

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a calm river in the foreground, reflecting the sky and surrounding greenery. The middle ground is filled with dense, vibrant green vegetation and trees. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a cloudy, overcast sky. A vertical white line is positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping the river and the text below.

ANNUAL REPORT
2019

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Dear Conservation Districts of Montana:

The Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Montana (SWCDM) looks forward, each year, to working with our partners and delivering programs that bring additional support to Conservation Districts and conservation efforts across the state.

Providing opportunities to increase capacity and technical assistance for implementing conservation is key to our efforts.

In 2019 SWCDM continued programs that provided mini-grant funding to five conservation districts; provided supplemental funding to four conservation districts to host Big Sky Watershed Corps Members; and continued seven SWCDM partner employee positions that provided a number of services including technical assistance

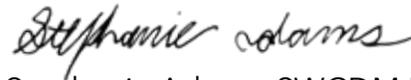
to landowners and conservation districts in Flathead, Fergus, Custer, Musselshell, Phillips, Rosebud, and Carter counties. These partner employees were monumental in increasing the capacity to implement conservation and promote best management practices that enhance and protect soil and water resources.

SWCDM is listening, learning, and evolving to better serve the needs of the conservation districts and to turn short-term funding into long-term conservation benefits. We look forward to continuing conversations, growing our current programs, and developing new opportunities with you into the future.

With gratitude,



Mike Hansen, SWCDM Board Chair



Stephanie Adams, SWCDM Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Hansen *Gallatin CD*

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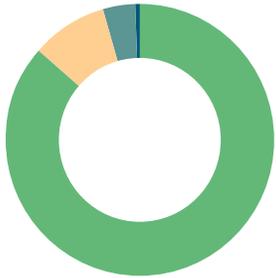
Roger Hybner *Carbon CD*



2019 HIGHLIGHTS

- 6** BSWC members serving Conservation Districts
- 7** partnership employees providing technical assistance
- 8** Water Quality Mini-Grants Awarded
- 25** districts provided with technical assistance, graphic support, or software
- 75** people recieved free wildflower seed
- 323** Participants at Soil Health Workshops

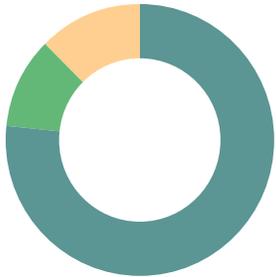
2019 FINANCIALS



REVENUE

- Programs \$579,784.57 (87%)
- Bridger Plant Materials \$58,395.80 (9%)
- Office Rent/Management Fees \$27,236.93 (4%)
- Interest / Donations \$2,660.23 (.4%)

TOTAL REVENUE: \$668,077.53



EXPENSES

- Programs \$537,097.72 (82%)
- Bridger Plant Materials \$47,498.58 (7%)
- Administrative \$73,446.84 (11%)

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$658,043.14

\$94,700

DIRECT TO DISTRICTS
Through mini grants, Big Sky
Watershed Corps, and other grants.

\$5,642

DISTRICT SAVINGS
Through our TechSoup software
lending program.

\$17,385

VALUE OF SERVICES
Provided free of cost to districts
through technology assistance
program

OUR PROGRAMS

Sage Grouse Initiative*
Montana Rangelands Partnership
Big Sky Watershed Corps
Bridger Plant Materials Center
Ranching for Rivers
Pollinators*
Water Quality Mini-Grants
Soil Health Workshops*
Rolling Rivers Trailer
NW Area Resource Specialist*
Conservation Menu
District Technology Assistance
Irrigation Water Management

**highlighted in this report*

ABOUT OUR WORK

SWCDM works with partners across the state to secure and re-distribute funding to Conservation Districts and Partners that increase Conservation District capacity, opportunities for public education and outreach, and provide technical assistance and cost-share for conservation implementation.

In this report, we chose to highlight the programs we feel had a big impact in 2019. On the following pages, you'll find narratives about these programs and how they serve Montana Conservation Districts.

Our mission is to supplement the resources of conservation districts and amplify the mission of local, common sense conservation.

Visit swcdm.org for information on current programs and funding opportunities.



AMPLIFYING THE CD MISSION

SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

Since 2015, SWCDM in partnership with the Montana NRCS has hosted Soil Health Workshops across the state of Montana with a focus on producer-to-producer education and networking. Over this time, it has been evident that the soil health movement has been picking up significant steam in recent years and has been gaining in popularity amongst farmers and ranchers looking to improve their operations' bottom lines as well as the fertility of their land.

In 2019, SWCDM and NRCS hosted five Soil Health Workshops in Great Falls, Three Forks, Billings, Forsyth, and Sidney. Speakers Race King, Derek Axten, and Keith Burn provided a variety of topics covered from Carbonics, Interseeding, grazing systems, improving hay systems, cover crop mixes, and showcasing local producers on Q&A panels. Over 300 local producers participated in the 5 Soil Health Workshops.

Primary Funder: NRCS

EXPANDING CAPACITY

SAGE GROUSE INITIATIVE

The SGI program puts field staff on the ground to expand technical assistance capacity in key rangeland focal areas. These partner positions work with private landowners in Montana to increase the sustainability and economic viability of ranches while simultaneously improving the habitat for sage grouse and other rangeland dependent wildlife. We're very proud of the accomplishments of our SGI field staff, including:

Jalyn Klauzer, Ekalaka

- 9 EQIP contracts that encompass over 57,000 acres
- 3 CSP contracts that cover over 14,00 acres
- 2 SGI-EQIP contracts that cover over 22,000 acres

Heather Nenninger, Forsyth

- Over 3,500 acres of farmland planted back to pasture or native rangeland in core areas.

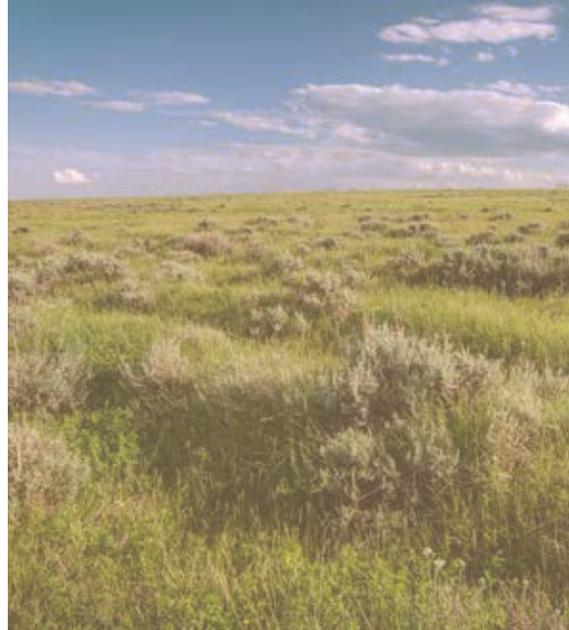
Hayden Nelson, Roundup

- 4 SGI EQIP contracts, 2 in Core Areas

Martin Townsend, Malta

- A cropland reseeded project on an 8,000 acre farm
- RSA contract for 575 acres to install a stock water system on an old CRP field.
- Two additional projects that will put grazing systems on new seedlings and cover 980 acres.

Primary Funders: NRCS, WWF, MT FWP, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, InterMountain West Joint Venture, Rosebud CD





SUPPORTING DISTRICT PROJECTS

LAKE COUNTY POLLINATOR INITIATIVE

In 2019 SWCDM provided funding to the Lake County Conservation District through our NRCS Conservation Delivery Agreement to continue the increasingly popular Lake County Pollinator Initiative.

The funding helped build capacity by producing outreach resources to share with the public and events that provide high-quality engaging community outreach that promotes pollinator health.



Primary Funder: NRCS

POLLINATOR HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

Funds have gone towards the purchase of 5 acres of wildflower seed that was distributed to over 75 people in amounts from 100 sq. ft. packages to 2500 sq.ft. bags.

LCCD followed up with landowners who completed spring plantings to provide technical assistance about continued maintenance of their pollinator garden.

John Gardner made a prototype of a raised, portable wooden pollinator garden box as a test plot with LCCD Annual Mix in 2019. After viewing the success of the planter box, LCCD contracted with a local woodworker and had 4 more boxes made. LCCD is working with local businesses and community groups to place the new planters out in Ronan, Polson and other towns around Lake County and seed with our Annual Mix for the 2020 growing season.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- 4th Grade Ag Days Honey Bee Station with Chuck Lewis of Plan Bee and Pollinator Jeopardy, an interactive game that teaches basic honey bee facts to kids of all ages.
- Youth and adult mason bee house construction.
- Lake County Conservation Speaker series talk "Huckleberries & Pollinators" by Janene Lichtenberg from the Salish Kootenai College Wildlife Department.
- Bees and Blooms Pollinator Conservation Workshop
- "lunch and learn" Pollinator Conservation Workshop in Thompson Falls

Remaining funds were used to purchase wildflower seed for a diversity of mixes that will be provided free of charge to the local community members in our 2020 Pollinator Initiative.



PROVIDING TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

NORTHWEST MONTANA AREA RESOURCE SPECIALIST

Samantha Tappenbeck worked with conservation districts, watershed groups, and landowners in northwest Montana as a technical resource on water quantity and quality issues. As an Area Resource Specialist in the Clark Fork and Kootenai Basins, Samantha worked to connect conservation districts and stakeholders to available resources to meet their needs.

In 2019, Samantha:

- Assisted in the Central Clark Fork Watershed Restoration Plan
- Provided background information on TMDL-listed impaired streams for Eastern Sanders County
- Worked with Flathead CD in developing project design for Cow Creek restoration project
- Assisted in numerous education and outreach events with the Flathead lakers, Green Mountain CD, Lake County CD, Lincon CD, and Mineral County CD.
- Provided program development on a septic system maintenance program that will be implemented in 2021.

Primary Funder: DNRC and DEQ



THANK YOU
to the countless districts, sponsors, and partners who work for
local, common sense conservation in Montana.

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF MONTANA
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