

Mini-Cassia Conservation Update

Summer 2020
Volume No. 2020.2



East Cassia, West Cassia, & Minidoka Soil and Water Conservation Districts

DISTRICT ACTIVITY DURING COVID-19

Soil & Water Conservation District activities continue despite office lock down requirements and activity cancellations due to the Covid-19 spread. You can still rent the drill and reach us by phone:

Burley office 208-572-3375
Minidoka office 208-436-4202

We are continuing with our Soil Health program which includes planning for our yearly **Soil Health Workshop** and the rental of our **Direct Seed Drills**. You can reserve one of the drills by calling either office. Leave a clear message if no one answers. We will get back to you. West Cassia continues management of the Invasive Species Watercraft Inspection Station at the Cotterel Port of Entry and most district business is continuing as usual.

Both the Awards Banquet and the Family Summer Picnic were canceled because of Covid-19 but the awards have been presented individually. See later in this newsletter for awards photos.

The 2020 Annual Seedling Tree Sale was a great success. Districts continue to provide trees and shrubs to the public for wind-breaks, shelterbelts, and habitat or beautification plantings. Start planning now for next year's seedling trees. Orders will be accepted beginning in February 2021.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Minidoka SWCD presented a college scholarship to Dillon Ball. Dillon Ball graduated from Minico High School in 2020. Dillon played varsity basketball for 2 years, enjoys fishing camping and dirt-bike riding. He has a love for classic cars, and owns a 1970 Thunderbird. Dillon is an active member of FFA and entered potato and beet projects in the fair. Dillon's award was presented at the



Minidoka County Fair by Chairman Brian Kossman and Treasurer LaNae Nalder.

East & West Cassia SWCDs presented scholarships to Riley Rigby of Malta. Riley has been active in the Raft River chapter of FFA and served as secretary for one year. Riley has earned his Eagle Scout Rank working on the California Trail and served 2 years in the Philippines spending time implementing self-reliant stewardship projects. Riley is planning to attend BYU-I this fall majoring in Agri-Business. Riley's scholarships were presented at the East Cassia Board Meeting by East Cassia Chairman Mark Webb.



NOXIOUS WEEDS - BE ON THE OFFENSIVE ATTACK

Eradication of noxious weeds is everyone's responsibility. Noxious weeds and invasive plants are one of the largest disruptors of ecosystem function. They reproduce rapidly and out-compete native species. If you have questions about weeds in your area, contact the Cassia County Weed Control at 208-878-4043.

Be on the lookout for **Houndstongue** (*Cynoglossum officinale*). Houndstongue is a biennial plant that grows from 1 to 4 feet tall and reproduces by seed. Leaves are rough, long (resembles a hounds tongue), and somewhat hairy. The flowers of this enemy are reddish-purple and form 4 prickly nutlets, each about 1/3 inch long with barbs that allow it to cling onto clothing, fur, shoelaces - and anything that brushes against it.

Houndstongue is toxic to animals as it causes liver damage. One of the ways that animals eat it is by indirect ingestion through weedy bailed hay and alfalfa.

Continued on page 5.



District Board of Supervisors

East Cassia SWCD

Chairman..... Mark Webb
 Vice-Chair..... Steve Ward
 Sec/Treasurer Ken Woodworth
 Member..... Hannah Sanders
 Member Rob Cottle
 Associate Member
 Associate Member

West Cassia SWCD

Richard Kunau
 Jordan Searle
 Kathy Poulton
 Brent Stoker
 Ken Black

Minidoka SWCD

Brian Kossman
 Dusty Wilkins
 LaNae Nalder
 Aaron Firth
 Luke Adams
 Justin Hunter
 Russ Suchan

District Employees

Megan Heward.....Cassia Financial Assistant
 Sharon Hardy.....Minidoka Administrative Assistant
 LaRae Warren.....Cassia Administrative Assistant
 Doreen McMurray.....Cassia Information & Education Specialist
 Melanie Nebeker.....Soil Conservation Technical Assistant

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Personnel

David Mabey.....District Conservationist
 Carolyn FirthISWCC Ag Program Specialist
 Dinah Reaney.....Soil Conservationist
 Haydn Carson.....Soil Technician
 Nathan Huber.....Soil Conservationist

CONTACT OUR OFFICES:

Rupert Field Office 208-436-4202

Burley Field Office 208-572-3375

Minidoka e-mail: minidokaswcd@gmail.com

Cassia e-mail: ewcswcd@gmail.com

Web page: www.minicassiaswcd.com

Spanish translation is available in the office upon request.

SUPERVISOR BOARD MEETINGS

Supervisors for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are landowners in Cassia and Minidoka Counties who volunteer their time. They are interested in farming issues and want to make a positive difference in their communities.

Serving as a Supervisor is a great opportunity to learn how to improve your own operation as well as helping to make a difference within your community.

If you are interested in serving on the Soil & Water Conservation District in your county, contact a current board member or call one of the NRCS offices for information.

Monthly Board Meetings

(Public Welcome)

East Cassia SWCD - 1st Tuesday of ea month

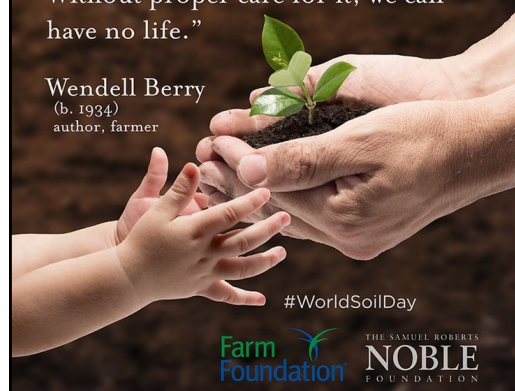
West Cassia SWCD - 2nd Tuesday of ea month

Minidoka SWCD - 2nd Thursday of each month



"The soil is the great connector of lives,
 the source and destination of all ...
 Without proper care for it, we can
 have no life."

Wendell Berry
 (b. 1934)
 author, farmer



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The "Conservation Update" is published 3 times a year by the East Cassia, West Cassia, & Minidoka Soil and Water Conservation Districts and mailed to approximately 1,000 landowners, and sent by email to several hundred more. The distribution mailing list is maintained by the Information & Education Specialist in Burley, Idaho. Names may be added to or removed from the mailing list for the next publication by calling 208-572-3369.

East Cassia, West Cassia, & Minidoka Soil and Water Conservation Districts are non-profit organizations. All programs and services of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

DIVISION IV MEETING HELD

The Division IV Spring Meeting was held on March 12, 2020 and sponsored by Snake River SWCD. Ten of the eleven Soil Districts in Division IV were represented. Richard Kunau, West Cassia SWCD Chairman, also serves as the Division IV Chairman and was in charge of the meeting. Supervisors from each District gave activity updates. Agency reports were presented by the IASCD, NRCS, and the ISWCC.

A Water Irrigation presentation was given by Mike Humphries and Mike Cothorn of the Twin Falls USDA office. Linda Schott, Assistant Professor and Nutrient and Waste management Extension Specialist, spoke about the Division IV Soil Testing Project. The Soil Testing Project is a great example of how districts can work together.



Minidoka Soil & Water Conservation District Display Booth at the Minidoka County Fair July 2020.

Supervisor BROOK HOLTMAN Retires From East Cassia Board

Brook Holtman has served on the East Cassia Board of Supervisors for 5 years. Brook has enjoyed the educational programs for youth hosted by the Districts and has taken special interest in FFA students participating in our Conservation Speech Contests. THANK YOU for your service Brook and good luck ahead.



West Cassia Supervisor / Chairman RICHARD KUNAU Honored for 15 Years of Service

Richard Kunau began serving on the West Cassia Board in January of 2005. He had always been curious about the Soil and Water Conservation District. Serving on the board gives him a chance to be involved in the farming community in a positive



West Cassia Supervisor Brent Stoker presents 15 Yr. Service Pin to Richard Kunau.

way. Richard likes being able to learn about new farming methods, and getting to know new people. Richard would like to see the current district activities continued as well as look for ways to increase funding through grants. Richard's farming experience goes way back. He started working with his brother as a young teenager in Jr. High school. They raise malt barley and alfalfa and they have custom farmed 6,000 acres of corn, alfalfa, and barley for Oak Valley Dairy. Recently, Richard has been employed by Artema Dairy managing farming operations and employees.

Richard has 2 daughters, Delaney and Rayn. Richard enjoys snowmobiling and following his girls to activities. He enjoys farming, working on equipment, implementing new ideas and improvements, and especially enjoys the planning stages of preparing for each new season. Richard is also currently serving as chairman of the Direct Seed & Cover Crop Project along with Chairman for Division IV and serves as Treasurer on the IASCD Board of Directors. Richard has served as Chairman of the West Cassia Soil District for 14 out of the 15 years he has served on West Cassia's Board. He has appreciated the opportunity to learn from the current board members. Congratulations & thanks to Richard for his dedicated service.

EAST CASSIA WELCOMES 2 NEW SUPERVISORS

Rob Cottle began serving on East Cassia's Board Spring of 2020. Rob was raised on a small cattle ranch in Malta. After graduating from high school and spending a year in college, where he met his wife Sheryl, Rob joined the United States Army. After bouncing around the country and dragging their 3 children (Hailey, Megan, and Justin) along for the ride, he decided after 24 years, it was time to retire and start a new adventure. In August of 2012, they moved back to Malta to be the 3rd generation to run the family cattle ranch.

Upon returning, Rob soon learned that he "had a lot to learn!" No matter how good a plan he thought he had, nothing ever went as planned. Things break down, water doesn't go far enough, cattle get out, and the wind never stops blowing! Thankfully his wife and kids keep him focused and moving forward.

Besides ranching, Rob is currently serving on the Raft River Flood Board and sits on the advisory board for Cassia 43C Water District. Rob is looking forward to serving on the East Cassia Soil & Water Conservation District Board and working to keep farming and ranching alive for future generations.



Official welcome to Hannah Sanders by East Cassia Chairman, Mark Webb at their monthly board meeting.

Hannah Sanders works on her family farm in Raft River. She began serving on the East Cassia Board Fall of 2019. Hannah believes that we need to learn everything we can and help educate other farmers (as well as those who are not part of farming) about the resources available to us. (Hannah's spotlight was printed in our Spring 2020 newsletter.)



Welcome to Rob Cottle, new East Cassia Supervisor, presented by East Cassia Chairman Mark Webb.

CONSERVATION STEWARDS:

Awards for each soil district were presented in smaller settings due to Covid-19 cancelation of the Awards Banquet and the Summer Family Picnic. Each district selected a land owner who is showing initiative through improving conservation practices in their operation and are examples of good stewards in their communities.



L to R: Caleen & DelRay Heward, Carolyn & Aaron Heward, (Cooperators of the Year) and West Cassia Chairman Richard Kunau.

West Cassia: DelRay & Aaron Heward

Aaron grew up farming with his Dad DelRay, and his uncles farming hay, beans, and corn. They ran a small dairy farm and then worked raising cash crops. They are now experimenting with efficient feed for “low line” angus cows.

Aaron and DelRay now run the family cattle operation where they no longer feed hay to their cattle. Their livestock are fed year round strictly by cover crop grazing. They worked under the theory that 1 acre can feed 1 cow for 1 year. They want to raise healthy cows on a larger scale. So, they began their search for pieces of farm ground or pastures that were not currently being

farmed that could be utilized for their year round cover crop grazing. When they see an area of unused corrals or small parcels of ground, they contact the owner and ask to manage their land. Some of these properties are not acceptable for immediate grazing, so the Hewards are experimenting with cover crops that improve the soil. They let the plants do the excavation and turn these old road or storage sites into good soil and pasture fields. They have also experimented with cover crop mixes on dormant winter land.

The Hewards learn everything they can about cover crops for livestock. They have experimented with warm season cover crops and inner seeding into cool season pastures. Their goal is to increase diversity in their pastures to improve animal health. They want to raise high quality beef, using year-round cover crops without any inputs. Aaron loves working with his Dad DelRay, because he is open minded to new ideas. They make a great team. Congratulations to Aaron and DelRay Heward – West Cassia’s Cooperators of the Year.



Left - Minidoka Chairman Brian Kossman, Center - Josh & Emily Kowitz with their 3 children, and Right, LaNae Nalder, Minidoka Treasurer.

Minidoka: Josh Kowitz

Josh Kowitz was raised in Declo, Idaho. He grew up on a farm and sheep ranch. That is where Josh found his passion in farming and ranching. Before venturing on his own, Josh worked for Whitesides Dairy, John Deere and Grant 4-D. Besides custom work, Kowitz Farms now raises beans, sugar beets, barley, corn, and alfalfa. Raising cattle as Keystone Cattle is Josh’s new desire.

Josh currently serves as Board of Directors for Minidoka Irrigation district. He has served on the Farm Bureau Board for 13 years. Josh is always willing to lend a hand.

Josh is married to Emily and they have 3 children. Their 2 daughters are involved in 4-H and love to follow their dad’s footsteps in showing sheep and raising

beets. Josh’s son can’t wait until next year, when he is able to participate in 4-H with his sisters. Congratulations to Josh Kowitz, Minidoka’s Conservation Steward of the Year.

East Cassia: George & Gwen Montgomery

George and Gwen Montgomery began farming in 1974 on the farm George grew up on. They currently run 150 mother head of cows on leased property including Skaggs 6S Ranch land along with 70 acres of their own.

Marsh Creek runs the entire length of the Montgomery's property. Over the years, they have seen the banks of Marsh Creek erode away. They decided to begin a Creek Restoration Project on 25-30 acres of Marsh Creek banks connected to their property. They worked extensively with NRCS and other agencies to develop their restoration plan. They fenced the creek to control grazing on both sides of the creek and have built structures including rock-tows and drops. They have cut and planted hundreds of willow starts along the banks of the creek.

Installing these structures and willow plantings will slow the creek down. These improvements will encourage water infiltration into the aquifer. In the process, the surrounding banks will hold more water which in turn will raise the surrounding ground water levels substantially. Montgomerys hope that as the creek is slowed, and willows and other plants grow, it will allow for improved environment for fish. Their project will continue as they plant more trees and bushes for wildlife habitat. This project has been a "family project" with help from their daughter Cedar, her husband Nick, and their son Casey.

The Montgomerys are hoping that their pilot project will encourage surrounding landowners to also begin restoration projects to help improve Marsh Creek. Thank you George and Gwen Montgomery for being great stewards of the land!



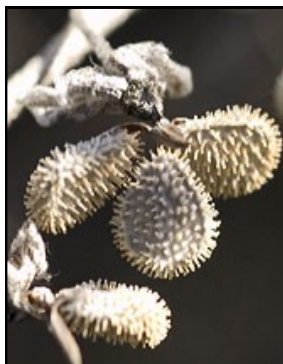
NOXIOUS WEEDS (continued from page 1.)

Houndstongue is mainly spread by wildlife and livestock, but we can find it anywhere humans have visited. The seed can catch a ride on an animal's fur and carried for many, many miles. This plant is extremely mobile and once established, out competes native habitat. It particularly gets dense in riparian (near water) areas as there is an abundance of moisture as well as the seeds get rubbed off of animals by the branches. Because the seed is cased in the hard shell with barbs, the seed can last 7 to 10 years in the soil.



As this is an biennial plant, mechanical control can be quite effective. If you decide to 'dig it' out with a shovel just make sure that you get at least three inches of the root.

Many herbicides are available that work well. Any questions contact Cassia County Noxious Weed Control at 208-878-4043.





NO-TILL DRILLS

There are 2 drills in the Mini-Cassia area for rent from the Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The drills are perfect for direct seeding into grain stubble as well as no-till plantings of oats, barley, pasture mix, alfalfa, forage mix, orchard grass, crested wheat, or any blend of cover crops. Contact the Soil & Water Conservation Districts to reserve a drill.

Minidoka office: 208-436-4202
Cassia office: 208-572-3375

Information is also on our website at
www.minicassiaswcd.com.

Soil Health Workshop information coming soon!

5 Principles of Soil Health

1. **Soil Armor** - Keep soil covered to control weeds, reduce evaporation, maintain soil temperatures, reduce compaction, and more.
2. **Minimize Soil Disturbance** - This allows soil aggregates to rebuild, increases pore spaces, and improves soil productivity.
3. **Plant Diversity** - use crop rotation and cover crops to provide biodiversity and nutrient cycling, improves water infiltration, and reduces disease and pests.
4. **Continual Live Plant/Root** - Plant cover crops during dormant periods and after harvest. Benefits include building soil aggregates, controlling erosion, increasing moisture holding capacity, nutrient management, livestock integration, and more.....
5. **Livestock Integration** - recycles nutrients, minerals, vitamins, and carbon, provides higher nutritional diet for livestock, reduces livestock waste, and controls crop residues.

WELCOME to BOAT STATION MANAGER BETTY CARLSON

We'd like to welcome Betty Carlson as our Invasive Species Boat Inspection Station Manager. Betty grew up with all sisters on a small farm & cattle ranch in Malta and graduated from Raft River High School. She lost her husband of 35 years to cancer. Betty has 2 sons, 2 wonderful daughter-in-laws, and 5 grandkids. She loves Sunday dinners with family. Betty worked harvest for 34 years driving truck. She started working as an invasive species inspector with the Boat Inspection Station in 2012 when it was managed by the Cassia County Noxious Weed Department. She worked as a supervisor for ISDA when they ran the station.

Betty has continued working at the boat station since West Cassia took over management of the station and worked as an inspector and an assistant supervisor. She is now the Managing Supervisor for the boat station and oversees all on site equipment, activities, and personnel issues and scheduling.

Betty originally started working for the boat station just because she needed a job. But now she loves it. Betty says *"We have come so far!"* Originally, they had only a camp trailer, and finally got a shed but they could still only work during daylight hours as there was no electricity or heat. Filling the water tank was a huge job, pulling hoses and hauling tanks, etc.... They finally got a generator and electricity which has been a huge help – providing lights so they could run 24 hours, and no more hauling water from the rest area! They have an improved building now as well.

Betty loves working at the Boat Station. She likes to meet people and enjoys working outside. In her spare time, Betty enjoys gardening, piecing quilts, crocheting, and embroidery.



Welcome to Betty Carlson (Managing Supervisor for the Invasive Species Boat Inspection Station) presented by West Cassia Chairman Richard Kunau.

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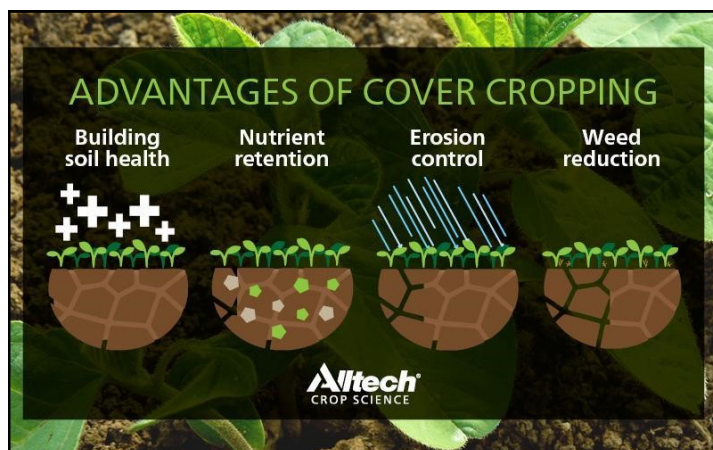
East Cassia - 1st Tuesday of each month.

West Cassia - 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Call 208-572-3375 for details.

Minidoka - 2nd Thursday of each month.

Call 208-436-4202 for details.



Coming Soon:

Soil Health Workshop 2021
Watch our website for details.

Do You Know What's On Our WEBSITE?

*District Supervisor Boards & Meeting information
Direct Seed & Cover Crop Information
Soil Health Workshops
Drill Rental information
Seedling TREE SALE photos & info
Cotterel Invasive Species Boat Inspection Station
Educational Programs
Envirothon
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