



Goose Creek Watershed Annual Newsletter

Goose Creek Watershed Group
Sheridan County Conservation District
Natural Resources Conservation Service
The City of Sheridan
Sheridan County

MAY 2008

07-08 Highlights

- 1 Septic project complete/ 2 projects in progress
- 1 AFO completed
- 1 Stream Restoration project in progress
- Joint watershed meeting in February w/TRWG and WDEQ to discuss the future of watershed efforts in Sheridan County.

Upcoming events

- Goose Creek Watershed meeting—TBA later this summer/fall
- Goose Creek Interim Monitoring—June and August

TMDL Scheduled for Goose Creek Watershed in 2008

In February of 2008, the Goose Creek Watershed Group (GCWG) met the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) in a joint meeting with the Tongue River Watershed Group to discuss local watershed plans and WDEQ's plans for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development on these and other watersheds in Wyoming. Although the GCWG will be updating the existing watershed plan to meet the requirements of an EPA Watershed Based Plan, this will not take the place of a TMDL. WDEQ has scheduled completion of a TMDL on the Goose Creek watershed for 2008.

Watershed Plans and TMDLs: When levels of a pollutant, such as bacteria, exceed the standard, the stream is considered to be "impaired" and states are required by the Clean Water Act to develop a TMDL. Many states, in response to lawsuits or other pressures, began writing TMDLs in the 1990's. Wyoming was the exception. The WDEQ allowed and encouraged local groups to develop and implement local watershed plans. Watershed plans were not to take the place of a TMDL; streams with an active, local effort

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Goose Creek Watershed Scheduled for Interim Monitoring



Projects within the Goose Creek watershed that keep livestock from entering the channel help to benefit and enhance water quality.

As outlined in the Goose Creek Watershed plan, the SCCD uses a 3 year rotation for interim monitoring as part of a successful and comprehensive assessment and planning effort. Monitoring for 2008 is scheduled for June, with additional monitoring in August. Interim monitoring measures temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, discharge, turbidity, and *E. coli*. Samples will be collected from 18 sites with macroinvertebrate sampling occurring on 6 of the 18 sites in late September 2008.

This local process of planning and project implementation is in the early phases of an anticipated long-term program. The watershed planning process has begun to address and create widespread local awareness about several important resource issues, most notably the rural septic systems. The SCCD anticipates that voluntary, incentive based watershed planning and implementation efforts will be successful; however, it may require several years to actually measure these achievements. Nonetheless, each improvement project that has been implemented or is currently being implemented on the watershed certainly induces positive water quality changes, whether they are immediately apparent or not. To date, SCCD and NRCS have helped deliver funds for ~34 projects on the Goose Creek Watershed.

The Goose Creek Watershed Annual Newsletter is part of an ongoing effort by the Goose Creek Watershed Group, the Sheridan County Conservation District, the City of Sheridan, and Sheridan County, to improve water quality on the Goose Creek Watershed. The Goose Creek Plan was developed in 2004 by watershed residents and outlines their concerns as well as regulatory concerns uncovered during previous assessments. The plan includes a variety of action items to facilitate water quality improvement, including activities to increase public awareness of watershed concerns as well as the impacts of land use practices. This is done through a variety of information and education (I&E) items, including this newsletter. As part of these watershed efforts, the SCCD-NRCS partnership offers financial and technical assistance for water resource improvement projects. Projects have included corral/feeding ground relocations, septic system replacement, irrigation diversion replacements, erosive streambank stabilization, stockwater developments, stream corridor fencing, and others. Through watershed efforts throughout Sheridan County, over \$450,000 in state and federal grant funds and over \$90,000 in USDA program funds have been used for watershed improvement projects. These funds do not include landowner contributions for projects or the additional dollars for watershed assessments and information and education activities. For more information, please contact the SCCD at 672-5820 ext. 3.

were given a lower priority for TMDL development. Ideally, if a stream could meet water quality standards through the implementation of a watershed plan, a TMDL would never have to be written. That was over ten years ago. Now, with many Wyoming streams still not meeting standards, the requirement to develop TMDLs will have to be met.

A watershed plan includes general identification of potential contributors (sources) of a pollutant and goals for pollution reduction. The TMDL takes a more focused, targeted approach and attempts to provide a more quantitative evaluation of pollutant sources and more specific reduction targets. Both watershed plans and TMDLs include provisions for sufficient monitoring to allow on-going adjustments in targets, source identification and implementation strategies. Both are dynamic documents and require an active implementation program to ensure local involvement and control.

The Goose Creek Watershed Management Plan currently meets most of the EPA Watershed Based Plan requirements. The updated plan and future watershed plans will include ways to prioritize areas that may need additional focus, such as increasing the information activities. There may be areas where increased monitoring is needed to better identify the concerns. These are discussions that occur at every watershed meeting in an informal way; we are now being asked to document those discussions. The plan updates will not change the intent of the plans themselves or the voluntary nature of the programs.

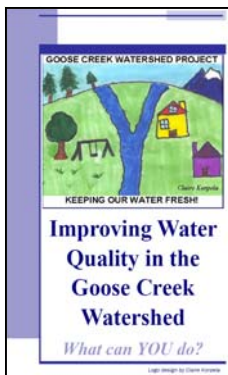


Irrigation upgrades help to increase water efficiency from 20%-55%.

The future of Sheridan County planning efforts: The Sheridan County Conservation District (SCCD) and local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will continue to work with landowners and WDEQ to improve water quality in Sheridan County streams. The SCCD is committed to helping watersheds meet applicable provisions of the Clean Water Act while maintaining the maximum level of local control and workable solutions. While SCCD recognizes the potential hazards of over-quantifying pollutants from watershed sources, we felt it was important to continue to be an active part of the process and to continue to be a liaison between landowners and regulatory agencies. This will include working with residents and WDEQ to update the existing watershed plans to “EPA Watershed Based Plans,” which will enable SCCD to continue to have access to grant funds for projects and improvement efforts. Much of the information in the TMDL will likely come from watershed plans and assessments written and conducted by SCCD and the GCWG. The SCCD does not have the staff nor the expertise needed to write the TMDL, as was suggested by residents at the watershed meeting. SCCD will be an active participant in providing information and voicing concerns on behalf of watershed residents. The actual document will either be written by WDEQ or a private consultant.

Booklets Available

Copies of the Goose Creek Watershed booklet, “Improving Water Quality in the Goose Creek Watershed,” are still available from SCCD. The booklet, mailed to watershed residents in 2007, provides information on how they can improve water quality around their homes as well as provides information on how people can obtain funding for projects that have an impact on water quality such as replacing septic systems and relocating livestock feeding facilities. If you would like to obtain a booklet, please call 672-5820 ext. 3. It is also available at sccdfwyo.org.



City of Sheridan and Sheridan County updates

In 2006, the Sheridan County Conservation District, Sheridan County and the City of Sheridan contracted with HKM Engineering to complete an assessment of the impact of septic tanks and septic drain fields on surface water and groundwater in the Goose Creek watershed. The purpose of the study was to develop recommendations for septic system installations to minimize these impacts.

In an effort to evaluate alternative waste water treatment technologies, to address the identified Goose Creek impairments, Sheridan County applied for and received \$41,000 in grant funds from the WDEQ. This study will evaluate alternative waste water treatment methods, potential service areas, and management options for the preferred alternatives within the Little Goose Creek Valley. This report is proposed to be completed by the end of the year.

Sheridan County has recently filled the County Engineer position. We are happy to let you know we have hired Ken Muller to assist us with our Engineering program. Ken started with us in mid April. He worked for WYDOT for 17 years in design and various construction offices. Ken brings a wealth of knowledge to the County and I am looking forward to working with him.

Introducing myself-Rod Liesinger, I am currently the City of Sheridan’s Public Works Director. Effective July 1, 2008, I will assume the same position with Sheridan County. I have enjoyed my time with the City of Sheridan and I’m looking forward to the opportunity to work as the County’s Public Works Director. Looking ahead I see many opportunities and potential for our community. I hope to continue moving forward with the projects and programs the community has begun.