



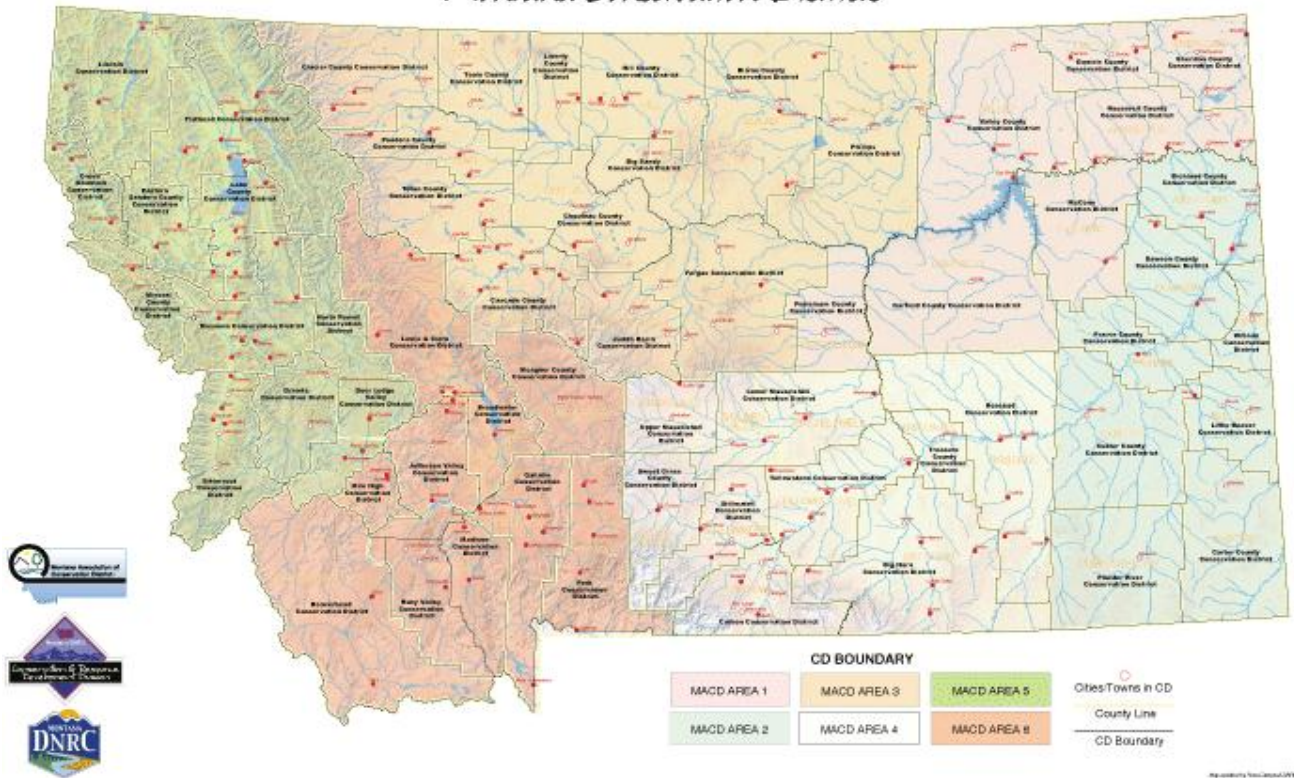
# CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

DNRC Conservation and Resource Development Division helps manage natural resources and finance conservation, resource management and reclamation activities. The Conservation Districts Bureau within CARDD provide direct service to the Conservation Districts in Montana. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the technical and financial accomplishments for the 2021 biennium. The report summarizes fiscal year 2020 and 2021 up to December 30, 2020.

Montana’s Conservation Districts (CDs) are a legal subdivisions of state government, and are responsible for (1) developing and carrying out long-range programs that conserve and improve soil and water resources within its boundaries, and (2) encourage maximum public participation and cooperation with state and local agencies to fulfill its purpose.

DNRC provides financial, legal and technical assistance and training to Montana’s 58 Conservation Districts under state law (MCA [76-15-105](#)).

*Montana Conservation Districts*



Map courtesy of Montana DNRC

## STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES:

- √ Offer assistance to the supervisors of conservation districts in the carrying out of their powers and programs;
- √ Keep the supervisors of each of the several districts informed of the activities and experiences of all other districts and facilitate an interchange of advice and experiences between the districts and cooperation between them;
- √ Coordinate the programs of the several conservation districts hereunder so far as this may be done by advice and consultation;
- √ Secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and of agencies of this state in the work of the districts;
- √ Disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and programs of the conservation districts;
- √ Encourage the formation of districts in areas where their organization is desirable; and
- √ Administer the Conservation District Account, established by MCA [17-2-102](#) to provide funding for CDs.

Day to day duties of the Conservation District Bureau staff at DNRC include attending CD meetings to provide administrative and technical support, prepare and maintain a list of training and resources for CD Administrators and Supervisors, design communications and set up meetings to engage CDs across the state to share ideas to further the mission of the CDs in Montana. Provide the financial support through grants as well as fiscal oversight of CD business. Train and oversee Stream Permitting (310 Law) activities across the state and provide both legal and technical services to CDs in administering the law. Coordinate with state and federal agencies to benefit the mission of the CDs. The DNRC staff also work with the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts to address natural resource concerns on the state and national level.

## DOCUMENTS & WEBINARS

The DNRC maintains an [online library](#) of forms, guidance documents, training materials, webinars and other resources to help CDs carry out their legally obligated duties. Some highlights from the biennium include:

[2020 Personnel Model Policy](#)

[Supervisor Election 2020](#)

[2020 Conservation District Law Book](#)

[2019 Conservation Districts Directory](#)

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Resource Conservation Advisory Council, which consists of 7 members serving at the pleasure of the Governor, they meet and provide advice and assistance on conservation matters and sets guidelines for Conservation District grant programs. Members include:

Gayla Wortman – Cascade Conservation District

Judi Knapp – Treasure County Conservation District

Doug Bonsell – Carter County Conservation District

Kathleen Johnson – Lincoln Conservation District

O. Ramsey Offerdal – Pondera County Conservation District

Bob Schroeder – Missoula Conservation District

Bob Breipohl – Phillips Conservation District

## WATER RESERVATIONS

In 1978, the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation granted water reservations to 14 Conservation districts (CDs) in the Yellowstone River basin. Ten CDs were granted reservations in the upper Missouri River basin in 1992, and eleven CDs were given reservations in the lower and Little Missouri River basins in 1994. Some CDs have reservations in more than one basin. Each of these CDs administers its reservation for use by individuals within the district. Applications for reserved water use can be obtained from the applicable conservation district.

DNRC staff work with the CDs to process applications for reserved water right use to ensure compliance with state regulations.

## STREAM PERMITTING

The Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act, also known as "The 310 Law" is administered by the Conservation Districts. The purpose of the 310 law is to keep rivers and streams in as natural or existing condition as possible, to minimize sedimentation and to recognize beneficial uses. Any individual or corporation proposing construction in a perennial stream must apply for a 310 permit through the local conservation district.

DNRC staff provide training and support to CDs to administer the 310 Law. In 2020, DNRC staff released the new "[Montana Stream Permitting – A Guide for Conservation District Supervisors and Others](#)" and updated the stream permitting website and guidance materials.

Table 1 - 310 Technical Grants Fiscal Year 2020 – Fiscal Year 2021 (as of 12/31/20)

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
BROADWATER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR 310 ASSISTANCE	\$2,970
PIONEER TECHNICAL SERVICES INC	310 REVIEW TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR PARK CD	\$2,400
RIVER DESIGN GROUP INC	310 REVIEW TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE-GREEN MTN CD	\$1,730
RIVER DESIGN GROUP INC	310 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR LAKE COUNTY CD	\$2,882
OVERLAND LEGAL SERVICES PLLC	LEGAL SERVICES FOR CD'S	\$50,000

## SALINE SEEP RECLAMATION

Conservation district supervisors in 33 counties make up the member of the Montana Salinity Control Association. This internationally recognized organization headquartered in Conrad, Montana provides expert technical assistance in the reclamation and control of saline seeps in agricultural areas.

Table 2 - Saline Seep Fiscal Year 2020 – Fiscal Year 2021

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
PONDERA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	SALINE SEEP ABATEMENT ACTIVITIES	\$546,000

## GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

A very significant water resource in eastern Montana occupies a broad valley formed by the ancestral Missouri River. The Clear Lake aquifer contains sand and gravel deposited by the ancestral Missouri River and by later glacial melt water streams. These deposits form a complex aquifer system with some areas capable of supporting high yield irrigation wells. The SCCD, through its technical advisory committee, has developed an effective water management and monitoring program that provides data, interpretations, and recommendations to allocate water from the Clear Lake aquifer. Maintaining this monitoring program is critical to evaluate existing and future applications, determining multi-aquifer (both quantity and quality), and evaluating impacts on other water uses.

Table 3 - Groundwater Management Program Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
SHERIDAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	ADMINISTER GROUNDWATER MGMT-CLEAR LAKE	\$60,000

## RIVER COUNCILS

### MILK RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Lifeline of the Highline... The Milk River Watershed Alliance is a locally led organization of conservation districts working together to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources within the Milk River watershed, while maintaining the quality of life. Milk River Watershed Alliance coordination is funded through CD Technical Assistance Grants to Phillips CD and Valley CD.

Table 4 - Milk River Watershed Alliance Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
VALLEY COUNTY CD	CD TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$30,000
PHILLIPS CD	CD TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$50,000 (prior biennium)

## MISSOURI RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Devoted to conservation of the Missouri River's natural resources through grassroots collaboration, education, inventive, and voluntary action The Missouri River corridor extends for 725 miles across Montana passing through the 14 counties and 15 conservation districts that form the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council. Each of the 15 conservation districts in the Missouri River corridor has one supervisor as a voting member of the Council. Conservation districts, through public elections, represent local residents' views and concerns regarding natural resources - giving this Council a true grassroots perspective of Missouri River issues. The river corridor is divided into reaches that contain unique geographic, social and economic features that create conservation priorities for the region.

Table 5 - MRCDC Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	MISSOURI RIVER CD COUNCIL	\$220,800

## YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Providing leadership & guidance for the wise use of the Yellowstone River's natural resources. The Yellowstone River stretches over 670 miles and is the longest free flowing river in the lower 48 states. Originating in Yellowstone National Park, it drains 70,000 square miles of land before it joins the Missouri River northeast of Sidney, MT. In addition to an abundance of fish and wildlife, the Yellowstone River supports a wide variety of agricultural, domestic, industrial, and recreational uses. The Council made up of representatives from eleven conservation districts bordering the main stem of the Yellowstone River.

Table 6 - YRCDC Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	YELLOWSTONE RIVER CD COUNCIL	\$194,000

## ENVIROTHON

The Envirothon was established as a competitive, problem-solving, natural resource event for high school students to challenge them about the environment. Thousands of high school students have met the challenge and have come away wiser and more concerned about the natural world and their environment. At the beginning of the school year, the resource committee and the teachers or advisors sit down to plan activities. They enhance the existing environmental education programs in high schools because they bring together natural resource professionals with teachers to offer expert, quality field work and ideas.

Participation in the Envirothon is open to all students enrolled in grades 9-12 in public, private, vocational technical or home-school program. Students are tested for their knowledge in five natural resource topics - Aquatics, Forestry, Rangeland, Soils, and Wildlife. At the Envirothon, students are given a current environmental issue (changes annually) and are challenged to share their solutions in an oral presentation.

The state competition usually takes one-two days and is held in Lewistown the last full week of April. The winning team from the Montana competition will go on to compete at the NCF-Envirothon each Summer where awards are offered for the 1st-10th place team. The national Envirothon is a four-five day event where teams from each participating state/country work out the solution to an environmental program.

The 2020 Envirothon was canceled due to COVID-19. The 2021 Envirothon is scheduled for April 19 – 20, 2021.

*Table 7 - Envirothon Grant Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021*

<b>PROJECT SPONSOR</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>AGREEMENT AMOUNT</b>
FERGUS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	MONTANA ENVIROTHON GRANT	\$70,000

### CONSERVATION DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The Resource Conservation Advisory Council set aside up to \$50,000 to increase conservation district’s ability to meet statutory requirements for developing and implementing locally led conservation projects. This program will provide funds to increase conservation district employee’s hours to assist in planning, securing funding, and implementing programs that improve public outreach, improve conservation district administrative capabilities, and implement conservation plans.

A maximum grant of \$10,000 may be requested to cover the costs of district employee salary, travel expenses, or supplies: plan and implement new conservation projects or programs, organize conservation district education and outreach efforts, and provide on the job-training to other district administrators.

*Table 8 - CD Development Grants Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021 (as of 12/31/20)*

<b>PROJECT SPONSOR</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>AGREEMENT AMOUNT</b>
CONFLUENCE CONSULTING INC	HYDROLOGIC ASSESSMENT REPORT	\$19,985
LIBERTY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	DNRC Oral History project- Agriculture Women	\$12,000
PIONEER TECHNICAL SERVICES INC	SUN RIVER ASSESSMENT-INSPECTION	\$1,754
GARFIELD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	HOST SITE SUPPORT/TRAINING/ADMIN	\$36,550
SWCDM	Assistance to Conservation Districts	\$5,000

## CONSERVATION DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE GRANTS AND 310 ADMINISTRATIVE GRANTS

The purpose of this grant program is to provide funding for conservation districts that do not have enough funding to cover basic operation costs, such as administrative salaries, insurance, office supplies, communications, and insurance.

Table 9 - CD Administrative and 310 Administrative Grants Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021 (as of 12/31/20)

RECIPIENT	TOTAL
BEAVERHEAD CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$24,608
BIG HORN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$25,466
BIG SANDY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$23,409
BITTERROOT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,250
BLAINE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$19,499
BROADWATER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$46,253
CARBON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$2,480
CARTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$55,795
CASCADE COUNTY CD	\$2,427
CASCADE COUNTY TREASURER	\$1,871
CHOUTEAU COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$4,524
CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$8,409
DANIELS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$26,037
DAWSON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$15,800
DEER LODGE VALLEY CD	\$15,652
EASTERN SANDERS COUNTY CONSERVATION DIST	\$23,769
FERGUS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$7,936
FLATHEAD CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,250
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,250
GARFIELD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$47,280
GLACIER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$12,349
GRANITE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$33,012
GREEN MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$12,521
HILL COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$264
JEFFERSON VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$4,222
JUDITH BASIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$49,507
LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$595
LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$12,855
LIBERTY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$106
LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,100
LITTLE BEAVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$39,957
LOWER MUSSELSHELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$34,794
MADISON CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$3,838
MCCONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$49,250

RECIPIENT	TOTAL
MEAGHER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$55,628
MILE HIGH CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$825
MINERAL COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$49,081
MISSOULA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,250
NORTH POWELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$2,787
PARK COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$2,500
PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$69,244
PHILLIPS CD	\$35,761
PONDERA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$5,269
POWDER RIVER COUNTY CONSERVATION DIST	\$48,313
PRAIRIE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$34,158
RICHLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$859
ROOSEVELT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$15,372
ROSEBUD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$1,454
RUBY VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$43,813
SHERIDAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$49,454
STILLWATER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$22,265
SWEET GRASS COUNTY CONS DISTRICT	\$15,584
TETON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$21,429
TOOLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$26,556
TREASURE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$35,965
UPPER MUSSELSHELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$13,223
VALLEY COUNTY CD	\$30,119
WIBAUX CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$18,357
YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$4,228
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,232,828</b>

### POLLINATOR GRANT PROGRAM

The DNRC Pollinator Grant funding was provided by the 2019 Legislature. Montana Conservation Districts may apply for this grant for funds to be used for education, farm projects, demonstration plots, and pollinator seed mixes or products. Projects must improve pollinator habitat in Montana and have a demonstrated public and conservation benefit.

Table 10 - Pollinator Grants Fiscal Year 2020 – Fiscal Year 2021 (as of 12/31/20)

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Montana Pollinator Education Project	\$14,972
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Area 6 CD Pollinator Initiative Seed Mix	\$8,233



GLACIER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Native Pollinator Education Garden in Cut Bank	\$8,020
GREEN MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Sanders County Pollinator Initiative Demonstration Plots	\$8,250
LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	2021 Area 5 Pollinator Initiative Seed	\$2,000
LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	MT Conservation Districts Pollinator Initiative	\$12,000
LAKE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Area 5 Pollinator Film Festival	\$1,776
LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Tenmile Creek Park Pollinator Habitat	\$5,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$60,251.00</b>

### 223 GRANT PROGRAM & EDUCATION MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

The 47th Legislature provided CDs one half of one percent of the coal severance tax monies for grants to complete work authorized in [75-15-4](#), MCA. The Resource Conservation Advisory Council (RCAC) reviews applications quarterly and make funding recommendations. The grant limit for “on the ground” conservation projects is \$20,000, more may be available with a 50:50 match. The grant limit for education projects is \$10,000.

Table 11 - 223 Grants Fiscal Year 2020 – Fiscal Year 2021 (as of 12/31/20)

PROJECT SPONSOR	PROJECT TITLE	AGREEMENT AMOUNT
CASCADE COUNTY CD	Sun River Watershed CZM Mapping	\$20,000
CHOUTEAU COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	EDUCATIONAL FUNDS-PURCHASE A MICROSCOPE	\$500
CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	MRRIC Meeting Participation Travel & Expenses	\$10,850
CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	310 Database Update Assistance for Yellowstone CD Council	\$10,000
CUSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	District Development Irrigation Projects	\$10,000
DEER LODGE VALLEY CD	Beaver Conflict Valley Conservation Pilot Project	\$16,500
FERGUS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	No-till Drill	\$20,000
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Plant & Animal Relationships in Montana Forests	\$500
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Camp/Godfrey Creeks Rehab	\$14,000
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	PLANT & ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP IN MONTANA'S FOREST	\$500
GALLATIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	River Rendezvous	\$2,200

<b>PROJECT SPONSOR</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>AGREEMENT AMOUNT</b>
GLACIER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	4th Grade Conservation	\$500
GRANITE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Watershed Stories, Sharing Local Conservation Successes	\$10,000
GREEN MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Empowering Watershed Stewardship & Restoration on Private Lands	\$10,000
GREEN MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Water Festival	\$500
LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT	2020 MT Youth Range Camp	\$4,318
LEWIS & CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Sun River Watershed CMZ Mapping Phase II	\$17,730
LITTLE BEAVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Youth Ag Symposium	\$500
LITTLE BEAVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Enhancing Your Livestock Operation--Surviving a World of Change Seminar	\$10,000
LOWER MUSSELSHELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Noxious Weed Workshop	\$500
MEAGHER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Ranching for Profit Workshop	\$500
MISSOULA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Flagship Summer Conservation Program	\$499
PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Soil Focused Conservation Intern Program	\$20,000
PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Technical Assistance Position	\$10,000
PETROLEUM COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Musselshell Weed Mapping	\$5,253
PHILLIPS CD	MT 2020 Range Tour	\$7,632
POWDER RIVER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Weather Reporting for Power River County	\$5,398
RUBY VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Watershed Stewardship Program 2020-2022	\$10,000
SHERIDAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Connecting CDs to Watershed Conservation Resources	\$10,000
TETON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Creeks N Critters Outdoor Classroom	\$500
TETON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Pull Your Share Weed Project	\$500
TOOLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	2020 Ag Day	\$500

<b>PROJECT SPONSOR</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>AGREEMENT AMOUNT</b>
TOOLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	2020 Ag Days Galata	\$500
TREASURE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Plant Specimen Imaging Box	\$479
TREASURE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Tree Planting Project	\$471
TREASURE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT	John Deere No-Till Drill	\$15,000
UPPER MUSSELSHELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	2019 Range Tour	\$5,450
UPPER MUSSELSHELL CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Supply Canal Rehab Roma Reach	\$12,801
YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT	West End Pollinator Park--Audubon	\$490
YELLOWSTONE CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Yellowstone County Salt Cedar Management 2020	\$25,000
VARIOUS CONSERVATION DISTRICTS	MACD TRAVEL 2020	\$9,707
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$299,778.00</b>