

# West Cassia

Soil and Water Conservation District



## Performance Report FY2023

(July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023)



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Board Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 11:00am

## Mission Statement

*To encourage responsible natural resource management and to implement conservation goals which improve air, soil, and water quality while improving wildlife habitat.*

*To educate both youth and adults about our local conservation practices and needs.*

## Top Priorities and Resource Concerns

### 1. Water Resource

Encouraging good conservation practices which conserve water and reduce soil erosion such as conversion from flood irrigation to sprinkler systems, promoting benefits of crop residue, conservation tillage, and cross slope farming practices. Make efforts to improve the groundwater within the Marsh Creek Nitrate Priority Area. Manage the Invasive Species Watercraft Inspection Station.

### 2. Rangeland

Education and encouragement of practices such as brush control, range seeding, pest and noxious weed control, and fire control practices. Address drought concerns through stock water improvements and planned grazing systems.

### 3. Direct Seed and Cover Crops

Encouraging farmers and landowners to implement new and innovative conservation farm practices such as the use of cover crops to improve soil health. Encourage direct seeding and cover crop plantings by renting a Direct Seed drill to landowners. Organize and provide a Soil Health & Water Conservation workshop.

### 4. Education

Education is a main focus for the districts. By educating students, while young, it helps them to understand the importance of being good stewards of the land. Education is encouraged by providing scholarships, poster and speech contests, Land & Soil Evaluation Event, and more. Education to the general public includes press releases, newsletters, active website, workshops and Local Work Group Input Meeting.

## FY2023 Revenue 7/1/22 - 6/30/23

\$ 24,119.08	State- Base, Match & Operating Funds
\$ 7,000.00	County Appropriations
\$ 1,479.53	Tree Sale Profits
\$ 21,481.36	Administrative Funds from Boat Station
\$ 2,436.87	Admin Fees Direct Seed & Cover Crop Project
\$ 450.00	Admin Fees for LSEE
\$ 5,500.00	Admin Fees for WQPA
<b>\$ 49,828.59</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

## District Operations / Accomplishments

### Awards Banquet

In the summer of 2023 Mini-Cassia Soil and Water Conservation Districts held their annual Awards Banquet. West Cassia recognized Kathy Poulton, an active supervisor of 14 years. Kathy passed away May 27, 2023. Kathy served as the treasurer for 11 years and helped with many projects including educational activities, tree sale distribution, the Land & Soil Evaluation Event, financial matters and personnel support. There will be a scholarship awarded in Kathy's name in the Spring of 2024.

West Cassia presented Ken Black with his 10-year service pin and Jordan Searle with his 5-year service pin. They also recognized Doreen McMurray for 30 years as the Information & Education Specialist. West Cassia welcomed a new board member, Chad Searle. The banquet was a success.

### Seedling Tree Sale

In early spring, the 3 Districts in the Mini-Cassia area held their annual Seedling Tree Sale. The three districts managed to sell over 3,010 seedlings of the 11 different varieties offered. We worked with landowners who are dedicated to implementing good conservation practices. This year each of the three districts profited \$1,479.53.

Income from the tree sale is used to help encourage good conservation practices in the community and help with student awards such as: college scholarships, Know Your Government (KYG) scholarships, Natural Resources Camp (NRC) scholarships, as well as prizes for speech and poster contest winners.



**Board/Business Meetings**

West Cassia SWCD holds monthly board meetings with agendas posted at offices and on the website. Supervisors and district employees attended the Fall 2022 Division IV meeting hosted by Balanced Rock SWCD and the Spring 2023 Division IV meeting hosted by Minidoka SWCD. Division IV hosted the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual IASCD Conference in Burley Idaho in November 2022. The theme was “Tomorrow’s Agriculture - Today’s Reality Check”. The Educational Banquet and Conservation Speech Contest, where high school students representing different areas from around Idaho, competed for scholarship money prizes. Conference keynote speaker was Dave Holtom (CEO for Valley Wide Co-Op & Valley Agronomics) and then included a tour of the Valley Agronomics Fertilizer Co-Op. Other tours spotlighting Southern Idaho included Ward Robotic Dairy, Amalgamated Sugar Factory and a Wet Lands & Striker House Tour. The Idaho District Employee Association (IDEA) held a training workshop with a luncheon, awards and prizes for employees. Districts held their Annual Business Meeting addressing recommended changes to the By-laws. The conference ended with the Awards Banquet. The Idaho District Employee Association honored Doreen McMurray as their IDEA Employee of the Year 2022 for the state of Idaho.

The districts published a Conservation Update Newsletter 3 times a year to approximately 1,000 landowners. All district financial information and documents are available for public review.

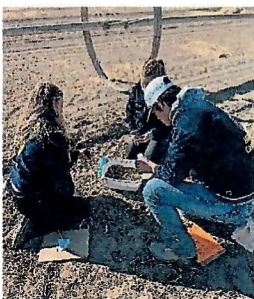
**Operations**

The district continues to run from a temporary office in the Cassia County Court House. In February, board supervisors met with elected Cassia County Commissioners to review the proposed budget and activities as a basis for requesting county funding. The district requested \$1,000.00 increase for the upcoming fiscal year. The districts completed yearly reports due to ISWCC and completed a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024. West Cassia SWCD has an official financial audit conducted each year. The audit review and findings are available for public review.

**Education and Outreach**

West Cassia awarded 4 college scholarships to Falon Bedke, Cooper Beene, Sadie Williams, and Kelcee Burton. West Cassia contributed to Idaho Ag in the Classroom, Envirothon, Idaho State Forestry Contest, Know Your Government and Natural Resource Camp.

West Cassia hosts the Idaho State FFA & 4-H Land & Soil Evaluation CDE providing contest planning, fundraising and volunteers. Rigby FFA placed 1<sup>st</sup> (pictured below) and Kuna FFA placed 2<sup>nd</sup>. Over 25 volunteers assisted, including SWCD District Supervisors, County Commissioners, and soil scientists.



Rigby FFA - 2022 1<sup>st</sup> Place Team

**Projects**

The Mini-Cassia Direct Seed & Cover Crop Project is managed by the 3 Soil Districts in Cassia and Minidoka Counties. 2022 was the 8<sup>th</sup> year to rent out the seed drills to landowners. Districts continued promoting good soil health practices which benefit landowners in many ways. Some benefits include improved water infiltration and increased water holding capacity of the soil, reducing the loss of top soil from blowing winds, and improving air quality and individual health. An annual Soil Health workshop is held in the first quarter of each year to help inform and educate those interested in how cover crop planting aids soil health. The 8<sup>th</sup> Soil Health Workshop was held in January 2023 with the theme of “Managing Water for Tomorrow’s Agriculture”.



West Cassia partnered with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture for the 6<sup>th</sup> year to run The Cotterell Invasive Species Watercraft Inspection Station. The station runs on a calendar year, they opened on March 6, 2023. As of December 10, 2023, they inspected a total of 5,441 water craft, of which 367 came from infested waters. They hot-washed 215 water craft. Law enforcement returned 441 drive-by boats and assisted in keeping our employees safe. The district was responsible for day-to-day operations at the station, managing employees, finances and payroll. As of December 1, 2023 the district has received \$21,481.36 in administrative funds from the project.



2022 Idaho State Land & Soil Evaluation Event

**West Cassia SWCD Board of Supervisors**

Richard Kunau	Chairman	137 N Hwy 77 Declo, ID 83323	richardkunau@gmail.com
Jordan Searle	Vice-Chairman	635 South 450 East Burley, ID 83318	jordansearle@gmail.com
Ken Black	Treasurer	352 S Hwy 27 Burley, ID 83318	ken.nina@msn.com
Chad Searle	Member	796 S 550 E Burley, ID 83318	farmer.campesino@gmail.com