the section of land that is being worked this year to improve the Big Onion area. Partnerships with Marsh Valley Cattleman Corporation and PSWCD continue improvements to Big Onion. With the help of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Ag BMP program bringing bigger and better conservation improvements to the area.

Mud Springs has seen detrimental environmental changes to the area. Large sections of soil erosion caused by an abundance of juniper and brush reducing the amount of water that flows through the creek and overgrazing in sensitive areas of the project site, causing areas that are being impacted by drought.

Mitigating each of these concerns over the whole Big Onion area is the goal of the project. Brush management will increase water quantities, reduce the number of junipers, and prevent the spread of noxious weeds in the area. The water facilities and the pipeline between them will help manage the water within the creek, reducing erosion and ensuring there are adequate levels of water. watering systems are being strategically placed to reduce the amount of erosion and provide a consistent watering spot for cattle.



When talking to Wade Egan, the project manager, he explains that one of the most exciting aspects of this project is that it allows us to continue to improve the quality of the range as we continue to deconcentrate livestock from lower drainages and spread them out over underutilized areas of the range. We will also be removing the brush, which will help improve things as well with better grass and forages taking over the area. When asked about the challenges of the project Mr. Egan simply stated that “The terrain is always a challenge with these projects, but we have the equipment and expertise gained by experience to install these systems.” Mr. Egan mentions that these cooperative projects take a lot to set up and complete, but the cost and time are well worth it and will pay big dividends for generations to come.

Each of these components of the project will create a more drought tolerant environment and enable improved grazing management in the area. Phase one of the project entailed the installation of high-pressure HDPE pipe, water troughs, and completed 12 acres of brush management. The second phase of the project is ongoing and anticipated to be completed in the Summer of 2024. Phase 3 is in the planning process with the goal of installing an additional 15 miles of pipe, more troughs along the area, and completion of 300-400 acres of brush removal. More information about the project can be found on the Portneuf Soil and Water Conservation District Website: <https://portneufswcd.weebly.com/>



The McCammom Community
Learning Garden is looking for
Volunteers!

McCammom Community Learning Garden is looking for volunteers to help with events throughout the year or a hometown hero with the general day to day maintenance of the garden. Without the help of our amazing volunteers, the garden would not be where it is today. We are always looking for more individuals to come and help! Not from McCammom? That is ok! We open our gates to anyone that is interested!

For questions or signing up for volunteering please contact Kassidi Dunn at dunnkass@isu.edu or through our website at mccammomactioncouncil.org

We hope to see you at our garden!