



*The District and partners in the Fish Creek drainage are installing a new mid-elevation snotel site to improve the accuracy of streamflow forecasts in the region.*

## BLAINE SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT WORKS ON NEW SNOTEL SITE, TREE SALES AND MORE

*By Steve Stuebner*

The Blaine Soil Conservation District has had a quiet year because of the Covid pandemic. Blaine County has been one of the hardest-hit areas by the pandemic, limiting the opportunity to have any public events or gatherings, even in rural areas.

Nevertheless, the Blaine District is moving ahead with a number of proj-

ects this year, including working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Snow Survey staff and the Idaho Water Resource Board to establish a new mid-elevation snotel site in the Fish Creek drainage.

The snotel site will be established at 6,785-foot elevation. It's located on private property on the Lava Lake Ranch, northeast of Carey, north of Craters of the Moon National Monu-

ment and U.S. 93. NRCS officials have been working on a long-term agreement with Lava Lake Ranch to provide access to the snotel site.

Corey Loveland, NRCS Snow Survey Supervisor in Idaho, said the new site will cost in the range of \$20,000-\$25,000 to install, including labor and equipment. They hope to install the site in the summer of 2021 or 2022 at the latest. The Idaho Water Resource



Board provided funding to NRCS Snow Survey to establish four new mid-elevation sites in Idaho to improve the accuracy of steam-flow forecasts in local areas where new sites are established.

The Blaine District welcomes having more automated snotel sites to reduce the amount of labor required to do manual snow survey measurements, said the district's administrative assistant, Kelsey Barg.

The Blaine District contracts with a person to measure snow and snow-water equivalent data via snowmobile at five locations once a month during the winter to help with detailed information in the Fish Creek drainage, Barg said.

"Right now, those sites are measuring pretty low," she noted.

The new Iron Mine snotel site will eliminate the need for the manual estimates, she said.

Coming up next will be the Blaine District's annual tree sale for land-owners who might want to add more trees on their ranches or farms. The district holds an annual spring tree sale to provide a variety of fruit trees, deciduous trees and coniferous trees to hold soil in place, clean the air and provide cover for wildlife and beautify neighborhoods, district officials said.

Barg said the trees are 2-3 year old saplings ready to plant in the ground. People can order trees from the Blaine District web site, [www.blainesc-d.org.com](http://www.blainesc-d.org.com), email [blainescd@gmail.com](mailto:blainescd@gmail.com) or call 208-481-0409.

The trees cost in the range of \$30-\$60. People who pre-order trees will have the best chance of getting what they want, she said. Pre-orders are taken through mid-March.

Trees available for purchase include:

- Russian sage
- Honey locust
- Royal Raindrop crabapple
- Newport plum
- Red dogwood
- Honey crisp apple
- Pink lady apple
- Autumn blaze maple
- Common lilac
- Brookcut apricot
- Superior plum
- Santa Rosa plum
- Cherry

#### Shrubs:

- Red leaf rose
- Illini blackberry
- Forsythia
- Snowball bush
- Black current

**Other initiatives that the Blaine District works on include:**

- Implementing federal and state farm conservation practices and programs to help local farmers and ranchers with the best management practices.
- Conserving and restoring wetlands, which purify water and provide habitat for birds, fish and numerous other animals.
- Protecting ground water resources and water quality.
- Assisting developers and homeowners to help them manage the land in an environmentally sensitive manner; and
- Reaching out to communities and schools to teach the value of natural resources and encourage conservation efforts.

Enhancing the Blaine District's education outreach, the district provides three \$500 scholarships – one each to three high schools in Blaine County. Last year's winner was Bailey Morey at Carey High School, Barg said. Morey went on to Brigham Young University – Idaho majoring in biology.

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# ABOUT BLAINE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Mission

To coordinate and deliver technical, financial, and educational assistance for responsible natural resource management.

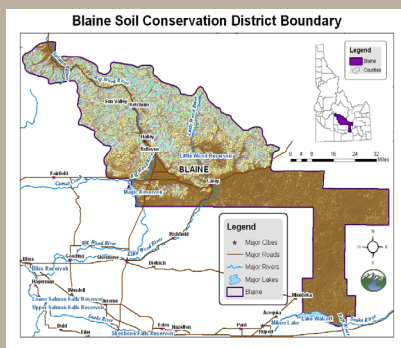
## Values

- The sustainable use of natural resources
- Support for agriculture activity that uses sustainable, economically feasible practices
- Value and respect for the Idaho Conservation Partnership
- Conservation education for adults and youth

Blaine District's jurisdiction correlates with the boundaries of Blaine County. Blaine County is a unique area that ranges from lava rock beds, to desert landscapes, to fertile farms and ranches, to forested mountains. It includes 2,661 square miles on the north side of the Snake River Basin, stretching into the Sawtooth Mountains.

The northern part of the county is covered with streams and beautiful forested mountains. The Wood River flows through the county from its headwaters in the Sawtooth Mountains southward through the county's population centers around Sun Valley, Ketchum, Hailey (county seat), and Bellevue into the Snake River Basin.

A long arm of the county extends to the southeast through the Snake River Basin and all the way to the Snake River. This area is covered with ancient lava flows and is relatively uninhabited. Much of it is included in the Craters of the Moon National Monument. The agricultural town of Carey lies at the base of the mountains on the northern edge of this arm.



### Supervisors

Bryan Dillworth, Chair, Robert Simpson, Kathy Noble, Wade Prescott, and Steve Grigsby

Kelsey Barg, Administrative Assistant

### District Office

20422 Main Street, Carey, 208-309-0846,  
[www.blainescd.org](http://www.blainescd.org), [blainescd@gmail.com](mailto:blainescd@gmail.com)

Hyndman Peak is the highest elevation at 12,009 feet, located near Trail Creek Road on the boundary of Custer County. The lowest elevation is 4,620 feet in the Snake River Basin.

## Natural Resource Priorities and Goals

### 1. Information and education

**Goal:** provide information and education to improve conservation practices in the District; **Objective:** each individual in the District will understand their ability to improve the quality of life through best practices in conservation

- Work with Blaine Co. Schools and others to bring Ag Education into the schools.
- Provide programs (with our

## Snotel, cont. from pg 2

The Blaine District also helps area schools participate in the annual Envirothon science competition in Challis. No Blaine County teams participated this year because of the covid pandemic.

The Blaine District also has been working on information and education for Blaine County residents to learn more about soil and water issues to reduce erosion and conserve scarce water supplies.

The District also has helped with noxious weed control in the aftermath of the Sharp's wildfire in the Little Wood drainage, and it has a rangeland seed drill to assist landowners with planting grass or shrubs from seed post-fire.

For more information about the Blaine District, contact Barg at [blainescd@gmail.com](mailto:blainescd@gmail.com) or 208-481-0409.



*The District's seed drill is used by landowners to plant grass and shrubs from seed after rangeland fires.*

partners), information, and teach workshops on urban and rural conservation issues.

- Provide current snow-pack levels, water levels, and snow water equivalent levels to partners and the public during the winter months.
- Annually conduct youth environmental education programs and increase participa-

- tion and public
- Be involved in the IASCD speech contest, poster contest, Envirothon Competition, Blaine SCD scholarship programs, Blaine Bug Crew, University of Idaho Natural Resource Camp and others.
- Annually sponsor a fair booth

## 2. Water Resources and Quality

**Goal:** improve ground and surface water quality in Blaine County by conservation planning, funding, and promoting implementation of best management practices; **Objective:** Increase awareness of water conservation and improve water quality.

- Make available technical and financial assistance for improved irrigation water management to at least 5 producers from FY 2016 - 21 through various conservation programs.
- Provide yearly information to District irrigators on current Idaho water issues.
- Annually support water users, irrigation districts, and conservation partners in improvement of water quality and water resources.

## 3. Irrigated Cropland

**Goal:** To provide programs and educational information to land owners that will help them develop best use of lands within the county. **Objective:** To promote best management practices for crop land within the county.

- Provide soil and plant testing services to land owners at a low cost.
- Make available technical and financial assistance for improved

cropland management through various conservation programs.

- Purchased rangeland drill and leased it out to several area farmers and drilled 1000 acres.
- Drill is serviced and ready to go hit the fields in spring 2020.

## 4. Rangeland and Pasture/Hay-land

**Goal:** To provide programs and educational information to land owners that will help them develop best use of land within the county.; **Objective:** To promote best management practices for range, pasture and hay-land within the District.

- Annually promote biological control of noxious weeds through various conservation partners.
- Seek NRCS conservation funding and technical assistance for private landowners to develop best grazing management practices.
- Provide data on drought tolerant, native and riparian plants available to land owners.
- Work with conservation partners on the sage grouse initiative and other conservation issues.

## 5. District Operations

**Goal:** Maintain district operations at optimum level of efficiency; **Objective:** The Blaine SCD will provide leadership and business management of the highest quality.

- Make available 5-Year Plans, Annual Reports Budget as needed for federal and state agency assistance.
- Provide information to landowners on current environmental issues and available conservation funding.
- Provide the opportunity for

supervisors to complete Supervisor Training.

- Complete effective and efficient operations including accounting, personnel management, training and development, annual planning and reporting, district web site and administrative procedures.
- Provide a yearly low cost tree sale.
- Provide Workshops to local farmers and growers on soil health and water conservation management programs.

## Trends Impacting Conservation in the District

- State funding scarcity which reduces the District's efforts to be as effective in conservation
- Endangered Species Acts requirements and enforcement
- Urban development and absentee landowners)
- Poorly planned growth in agricultural areas
- Increasing small acreage farms, five acres or less
- Recreational use and its impact on agricultural management
- Focus on water quality and quantity issues

To learn more about Blaine Conservation District, contact the District at [blainescd@gmail.com](mailto:blainescd@gmail.com) or 208-309-0846 and review their [5-Year Plan](#) and [FY 2020 Performance Report](#).

## COMMISSION

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## SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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