

DISTRICT DIRT

PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Fall 2026

*Local Common
Sense Conservation*

Photo Credit: Reba Ahlgren



The Petroleum County Conservation District encompasses the county's 1,071,000 acres and the board is comprised of five county elected officials and two appointed city officials. This board is tasked with the education and conservation of the county's natural resources.

The Petroleum County Conservation District through education, outreach and program and project development works hard to put local common sense natural resource conservation on the ground and to educate the current and future producers and landowners on natural resource conservation all while helping them to continue sustainability in their businesses.

The Petroleum County Conservation District regularly partners with other conservation districts, watershed groups, stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, as well as some NGO's and nonprofits to put conservation on the ground.



SNEAK PEEK OF WHAT'S INSIDE

Salinity Workshop	1
Spotlight - Lesley Rolls	2
Japanese Beetle	3-4
Sourdough Workshop	5
Ladies Day on the Range	6
Announcements/Rentals	7
Contact Info/Staff & Board	8

SALINITY WORKSHOP

By Lesley Rolls, PCCD Water Conservation Program Coordinator

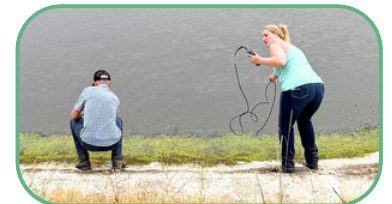


The Petroleum County Conservation District and Montana Salinity Control Association (MSCA) met with local producers on August 28th to host a salinity workshop.

Ashlee, Scott, and Tera with MSCA provided an in-field "Salinity 101," followed by an update on the progress of their airport and well projects. The workshop focused on how groundwater recharge, geomorphology, grazing, and habitat composition all play a role in understanding and reclaiming saline seeps.

Attendees got their hands dirty while learning how MSCA conducts its initial site assessments. Participants worked through water infiltration testing, soil composition, salinity testing, and vegetation sampling, gaining a better understanding of the key indicators MSCA looks for during site visits and how those factors can help determine the best approach for addressing a saline site.

Following the workshop, MSCA visited several local producer properties to look at saline areas and provide recommendations on potential actions they could take to address salinity concerns on their land.



If you have a saline site on your property that you would like MSCA to visit, please reach out to Lesley Rolls at pccdwater@macdnet.org for an application. These site visits and recommendations are provided free of charge to Petroleum County producers.



Petroleum County CD Spotlight - Lesley Rolls



Lesley on Medicine Lake, waterfowl migration monitoring

Lesley Rolls grew up in a small ranching town in California. Her dad, originally from England, came to the U.S. in the early 1980s and worked as a horse trainer and farrier. After graduating high school, Lesley's Dad returned to Europe, and Lesley spent two years living in the south of France as a live-in nanny.

She eventually returned to Montana, where she began working as a backcountry tour guide. After a couple of years, Lesley went back to school at the University of Montana, earning her B.S. in Resource Conservation.

Shortly after graduating, Lesley spent several summers traveling across the U.S. for work, gaining experience with a variety of wildlife species and landscapes, from the wetlands of Florida to the Arctic Circle in Alaska. She eventually returned to Montana full-time to work and pursue her master's degree at Montana State University, earning an M.S. in Land Resources and Environmental Sciences.

Lesley has now called Montana home for 10 years, with the last five spent in Central Montana. She enjoys hiking, traveling, upland hunting with her lab Boog, trail rides, and new opportunities to learn the ins and outs of the agricultural industry.



Lesley took the new PCCD position as the Petroleum CD Water Conservation Program Manager, starting August 2025.

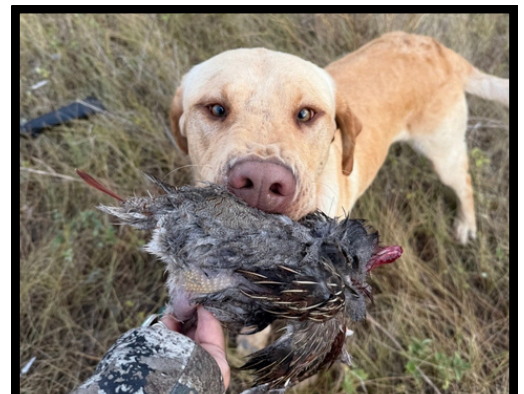
She is excited to take on her new role. With her background in natural resources and ranching, Lesley hopes to bring her technical experience to Petroleum County and work alongside local producers to address irrigation infrastructure repairs, improve water efficiency, and support water conservation efforts throughout the county.



Lesley back country hunting, packing out an elk in the Salmon-Challis Mountains in Idaho



Shorebird monitoring on the arctic national wildlife refuge



Lesley's dog, Boog, with his first Huns last year



JAPANESE BEETLES IN MONTANA: FALL PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

*Figure 1:
Japanese Beetle
& skeletonized
appearance*

*Photo Credit:
Megan Hoyer*



As summer begins to wind down, Montana homeowners, gardeners, landscapers, and nursery operators should keep an eye out for Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*). This invasive insect is a serious plant pest that can damage a wide variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, fruits, vegetables, and turfgrass. Japanese beetles have become established in the Billings area, but preventing their spread to new locations remains an important priority for Montana.

Japanese beetles have a wide host range. Adults feed on numerous plant species, with roses, grapes, cherries, apples, raspberries, and lindens among their preferred hosts. Adults typically emerge from mid to late July and remain active through September. Their feeding creates a characteristic “skeletonized” appearance, where the tissue between leaf veins is consumed while the veins remain intact. Heavy feeding can cause significant defoliation and plant stress.

WHY FALL IS IMPORTANT

While the adult beetles may be disappearing by late September, the problem does not necessarily end. Female beetles lay eggs in the soil, particularly in lawns and other

grassy areas. The eggs hatch and the developing grubs feed on plant roots throughout the late summer and fall. As temperatures drop, the larger grubs move deeper into the soil to overwinter.

This makes late summer and early fall an important time to monitor turfgrass and take action when Japanese beetles are confirmed. Look for irregular patches of yellowing, thinning, or dying grass. A simple “tug test” can help identify possible grub damage—if sections of turf pull away easily from the soil, investigate beneath the sod for grubs. Keep in mind that several other Montana beetle species also produce white grubs, so proper identification is important.

PREVENTION STARTS WITH MOVEMENT

One of the most important things Montana residents can do is avoid accidentally transporting Japanese beetles or their larvae. The beetle's soil-dwelling life stage creates particular concerns with nursery stock, potted plants, turf, and soil.

When purchasing or moving plants, pay attention to where they originated and avoid transporting potentially infested soil or plant material from areas known to have Japanese beetle populations. Nurseries and landscapers should follow Montana Department of Agriculture requirements for regulated material and should take particular care when handling plants and growing media.

Homeowners should also inspect plants for adult beetles during the summer and report suspected Japanese beetles.



*Figure 2:
Sod/turf damage from
Japanese Beetles*

Photo Credit: iNaturalist

MANAGING AN INFESTATION

Management should be based on confirming the pest and determining whether treatment is warranted. Chemical controls are available for both adults and grubs in Montana, but products and application methods change, so always consult the current pesticide label, Montana State University Extension or the Montana Department of Agriculture before treating. Fall treatments targeting grubs are generally most effective before the larvae move deeper into the soil for winter.

Japanese beetle traps can be useful for monitoring, but they should be used carefully. The pheromone used in traps can attract beetles from considerable distances and may actually increase beetle activity around plants if traps are placed incorrectly. Traps are therefore better considered a monitoring tool than a stand-alone solution.



*Figure 3:
Japanese Beetle Grub
Treatment option*

IF YOU FIND A SUSPECTED JAPANESE BEETLE

If you find a beetle that you suspect is Japanese beetle, collect a specimen if possible and preserve it in rubbing alcohol. Record the location, date, host plant, and other relevant information. Suspected specimens can be submitted to the Montana State University Schutter Diagnostic Lab or the Montana Department of Agriculture for identification. You can also report through the iNaturalist app.



*Their feeding creates a
characteristic
“skeletonized” appearance*



Figure 4: Japanese Beetle

Photo Credit: iNaturalist



GO TO WWW.INATURALIST.ORG OR SCAN THE QR CODE!

Japanese beetle may be small, but its potential impact is large. Early detection and preventing the movement of beetles and infested soil or plant material are among Montana's best tools for keeping this invasive pest from becoming more widespread. As fall approaches, take a few minutes to inspect your lawn, landscape plants, and nursery stock—and report anything suspicious.

Fall HOMESTEADING WORKSHOP SOURDOUGH CLASS PART 2

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



➤ **SEPTEMBER 23, 2026, NOON-2PM** ➤
PETROLEUM COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER, WINNETT, MT

TOPICS:

Sourdough Overview
What's & How's, Tips/Tricks
Pumpkin Cinnamon Roll Tutorial
Sourdough Supplies and Starter will be available for purchase

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.



Annual Ladies Day on the Range - June 2026



Attendees at the PCCD 16th Annual Ladies Day event on June 11th. Not Pictured: Desi King, Laura Nowlin and Trish Smith

Ladies Day on the Range, held June 9, was another successful event, with 24 ladies in attendance. Participants enjoyed beautiful weather, great conversation, and a full day of learning through presentations, hands-on activities, and time in the field.

The annual event featured four educational topics focused on agriculture, conservation, and rural life. Participants learned about cover crops and sustainable agricultural practices, entrepreneurship and starting a business, and practical ways to stay organized while managing a busy life. The group also enjoyed a short bird walk focused on local bird habitat and identification, followed by a tour of the Musselshell Riverbank Restoration Project to see conservation efforts firsthand.

Presenters included Kate Vogel of North40 Ag; Lesley Rolls, PCCD Water Coordinator; Kacie Sikveland of 41Grains; and Winnett ACES/NRCS staff Laura Nowlin, Desi King, and Reba Ahlgren.



Kate Vogel of North40 Ag presented on cover crops and sustainable agriculture practices.

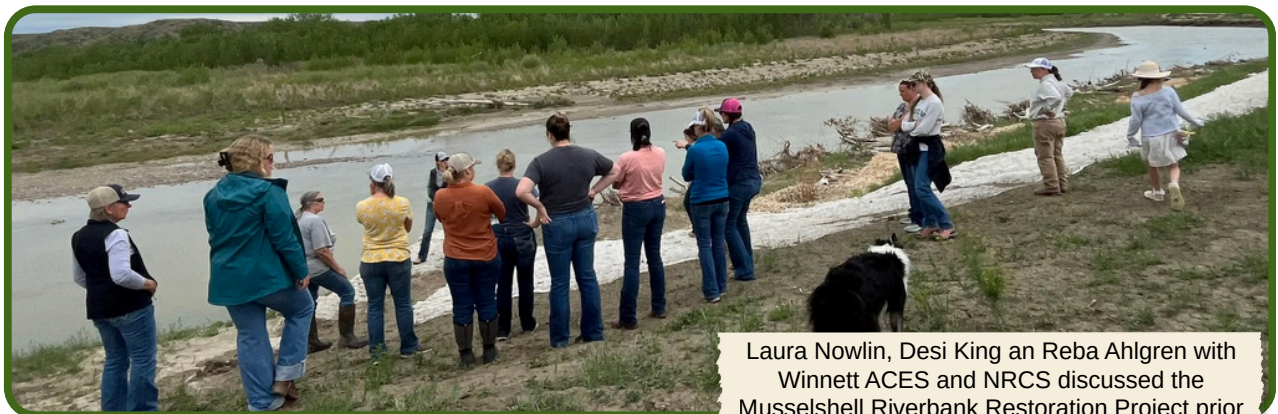


Kacie Sikveland of 41 Grains presented on entrepreneurship, starting a business, and ways to stay organized and protect mental and physical health and well being.



Attendees enjoying a bird walk near Mosby, MT. Lesley Rolls, PCCD Water Coordinator, presented on local bird habitat and identification.

Ladies Day on the Range continues to provide opportunities for hands-on learning, field tours, and discussions promoting sustainable agriculture, natural resource stewardship, and innovative approaches to ranch and land management. If you would like to be included in emails next spring prior to the 2027 Ladies Day event, please contact Trish: petroleumcd@macdnet.org



Laura Nowlin, Desi King and Reba Ahlgren with Winnett ACES and NRCS discussed the Musselshell Riverbank Restoration Project prior to a tour of the project.

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 email or call the CD Office: petroleumCD@macdnet.org
OR 406-429-6646 ext. 104 for more info

PCCD IN Office Hours:
Mon thru Thur 1pm - 5pm
813 N. Broadway Ave, Winnett, MT
Available M-F 8-5 by email or phone:
petroleumcd@macdnet.org/406.428.8151

Are you (or know someone) interested in joining the PCCD Board?

The Petroleum County Conservation District through education, outreach and program and project development works hard to put local common sense natural resource conservation on the ground and to educate the current and future producers and landowners on natural resource conservation all while helping them to continue sustainability in their businesses.

The Petroleum County Conservation District regularly partners with other conservation districts, watershed groups, stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, as well as some NGO's and nonprofits to put conservation on the ground.

Our CD is involved in many programs and educational outreach/workshops, as well as rental and sale items.

We currently have Associate Supervisor positions open. These are a great way to learn about and participate in the PCCD. If you have interest in resource conservation and education and are interested in joining the PCCD Board (or would like to learn more) please contact Trish at PetroleumCD@macdnet.org.

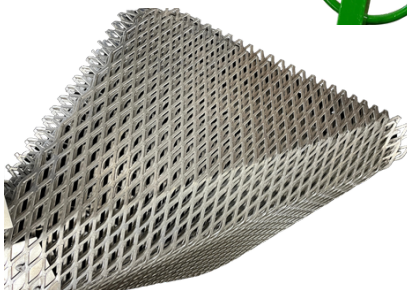
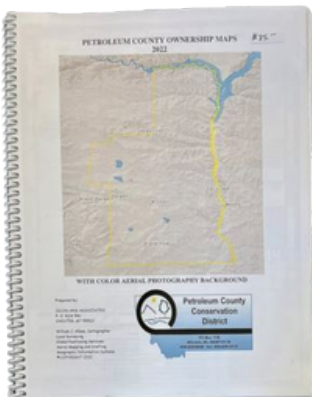
Time to Order Trees!

Need trees for your property? Ordering deadline is March 1st, but if you wait till March there is a high chance trees will be sold out already.



To order, please email petroleumcd@macdnet.org to have an order form emailed or you can find the order form on our website www.petroleumcd.org, under the "Tree" tab.

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

*****Email 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

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

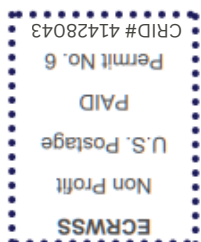
PCCD – NRCS Office Staff

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

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