



# LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021—2025



Lower Wind River Conservation District  
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Riverton, WY 82501

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# RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

Whereas, the Lower Wind River Conservation District is empowered by Wyoming State Statute §11-16-101—135 to adopt and implement soil and water conservation management plans and programs; and

Whereas, the Land Use and Natural Resource Management Plan for 2021-2025 was developed and prepared by the Lower Wind River Conservation District Supervisors in cooperation with local individuals, groups and government agencies in an open and collaborative planning process; and

Whereas the Land Use and Natural Resource Management Plan for 2021-2025 provides direction and defines the role of the Lower Wind River Conservation District in the management of the District's natural resources; and

Whereas the Lower Wind River Conservation District publicly requested comments from November 2, 2020 through December 16, 2020;

Therefore, be it hereby resolved by the Board of Supervisors of the Lower Wind River Conservation District this 16th day of December 2020 that the Land Use and Natural Resource Management Plan for 2021—2025 be approved and adopted.

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Nick Biltoft

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Richard Denke

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Rod Rivers

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Ron Lucas

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Ray Appelhance

## AUTHORITY

**DISTRICT LAW**—In 1941 the Wyoming State Legislature recognized the need for a local governmental entity which would assist landowners and resource users with conservation practices and provide leadership in natural resource management issues and efforts. As a result, legislation was enacted which enabled the formation of local Conservation Districts and the election of Conservation District Supervisors. The Wyoming legislation authorizing the establishment of Conservation Districts was signed by Governor Smith on March 5, 1941. The Conservation District Law can be found in the Wyoming Statutes §11-16-101—135 (Districts Law).

The Districts Law clearly states that conservation districts are legal subdivisions of the state of Wyoming. The Lower Wind River Conservation District (LWRCD) is authorized to develop plans (W.S. §11-16-122 , xvi) for range improvement and stabilization, conservation of soil, water and vegetative resources, control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water within the district while considering the customs and culture of residents of the district. Further, conservation districts may serve as cooperating agencies with special expertise (W. S. §11-16-122, viii) in federal or state land planning and implementation actions.

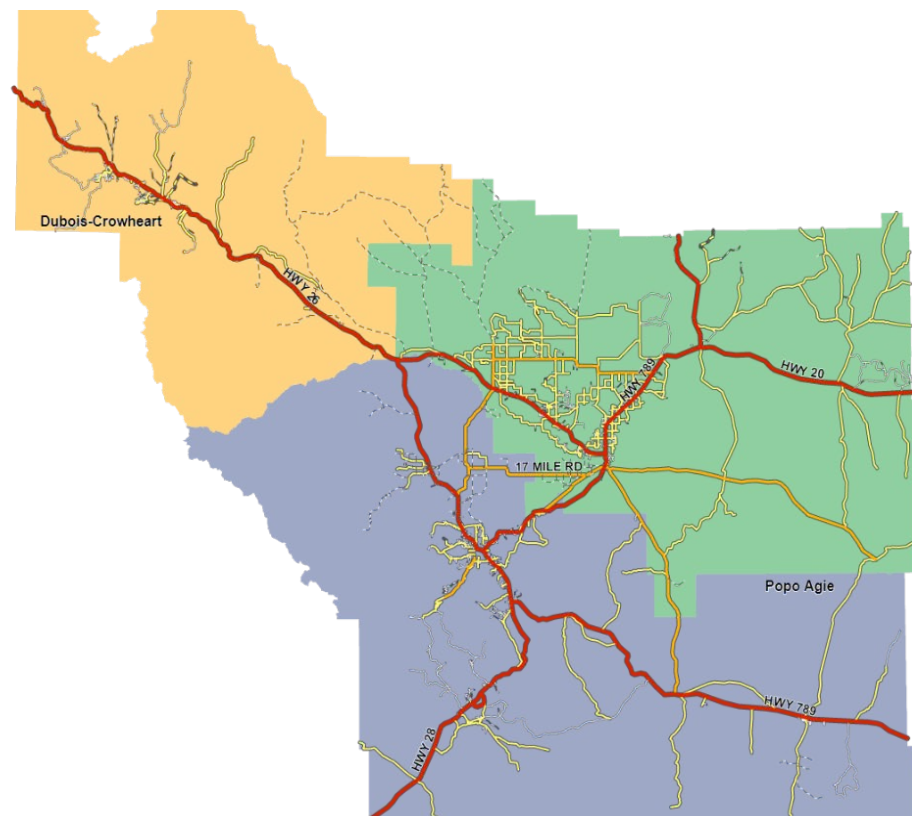
## HISTORY

The Pavillion Soil Conservation District was formed on July 16, 1942. Original Board Members were Andrew Ibach and Otis Williams. On March 15, 1945, the Wind River Soil Conservation District was formed with E. M Gorum, John Twidale, Harry Trembley, James A. Luckett and Emory Miller serving as the original Board of Supervisors. On June 16, 1969, the Pavillion and Wind River Soil Conservation Districts were merged to form the Riverton Conservation District. The Board Members were Marvin Heil, Richard Haun, Richard Donelson, Harvey Woolery and Harold Schmidt. Since 1969, the name of the District twice changed. The Lower Wind River Conservation District (LWRCD) has been the District name since 2004.

The Lower Wind River Conservation District is operated by a five-member Board of Supervisors whose members are elected by the citizens living within the boundaries of the District. Members serve four-year, staggered terms without pay. Three of the five supervisors represent the rural areas of our district while one represents the urban areas and one serves as an at-large representative. There are two employees of the District who manage the day to day operations and carry out projects authorized by the Board of Supervisors. The District offers all programs and services on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, marital, familial or veteran status.

Prior to 2016, sources of funding included the Fremont County Commissioners, sales of seedling trees and shrubs, subdivision soil reviews and grants from the City of Riverton, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. During the general election in 2016, the citizens of the District approved a mill levy proposal. The District began receiving mill levy funding in the fall of 2017. Since the mill levy was a petition recall proposal, the tax shall remain in effect until a petition to discontinue the tax, signed by not less than ten percent (10%) of the voters of the district, is received by the board of county commissioners, and the proposal to discontinue the tax is approved by the voters at the next general election or by mail ballot pursuant to W. S. 22-29-115 and W. S. 22-29-116.

The Lower Wind River Conservation District is one of 34 in Wyoming and three in Fremont County. The Popo Agie Conservation District covers the southern part of the county while the Dubois Crowheart Conservation District lies to the northwest. The district encompasses the central and northeast part of Fremont County including the towns and communities of Arapahoe, Morton, Kinnear, Pavillion, Shoshoni, Moneta, Lysite, Lost Cabin, Riverton and Sand Draw. **The green area below is the LWRCD.**



The Lower Wind River Conservation District boundaries include approximately 1,908,360 acres. Land management is Bureau of Land Management 39.8%, Bureau of Indian Affairs 26.2%, Private 21.2%, Bureau of Reclamation 4%, State 7% and Local Government 0.2% while about 1.6% is water including the Wind River and its tributaries, Morton Lake, Ocean Lake, Bass Lake and Boysen Reservoir.

## ECONOMY

Agriculture has been and continues to be a very important part in the economic and cultural heritage of the District. Riverton was founded in 1906 and that same year construction began on the Riverton Reclamation Project. The hard work of early homesteaders and development of hundreds of miles of irrigation infrastructure are the keys to agriculture productivity in the District. There are three main irrigation districts within the LWRCD. The largest is the Midvale Irrigation District who manages the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation project (over 250,000 acres). The other two irrigation districts are Riverton Valley (13,000 acres) and LeClair (13,500 acres). Of the 22,111 citizens in the LWRCD, it is estimated that one third use irrigation water. Crops produced include alfalfa hay, native hay, forage crops, beans, sugar beets, corn, oats and barley as well as specialty products such as raspberries, sunflowers and pumpkins. The amount of irrigation water annually available is dependent upon mountain snowpack and precipitation. Thus, agriculture productivity and our economic viability are directly related to the availability of irrigation water.

Nearly 90% of the area in the LWRCD is rangeland located in the Wyoming Basin ecoregion. The terrain is hills and low mountains to plains. Vegetation consists of mostly sagebrush steppe with native grasses, forbs and shrubs. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 recognized grazing as the optimal use of federally managed lands. Rangelands in the LWRCD have traditionally been used for livestock grazing during the summer months on federally managed, state and private lands. Trailing of cattle or sheep from one pasture to another or from rangelands to irrigated land in the fall is customary. This spring/summer to fall/winter cycle of use is extremely important to the livestock industry, our culture and the economy in our area. If using rangelands for grazing is reduced or discontinued, it would be devastating to our economy.

In addition to livestock grazing, rangelands in the LWRCD have multiple uses important to our economy. Energy development includes oil and gas development and uranium mining with some attempts to produce coal-bed methane. Activity in the Beaver Creek area south of Riverton, the Pavillion area and the Lysite area has slowed in recent years due to government regulations and markets. Uranium mining was once a booming industry in the Gas Hills area but the mines have closed and the land has been reclaimed. The decline in the energy industry has affected many small businesses especially those related to the oil and gas industry. Many businesses have relocated or closed while others have reduced services available to customers.

Recreational use of the rangelands is important to our economy. Many people hunt antelope, deer, elk, waterfowl and upland game birds. More recent activities include camping, ATV and motorcycle riding particularly on federal and state lands. Many tourists pass through this area on their way to the Tetons and Yellowstone National Park or to view cultural activities of the Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Pilot Butte Reservoir, Ocean Lake, Bass Lake and Boysen Lake are destinations for fishing, boating, skiing, swimming and camping. Fishing is the main recreational use of the Little Wind and Big Wind Rivers.

Expansion of urban areas is gradually occurring. The subdividing of land has slowed in recent years particularly with the decline in oil and gas prices. However, the real estate market is very active as people from large cities are moving to our less populated, rural area to enjoy our wide-open spaces, beautiful scenery, customs and culture. Water rights in Wyoming belong to the land. When the land is subdivided with water rights, disputes about water use often arise between neighbors.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **SOIL**

The soils in the District are immature and vary from blow sands, silts, loams and clays to rocky soils of the mountain areas. They are principally sedimentary in form and nature, contain little organic matter and are low in fertility. Some glacial deposits are found. Depth of soil ranges from shallow to 20 inches or more. The rangeland consists mainly of sandy, shallow, highly erodible soils. The topography includes relatively flat river bottomlands and terraces to rolling and broken rangelands. Elevations vary from 4,557—8,637 feet. Soil erosion from wind and water is a concern of LWRCDC citizens.

### **WATER**

Annual precipitation in the area varies from 5-9 inches to 10-15 inches. Dry periods are frequent while heavy downpours or cloudbursts of various intensities are not uncommon. Rapid, heavy rainfall can lead to severe soil erosion due to the soil types. Moisture from snowfall constitutes 50-60% of the total precipitation. The growing season averages 90-120 days. The average last killing frost is May 5<sup>th</sup> and the average first killing frost is September 10. Temperatures range from -45° F to 102° F with the 30-year annual mean temperature of 45° F. The annual mountain snowpack and precipitation are extremely important factors in the annual agriculture productivity.

All the water resources within the District flow to Boysen Reservoir. The primary perennial streams are the Big and Little Wind River which are the sources for irrigation water diversion. Many intermittent streams flow in the spring during snow melt. Other tributaries only flow during heavy rainfall. Springs and wells (of various depths) furnish a supply of water for domestic use although the water quality is variable. Water quality, especially of recreational destinations, is a concern as reduced recreational use will affect the economy of our area.

### **VEGETATION**

Vegetative productivity is highly dependent upon precipitation both on cropland and rangeland. The National Climatic Data Center indicated that of all the weather-related phenomena droughts have historically had the greatest economic and environmental impact on the largest number of people. The native grasses, forbs, shrubs and sagebrush are very resilient. However, continual improper use and/or management of the land can result in increased invasive species, lack of vegetation and soil erosion.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Lower Wind River Conservation District is dedicated to local development and implementation of programs to provide leadership and technical assistance for the conservation of the District's natural resources, agricultural heritage and resource base through preventing soil erosion, protecting water quality and quantity, conserving and enhancing wildlife habitat, protecting the district tax base and promoting the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the District.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

**GOAL:** Conserve and enhance the natural resources within the Lower Wind River Conservation District.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Coordinate with landowners, local, state and federal agencies in land use planning.

Communicate with landowners, local, state and federal agencies about legislation and policies that affect the natural resource base and agricultural heritage in the LWRC.

Complete soil reviews for proposed rural subdivision as required by law and make recommendations to the Fremont County Planning Commission.

Provide technical assistance and program information about soil health and best management practices to prevent soil erosion.

Continue to annually sell trees and shrubs to aid in preventing soil and wind erosion, to provide livestock, crop and building protection and to provide wildlife habitat.

Work with landowners, local, state and federal agencies to maintain and enhance vegetative resources, reduce invasive species and maintain and enhance wildlife habitat.

Expand water quality monitoring of well water, streams and lakes within the District and work with citizens and land managers to maintain and improve water quality.

Continue implementation of the Muddy Creek, Poison Creek and Ocean Lake watershed water quality management plans.

Coordinate with landowners, local, state and federal agencies to develop upstream water storage and to improve irrigation delivery systems.

Work with landowners to develop grazing management and monitoring programs.



## **INFORMATION AND EDUCATION**

**GOAL:** Expand and strengthen the information and education programs to enhance natural resource conservation.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Organize and/or participate in workshops to inform the public about natural resource programs, best management practices and conservation technology.

Participate in local events to provide information about LWRCD programs and services.

Coordinate with local schools and organizations to teach youth about the importance of wise use of our natural resources.

Utilize local newspapers, radio, newsletters and social media to provide information to the community about conservation programs and activities.

Maintain and regularly update the web site.

Make available educational brochures about conservation programs.

Seek and incorporate citizen input for program planning, implementation and assessment.

Communicate with locally elected officials about LWRCD projects and programs.

Sponsor meetings with landowners, resource agencies, groups and other organizations to identify opportunities for cooperative identification and implementation of resource conservation efforts.

Maintain and develop partnerships between the LWRCD and local, state and federal agencies and groups such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, UW Cooperative Extension Service, local Chambers of Commerce, local civic groups, local legislative representatives, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, The Eastern Shoshone Tribe, recreation groups, LeClair Irrigation District, Midvale Irrigation District, Riverton Valley Irrigation District, Fremont County Commissioners and County Officials, Fremont County Planning Commission, Recreation Districts, Fremont County Weed and Pest, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming State Forestry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts and other entities that provide technical and financial assistance necessary to the operation of the District.

## **DISTRICT OPERATIONS**

**GOAL:** Ensure that all District programs are carried out in a responsible and accountable manner.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Develop and adopt a fiscally responsible, annual budget, provide for public comment and file the adopted budget with the Wyoming Department of Audit and the Fremont County Commissioners.

Publicize and conduct monthly Board of Supervisor meetings and encourage the public to participate.

Complete and file financial reports, financial reviews or audits, meeting minutes and other reports as required by local, state or federal law.

Pursue additional sources of funding for resource conservation projects and programs.

Provide training and educational opportunities to staff and board members to more efficiently and expertly carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Provide adequate facilities, equipment and personnel to meet the administrative and program needs of the LWRCD.

## **Lower Wind River Conservation District Operating Policy**

The Board of Supervisors has adopted the following policies to assist in the implementation of goals and objectives.

The Lower Wind River Conservation District will

- 1) Protect the land within the LWRCD against soil deterioration.
- 2) Help maintain and improve water conservation, quality, management and distribution.
- 3) Help maintain and improve cropland, rangeland, recreation areas and wildlife habitat.
- 4) Provide planning, technical and material assistance to citizens and partners of the LWRCD for natural resource conservation projects.

- 5) Review, study and comment when possible on all local, state and federal legislation, rules, regulations and actions that may affect the LWRCD, its cooperators and its citizens as well as their economy, customs and culture.
- 6) Coordinate with cooperators, citizens of the LWRCD, public institutions and government agencies in the conservation (wise use) of the soil, water, and vegetative resources in the District.
- 7) Cooperate and coordinate with the private individuals and groups along with local, state and federal governmental agencies to pursue continued economically viable resource management while maintaining our customs and culture.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

This Land Use and Natural Resource Management Plan was available for public comment from November 2, 2020 to December 16, 2020. The following are responses to those comments.