



Annual Report 2010-2011



**Laramie Rivers
Conservation
District**



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Mission Statement

To provide leadership for the conservation of Albany County's soil and water, promote and protect the quality of Albany County's waters, and promote sustained use of Wyoming's water and all other natural resources. Preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect the tax base and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Albany County through a responsible conservation ethic.



LRCO INFORMATION

History

On December 29, 1945, the Laramie Rivers Conservation District (LRCO) was organized in accordance with Wyoming State Statutes. Four additional areas of Albany County were added to the district between 1948 and 1954. The district did not conform to Albany County boundaries until a fifth addition was made in April 1984.

LRCO encompasses an area of 4,305 square miles, or 2,755,136 acres. Within the district, 1,820,093 acres (66.1% of the area) are privately owned; 684,911 acres are federal lands (24.8%); and 250,133 acres are state, county, city, and school owned (9.1%) (source: 2006 Equality State Almanac). There are approximately 320 operating agricultural units in Albany County, with an average size of 7,450 acres, although ranches of more than 10,000 acres are not uncommon.

The high altitude and short growing season of Albany County are best suited to range grass, native hay, and livestock production. Approximately 95,000 acres of meadow are irrigated, primarily by flood irrigation.

LRCO is responsible for directing conservation programs in Albany County. To promote sustainable use of natural resources in both rural and urban communities, the District's Board of Supervisors oversee technical assistance projects provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Additionally, the Board works cooperatively with local entities to promote federal, state, and local programs.

District Facts

District Area.....	2,755,911
Private Lands.....	1,840,441
Federal Lands.....	672,775
State Lands.....	220,733
County, City, Local lands...	36,414

Elected Board Members.....	5
Full Time Staff.....	4
Part time or Seasonal Staff.....	1

District Board

The Laramie Rivers Conservation District has been represented by an impressive group of dedicated board members over the past 65 years. The Board of Supervisors consists of five members who are elected in the general election and serve four-year terms. Because these are voluntary positions, supervisors receive no compensation for their services. Board meetings are held monthly at the district office in Laramie, and are open to the public.





LRCO BOARD

MEET OUR BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Nancy Bath (Rural Supervisor and Chair) sees wind development as a way to save private lands from subdivision and is pro-renewable energy for the tax benefit to the state, which has often found itself in a boom-bust cycle related to the oil, gas and minerals industries. She also points out the contribution that agriculture land provides for wildlife habitat and open space. Nancy encourages good land stewardship and wants to improve LRCO's visibility to the community for all of its environmental endeavors, "We don't just want to be known for our living snow fences."



Larry Munn (Rural Supervisor, Vice-Chair) has been a Professor of Soil Science at UW and an Albany County resident for 28 years. His background also includes forestry and rangeland systems. Larry sees the main challenges for LRCO as helping to maintain open spaces and to preserve a healthy landscape for future generations. Along with the traditional role of assistance to producers, Larry underscores the importance of educating our youth and assisting the emerging population of people living on small acreage plots in Albany County, in being better stewards of the land.



Jim Rogers (At-Large Supervisor, Secretary/Treasurer) has ranched in the Little Laramie Valley for 14 years and is originally from Pinedale. He is a former Albany County Planning Commissioner and has been active with the Stock Growers and the Beef Council. Jim's passion over the past 4 years as an LRCO supervisor, has been to help keep ranching viable through diversification, as a way of preserving open spaces. He sees wind development as one key to saving ranches from going into residential subdivision. He has also been a proponent of allowing ranchers to use their irrigation water to develop fisheries in order to build the recreation and tourism economies.



Kelly Kennedy (Rural Supervisor) is a lifetime Albany County resident, rancher and entrepreneur and looks forward to representing landowners in the northern part of the county. He will work to help us identify natural resource issues and to inform neighbors of programs available to help conserve natural resources and improve ranch viability. He's also interested in staying current and contributing with respect to natural resource issues in the state legislature. Kelly is active on the Albany County Farm Bureau Board and the Albany/Carbon County Farm Services Agency Board.



Carl Shaffer (Urban Supervisor) is a resident of the Town of Rock River and has ranched there for 27 years and in Albany County his entire life. He previously served on the LRCO board for eight years. Carl holds a degree in agronomy from UW and has been instrumental in our work with the endangered Wyoming Toad. He values sustainable agriculture and appreciates the lure of life in the country for our customers who are "new to the land." He is interested in seeing LRCO follow its stated mission, without duplicating services provided by other local agencies. He wants LRCO to spend taxpayer dollars wisely and efficiently.



STAFF & PARTNERS



LRC Board

Top-Carl Shaffer, Urban Supervisor;
Nancy Bath, Rural Supervisor/Chairman;
Larry Munn, Rural Supervisor/Vice-Chair;
Bottom- Kelly Kennedy, Rural Supervisor;
Jim Rogers, At-large Supervisor and
Secretary/Treasurer.

LRC Staff

Left to right: Tony Hoch, Director; Martin
Curry, Resource Specialist; Liz Harvey,
Administrative Assistant; Trish Penny,
Education Coordinator.



UW Cooperative Extension
Small Acreage Coordinator
Jenny Thompson



NRCS District
Conservationist

NRCS Civil Engineering
Technician
Clay Thompson
(not pictured)



5015 Stone Rd.

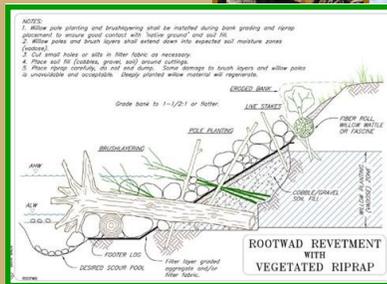


US Fish and Wildlife
Partners Program
Mindy Meade





LARAMIE RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT



This past fall we completed Phase 2 of 3 and saw the work withstand another 200+ year flood event in late spring of 2011. All work is completed south of the Snowy Range Road, including some of the most high profile recreational access sites. Among these are the rock amphitheaters overlooking the river in Optimist Park, and the “fishing hole” site across the Snowy Range Road from the Territorial Prison Park, which features rock piers jutting out from the bank. In addition, we were contracted by BP Amoco to take care of some of their environmental mitigation work along the old Amoco Refinery site, efficiently “killing two birds with one stone” as the old saying goes. We have seen immediate improvements in the fishery, as evidenced by abundant fisherman and their catch.





COST SHARE PROGRAM

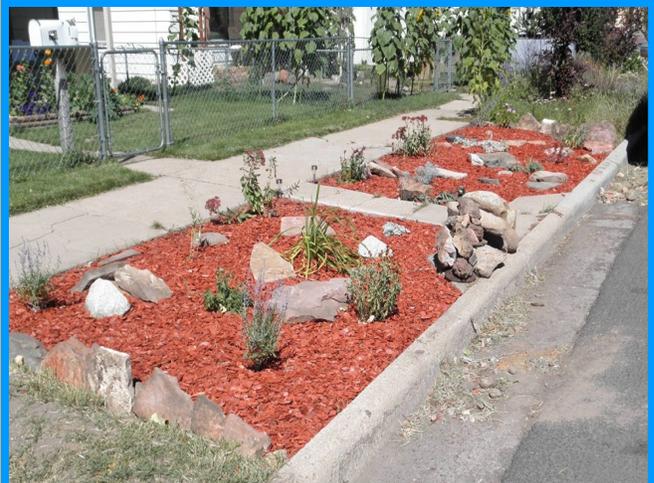
In 2011 we completed the 9th year of our highly popular Regular Cost Share program whose goals are: natural resource conservation, environmental education, and community beautification. We funded 20 projects ranging from our traditional living snow fences to landscape trees at the local trap club. We also supported residential water conservation by cost sharing on grass removal and replacement with “water-wise” landscaping. Funds were also used by a local analytical lab to leverage complete drinking water analyses for over two dozen rural wells, and to help our award winning Snowy Range FFA club to their national convention in Indianapolis, IN. We also used our Regular Cost Share funds to help support a clinic for ranchers on how to reduce their use of fuel and machinery in their daily operations.

Big beautification projects funded under Regular Cost Share include landscaping and irrigation for the almost-refurbished Lincoln Community Center, Energy conservation was encouraged by supporting a small wind turbine at a small lumber operation and sponsoring energy efficiency makeovers for windows at the revitalizing Laramie Plains Civic Center.

Our Rural Cost Share program offers a cost share of up to \$5000 (rather than \$1000 in Regular Cost Share) to do larger projects to benefit natural resources on more of a landscape scale. Rural Cost Share projects included installing a water pipeline and stock tank at a remote location, and a solar panel array and water pump at a remote location; both are intended to improve cattle distribution in large pastures, making for better bird and wildlife habitat.



Solar Stock Pump Conversion done under the Rural Cost Share Program.



Grass Removal/Xeriscape project



OUTREACH PROGRAMS

2011 Conservation & Sustainable Living Expo



This year's expo featured exhibits ranging from alternative energy, green building, gardening, food co-ops, water conservation, non-profits, and agency experts.

Training sessions were offered on several topics. Community Supported Agriculture: getting a CSA started and Marketing at the Farmer's Market by Cole Ehmke; Alternative Energy Set up by Earth Friendly Options, and a discussion panel on Conservation Easements.

We had 43 different exhibitors participate and over 350 members of the public attended- a steady crowd throughout the day. People enjoyed Larry Fairfield's famous burritos and we gave away over 30 door prizes.

Adult Outreach Program Totals

Total presentations.....	37
Total adults reached in person....	972

Workshops

Working with the Cooperative Extensive Service and Barnyards and Backyards, five workshops were held. The topics covered were hoop houses, wellhead protection and food preservation at one. The others were on Pollinators, Horse Health/Fencing, Keeping Chickens, and Small Acreage Living. The Conservation District contributed all of the advertising with the local radio station.





RANGELAND

2010-2011 Rangeland Improvements and Projects

The district has worked with several agencies and individuals within the district to implement rangeland improvements for enhanced wildlife habitat and livestock grazing distribution.

List of projects implemented this year:

- Rangeland and Riparian Monitoring
- 2 Small Acreage Management Plans

List of technical assistance provided this year:

- Seed Mixes for irrigated and upland areas
- Irrigated Land Management Practices



Small Acreage Assistance:

- * 1 grazing plan
- * 7 seed recommendations
- * Several visits to check on tree issues
- * 1 fence layout plan

We worked with the SAIT (Small Acreage Issue Team) and assisted on a property near Blair with many projects addressing Aspen stand regeneration, beetle kill removal and weed control.

Other Rangeland Projects:

- *Assisted WACD locating and verifying 49 UAA (Use Attainability Assessment) points.
- *Brown Creek Angus water development– Installed tank and pipeline.
- *CTA (Conservation Technical Assistance)- Irrigation improvements, River Issues.

Rangeland Monitoring

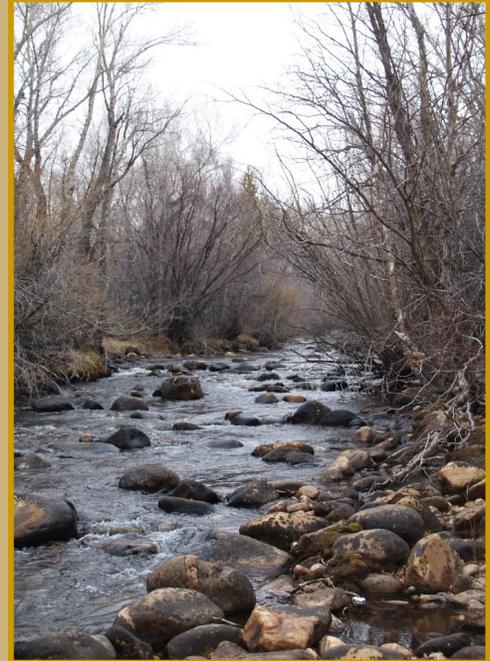
LRCD continued the rangeland monitoring program in the spring and early summer of 2011 as part of its efforts to assist federal grazing permittees and private landowners in identifying their rangeland and riparian conditions. To date, well over 45 monitoring sites have been established on private, state, and federal lands throughout Albany County. LRCD uses a variety of simple yet informative methods for data collection and processing, utilizing the best available science. However, due to time constraints for staff and the timing of the peak vegetation season we are not able to monitor all the areas we want to.





WATER QUALITY

District staff continues to sample the 11 locations on the Big Laramie and Little Laramie Rivers, from the Medicine Bow Mountains to Bosler, an effort to evaluate the health of our major waterways. We monitor pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, total dissolved solids, total suspended solids, and bacteria. We also record discharge numbers from the State Engineer's Office. This is the 11th year for the water quality program and the 8th year under the direction of Tony Hoch who has a deep background in geochemistry and water quality. Our data are submitted to the Wyoming Department of water quality annually for their semi-annual 305b report.



Water Quality Program Facts

Streams Monitored:

Big Laramie and Little Laramie Rivers
 Years LRCD has monitored 11
 Routine Monitoring Sites 11
 Site visits/year 10/site
 Wells Tested 35



COMMUNITY WELL TESTING

For the second year, Laramie Rivers Conservation District and the Wyoming Analytical Lab (WAL) hosted a community well testing program. Through the cost share program and WAL, we were able to test resident's wells for nitrates, bacteria, sodium, salinity, and pH, for \$40.00; a fraction of the regular cost. Our hopes were that we could educate well owners on the quality of their water as well as create awareness about each individual's responsibility in protecting that ground water. This excellent opportunity was utilized by 35 Albany County residents this year.



TREE PROGRAM

Tree Program Totals

Total seedlings sold	9240
Total trees and shrubs planted	2081
Windbreaks/snow fences installed....	11



LRCO's 24th Annual Tree Sale

This year was the 24th year that LRCO has hosted the annual seedling tree sale. Held on the first weekend in May at the Fairgrounds, the sale was a great success. This year's totals were 6150 shrubs and 3090 trees sold. The majority of shrubs and trees sold are to local landowners who plant them themselves. Our most popular species continues to be Caragana, lilac and Rocky Mountain Juniper. Other items sold to the public are our line of tree survival aids. These items include weed barrier, which is sold in 4' x 4' squares or in 6' lengths, Hydrosorce, animal repellent tablets, anti-transpirant and tree protectors.

LRCO is among the few conservation districts within Wyoming that will separate full bundles in order to process customers' orders. We believe this to be a great benefit to our customers with limited planting space. At LRCO, we continue to be fully committed to promoting the establishment of shrubs and trees in Laramie as well as throughout Albany County.



LIVING SNOW FENCES

In 2011, LRCD staff planted 8 Living Snow Fences throughout the county. These 8 Living Snow Fences included 1.1 miles of weed barrier as well as 2.72 miles of drip irrigation. All of this is required to insure the survivability of the 519 shrubs, 37 Rocky Mountain Juniper, 106 Ponderosa Pine, 49 Colorado Blue Spruce and 132 larger deciduous trees that were planted. To plant all 843 shrubs and trees required 93.4 man-hours.



Once planting is finished LRCD staff will continue to follow up and monitor these Living Snow Fence to insure their success. This will include education on proper care and maintenance such as watering schedules, winterization and weed control. Other issues of concern are insect/pest damage and other causes of tree mortality.





GARDENING PROGRAMS

School gardens are a powerful means of instilling lifelong environmental and nutritional literacy in children. The garden engages students by providing a dynamic environment in which to observe, discover, experiment, nurture, and learn. It is a living laboratory where lessons are drawn from real-life experiences rather than textbook examples, allowing students to become active participants in the learning process.



Slade Elementary Garden



Linford Elementary Garden



LRCD is the recipient of a potting greenhouse donated by Laurn and Eloise Wilhelm. The greenhouse will be used for educational purposes and growing out seedlings for wind breaks and living snow fences. Students will learn the four factors of plant growth—heat, light, water and air. An imbalance can cause stress to the plants. Students will be able to experiment with controlling the environment while growing transplants for their school gardens.



...more Gardens



Students from the U of WY Lab School developed a test plot of potatoes at the Territorial Prison. The varieties planted were distant relatives, originally planted by inmates during the time the prison was in use. Colorado State University provided the seed potatoes. Territorial park staff, LRCD and volunteers maintained the plot during the summer.

LABONTE OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

With the help of many community volunteers, local businesses, and space allocated by the City of Laramie Parks and Recreation Department there are new gardens located on the northeast corner of LaBonte Park. There are 16 plots in the Community Garden and they are diverse in size, shape and personality. The north side of the site hosts a much larger 'Kids' garden and greenhouse. The Kids' Garden is used to teach children about gardening in Laramie's challenging environment from seeds to harvest.

A grant from Wyoming State Forestry provided a fruit tree grove including apples, plums and cherry trees. Funding from the Beautification Committee provided ADA accessible walkways, Laramie Garden Club provided top soil, James Waggoner provided the fertilizer, and the University Acres Farm provided compost material.





LABONTE OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER



**Laramie Beautification
Achievement Award**

Demonstration bed for small spaces. This bed provides areas for regular and vertical planting.

The LaBonte Outdoor Learning Center and Community/Kids Gardens wins the Innovation Award. The objective of the award is to enhance the quality of life in the City of Laramie by encouraging improvements and constructive contributions to the community's aesthetics and physical environment. Entrants must be either business, citizens, public or private organizations in the Laramie area. The contest is sponsored by Laramie Beautification Committee Community Coalition.



The Outdoor Learning Center provides people of all ages an opportunity to have experiences in an outdoor setting while instilling an appreciation for natural resources.



YOUTH PROGRAMS



Fiachra Rottinghaus, 2011 State Arbor Day Poster Contest winner, and Governor Matt Mead at the Wyoming State Arbor Day Celebration in Cheyenne, Wy. Fiachra is a fifth grade home-schooled student from Lander.

LRCD teamed up with Laramie Parks and Recreation and provided two separate weeks of summer science camps. Some of the programs included were solar and wind power demonstrations, nature hikes, water and aquatic insects sampling, bee pollination, insect collecting, owl pellet dissection, and a field trip to the Botanical and Children's Village.



Youth Education Program Totals

Total children reached: 5136
Total adults reached: 600



LRCD hosts the annual Ag Expo poster contest each year. This year's focus was the importance of a healthy diet, good nutrition and variety. The stream trailer is used to explore watersheds, riparian areas and how erosion can affect our water quality.





Training & Involvement

WACD State Convention

Board Chair Nancy Bath, Secretary/Treasurer Jim Rogers and staff members Tony Hoch, Martin Curry, and Liz Harvey, attended the 65th annual WACD (Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts) State Convention in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

LRCD Staff Training

Martin Curry– WCDEA Winter Training, GIS Short Course
Liz Harvey– WCDEA Winter Training
Tony Hoch– GIS Short Course

District Supervisors and Staff Serve on Local, State, and National Committees

Nancy Bath– LRCD Chairman/Rural Supervisor, Pole Mountain Cattleman’s Assoc. Secretary/Treasurer.

Larry Munn– LRCD Vice-Chair/ Rural Supervisor, ROAR Member

Jim Rogers- Treasurer/Secretary, LRCD; Wyoming Stock Growers Association; Wyoming Beef Council Director to the State Federation; Windy Ranches LLC- Chairman, Albany County Farm Bureau- Resource Committee Chair.

Carl Shaffer-Urban Supervisor, LRCD.

Kelly Kennedy– LRCD Rural Supervisor, Albany County Farm Bureau Member, Albany/Carbon County Farm Services Agency Board Member.

Trish Penny - Steering Committee member of Wyoming Project Learning Tree (PLT) Board Member, 4H Shooting Sports Leader, Senior Member Civil Air Patrol, Wyoming Environmental Science Certification Study, Wyoming State Arbor Day Poster Contest Coordinator, Albany County Cow-Belles Member; Albany County Ag Expo Committee Member, Laramie Local Foods Member, and Share the Bounty/Feeding Laramie Valley Member.

Tony Hoch - Wyoming Small Acreage Issue Team; Backyards and Barnyards Magazine Coordinator; Laramie Beautification Committee; Wyoming Outdoor Council Board Member; Laramie Rotary Club Board Member, and Wyoming Toad Recovery Team Member.

Martin Curry–Society of Range Management Member, Wyoming Territorial Prison Historical Steering Committee.

Liz Harvey– WCDEA Area II Representative, Friends of Community Recreation– Chairman, Albany County Cow-Belles member, Albany County Ag Expo committee member.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Laramie Chamber of Commerce

LRCO is an active member of the Laramie Area Chamber of Commerce and supports such programs as the Agriculture Appreciation Night.

Laramie Farmer's Market

Since its inception in 2004, LRCO has participated in the Laramie Farmer's market by providing information to citizens with natural resource concerns. The Farmer's Market is a fantastic asset to Laramie's downtown image, economy, and social scene, as well as a great way for LRCO to have a public presence.

LRCO Website – www.lrcd.net

LRCO's website has become an important tool for the public's use. Newsletters, a precipitation table, program applications, and helpful links at the tip of their fingers! The LRCO website is updated regularly by Jim Hurley of Hurley Assoc.

Albany County Planning Office

LRCO works with the County Planning Office by performing reviews on proposed subdivisions in the county. Issues considered in these reviews are water, weeds, erosion, and drainage. Also, this year LRCO teamed up with the planning office for County Clean-up weekend. We cost-shared with them, paying dump fees on tires, appliances, and lots of other junk.

Wyoming Toad Recovery Team

Since the late 1990s, LRCO has played an important role on the Wyoming Toad Recovery Team, with Chair Emeritus Mike Parker, and Tony Hoch, as team members, and LRCO as a lead agency in implementing on-the-ground recovery efforts.

Wyoming State Science Fair

LRCO continued to offer four monetary awards for best general conservation project, at the school district's annual science fair. Tony Hoch, Director, served as a judge for the Wyoming State Science Fair at the University of Wyoming. This year's winners were: Samuel Rovani- Snowy Range Academy, Maggie Hudlow- Pinedale High School, Jessica Hunt- Greybull High School, Emily Sikorski- Pinedale High School, and Anna Johnson- Big Piney Middle School. All received \$100 from us for the "best conservation projects."

Operation Warm

Operation Warm is a program that was started eleven years ago by a Rotarian Dick Sanford of Longwood, PA, to provide new winter coats for children. These coats provide more than just warmth, but improve a child's self esteem. With the current economic situation, many families have lost their jobs and it has been extremely difficult for them to make ends meet or secure housing. With the generosity of the following organizations and individuals we were able to purchase over **150** coats for students within the Albany County School District. This fell under "promoting the general welfare of Albany County citizens" in our mission statement.

Rotary Club of Laramie	Kiwanis Club of
LaramieFay Glissman	Tony Hoch
T. J. Max	
Stores	Sunrise Rotary
Marcia Britton	
Carmen Roth	Matt Scott
Trish Penny	
Charles Shawver	
Bob and Carmen Leonard	James D. Andersen-
Dan Furphy	Kiwanis Junior High Builders Club
Rob/Kacee Schutterle and John/Heidi Schutterle,	
Mtn. Valley Properties	Robert and Sara Needles,
All Terrain Sports	





PARTNERSHIPS

The Staff and Board of LRCD

sincerely appreciate the cooperation of the following organizations-

State, National, and Federal Organizations

- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Wyoming Agriculture in the Classroom
- Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Wyoming State Forestry Division
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program
- Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
- Wyoming Department of Transportation
- Wyoming Conservation District Employee Assn.
- Wyoming Project Learning Tree
- University of Wyoming Cooperative Ext. Service
- UW School of Natural Resources/Ruckelshaus Institute
- Wyoming Natural Diversity Database
- Wyoming Natural Resource Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- UW College of Agriculture

County, Non-Profit, and Community Organizations

- Albany County Fair Board and Staff
- Albany County Weed and Pest
- City of Laramie
- Albany County School District No. 1
- Town of Rock River
- Albany County Commissioners
- Albany County Cooperative Extension Service
- Albany County Cow-Belles
- Laramie Area Chamber of Commerce
- Laramie Economic Development Corporation
- Laramie Chapter, Audubon Society
- Laramie Local Food Group
- Laramie Parks and Recreation Department
- Laramie Garden Club
- Laramie County Conservation District
- Medicine Bow Conservation District
- Saratoga-Encampment Rawlins Cons. District
- Isaac Walton League
- Laramie Beautification Committee
- Wyoming Outdoor Council
- Albany County Planning Office
- Laramie Valley Trout Unlimited





2010-2011 BUDGET

We anticipate the following expenses:

Administration/Salaries	\$	257,098.15
Operations	\$	292,567.00
Fixed Costs	\$	71,450.13
Capital Outlay/Reserve	\$	366,829.72
Total	\$	988,445.00

We anticipate revenue from the following sources:

County Appropriations	\$	445,000.00
Biennial State Grant - WY Dept. of Ag	\$	8,823.00
Equipment Rental	\$	5,000.00
Labor	\$	5,000.00
Advertising Sales	\$	150.00
Seedling Tree Sales	\$	10,000.00
Tree Survival Aids	\$	15,000.00
Education Grants	\$	10,000.00
Wildlife/CRM Grants	\$	10,000.00
WACD/WDA Water Quality Grant	\$	2,132.00
USFWS Safe Harbor Grant	\$	30,500.00
BLM Habitat Grant	\$	50,000.00
USFS Forest Stewardship Grant	\$	15,000.00
Refund from Fraud	\$	9,800.00
Interest	\$	5,000.00
Local Project Income	\$	10,000.00
Miscellaneous Receipts	\$	500.00
Cash Reserve/Checking	\$	305,540.00
Total	\$	988,445.00