

DISTRICT DIRT

PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Spring 2025

*Local Common
Sense Conservation*

Photo Credit: Brenda Brady

2025 Young Ag Conference - PCCD Nomination



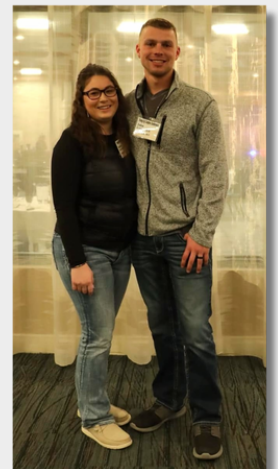
The Young Ag Couples Conference (YACC) was January 29-Feb 1 this year in Helena, Montana. It is designed to assist young ag couples in enhancing their leadership qualities and increasing the awareness of the common bonds they have with other young couples in agriculture.

YACC is sponsored by the Montana Department of Agriculture in cooperation with Montana agriculture organizations. Each year 30-40 couples are chosen. This year the PCCD nominated **Jake & Katie Solomon**.

Jake & Katie are new and have a small operation, with their focus on cattle work and farming. They plant wheat, corn, barley, and more. Both grew up in agriculture. Jake's parents run a ranch that focuses on cows, where Katie's family had both a cattle and farming operation.

“The Young Ag Couples Conference was such a fun event to attend! We made so many connections, learned lots, and got to spend some quality time together! We want to thank the Petroleum County Conservation District for nominating us!

~Katie Solomon



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**Petroleum County
Conservation
District**

Board Member Spotlight ~BRENDA BRADY



Brenda in Spain for work with the US Ski Team

Brenda has been a PCCD supervisor since 2019. She lives and ranches north of Winnett. Along with her sisters, Laura and Carrie, she grew up on her family's ranch and attended school in Winnett. After high school she attended the University of Montana in Missoula where she earned her bachelor's degree in athletic training and master's degree in Exercise Science.

After college Brenda went to work in Grand Junction, Colorado for Mesa State College. She worked as an athletic trainer at MSC and taught courses in the athletic training education program. She also had the opportunity to work with the US Ski Team as a volunteer athletic trainer and travel to competitions with the team.



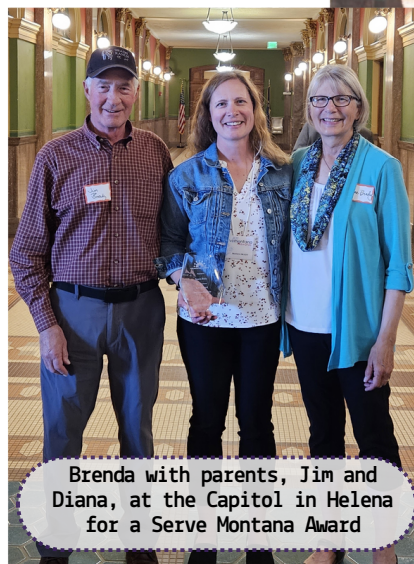
Brenda covering a 4th of July Rodeo in Red Lodge

She really enjoyed working with college athletes and students, but missed Montana and decided to return after four years in CO. Brenda went to work for Billings Clinic as an athletic trainer for the Billings Bulls junior hockey team and later doing outreach to high schools in the outlying area of Billings. With her move back to Montana she was able to spend more time at home on the ranch helping her parents, Jim and Diana Brady, and soon decided that Winnett was where she wanted to call home.

Brenda with her sister, Laura Nowlin



Brenda & sister, Carrie, at a Cat/Griz game in Missoula



Brenda with parents, Jim and Diana, at the Capitol in Helena for a Serve Montana Award



Carrie, Brenda, Jim & Diana hiking in the Judith Mountains



Brenda in Alaska with nephew Jack, niece Anna, and sister, Carrie

Now, Brenda operates a ranch on property that she leases from her family, Jerry and Jody Brady and Jim and Diana. She is loving being a rancher, being back in Winnett, and being able to be involved in the community. Brenda is also on the board of Winnett ACES and was on the initial Petroleum County Community Center board. She continues to work as an athletic trainer, periodically covering high school sporting events and rodeos.



Brady Ranch

VARMINT CONTROL: PART 2



PRAIRIE DOGS

Stephen M. Vantassel, Vertebrate Pest Specialist, MT Dept. of Ag.



Air rifles can provide a low-report option for shooting.

6 FACTS PRAIRIE DOG SHOOTERS NEED TO KNOW

Shooting of prairie dogs has long history in Montana. Residents and out-of-staters alike look forward to the recreational opportunities shooting prairie dogs provides. This article will discuss some tactics that can be used to enhance prairie dog shooting.

FACT #1: Shooting Doesn't Control Prairie Dogs in Large Towns. One researcher reported that shooting only removes about 5% of the town's population. There are several reasons for this low percentage. First, prairie dogs quickly learn to become more wary. By extending the time in their burrow, they can wait out the threat. Second, shooting often causes prairie dogs to expand the town's footprint. By creating a larger footprint, the remaining prairie dogs have greater distance between them and the sentinels can provide earlier warnings when threats in vehicles arrive.

FACT #2: Shooting can Control Prairie Dogs on Small Towns. While shooting is relatively ineffective in large towns, towns less than 16 acres in size can be significantly reduced with heavy shooting for two consecutive years.

FACT #3: When You Shoot Affects Efficacy of Shooting. Prairie dogs do not hibernate. While they may "den up" during periods of harsh weather, they will emerge when the weather improves. This means that when you shoot is determined by the shooter's preferences not the target's. Shooting between March-May increases the chances of shooting pregnant or nursing females, thereby preventing the litter from surviving. Shooting in June and later is not only warmer for the shooter, but also provides more target opportunities because the young have emerged from the burrows. Keep in mind that shooting between May and June will likely be killing juveniles. One researcher found that while only 35% of the prairie dogs were juveniles, 53% of the shot prairie dogs were juveniles. If control is your goal, shoot before May. If entertainment is the goal, shoot after May.

FACT #4: Shooters Are Not as Accurate As They May Think. A survey of 936 shooters at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota found that they discharged 156,307 rounds taking 57,848 prairie dogs. This amounted to 2.7 shots taken for every prairie dog killed. A shot/kill ratio of 3 shots per prairie dog taken also occurred at Fort Belknap in 1999.

Old haybales can be stacked to provide a shooting blind.



FACT #5: Prairie Dogs Can Make You Money. Everyone knows that prairie dogs compete with livestock for forage. But did you know that opening your ground to prairie dog shooters can make you money? One site said that hunts can cost shooters \$300 to \$500 a day. A guide license is not required and the liability insurance rider is less expensive than you might think. If you do not want to deal with the hunters, consider reaching out to the numerous companies that offer prairie dog hunts. Just use search terms "prairie dog shooting Montana" or "prairie dog hunting Montana" for companies that offer prairie dog hunts. Collaborating with neighbors with prairie dogs will make your location more valuable to shooters and guides alike. If you have enough land for shooting to be done safely, etc., then may I suggest that you require all shooters to use non-toxic rounds. With the amount of bullets being discharged in these shoots, it is probably best to not use lead.

FACT #6: Suggestions to Improve Shooter Success. Are there ways to improve the success of shooting to remove prairie dogs? I think there are. First, establish some blinds strategically around the town. Old haybales could fit the bill. These need to be spots where shooters can approach the town without being seen. Second, record shooting sounds with a game caller and play the sounds to condition the prairie dogs to the sounds of gun fire. Third, use guns with low report (e.g. air rifles) or suppressed firearms. Finally, be sure your equipment is fully sighted in. Every missed shot is just another teaching lesson for the prairie dogs and they do take notes.

If you have questions about prairie dog management, contact:

**Stephen M. Vantassel, Vertebrate Pest Specialist, Montana Department of Agriculture,
Lewistown, 406-538-3004 svantassel@mt.gov**

Images. All images by Stephen M. Vantassel, Montana Department of Agriculture

Use a wildlife caller to record shooting sounds and play them to condition prairie dogs to the sounds of shooting.



Invasive Plants

VENTENATA (*VENTENATA DUBIA*)



Ventenata is non-palatable to livestock and wildlife due to its high silica content.

IDENTIFICATION/ORIGIN

Ventenata originates from southern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa. North African grass or wiregrass are other names for ventenata. Ventenata is a winter annual bunchgrass that has open, airy, pyramid-shaped panicle with flower and seed-bearing stems coming off the main stem at almost 90-degree angles, it has a silvery sheen due to microscopic hairs along the plant. This grass has reddish-black nodes, and the awns are bent on upper florets, making it distinguishable from similar species such as cheatgrass.

LEVEL OF INFESTATION IN MONTANA

Ventenata was first found in North America in the early 1950s in Washington and Idaho. Ventenata was first documented in Montana in the mid-1990s when it was only sporadically found in distributed areas. In the 2010s it began to rapidly increase and is present on range and pasture lands and rights-of-way from northwestern to southeastern Montana.



Monoculture of ventenata

REPORTING

To report suspected ventenata plant, contact your local Extension agent or county weed coordinator or the Montana Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed EDRR program at MTEDRR@mt.gov.

Pathways



Hiking, biking, & other trail use



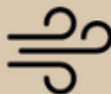
Cars, trucks, trailers, highway vehicles



Livestock or contaminated feed



Vehicles and Equipment



Passive spread (wind/water)

REGIONAL RAMIFICATIONS

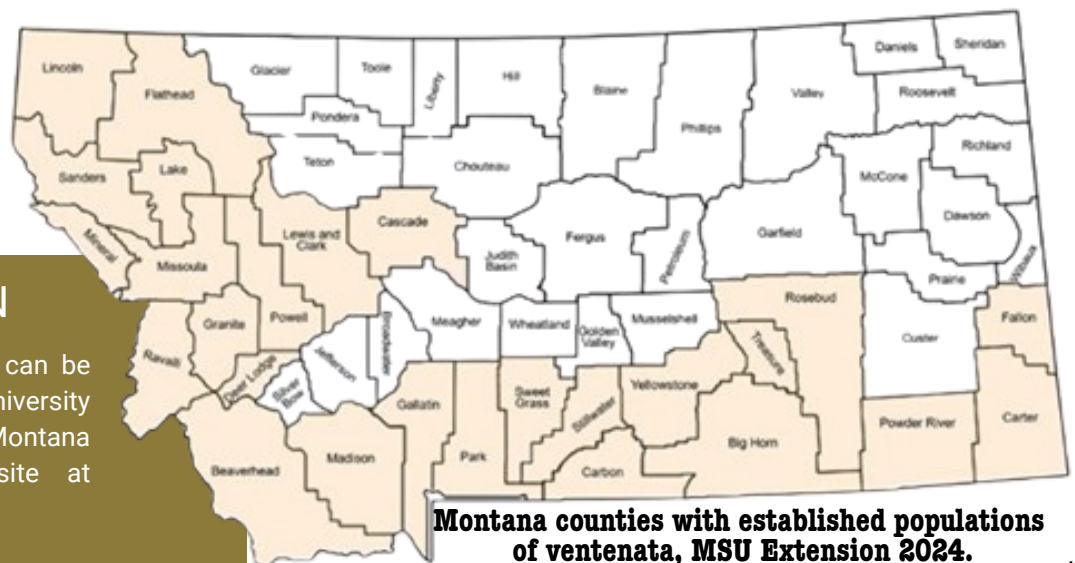
Ventenata infestations lead to reduced rangeland productivity. It is not palatable to cattle, other livestock, and wildlife and this is of particular concern in Montana. In Idaho an estimated reduction of 50% forage yield and crop quality occurred a few years after initial infestations.

IMPACTS

Invasive grasses such as Ventenata may degrade plant communities and reduce suitable habitat for livestock and wildlife.

MORE INFORMATION

More information about ventenata can be found on the Montana State University Extension website or on the Montana Department of Agriculture website at agr.mt.gov/Noxious-Weeds.



Montana counties with established populations of ventenata, MSU Extension 2024.

VIRTUAL FENCE

You've heard the hype...
Now come learn the reality.

TUE, JUNE 10, 2025, 6PM-8PM
Petroleum County Community Center

Join us for a discussion and presentation on this rapidly evolving technology for cattle management.

Presenter: Dr. Sam Wyffels,
MSU Extension Beef Specialist

Virtual fence representatives and producers/current virtual fence users in the area will also be in attendance for Q/A with landowner perspective.

You are also welcome to join the earlier

3-5pm session

Virtual Fence reps will present brief overviews of their products. Individual tables will be set up so attendees can stop by to ask questions.



Petroleum County
Conservation
District

**Catered supper, 5-6pm, at the
PCCC (between sessions) is
SPONSORED by Halter.**



Community Center: 207 East Main Street, Winnett, MT



Ladies Day on the Range

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 11TH, 2025

Topics covered:

- Building a Rural Food Web
- Vermicast for Soil Health
- Cattle parasites, Reproduction, & Breeding

Ladies:

Please bring a lawn chair & you are welcome to join the ACES Pasture Walk in the evening after this event at 6pm! RSVP's not required, but appreciated, so we can plan drinks/snacks accordingly!



Abundant Montana: As Abundant Montana Local Food Coordinators, Olivia Wood and Melodie Snyder work to get more Montana-grown food on every plate in Montana. Abundant Montana is committed to increasing the amount of local food Montanans eat from 3% to 33% by 2033. Toward this goal, Olivia and Melodie work in Central and Eastern Montana to connect food and farm businesses with new consumers and in-state market channels.



Kendall Morgan leads the Winnett ACES Soil Health Program, collaborating closely with ranchers in central Montana. Her role involves guidance in adopting regenerative soil health practices through comprehensive soil mineral and biological testing and strategic planning. Kendall's unwavering commitment is centered on empowering ranchers to nurture their curiosity and enhance their most vital asset—their soil.



Rebecca Woodford, DVM, grew up in Three Forks MT on a commercial cow/calf operation. She graduated from Montana State University with a Bachelor's in Animal and Range Sciences with a focus on livestock management. After attending Montana State, Dr. Woodford attended Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and graduated in 2019. Becca joined Crazy Mountain Vet Service in July of 2019. At CMVS Becca is a mixed animal practitioner and enjoys large animal emergency calls. Becca enjoys spending time with her husband Cedar, daughter Clara, doing all the ranch duties, riding horses, leather working, and taste testing all the delectable food prepared by ranch wives.

Departing from the Winnett NRCS/PCCD
Office at 12:30pm, concludes around 4pm
Location: Charlie & Reba Ahlgren Ranch,
16 miles NE of Winnett, Jitney Rd
~Snacks & drinks will be provided~

For more Info:
Contact the PGCD/NRCS
@ 406.429.6646
petroleumcd@macdnet.org

PEST CONTROL CLASS

BY MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 10, 2025

1PM - 4PM In Winnett

THE PETROLEUM COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER
207 EAST MAIN STREET
WESLEY ROOM

THIS IS A **FREE** CLASS.
APPLICATORS WILL
ALSO RECEIVE 3 CREDITS
TO GO TOWARDS THEIR
APPLICATORS LICENSE!

NOTE:

You do **NOT** need to have an Applicators License to attend this class. **Open to all!** Come and learn about effective pest control methods.



3 CLASSES (3 CREDITS TOTAL)

- COYOTE CONTROL
- VOLE CONTROL
- BAT CONTROL



PRESENTER:

Stephen M. Vantassel, MT Dept. of Ag



EXTENSION



For Questions call the PCCD at 406.429.6646 Ext 104

Fall HOMESTEADING WORKSHOP SOURDOUGH CLASS

Taught by Amanda Flann, As Much As You Knead Owner/Operator



SEPTEMBER 17, 2025, NOON-2PM

PETROLEUM COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER, WINNETT, MT

ABOUT AMANDA

I grew my own sourdough starter in January 2022 after months of dabbling in bread-making, and dove deep into all things sourdough baking. Sourdough bread & pastries were so fun to make (and delicious) that I wanted to share the joy of the traditional sourdough process with others.



TOPICS:

Sourdough Starter:
What is it
How to use it
How to maintain it
Tips/Tricks
Recipes

HOSTED BY THE PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

PETROLEUM CD'S SPRING TREE WORKSHOP



Winnett, along with other communities in central and eastern Montana, faces a shortage of trees, with many of the existing ones aging and requiring significant pruning or removal. There is a pressing need to plant new trees and ensure their ongoing care. To address this, the Petroleum County Conservation District hosted a Tree Workshop in Winnett March 27th at the Petroleum County Community Center.

The workshop covered several topics including tree selection, tree pruning, tree planting and the benefits of shelterbelts/wind breaks. The workshop was led by Patrick Plantenberg, the Chair of the Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association and also the Chair of the Townsend, MT Tree Board.



Patrick introduced urban forestry to the science classes at the Winnett School. Mr. Plantenberg suggested many ways that students could get involved with the possible new Tree Board on tree planting and care programs.



For more TREE INFORMATION and Tree Workshop materials, check out the TREES tab on our website: www.PetroleumCD.org

Announcements & Notices

DISTRICT 411

310 PERMITS are required:

If you are planning any project including the construction of new facilities or the modification, operation, and maintenance of an existing facility that may affect the natural existing shape and form of any stream, its banks or its tributaries. Any private entity or non-governmental individual that proposes to work in or near a stream on public or private land must obtain a 310 permit prior to any activity in or near a perennial stream.

When in doubt please call the Conservation District Office @ 429-6646 ext. 104 for more information.

PCCD Office Hours:
Mon thru Thur, 10am-5pm

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS:

TUESDAY, JUNE 10:

VIRTUAL FENCING WORKSHOP, PCCC, 6 - 8:00PM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11:

LADIES DAY ON THE RANGE, AHLGREN RANCH, 12:30-4:00PM
PASTURE WALK TO FOLLOW AT 6PM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10:

APPLICATORS CLASS, WINNETT PCCC, 1:00-4:00PM
3 APPLICATORS CREDITS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17:

HOMESTEADING WORKSHOP - SOURDOUGH, WINNETT PCCC, 12:00-2:00PM
AS MUCH AS YOU KNEAD - AMANDA FLANN

SEPTEMBER TBD

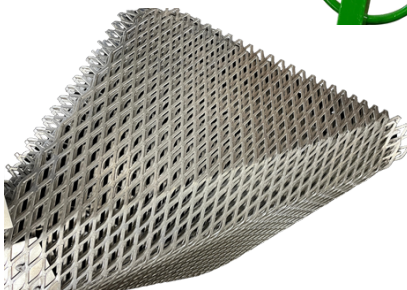
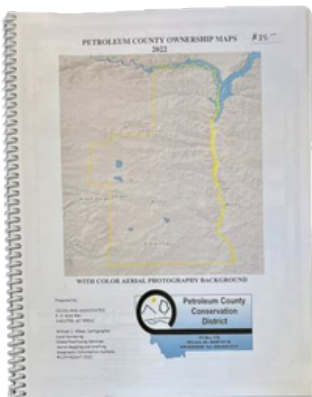
KIDS AG & CONSERVATION EDUCATION DAY



Did you order
TREES??

Trees will be delivered to the PCCD early May. If you ordered trees you will be contacted on the exact delivery day, and invoiced prior to pick up. Payment is due when you pick up your trees.

Items for Purchase or Rent at the PCCD



FOR RENT

Tree Planter

Fabric Layer

Level & Tri-pod

Flow Meter

Rangeland Monitoring Bag

No-Till Drill

EZ Ject (woody invasive species control)

FOR SALE

2023 Land Ownership Maps

Fabric rolls (by roll/foot, depend on size) & fabric staples

Wildlife Escape ramps

Sage Grouse Fence Markers

Gate Closers

****Call the CD Office for availability of all items. Prices are subject to change****

The public is always invited to the Conservation District meetings. Regular meetings are held each month at the USDA/PCCD office up on the hill. Meeting time is usually the last Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. Look for notices posted around Winnett.

All PCCD and NRCS programs are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, nation of origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Petroleum County Conservation District Board

JC King - Chairman, Elected Supervisor
Brenda Brady - Vice-Chairman, Elected Supervisor
Laura Kiehl - Treasurer, Elected Supervisor
Ralph Corbett - Urban Supervisor
Rodney Rowton - Rural Supervisor
Butch Arthur - Urban Supervisor
Tye Lund - Supervisor

VACANT - Associate Supervisor

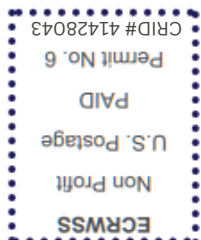
PCCD – NRCS Office Staff

Trish Smith - PCCD Administrator
Katie Lund - PCCD Fiscal Manager
Loyd Bantz - District Technician
Reba Ahlgren - NRCS District Conservationist
Mike Lucas - NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist
Allison Martin - MWC Coordinator
Molly Masters - MRCDC Coordinator
Brent Smith - CEMIST Program Manager
Skylar Stenson - Conservation Technician

If you are interested in joining the PCCD Board, have rental/sale or 310 permit questions, please reach out to the CD:
petroleumcd@macdnet.org, 406-429-6646 ext 104

**For more up to date information on events and meetings please check out the District's:
Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/Petcocd55>
OR Website @ PetroleumCD.org**

Postal Patron



**Petroleum County Conservation District
PO Box 118 Winnett, MT 59087-0118
(406) 429-6646 ext. 104
petroleumcd@macdnet.org**