



Conservation Connections

for Box Elder County

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FROM THE NORTHERN UTAH CONSERVATION DISTRICT CHAIRMAN

*By Fred Selman, Chairman,
Northern Utah Conservation District*

This newsletter is a new experience for the Conservation Districts of Box Elder County. We are happy to report on some of the conservation practices and projects that are going on.

With help from Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Utah Association of Conservation Districts (UACD) we are still actively locating and mapping tile drains that drain sub-surface water from our farms and ranches.

Earlier this winter, the Northern Utah Conservation District (NUCD) met with Utah State University Extension specialists at the Blue Creek Experiment Farm to discuss options for fire control. The increasing concern of crop and range-land loss due to summer fires has brought the NUCD and Utah State University Extension together to provide guidance and recommendations

which could prevent damage to productive agricultural lands due to wild fire.

One management option discussed was focusing on roadside landscape practices that create a green planting strip with fire deterrent plants. The experiment farm has examples of a variety of drought tolerant trees and shrubs which would work well in wind breaks and living snow fences. If this mix was to include an under-story of say forage kochia, road crest, and small burnett, a strip planting might be created that would be less likely to be penetrated by fire.

Landowners interested in creating fire-breaks, windbreaks or living snow fences are encouraged to contact their county extension agent or local conservation district board member.

We will try to keep you informed of other ideas that could be beneficial to our county.

2008 Conservation Fair and Field Days

By Thayne Mickelson

The Northern Utah and West Box Elder Conservation Districts are hosting the Utah Conservation Field Days on June 18-19, 2008. The event will be held at the Box Elder County Fairgrounds. On the 18th, there will be an Agricultural Marketing Tour in the afternoon. Rough Stock Band will entertain us that same evening in conjunction with a conservation fair open to the public. On the 19th, there will be an all day Conservation Tour. Charter buses will tour Box Elder County looking at conservation and historical sites. We will conclude the day with a visit to the Historical Golden Spike National Monument and the Bear River Bird Refuge.

Call early to reserve a seat and a lunch on the tour by calling Thayne Mickelson at 435-753-6029 Ext. 38

Soil Conservation Districts Play Important Role in Community Development



By Lyle Holmgren
USU Extension Agent

According to Utah history, upon their arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and other Mormons of the first company quickly set about to turn the desert into a productive land. These pioneers successfully developed irrigation for their communities and

farms. Indeed they made much of Utah's desert blossom like a rose. And so it was for more than 150 years.

Now Utah has been rediscovered. Box Elder County is experiencing unprecedented residential and commercial growth. Tremonton City alone has approved 117 building permits in 2007, a 20 percent increase over 2006, and it is expected to continue for the seeable future. New businesses like West Liberty Foods, Procter & Gamble and others will hire many hundreds of additional workers. According to Envision Utah, by the year 2020 the Greater Wasatch Area of Utah will add a million more residents, two-thirds of whom will be our own children and grandchildren.

Growth impacts people, land and the environment but it also provides new jobs, schools, health care and a sense of community. Successful growth requires sound

planning. Without sound planning and a healthy community, agriculture can suffer -- we want to do it right.

One way the Northern Utah Conservation District has provided leadership and important information for community development is by promoting and funding the study to identify field drains in several communities in Box Elder County. The identification of these field drains is important not only to agriculture but for city planners, city councils and developers. The project maps underground field drains which in some cases have been around for more than 80 years.

Fred Selman, Northern Utah Conservation District Chairman, explains that maintenance of the land drains has become a concern due to increasing urbanization in



A field drain empties into a drainage canal.

many areas in the county. The Conservation District's concern is that drain lines are becoming plugged, broken and severed, or built over. Due to these concerns they initiated the project to insure the continued utilization of these land drains for agricultural and city planning purposes.

Danny McBride, technician working on this project, explains that he researches maps and drawings dating back to the 1920s and consults with local residents regarding their knowledge of field drain location. Aerial photography was also used to locate drain lines. He then visited various sites in the area, took GPS coordinates, and photographed locations where an inlet, outlet, or clean out boxes occurred. From this information, he compiles books which contains the results of the project.

Utah's population is expected to approach 3.5 million by 2030- a growth rate of 56 percent over three decades- and Box Elder County will experience its fair share of this growth. It is important that we take action now so we are sure to manage this growth and not let it manage us. The Utah Association of Conservation Districts and Northern Utah Conservation District are to be commended for their foresight. They are important players in our community.

“Without sound planning and a healthy community, agriculture can suffer -- we want to do it right!”

PROGRAM NOTES

Learning Can Be Fun

By Staci Strenkert,
Education Specialist/Envirothon

When was the last time you heard a student say they enjoyed learning? Utah Envirothon seems to have figured it out!

Utah Envirothon is Utah Association of Conservation Districts' (UACD) leading conservation education program for high school students.

While preparing all year for the competition held in April, students utilize the natural world as their classroom. They have the opportunity to learn from professionals in the field about natural resource management and use the tools of the trade all while being exposed to careers they may have never known about. Students develop essential critical thinking and problem solving skills while preparing for the field tests and oral competition. All teams are encouraged to do a service learning project to meet the needs in their local communities. Through participation in Utah Envirothon, students learn the skills necessary for understanding and addressing environmental issues while gaining a sense of personal and civic responsibility.

Utah Envirothon encourages all FFA, 4-H, Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups to form teams as well. The Utah Envirothon competition serves as the Career Development Event (CDE) for the Environmental and Natural Resources area, with the winning FFA team moving on to the National FFA competition. We hope to see all of you next April in Moab!

For more information, please visit us at www.utahenvirothon.org.



Bare-root Tree & Shrub Sale

By Bracken Henderson,
Northern Utah Planner/Technician

The Northern Utah Conservation District sponsors an annual tree and shrub sale. The plant species offered in the sale are tailored to the local climate with specific species adapted to site conditions such as alkaline soils or a high water table. Species are generally intended to provide conservation benefit and be compatible with local landscape preferences. Participants of the local Master Gardeners will be on-hand the day of the sale to help field questions.

This year's sale has seen a few changes. Several species not offered in previous sales are now available. Some new trees include London planetree, burr oak, Amur maple,



Trees planted as a windbreak.

and Austrian pine. There are 20 shrub species offered including hedge cotoneaster, potentilla, golden currant, and silver buffaloberry. Each species now comes in bundles of 5 and most plants will be larger than they have been in the past. You can view images and information about the species, as well as helpful tips on planting at www.uacd.org.

Orders are due by Friday, February 29th and are filled based on availability. So get your order in early! Pick up your trees and shrubs at the sale on Saturday, April 19th in Brigham City at 195 West 1100 South. Additional trees and shrubs are available for purchase the date of the sale. Go online or call to receive an order form at www.uacd.org or (435) 257-5403 ext.11.

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A Brief Look at Utah Conservation Programs

Here's a review of some state programs that encourage conservation.

- **Grazing Improvement Program (GIP):** This statewide program is aimed at improving rangeland health, productivity, and management. Examples include elimination of invasive species, reseeding, livestock water development and improvements, fencing, grazing management planning, and any other project that improves watershed and rangeland health production while improving the profitability of Utah livestock producers. For more information, contact Troy Forrest, Northwest Region representative, at 435-257-5403 (office), 435-279-3603 (cell), or email him at troy.forrest@ut.nacdn.net.
- **Agriculture Resource Development Loan (ARDL):** The Utah ARDL program is a \$27 million revolving fund that provides low interest (3%) loans for projects with a conservation benefit. The goal of this state program is to help landowners conserve soil and water, increase yields, maintain and improve water quality, conserve and improve wildlife habitat, prevent flooding, develop on-farm energy projects and mitigate damages caused by natural disasters. A one-time 4% administrative fee is charged. For more information, visit: ag.utah.gov/conservation/agloans.html or contact Thayne Mickelson, Zone 1 coordinator, at 435-753-6026 ext. 38.
- **Revolving Loan Fund:** A little-known fund is available to help finance agriculture projects that will improve or protect water quality at 0% interest. The Non Point Source State Revolving Fund is administered through the Utah Division of Water Quality and the Utah association of Conservation Districts. This ongoing program has no deadline, but the projects it funds must improve water quality in some way. For more information contact Nathan Daugs, UACD conservation planner, at 435-753-5616 ext. 29.



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Drought Monitoring Sites Arrive in Utah

The national Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) saw a major expansion in May of 2007 with the installation of nine sites in Utah that will assist farmers and ranchers with land management decisions. In September another seven sites were added.

SCAN focuses on the collection of soil moisture and temperature data in agricultural areas. Soil moisture and temperature data are collected at 2, 4, 8, 20 and 40 inches. Data is also collected on air temperature, solar radiation,

"The national Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) focuses on the collection of soil moisture & temperature data in agricultural areas."

relative humidity, wind speed, wind direction and precipitation. This allows users to study the impact of weather on the soil moisture and temperature for an area.

This information can be used to monitor drought development, monitor crop productivity relative to soil moisture, predict regional shifts in irrigation water requirements and assist ranchers and farmers in crop management decisions.

SCAN uses the same meteor burst communications technology as SNOTEL (SNOWpack TELEmetry) to collect the remote station data. The equipment at the site is battery powered with solar cell recharge and operates unattended with maintenance needed about once a year. Unlike the SNOTEL sites that are located in high mountain watersheds, the SCAN sites are in the lower valley positions associated with dry land operations and irrigated agriculture.

The sixteen sites were funded by a Utah Conservation Initiative sponsored by Utah Senator Robert Bennett. For more information visit: www.ut.nrcs.usda.gov.



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Finding Field Drains

By *Thayne Mickelson*,
UACD Zone 1 Coordinator

The Northern Utah Conservation District is identifying underground filed drains in Box Elder County. Over the past 100 years drains have been installed to improve farmland. As a result, Northern Utah has some of the most productive agriculture lands in the state.

An increased awareness of the value of underground field drains has recently become evident as lines have been interrupted or severed. Not only has this affected farming, but has also been a concern for homeowners.



A field drain into the Bear River.

Two major problems occur if a drain is severed. One, an underground dam will form, causing possible flooding in the area and it also exposes the drain to debris. Two, if the drain becomes plugged it will no longer work effectively creating problems for many landowners.

A pilot project was completed in the spring of 2007 with cooperation from the town of Elwood. Northern Utah Conservation District is currently looking for opportunities to work with other communities and drainage districts to electronically map additional systems.

A Conservation Innovation Grant has been obtained from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to electronically map these systems. If you have any information that could help us identify and locate drainage areas please contact one of the following:

- Fred Selman - Chairman, Northern Utah Conservation District (435) 257-7201
- Bracken Henderson - Conservation District Planner (435) 257-5403 Ext.11
- Thayne Mickelson - Resource Coordinator (435) 753-6029 Ext. 38.

RMS Planning - what is it?

By *Jeff Schick*,
NRCS District Conservationist, Tremonton Field Office

If you haven't already heard about an RMS plan, and you work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), you will likely hear about it in the near future. In Utah, there has been an emphasis placed on having an RMS plan to be eligible for the Conservation Programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill. RMS stands for Resource Management System. An RMS plan is a conservation plan that encompasses all of the resources on all of your land. You may also hear it referred to as a Whole Farm plan.

Conservation Planning is a natural resource problem solving and management process. The process integrates economic, social (cultural resources included), and ecological considerations to meet public and private needs. It is a process that considers people and the resources they use or manage. Conservation planning is based upon a desired future condition that is developed by the landowner. To develop a conservation plan, a resource inventory is made of all of the resources (soil, water, air, plants, animals, and humans) of the land and operation. An analysis of the inventory is made and recommendations are prepared by the NRCS, and working with the landowner to meet their desired future conditions. Then a schedule to implement the plan is developed. This is what is called by NRCS the nine step planning process. The nine steps are 1. Identify Problems and Opportunities 2. Determine objectives 3. Inventory resources 4. Analyze resource data 5. Formulate alternatives 6. Evaluate alternatives 7. Make decisions 8. Implement the plan and 9. Evaluate the plan after it has been implemented.

A Progressive plan would only consider one or a few of the resources and develop solutions to any problems or improvements that may be desired. The RMS plan would be much more intensive and would consider all of the resources and all of the concerns that exist to develop solutions and a plan to correct all problems or desired improvements. An RMS plan could be scheduled to be implemented over a short period or many years depending upon your desires. The implementation of the RMS plan may then be facilitated by utilizing technical, educational, and financial assistance programs from NRCS or other sources.

If you have further questions concerning conservation planning (RMS or progressive) or would like to begin the planning process please call or drop by the NRCS office in Tremonton and schedule a time with one of our Planners.

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SNIPPITS

- Box Elder County was hit by the damage caused by wildfires. Statewide, an estimated 500,000 acres of rangeland burned. A UDAF survey concluded that of 78 ranchers surveyed, 28 planned to sell off animals in the wake of the fires, and 1,305 animals (sheep and cattle) were unaccounted for. Estimated damage to fences, corrals, water systems, etc. totaled \$2.3 million.

- NRCS Utah has developed a conservation planning workbook to assist producers and NRCS field offices in producing quality conservation plans that will help each producer meet his or her conservation and farming or ranching objectives. In addition, the workbook will help the producer comply with environmental laws and regulations. Filling out the workbook will lay the groundwork for high-quality conservation planning and will help producers understand the requirements for applying for NRCS conservation program funding. To access the workbook, visit: www.ut.nrcs.usda.gov.

- Bear Lake Watch has added to its website. Now, in addition to viewing the lake level, visitors can see real-time information on lake temperature, precipitation, air temperature, wind direction and speed, and more. According to the website, the lake level was at 5908.10 feet above sea level at the end of January, down from an unofficial high of 5912.58 feet on May 18th of 2007. For current information visit www.bearlakewatch.com.

- A new watering pump design allows livestock to drink under their own power and away from the stream bank. Using a nose pump, a cow can drink ground water by pushing its

own pump. The water flows into the basin, and excess water drains back down.

- Utah State University has established a website where persons wishing to buy, sell, or donate hay or forage can list that information at <http://extention.usu.edu/buysell/>. Other information is being developed and will be posted on the extension web page.


- A video on the UDAF website offers an overview of the Land EKG class held in late spring near Richfield. The event focused on helping producers balance grazing with caring for the environment. For a look at rangeland monitoring techniques, visit: <http://ag.utah.gov> and click on the video about the UDAF GIP program.

- The National Agricultural Statistics Service mailed out the 2007 Agricultural Census at the end of 2007. The USDA conducts the census every five years, counting the nation's farms and ranches and the people who run them. This census will collect data for the 2007 calendar year, and its information will be used by

national, state and local planners and policy makers in making decisions for rural areas. Businesses will also use the information when deciding where to open stores and services. Farmers, too, can use the information to make business decisions.

- A new invader has made its way to western waterways, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is anxious to keep it out of Utah lakes. The quagga mussel is a non-native, invasive creature that attaches itself to soft and hard surfaces and reproduces explosively. Ultimately it changes the chemistry and fish populations of the lake bottoms it inhabits because it eats plankton and nutrients and discharges a lot of waste. It forms "shell reefs" that can close off pipes less than 12 inches in diameter. It is now present in the lower Colorado River basin and may have made its way to Lake Powell, by way of contaminated boats. For more information on the quagga mussel, and for tips on how to avoid spreading it, visit: <http://wildlife.utah.gov/news/07-01/quagga.php>.

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COMING EVENTS

Coming Events

- Northern Utah board meeting. Every third Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at the USDA Field Office in Tremonton, Utah. 85 South 100 East.
- West Box Elder Board meeting. Every first Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.
- March 10-12, 2008. The Utah Water User's Conference is being held in the Dixie Center in St. George, Utah.
- March 25, 2008. Utah Mini Water Conference. If you missed out on the Water Users Conference in St. George, don't miss out on the Northern Utah Mini Water Conference in the Space Dynamics Lab in Logan, Utah.
- April 19, 2008. Bare-root tree and shrub sale. 2008 orders are due by Friday, February 29 and are filled based on availability; so get your order in early. For more information, visit www.uacd.org.
- June 7, 2008. Bear River Celebration.
- June 18-19, 2008. 24th Annual Conservation Fair and Field Days. Topics of discussion include global warming, carbon credits, alternative energy, organic farming, no till farming, and sustainable communities & landscapes. The fair is on June 18. It runs from 10 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. The fair is free and open to the public.

Ad Space Available

Contact Janice at (435) 257-5403

for more information.

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Northern Utah Board Actions

- On-going project indentifying underground field drains.
- Strengthened district capacity.
- Addressed local natural resource concerns and solutions.
- Coordinated public outreach effort on federal regulations.
- Approved conservation plans.
- On the Bear River RC&D board.
- Offered scholarships.
- Sponsored bare-root tree & shrub sale.
- Oversees Bear River Watershed water quality program.
- Advisory board for Agriculture Protection Areas in Box Elder County.
- Hired temporary employees to follow up on contracts throughout the county.
- Completed electronic map of Elwood City.

West Box Elder Board Actions

- Addressed local natural resource concerns & solutions.
- Coordinated public outreach effort on federal regulations.
- Approved conservation plans.
- Provided conservation presentations & materials.
- Rangeland improvements.
- Sponsored a poster contest.
- Grasshopper control & emergency relief efforts.
- Weed control issues.
- Management plans on BLM lands.
- Investigated brush management methods.
- Range Improvement Tour & dinner.

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CONSERVATION CLASSROOM

Working with Nature Publication Now Available

By Denise Stewardson
AITC Outreach Coordinator

The 2007 Newspapers in Education student magazine, *Food, Land & People-Working with Nature*, is now available through Utah Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC). Produced in cooperation with the Desert Morning News, this special edition, pull-out newspaper explores the geography, science and history of Utah's natural resources. Copies of this student magazine can be downloaded or ordered at [>>Newsletters>>NIE Student Magazines.](http://www.agclassroom.org/ut)

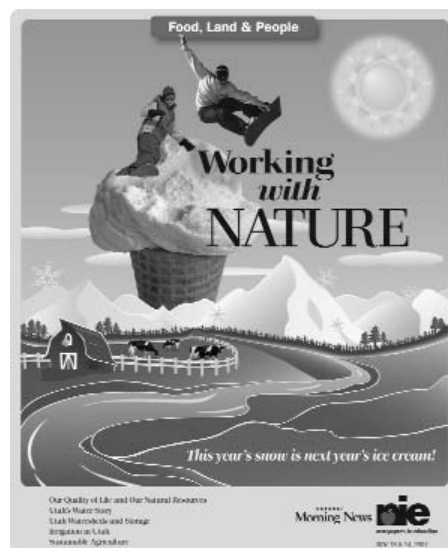
The connection between our quality of life and natural resources is an integral message in this issue. Consider your daily activities from waking in the morning to going to bed at night. We are nearly always using some kind of resource. Whether it's our bedding, our cell phones, our food, or our sporting

equipment, it is easy to see why mined and grown resources are so important to us.

Utah's water story is told through investigations of Utah's watersheds, water storage, and irrigation. Did you know that this year's snow is next year's ice cream? Trace the relationship between the winter snowfall and future ice cream production.

EPA, NRCS, ARS, BLM-is this just alphabet soup? Of course not! These federal agencies are critical to the conservation and protection of our natural resources. Read about these programs and their importance in natural resources conservation, stewardship, and sustainability.

AITC appreciates the support of UACD through their involvement in the Foundation for Utah Agriculture in the Classroom and their commitment of financial and educational resources. For more information on Utah AITC's teacher and student resources, teacher training through an online course, and agricultural literacy, visit www.agclassroom.org/ut.



Important phone numbers

Conservation districts	753-6029
USDA-NRCS	753-5616
Cache County Extension	752-6263
USDA-FSA	753-5480

Conservation Connections