

WOOD FAMILY AND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP BUILD UNIQUE BARN, MANAGE LIVESTOCK WASTE



Naples, Idaho - Several years ago Liz and Bert Wood began thinking about moving the location of the livestock barn where they kept their weaned calves during the cold, wet North Idaho winter months. There was more than one reason to do so.

First, their barn was located near a stream, causing concern about water quality impacts. In addition, the Woods' home ranch in Naples was 40 miles away from their barn and winter-feeding operation in Sandpoint. Commuting back and forth was time-consuming and burdensome.

So they decided to phase-out the old barn and build a new one at the home ranch in Naples - one that employed a clever waste-management technology. The design incorporated a removable, slatted floor built out of 4x6 lumber, allowing cattle waste to drop into a concrete pit to collect for eventual land-application.

The Woods approached the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission to help fund the waste-management aspect of their project. They worked with NRCS to develop a conservation plan for the home ranch, and received cost-share assistance from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Boundary

Soil Conservation District provided information about a low-interest loan from the Conservation Commission's Resource Conservation and Range Development Program (RCRDP). Under this program, they obtained a \$75,000 loan to help build the \$160,000 facility. They also harvested, milled and used lumber from their own property.

Because of their savvy partnership, creative ideas and funding strategy, the Woods have received kudos from the Conservation Partnership.

"We learned from the Woods about the design. It's a pretty neat system that collects and contains the manure," said Anna Marie "Ree" Brannon, district conservationist for NRCS in Boundary County.

Periodically, floor boards are removed, and the waste is extracted from the pit and used as fertilizer on the Woods' property. Under the Woods' conservation plan, NRCS developed a nutrient management plan prescribing the land application of the manure. The Plan helps calculate how much manure can be spread over their 240-acre ranch over a given amount of time without impacting ground water.

The Woods are "awesome producers -- it shows up in everything they do," Brannon said.

Terry Hoebelheinrich, RCRDP loan officer for the Conservation Commission, said the Commission was excited to provide a low-interest loan to the Woods family for the waste-management facility. The project is unique, and is an example of how the Conservation Commission can expand its reach to help ranchers and farmers achieve their conservation goals through the RCRDP low-interest loan program.

"This project definitely was different than what we typically fund, but it has a lot of conservation benefits," Hoebelheinrich said. "We've funded a lot of irrigation systems, but those projects have been mostly in southern Idaho. People will be surprised to learn we can fund a lot of different things to help farmers and ranchers do projects and in the process, realize their conservation goals."

"We want farmers and ranchers to know that not only do we have funds available, but we're also encouraging non-traditional types of projects to help landowners with their conservation work."

The RCRDP loan program offers low-interest loans up to \$200,000 for individual projects or \$300,000 maximum. The loan terms vary. Loan rates are:

- 2.5 percent for a 1-7 year term
- 3 percent for an 8-12 year term
- 3.5 percent for a 13-15 year term

Statewide, applications for loan projects that involve livestock management are increasing, Hoebelheinrich said. These include fencing off streams to prevent livestock from staying too long in riparian areas and waste-management systems.



Tractor-access to pit for removing manure

The Conservation Commission also provides loans for projects related to irrigation efficiency such as drip irrigation, upgrading from flood irrigation to pivots, installing solar-powered stock-water pumping operations, purchasing no-till drills, funding lime treatments to improve soil pH, pre-commercial thinning of timber, and more.

“Generally, if it fits into a conservation plan, the project is eligible,” Hoebelheinrich said. “We can supply funding to an eligible borrower to be used with NRCS funds, or fund a portion or an entire project as long as it fits within our \$200,000 per project limit.”

If landowners have an idea for a conservation project they think might be eligible, they should contact Hoebelheinrich to discuss their idea in detail. Terry can be reached at terry.hoebelheinrich@swc.idaho.gov or by calling 208-332-1790.

Landowners must work with the NRCS or Commission staff and develop a conservation plan to apply for a RCRDP low-interest loan. Because the Commission loans public funds, there are additional criteria on the website (www.swc.idaho.gov/what-we-do/conservation-loans), none of which were deal-breakers for the Woods.

The Woods’ conservation plan also included fencing to keep livestock back from Deep Creek, a 303(d) listed stream that supports bull trout, a federally listed threatened species. Their project also included some stream bank-stabilization and willow-planting, as well as a hardened livestock crossing on the Creek to prevent sedimentation when cattle cross it.

Liz Wood said the barn and waste-management project has been beneficial for their operations. Their calves have higher weight gains from indoor winter feeding which should result in more income from cattle sales, helping offset the cost of the RCRDP loan. “It was very valuable for us to be able to obtain this loan at such a low interest rate,” she said

Building the barn and waste-management facility was a collaborative effort that benefits their ranch, she said. “This is the third barn that we’ve built, and each time we do it, we’ve redesigned things to make it a little bit better,” Wood said. “We get so much rainfall up here in the winter, it’s really great to have our cattle under a roof.”

As part of the project, the Woods have donated about \$30,000 of labor, she said. “My husband, Bert, put in lots of hours hauling all kinds of construction materials on and off the site and helping with the construction, and our daughters and I helped with the clean up during construction. We’ve been pretty busy with all of it, but now that it’s done, it looks really nice.” □



Livestock feed from manger and waste drops through slots in the floor into the collection pit

**LOW INTEREST LOANS
IDAHO CONSERVATION
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- No-Till Drills
- Livestock Feeding Operations
- Fences
- Solar Stock Water Pump Systems

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**STATE ENDOWMENT FORESTS
LIVE ON AFTER WILDFIRES**

Excellent work is also being done by our sister state agencies that reflects Conservation the Idaho Way. This month we feature the efforts of the Idaho Department of Lands. - Editor

Intense wildfire can have a devastating effect on Idaho forests if they’re not actively managed before and after fires.

Day in and day out, foresters and staff with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) work to harvest and regenerate trees on one million acres of state endowment forests to make money for Idaho public schools. The lands were given to Idaho at statehood to generate income for schools in perpetuity from the management of the lands.

While most of the harvesting and replanting happens before wildfire when the trees are alive – thus reducing the risk of the forests burning because of fuel reduction – the State focuses on active management after the wildfire too by removing dead, insect-prone burned trees and replanting healthy new ones.

In August 2013, intense lightning-caused fires ripped through 400,000 acres of forest and brush

in southern Idaho, burning a 6,000 acre block of state endowment forests along with it. Within a matter of weeks, the IDL made modifications to two existing timber sale contracts and prepared new timber salvage sales on the burned forests.

Harvesting of 40 million board feet of burned timber has begun and will continue into next summer near the town of Prairie.

But active forest management isn’t just about harvesting trees to support schools, jobs, and the economy. In keeping with a Constitutional mandate to manage the lands for health and productivity for years to come, the IDL will plant millions of tree seedlings on state endowment forests every year. Natural regeneration also occurs when foresters leave trees still capable of dropping their own seeds.

The sales generated more than \$5 million additional revenue for the public school endowment fund this fiscal year.

The management that takes place on state endowment forests illustrates the IDAHO WAY of conserving forest health on a landscape level while supporting jobs and making money for schools, too! □



NOVEMBER DISTRICT TRAINING & REGULAR MEETING

Join us in Boise during the
Idaho Association of Soil
Conservation Districts'
Annual Conference

SUNDAY
November 17, 2013

**IDEA Training
Topics include:**

- Video Conferencing
- Website Instruction
- Website Building

TUESDAY
November 19, 2013
11:00 -12:30

**Commission Meeting &
Listening Session**



Chairman Norman Wright (middle) visits bank stabilization project with Bill Lillibridge (left) and Terry Hoebelheinrich

STAFF PROFILE

TERRY HOEBELHEINRICH Loan Officer

Commission Loan Officer Terry Hoebelheinrich is a man of few words, great depth, and integrity. We depend on Terry for logical, thorough analyses of whatever we throw at him and for a quirky sense of humor. - Editor

Where do you live and work? I live in Eagle and work in the Boise office.

Briefly describe your job responsibilities. I'm a loan officer and manage the Resource Conservation and Range Development Program.

What do you like about your job? I like to find financial solutions to people's conservation dreams.

What are your passions in life? I'm an avid reader of World War II history. I acquire books faster than I can read them.

What is your favorite thing about Idaho? I grew up on a southern Idaho desert and I gravitate toward the mountains and forests.

What's the favorite conservation project you've worked on for the commission and why? I worked on an animal feeding operation in Boundary County in north Idaho (see cover story on the Woods on



page one). It was a different project and a different location in the state than we typically see with the RCRDP program. I like to see participation in our program from the entire state of Idaho.

Tell us about your family . . . Married? Children? Grandchildren? I'm married without children.

If money were no object, what would you do to improve the farms, ranches or natural resources in your area? I would offer technical services for small irrigated acreages. There is tremendous potential for improved management of the soil and water resources, weed management and crop productivity. The productive potential of the land and water resources is misunderstood and greatly underutilized. □

GOVERNOR NAMES CHAIRMAN WRIGHT TO POWER COUNTY COMMISSION

Congratulations to Chairman Norman Wright! His appointment is a great thing for Power County and for voluntary conservation in Idaho. He joins ISWCC's Commissioner Dave Radford, also a county commissioner, in spreading the Conservation the Idaho Way message to county colleagues. Counties in Idaho play an active role in the support of conservation districts. - Editor

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter announced the appointment today of American Falls City Councilman H. Norman Wright to a vacancy on the Power County Commission.

The Democrat will fill the remaining term of Commissioner Vicki Meadows, who

resigned October 1 to move to a home outside Power County's District 2. The term expires in January 2015.

Wright resigned on Monday from his nearly ten-year seat on the American Falls City Council to accept the new position. The retired executive director of the U.S. Farm Service Agency in Power County remains chairman of the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, to which he was appointed in 2011.

The Boise State University graduate previously farmed in the Caldwell area. □

FALL DIVISION MEETINGS

Idaho's 50 Conservation Districts - give or take a few - are members of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts (IASCD). Every fall and spring IASCD holds six regional Division meetings around the state.

In addition to bringing districts up to speed on Commission activities, this year we asked districts to tell us what could be improved in our technical assistance request process.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

DIVISION 1: Don't require letters of support from the community, change the points system to de-emphasize community support, the process shouldn't make districts feel "like children" having to justify things, replace Technical Assistance Work Group (TAWG) with a review by technical experts from NRCS/DEQ, etc.

DIVISION 2: District and/or ISWCC field staff should be available to assist in the ranking of technical aspects, the TAWG participation is good - like the allocation of ISWCC staff time, meetings should be scheduled at a different time of year, total available staff hours should be determined and each Division should award districts a percentage of time (divisions should develop division-specific criteria and make the recommendation to the Commission).

DIVISION 3: Commission shouldn't require Divisions to rank projects - it should be the Commission's job. Districts will live with that decision.

DIVISION 4: Districts need to work together to allocate hours to each district. Like regional evaluation and recommendation. Locally-driven TAWG is import-

ant. Smaller districts almost always have difficulty competing and need methodology to help them. Small districts need opportunity to develop capacity. Need education on how to use Commission's services: distribute info on how other districts used technical assistance in FY 2014. Districts should mentor districts and collaborate on projects with Commission facilitating. Delwyne Trefz should video conference with districts considering possible requests for projects and technical assistance. Commission should share success stories to model ideas for districts. Technical assistance should be allocated more than once a year.

DIVISION 5: Overall allocation of field staff hours should be distributed equally to districts without specifying how hours will be spent. Each district decide how to assign Commission staff time according to their needs. Greater flexibility in the process is needed. Commission staff should not be required to track hours. Unused hours should be put into a pool and be transferable between districts (to be paid back the following year).

DIVISION 6: Allow for more flexibility. Unallocated time to Commission staff in another Division should be transferable between Divisions. Commission should have more engineering time available. The simpler the request application, the better. One page requests would be preferred.

MEETING RECAP

DIVISION 1: Congratulations to newly elected IASCD Division 1 officials: Director Billie Brown, Alternate Director Tom Daniel, IDEA Director Bob Flagor, and Rene Riddle, Alternate Director. Congrats also to Kootenai-Shoshone District Supervisor Doug England, awarded a scholarship from IASCD to attend the annual conference in Boise Nov. 17-19. Representatives from

the Restoration Partnership and the Department of Environmental Quality also gave presentations.

DIVISION 2: Congratulations to re-elected Director Steve Becker. The Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District hosted the meeting in Orofino. Districts reported on their efforts over the field season. Representatives from the Palouse Land Trust and Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust gave presentations on conservation easements.

DIVISION 3: Congratulations to new Division 3 Director Art Beal (Squaw Creek District), alternate Director Mike Somerville (Canyon District), Secretary Art Beal (he will hold both offices), and Treasurer Chuck Kiester (Owyhee District).

DIVISION 4: No elections were held this year. Steve Schuyler (NRCS) made a presentation on cover crops and soil health. IDEA recognized several administrative assistants for their years of service.

DIVISION 5: IASCD President Kit Tillotson was re-elected to serve another term as Division 5 Director. His alternate is Bret Leschen, and Kevin Coster was elected to serve on the Commission's District Allocation Work Group and TAWG. Garth Boehme was elected to the Resolutions Committee. Jennifer Jensen, District Supervisor, was awarded a scholarship by the Division to attend the IASCD Conference. Congratulations to all!

DIVISION 6: No elections were held in Division 6 this year. Troy Saffle (DEQ) gave an update on the 319 grant program and the High Country RC&D reviewed a number of collaborative projects undertaken with meeting host Teton District. Following the meeting, a tour was held of stream bank restoration, hoop house, Brucellosis fencing, fuels management and ag energy projects. □

COMMISSION

H. Norman Wright, *Chairman*
Roger Stutzman, *Vice Chairman*
Jerry Trebesch, *Secretary*
Dick Bronson, *Commissioner*
Dave Radford, *Commissioner*
Teri Murrison, *Administrator*



SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Conservation the Idaho Way: Sowing Seeds of Stewardship