



**Laramie Rivers Conservation District**  
**2012-2013 Annual Report**

# History

In the early 1930's North America experienced an unparalleled ecological and agricultural disaster known as the Dust Bowl. The massive dust storms that raged through the Great Plains were made up of eroding soils that were the result of years of drought and the farming practice of deep-plowing that displaced the native grasses which naturally held top soil in place. These storms blanketed the land with dust; damaging and destroying 89 million acres by 1934.

In 1935 Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act to address the devastation of soil erosion and the agricultural practices that cause it. Hugh Bennett "the Father of soil conservation" saw that instilling conservation practices would take participation of landowners to really take-off and proposed the idea of creating conservation districts throughout the nation. The first district was established in 1937 and continued to grow to the nearly 3000 in existence today.



**Laramie Rivers Conservation District** was organized in 1945.

It encompasses 2.7 million acres of land.

67% Private land · 24% Federal land · 8% State, County, City and School District land.

*To provide leadership for the conservation of Albany County's soil and water, promote and protect the quality of Albany County's waters, and promote sustained use of Wyoming's 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 Albany County through a responsible conservation ethic.*

# Leadership

We are all beneficiaries of nature; every aspect of our life is connected to the land. For conservation to work, people are essential and everyone has a role to play. LRCD strives to reach and benefit as many people as we can by presenting the latest technologies and information through conservation programs, publications, events, site visits, workshops, lectures, tours, school field trips and curriculum and partnership with numerous community organizations, agencies and businesses.

**Laura McGinley** has been LRCD's District Clerk for a year. Beyond synchronizing daily activities in the office, her communication skills are an asset in producing outreach materials and coordinating events that promote conservation concepts in the community. This past years activities included:

- Management of the **8th Annual Conservation Expo** presenting 55 local businesses and organizations, reaching over 600 participants and offering the raffle of a 12' x 12' high-tunnel greenhouse built with the assistance of UW Extension and WY Conservation Corps students.
- *Creating* an assortment of publications including the LRCD newsletter, informative pamphlets, annual report, event posters and flyers, and radio and newspaper ads.
- Membership in **United States Green Build Council** and participation in the USGBC Wyoming Chapter State Conference.



# Stewardship

The concept of stewardship has been important to conservation districts for over 55 years. Land stewardship is the belief that we have been entrusted to care for the land and are committed to wise and cautious management. This ethic includes both private and public lands and involves individual and public responsibility.

Many of Laramie Rivers Conservation District activities focus on providing leadership in the principles of land stewardship. LRCD Staff and Board are dedicated to bringing our community the very best information and practices through programs that provide expert assistance and advice; education and training; financial assistance and access to resources; and hands on support in local stewardship activities.

We share a love for this land with all those who live and visit here and appreciate our role as caretakers of the soil, water, air, plants, trees, and wildlife for the benefit of present and future generations.

## Erosion Control

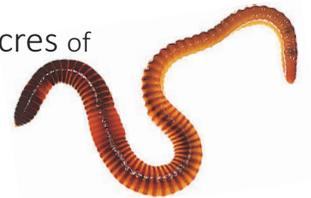


**Living Snow Fence** Reclamation Re-seeding Irrigation cover crops Riparian Strips  
Windbreaks tree planting Grazing Management Crop Rotation

Each year the United States loses nearly 1.7 billion tons of soil to erosion. Water and wind account for most of the erosion that displaces the earth's valuable soil layers in natural areas, agricultural lands and urban environments. LRCD directs knowledge, skills, financial support and man hours to reducing soil loss through individual consultations and programs open to Albany County residents.

**Martin Curry** has been the LRCD Resource Specialist for 6 years. His primary focus is helping residents with erosion control and land management. His work this year included:

- Installing 7 Living Snow Fence totaling 3985 feet in length and incorporating 567 trees & shrubs.
- Coordinating the **Wildfire Cost Share Program** granting \$5500 for the reseeded of 415 acres of burned land.
- Oversight of the **26th Annual Seedling Tree Sale** selling 5620 seedling trees.
- Supervising work on the **Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge** implementing conservation improvements. Leading resulted in the replacement of a water control structure, reclamation of *2.13 miles of two-track roads and conversion of 1.11 miles of old road into a walking path.*
- Teaming up with Albany County Weed & Pest for **Weed Workshops and weed survey** in Rock River
- Conducting a **Plant Identification** walk near Vedauwoo in collaboration with UW Extension Small Acreage team.



**A nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.** — Franklin Delano Roosevelt

# 2012-2013 BUDGET

## Assets

Cash reserve \$278,643

## Revenue

County Appropriations \$443,754

Grants \$202,823

Miscellaneous \$30,632

Operating Revenue \$17,000

**TOTAL \$694,209**

*Elementary schools installed gardens through the Cost Share program*



## Grants

WY Dept. of Ag \$8,823

DEQ 319 Grant \$5,000

USFWS Safe Harbor \$7,000

Education \$30,000

Wildlife/CRM \$97,000

Forest Stewardship \$15,000

Refinery Remediation \$40,000

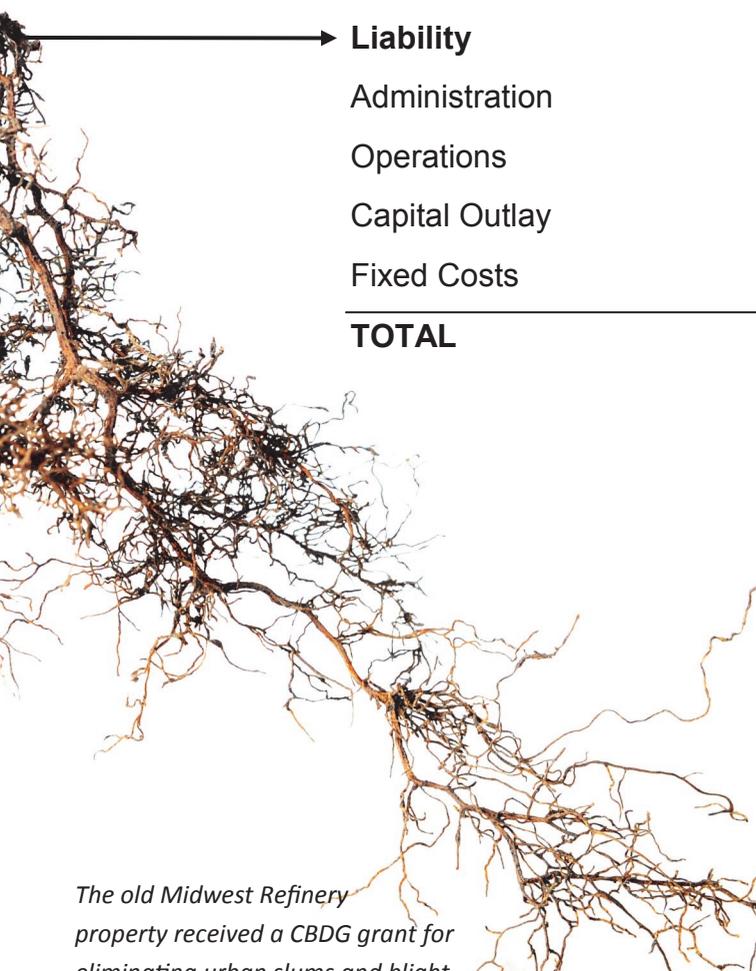
*Conservation Kids learned about Xeriscaping*



*Wildfire Cost Share funds helped reseed burned lands*

***LRCD is thankful to all the local groups, agencies and organizations that we work with throughout the year.***

Albany County · Albany County Fairgrounds · Albany County Weed & Pest · Albany County Cowbells · Albany County School District · City of Laramie · NRCS · University of Wyoming · UW Extension · Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources · Fish & Wildlife Service · Wyoming Conservation Corps · Wyoming Game and Fish · Bureau of Land Management · Department of Environmental Quality · Wyoming Natural Diversity Database · Feeding Laramie Valley · Laramie Local Foods · US Forest Service



**Liability**

Administration	\$282,047
Operations	\$315,700
Capital Outlay	\$299,482
Fixed Costs	\$75,623
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$972,852</b>

*Seniors-on-the-Go enjoyed hikes guided by Tony Hoch*



*The old Midwest Refinery property received a CBDG grant for eliminating urban slums and blight*



**Administration**

Administrative Personnel	\$237,247
Office Expenses	\$21,300
Board Expenses	\$10,000
Dues	\$13,500



*Hutton Lake NWR received a new control structure.*



*WY Conservation Corps Students helped build a hoop-house at the 8th Annual Laramie Conservation Expo*

# Water Conservation

Water makes up 70% of the Earth → 97.5% of that is salt water → 2.5% is fresh water → Only 1% of fresh water is available for human use → Water use has tripled since 1970's → U.S. currently uses 410 billion gallons per day.

Throughout the nation Conservation Districts helps ranchers, farmers and landowners improve and protect water quality and manage water quality. Locally, LRCDC is involved in many activities that contribute to the protection and management of our local water supply.

**Monitoring:** Each summer water samples are taken from 5 locations on the Big Laramie and Little Laramie Rivers, from the Medicine Bow Mountains to Bosler. Water is monitored for pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, total dissolved solids, total suspended solids, and bacteria.

**Well Testing:** Once a year LRCDC coordinates with a local analysis lab to provide well testing at a reduced cost. All water from natural sources contains dissolved substances. The primary contaminants analyzed include calcium, magnesium and sodium, chloride, sulfate and nitrate all which can affect odor and taste.

**Water Saving Landscapes:** The LRCDC Cost Share Program grants funds and provides technical assistance to residents who want to replace water hungry lawns with low water landscapes. Xeriscaping is a common choice for Wyoming yards but homeowners are experimenting with other innovative designs including yard meadows, wildflower gardens and eco-friendly fusion landscapes that incorporate low water plants, rocks, mulch and other ornamental features.



**Tony Hoch's** background is in geochemistry and water quality and he has held the helm as LRCDC Director for 11 years. Along with overseeing the District's water monitoring program he is extensively involved with local organizations to increase conservation ethics and practices within the community. This year his activities and partnerships included:

- Ongoing water quality monitoring along the Laramie Rivers and addressing water quantity by collecting precipitation data, preliminary exploration into watershed planning and authoring *Rainwater Harvesting* for Barnyards & Backyard magazine.
- *Presenting* lectures, workshops and tours throughout the community including LRCDC's latest projects and conservation concerns; notably the progress for the old Midwest Refinery property and the plans for remediation.
- *Serving* on Laramie Beautification Committee, Wyoming Conservation District Employee Association, Wyoming Toad Recovery Team, Small Acreage Issue Team, Laramie Soup Kitchen Board and Laramie Rotary.
- Working with the City of Laramie to obtain a \$330,000 Community Development Block Grant from Wyoming Business Council for the North Cedar **Midwest Refinery property** clean-up and remediation.

Vegetables grown in  
LRCD gardens



# Urban Agriculture

Conservation District's roots are in Agriculture. The importance of maintaining good soil health and water quality is the ability to grow and raise food. We are wedded to the land and depend on it for our survival. As society becomes more urban, we move further away from the intimate ties to the food we eat.

Re-establishing our connection to the land is vital to the future of food production. Bringing agriculture back into the classroom through gardening programs provides a powerful hands-on, interactive, multi-sensory curriculum that benefits people of all ages for years to come.

## Soil → Water → Food → Life

### Education

**Trish Penny** is LRCD's Education Coordinator and has been with the district for 9 years. Her focus is bringing conservation principles into the classroom through projects that engage children's natural curiosity about the world around them. Her recent Gardening Programs are very popular and nearly every school in Albany County has an educational garden due to her ongoing efforts. Her conservation and education projects this past year included:

- Installing 27 raised garden beds in educational gardens at Indian Paintbrush Elementary, Beitel Elementary and Big Brothers Big Sisters/The Hub after school program.
- Teaching 105 kids & 42 adults through the **Conservation Kids** summer programs.
- Hands-on learning programs with 36 students enrolled in the **Kids Garden Club**.
- Harvesting over *400 lbs. of fruit & vegetables* at the **LaBonte Park Outdoor Learning Center** gardens.
- Coordinating the submission of 285 posters drawn by Albany Co. school kids for the **16th Annual 3rd Grade Ag Expo** Poster Contest.
- **Partnerships & participation:** Albany County School Board, Ag Expo Civil Air Patrol, Albany County 4-H, Feeding Laramie Valley, Operation Warm, Project Learning Tree, Food Dignity/Growing Resilience, State Science Fair, After School Alliance, Master Gardener Program, Albany County Schools, Teton Science School, Arbor Day Foundation.





"...the care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope"

~ Wendell Berry

#### LRCO Board of Supervisors

Nancy Bath - Board Chair

Larry Munn - Vice Chair

Jim Rogers - Secretary Treasurer

Kelly Kennedy - Supervisor

Ruth Shepherd - Supervisor

#### LRCO Staff

Tony Hoch - Director

Trish Penny - Education Coordinator

Martin Curry - Resource Specialist

Laura McGinley - District Clerk

#### Laramie Rivers Conservation District



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