



The Explorer

Volume 65, Issue 2

Spring 2026



Lewis and Clark Conservation District Pollinator Program 2026



LEWIS & CLARK CD POLLINATOR SEED PICK UP DATES-2026

April 1st &

April 7th

USDA Service Center

790 Colleen Street

Helena MT

9 am - 3:30 pm

April 21st

Augusta Montana Community Center

Main Street, Augusta

10:00am-2:30 pm

April 29th

Lincoln Montana Library

11 am - 1 pm

For more information email admin@lewisandclarkcd.org or go to our website at <https://lewisandclarkcd.org/programs/pollinator-initiative/>

If these dates/times don't work for you, please contact the email address above to schedule an appointment since staff don't work in the office most days.



Stream Permitting in Lewis & Clark County

A reminder for landowners and managers in Lewis & Clark County, applying for a permit to do **any work that may affect the stream bed or the banks of any perennial stream** in the county, **as well as the shores of Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter Reservoirs is mandatory.**

There is no fee for the 310 permit with Lewis & Clark Conservation District. We work closely with landowners to make sure that their project is the best project possible.

Projects include, but aren't limited to, culverts, bridges, boat ramps, docks, bank stabilization etc. If a project might impact, directly or indirectly, the bank or shore, a permit will be required.

We work with the Gilly App's [online permitting application](#), or you can fill out the [pdf version](#).

You can also scan the QR code with your smart phone and go right to the Gilly App.

For more information, email joe@lewisandclarkcd.org or call Joe at 406-594-9823.



CLEAN OUT YOUR CULVERTS

Just a friendly reminder that
spring is quickly approaching

Clean out culverts by removing debris and mud using long-handled tools such as rakes, shovels, spud bar, pressure washer, or specialized culvert augers. This helps to prevent damage to the culvert, access roads, driveways, or the structures surrounding the culvert. If cleanout is happening on stream, a 310 permit is required if the work done doesn't have a maintenance permit already. For any questions about 310 permitting, contact Joe Kremer-Herman at 406-594-9823 or joe@lewisandclarkcd.org



Believe it or not,
there are 2
culverts in this
picture



Annual Invasive Grasses Workshop Followup



The Conservation District and the Helena Field Office NRCS hosted about 30 people attend the Annual Invasive Grasses Workshop with Dr. Jane Mangold from Montana State University. We learned about Ventenata, Cheat grass, Medusahead and Japanese brome, all invasives in our area, and how to manage them.

Following the presentation, the group broke for a meal and to discuss any new local resource concerns.

If you have feedback on any local resource concerns in Lewis and Clark County, please fill out our [survey](#)!!!



District Report--Chris Evans, District Administrator

And so ends the 1st quarter of 2026! The Conservation District spent the 1st quarter gearing up for our busiest season of the year. Spring is wall-to-wall events and programs for us, including: the Pollinator Program, the Montana Conservation Elders Event (April 18 at the fairgrounds), various outreach events, Rolling Rivers Trailer events spring and summer, including the Summer walk, the East Helena 4th Grader's Ag Day, a ramp-up in 310 permit applications and more.

The CD has sponsored a wrapped up a couple of grants for local landowners who rely on the Threemile Reservoir. Previous owners had delayed critical maintenance and with the help of some grants from DNRC to the CD and one from Future Fisheries to the landowner, progress has been made on getting the reservoir back into shape for continued use. There is still work to be done, but for now, things are better. In addition, the CD sponsored a grant to assist the County/Water Quality Protection District in finishing the Grizzly Gulch project, and that work should wrap up this spring/summer.

The next quarter should see CD staff wrapping up various spring projects and working on summer projects.

To contact the employees at the Conservation District, call Chris Evans at 406-502-8591 or email at admin@lewisandclarkcd.org, and Joe Kremer-Herman at 406-594-9823 or email at joe@lewisandclarkcd.org.

Partner News



The Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) is working with consultants to create a work plan to describe and prioritize the next couple decades of projects. Anyone interested in sharing their concerns about watershed resources or problem areas is invited to attend an open meeting on April 14 from 10 am – noon at the Fairfield Ambulance Training Facility. SRWG and consultants will be on-hand to document any concerns, and will follow up on resource issues that arise in this meeting. This plan will be complete in spring of 2027 and there will be another public meeting before the final plan is released – details to come.

SRWG has hired WGM Group to lead a preliminary engineering report that will describe issues occurring in the Willow Creek outlet / Floweree Intake reach of the Sun River. This report will suggest at least three alternative projects to address those issues, identify a preferred alternative, and provide estimated cost for design and construction. SRWG will use this report to seek funding to build out the preferred alternative. Issues in this area include consistent irrigation conveyance to water users, fish passage barrier, and other concerns which will be described in detail in the report.

The Bashin' Trash River Cleanup program is getting a makeover! Instead of one day of trash bashing, we will hold multiple events between May 15 and the end of August. Volunteers will have the option of joining us for one of the main events or picking their own date and location. SRWG and High Plains Conservation District will have B-T cleanup kits that can be checked out by volunteer groups wanting to clean up a riverfront park, trail, fishing access site, or float reach. Visit the Bashin' Trash page on our website for details.

SRWG Community favorite events like the Weed Whacker Rodeo and Rain Barrel Workshop will return in 2026 along with new events, including a nature photography workshop. Please visit www.sunriverwatershed.org/events or find us on Facebook to learn more.

USDA Water Report

If you are interested in keeping track of water predictions for 2026, take a look at the [**Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program**](#).

WEED COST SHARE PROGRAM

The Lewis and Clark County Noxious Weed Control District has a Cost Share Program to assist landowners with property in Lewis and Clark County in their fight against noxious/invasive weeds.

This program has an annual maximum payment of \$250/per landowner on properties less than 25 acres and \$500 per landowner on properties 25 acres or more.

In order to participate in the program, landowners need to fill out an application and a five-year weed management plan with the Weed Control District.

For more information, contact the Weed Control District by calling 406-447-8372 or by emailing [**clehnert@lccountymt.gov**](mailto:clehnert@lccountymt.gov).

Water Test Cost Share Program

Lewis & Clark Conservation District will reimburse landowners in Lewis and Clark County \$25 when they get their well water tested.

Your first call should be to the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District at 406-457-8584 for recommendations on what tests would be best to run. They should also have test kits available from the Well-Educated program from MSU. You may also get your test kits from other labs that do water testing.

Once you've gotten your results back, email a copy of your results and invoice to us at admin@lewisandclarkcd.org or mail to LCCD, 790 Colleen Street, Helena MT 59601. There is a limited amount of funding for this program so get your information in soon!



Invasive Annual Grasses in Central and Eastern Montana

With warmer winter conditions and spring just around the corner, it's time to start thinking about the invasive annual grasses in Montana. This article is a very broad overview of the impacts these invasive annual grasses have on Montana's economy and ecosystem....

Invasive annual grasses have emerged as one of the most pressing ecological and economic challenges across the rangelands of Montana, profoundly altering landscapes once dominated by native perennial grasses and diverse plant communities. These non-native/invasive species — notably Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*), Ventenata (*Ventenata dubia*), and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicus*)— are increasingly prevalent in semi-arid grasslands and mixed-grass prairies of Montana. Their spread is driven by their aggressive growth cycle, high seed production, and ability to establish in disturbed soils, whether from grazing, construction, or natural fluctuations in climate conditions.

One major impact of these invasive annual grasses is the degradation of native plant communities. Once they become established, they often out-compete native perennial grasses and forbs for moisture and nutrients. Cheatgrass, for example, germinates in the fall and grows early in spring, preempting soil moisture and establishing dense stands that leave limited resources for slower-growing native species. This competitive advantage enables invasive grasses to dominate ground cover across large areas.

Perhaps the most visible consequence of this shift is the altered wildfire regime across Montana's rangelands. Invasive annual grasses dry out earlier in the season than native vegetation and accumulate continuous fine fuels across the landscape. These fuels significantly increase the probability of ignition and can carry fire rapidly across what once were more fire-resistant native grasslands and shrublands. Although recent research suggests that wildfire isn't always the primary trigger for invasive grass expansion, the presence of continuous invasive fuel greatly enhances fire frequency and intensity where these grasses dominate.



Cheat grass



Japanese brome



Medusahead



Ventenata

The impact on agricultural operations may also be substantial. Invasive annual grasses generally provide poor forage quality and quantity for both livestock and wildlife. Ventenata and Medusahead, for instance, are unpalatable to most grazers due to its high silica content and coarse structure, reducing usable forage and leading to economic losses for ranchers. Biodiversity suffers alongside agricultural productivity. Dense stands of invasive grasses diminish habitat suitability for native wildlife species and reduce plant species richness. The thick litter layers these grasses create can also inhibit the germination of desirable native plants and disrupt soil processes that support a healthy ecosystem.

Efforts to manage and mitigate these impacts are underway. Land managers, researchers, and conservation programs are experimenting with integrated tools — from herbicide applications and prescribed grazing to revegetation with competitive perennial species — aimed at reducing invasive annual grasses populations and restoring resilience to native plant communities. Montana State University and federal agencies are actively engaged in studies to develop effective, cost-efficient strategies for controlling invasive annual grasses while promoting long-term ecological health.

In summary, invasive annual grasses in Montana are not just weeds on the landscape — they represent a system-wide disruption to ecological function, wildfire behavior, agricultural viability, and biodiversity. Addressing their spread requires sustained, science-informed management and cooperation among landowners, researchers, and public land managers to preserve the ecological and economic integrity of Montana's rangeland ecosystems.



Helena C.O.R.E

Lewis and Clark Conservation District will be doing our Summer Walk on August 18, 2026. Joe Kremer-Herman, our Resource Specialist will be hosting the event at the upcoming "Brushy Toe Project" on Little Prickly Pear Creek.

If you want to register for our Summer Walk, or any of the other Walks, the Summer Walk Series [Registration](#) opens on June 16th.

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Stream Permitting Required!

If you are planning any work that may affect the streambed or the banks of any perennial stream, or on the shores of Canyon Ferry, Hauser or Holter Reservoirs, in Lewis & Clark County, you are required to fill out a permit application with the Conservation District, along with a number of other agencies, using the [Joint Application](#). Culverts, bridges, fords, streambank work, construction etc. all require a permit.

In the event of any emergencies, where life, crops or property may be at risk, landowners are allowed to do the minimal amount of work to protect their property, but need to file a Notice of Emergency within 15 days of completing the work. Before and after photos are particularly helpful in these cases.

If you see a project that is affecting a stream somewhere in the county, and want to know if it's permitted, please contact our Resource Specialist, Joe Kremer-Herman at 406-594-9823 or via email at joe@lewisandclarkcd.org.

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SPECIAL EVENT SPONSORS

We would like to thank MacKenzie River Pizza Co. in Helena for sponsoring our Brushy Toe Project on Little Prickly Pear Creek in March/April, by providing pizzas for our volunteers!

For more information about the Conservation District, check out our [website](#), or find us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)!