

Crook County Natural Resource District

Long-Range Plan

2020 - 2025



Crook County Natural Resource District (CCNRD)

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Table of Contents

Crook County Natural Resource District Mission and Vision	3
Mission:.....	3
Vision:.....	3
Purpose of the Long-Range Plan	4
District Authority	4
Conservation District Law.....	4
CCNRD Management.....	5
Board of Supervisors.....	5
CCNRD Staff.....	5
CCNRD Meetings.....	5
District Description	6
CCNRD Program Areas and Objectives	7
Education and Outreach.....	7
Water Quality.....	7
Forest Management.....	8
Waste Management	8
Oil, Gas and Mineral Development.....	9
Range Management	9
Sustainable Living	10
Wildlife Management.....	10
Legislation.....	10
CCNRD’s Financial Long-Range Goal.....	11
Public Notice	12
Board of Supervisors Approval	13

Crook County Natural Resource District Mission and Vision

Mission: *The Crook County Natural Resource District's mission is to provide coordinated leadership in resource conservation for the purpose of educating, assisting, and meeting the needs of Crook County natural resource users.*

Vision: *The Crook County District Natural Resource District's vision is to establish an awareness of natural resource concerns and provide landowners in Crook County with the appropriate education, technical skills, funding, and support to conserve our natural resources for present and future use.*

The Crook County Natural Resource District will fulfill this vision by:

- **Identifying natural resource concerns:** CCNRD staff and Board members will participate in local, state, and federal meetings, trainings, conventions, and listen to local landowners, partners, and analyze resource data.
- **Educating the people of Crook County about natural resource concerns:** CCNRD staff and Board members will participate in public events throughout communities in Crook County and increase public awareness, as well as observe conservation-based holidays (For example: Arbor Day, Earth Day, Get Outside day, World Water Monitoring Day). Field days and other educational programs will be offered throughout school systems and various organizations.
- **Obtaining funds:** This will be accomplished by applying for grants, scholarships, and a mill-levy and/or other County funds to meet expenses not covered under grant funding. Grant funding is a competitive process and continual proposals must be generated and accepted to allow for future grant funding.
- **Developing strong working relationships with cooperating agencies that provide technical assistance knowledge, funding, and support:** CCNRD staff will communicate effectively and regularly with other agencies and entities, offer support to other organizations, and engage in public and co-sponsored events.
- **Providing quality service to landowners by being available and willing to address their needs and concerns as natural resource users:** The CCNRD will have staff available during core office hours to assist local stakeholders. The CCNRD will earnestly attempt to address comments presented by the public for the purpose of improving our service areas and the resources we provide.

Purpose of the Long-Range Plan

The Long-Range Plan (Plan) acts as a guiding document for future programs of the Crook County Natural Resource District. The Plan, outlined in the following pages, will help guide the CCNRD through 2025, at which time the plan will be evaluated and updated. The purpose is creating this plan is to ensure the CCNRD is implementing its mission, vision, and requests made by the County residents and the Board of Supervisors with regards to resource conservation and protection and development.

District Authority

The Crook County Natural Resource District is a legal subdivision of the State of Wyoming and therefore abides by State Statutes. In 1941, the Wyoming Governor passed a law to develop local government agencies to help implement conservation practices. There are 34 county districts within the State of Wyoming, all of which address conservation practices on private and public lands to ensure that natural resource needs are being fulfilled.

Conservation District Law

Wyoming Conservation District Law State Statute 11-16-103 entitled "Legislative Declarations and Policy," states the following:

(a) It is hereby declared that the farm and grazing lands of Wyoming are among the basic assets of the state; that improper land use practices cause and contribute to serious erosion of these lands by wind and water; that among the consequences which would result from such conditions are the deterioration of soil and its fertility and the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams and ditches; that to conserve soil, and soil and water resources, and prevent and control soil erosion, it is necessary that land use practices contributing to soil erosion be discouraged and that appropriate soil conserving land use practices be adopted.

(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil, and soil and water resources of this state, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, and thereby to stabilize ranching and farming operations, to preserve natural resources, protect the tax base, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state.

This document conveys actions the Crook County Natural Resource District takes to support the broad mandate districts have under Wyoming's conservation district law and policies. A political subdivision of the State, the CCNRD has express authority to address resource management issues in cooperation with landowners, local, state and federal agencies on

private lands as well as state and federally managed lands. The CCNRD addresses resource conservation and management through a variety of mechanisms including offering outreach and education activities, conducting research and resource monitoring, and offering technical and financial assistance to landowners. Statements of policy outlined in the Crook County Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) are also utilized in the development of the CCNRD's Annual and Long-Range Plans. As such, other state and federal agencies are required to recognize the CCNRD's responsibilities as management plans, policies and other resource management documents are developed, including actions that trigger the environmental review process outlined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination authorized through NEPA and other state and federal laws provide a mechanism for the CCNRD to meet its mission for developing, protecting, and conserving the natural resources that have shaped the heritage of Crook County.

CCNRD Management

The Crook County Natural Resource District is managed by a Board of five Supervisors who are elected officials. The Board of Supervisors are the voice of the Crook County citizens and their resources. The Board of Supervisors play an essential role in managing County natural resources by providing leadership and direction in resource conservation, development, and program implementation. The Board of Supervisors are residents of Crook County, Wyoming, and are selected to represent rural and urban citizens. State Statutes require three members to represent the rural community, one member to represent the urban community, and one member to represent the community at-large. As of 2020, the Board of Supervisors oversee three CCNRD employees: one Office Manager and two Program Coordinators. The Board of Supervisors has approved a Conservation Technician position to be filled in 2021. The employees work together under Board Supervision to implement conservation programs.

Board of Supervisors

Wayne Garman, Lily Altaffer, Wanda Burget, Kim Fundaun

CCNRD Staff

Bridget Helms, Office Manager
Sarah D. Anderson, Program Coordinator
Carmen Horne-McIntyre, Program Coordinator

CCNRD Meetings

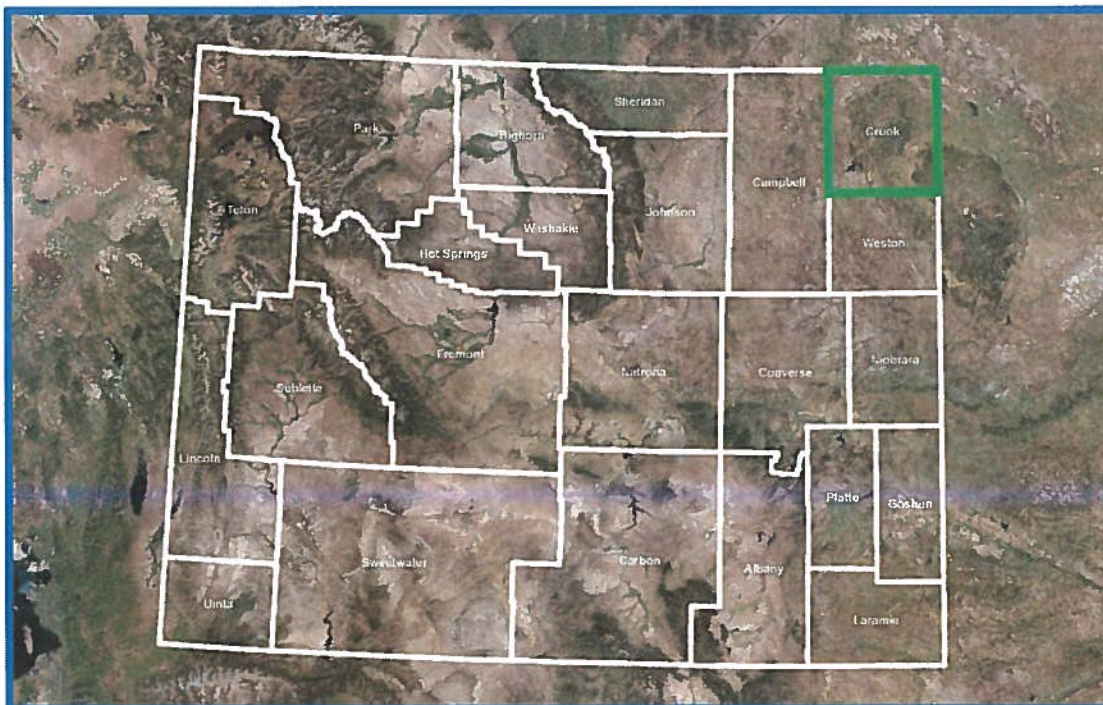
The CCNRD Board of Supervisors meets the first Tuesday of the month at 12:00 p.m. at the USDA Service Center in Sundance, Wyoming.

District Description

Crook County is in the northeast corner of Wyoming and encompasses 2,865 square miles. It is bordered by Montana to the north, South Dakota to the east, Weston County to the south and Campbell County to the west. Interstate 90 moves across the county east to west. Municipalities in Crook County are Sundance, Hulett, Moorcroft and Pine Haven.

Crook County is home to a variety of unique geologic formations such as Devil’s Tower, the first National Monument. The Black Hills and Bear Lodge Mountains are an oasis for animals and people alike who are in search of an abundant variety of resources. The landscape is comprised of ponderosa pine forests, native prairie grasslands and sage brush steppe. This offers habitat to a diversity of species and provides a variety of agricultural opportunities. The elevation ranges from 3,097’ on the Belle Fourche River as it crosses into South Dakota to 6,662’ at Warren Peak in the Bear Lodge Mountains. Crook County is home to Keyhole State Park which is the 5th most visited State Park in Wyoming. The 5-year visitor average is 200,171 people.

There are two main perennial rivers in Crook County. The Belle Fourche River is 290 miles long and the Little Missouri River is 560 miles long. Both rivers flow to the northeast and into South Dakota. The Belle Fourche river joins the Cheyenne River in South Dakota and the Little Missouri joins the main channel of the Missouri River in North Dakota. The Belle Fourche is the largest river in the county, and it flows into the Keyhole Reservoir near Pine Haven. It is impaired approximately 6 miles north of Moorcroft to 85 miles downstream beyond Hulett. Three major streams in the county are Beaver Creek, Sand Creek and Redwater Creek. Sand Creek is rated as a Blue-Ribbon trout fishing stream.



CCNRD Program Areas and Objectives

Education and Outreach

Long-Range Plan: *To establish a greater awareness in Crook County regarding the CCNRD's mission and services provided; and to influence today's youth to be tomorrow's advocates who appreciate, respect, and conserve our natural resources.*

Objectives:

- Increase CCNRD's visibility through various media outlets and community involvement
- Encourage development of future natural resource supporters
- Offer experiential service-learning projects (contingent upon funding)
- Provide conservation information to the public through brochures, displays, newspaper, radio and social media
- Provide educational opportunities through teachings, seminars, workshops and tours
- Participate in community events throughout Crook County
- Partner with natural resource based agencies who support common goals and objectives
- Participate in conservation days such as: Arbor Day, World Water Monitoring Day, America Recycles Day, etc. (as funding is available)
- Provide Crook County schools with natural resource conservation education programs
- Organize fundraisers that engages people in natural resource conservation and increases funding availability

Water Quality

Long-Range Plan: *To conserve and improve the quality and quantity of water resources in Crook County for multiple use.*

Objectives:

- Actively work towards improving watershed health throughout Crook County
- Maintain the CCNRD Water Quality Monitoring Program in order to gather scientifically credible data on local watershed health, including long-term water quality trends in the listed segment of the Belle Fourche River
- Secure funds to improve watershed health through outreach, data collection, and projects
- Seek funding opportunities to assist landowners in voluntarily implementing best management practices (BMPs) to improve water quality and quantity
- Maintain an updated Sampling Analysis Plan (SAP) to reflect monitoring programs and guideline changes
- Provide informational programs regarding point source and non-point source pollution threats with an emphasis on social media outlets
- Analyze water sampling data annually to assess water quality conditions in the watershed and evaluate the effectiveness of the BMPs implemented
- Maintain a cooperative relationship with neighboring counties and the states of Wyoming and South Dakota to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information related to implementing and updating Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies

- Evaluate and utilize supplemental monitoring strategies that focus on pathogenic, DNA or RNA-based analysis to narrow down the sources of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) impairment
- Develop and implement a nutrient monitoring strategy for Keyhole and coordinate with WDEQ and the Bureau of Reclamation as necessary to address nutrient management in the Belle Fourche River watershed
- Generate a dataset for subwatersheds in the Donkey Creek drainage to evaluate pollutant source(s) contributing to impaired conditions
- Preserve riparian buffer areas
- Work with the University of Wyoming to evaluate the persistence of *E. coli* in streambed sediments relative to bacteria concentrations found in the water column
- Participate in watershed and basin development planning
- Publicly disseminate information regarding harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Keyhole Reservoir
- Sponsor small water projects through the Wyoming Water Development Commission

Forest Management

Long-Range Plan: *To Promote the importance of forest management on both private and public lands to ensure forest health, resiliency, and future sustainability.*

Objectives:

- Increase participation of informational and educational activities and workshops to promote forest health improvement and to disseminate guidance regarding hazardous fuel reductions
- Support legislation focused on improving local and state-wide forest health and resiliency
- Seek grant funding or other financial opportunities to help landowners implement timber resource management, forest health improvement, and hazardous fuel reduction projects
- Host forestry related insect and disease identification and mitigation trainings in conjunction with Crook County Weed & Pest
- Attend working group and legislative meetings to emphasize the importance of continued forest management, health, and resiliency

Waste Management

Long-Range Plan: *To increase local awareness of waste management issues and to encourage the development of sustainable local waste management systems.*

Objectives:

- Promote and increase proper waste disposal and recycling efforts in Crook County
- Seek funding to provide cost-share on failing septic systems
- Provide education and outreach about the risks of old septic systems and waste management
- Host annual electronic waste (e-cycling) collection days in Crook County
- Secure funding for additional hazardous waste collections to expand upon e-cycling
- Promote trash pick-ups, pet waste management, and maintenance of storm drains and road ditches
- Provide information and feedback as necessary, to the County and local municipalities regarding long-term plans for landfill expansions and closures

- Provide education to the public, schools, and private organizations to promote recycling to reduce soil and water contamination
- Coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation, State Parks and Tourism Department and local partners to ensure Keyhole State Park campgrounds and boat dock areas are not contributing to algal blooms at Keyhole

Oil, Gas and Mineral Development

Long-Range Plan: *To stay informed and provide information and recommendations during all stages of oil, gas, and mineral development; including planning, operation, and site closures for the conservation and protection of natural resources and community health.*

Objectives:

- Remain involved in community and agency discussions regarding local oil, gas, and mineral development projects
- Provide the County and the applicable agencies with accurate information regarding natural resource conditions, potential benefits and adverse impacts
- Attend meetings where monitoring data, environmental protection measures, NEPA compliance, and other topics are addressed for active and proposed oil, gas, and mineral development projects in the County or that may impact local watersheds
- Provide our perspective regarding potential community and ecological impacts related to active and proposed projects
- Research and study advantages, disadvantages, and possible environmental threats to natural resources related to oil, gas, and mine development projects
- Continue to stay informed of local and regional oil, gas, and mineral development proposals and projects
- Request cooperating agency status when applicable

Cropland and Rangeland Management

Long-Range Plan: *To provide landowners with further education and support to enrich their knowledge, skills, and aspiration to improve land sustainability for the benefit of future generations.*

Objectives:

- Provide educational opportunities and outreach to stakeholders to increase range and farmland stewardship. Potential topics include, but are not limited to: seeding mixes for cover crops, soil health principles, grazing management, and riparian zone management
- Seek funding opportunities to assist landowners with range management best management practices (BMPs) to improve water quality and quantity, riparian health, soil health, plant productivity, wildlife habitat, etc.
- Explore opportunities to work with producers and other stakeholders to address forage needs of wildlife and livestock on private lands
- Provide technical assistance to increase range and farmland stewardship
- Partner with other landowners, agencies and other stakeholders to improve pasture, water quality, and wildlife management

- Post announcements regarding continuing education courses on weed management, multi-species grazing, native grass species, pollinators, and productive range management
- Coordinate with landowners and producers to address threatened and endangered species habitat on private lands where state/federally funded projects are proposed.

Sustainable Living

Long-Range Plan: *To instill the need for living sustainable lives and offering the education, the tools, and the support needed to establish sustainable living opportunities in Crook County.*

Objectives:

- Encourage sustainable living principles and provide resources to implement measures
- Gather community input on establishing community gardens in the County and identify resources necessary to implement projects
- Explore opportunities to support trails projects in communities and recreational areas
- Assist communities and individuals interested in implementing pollinator and bat-friendly habitat projects
- Secure technical assistance and funding needed to offer resources needed to put sustainable living into action.
- Look into sustainable products to sell or provide cost-share to generate revenue and to increase sustainability awareness

Wildlife Management

Long-Range Plan: *To provide the education and the resources needed to promote wildlife habitat and population management.*

Objectives:

- Promote wildlife habitat improvement practices
- Encourage land management practices that allow producers' personal goals to be accomplished while minimizing impacts to wildlife (e.g. wildlife-friendly fencing)
- Implement water quality and quantity improvement projects that include wildlife habitat enhancement components
- Support interagency efforts regarding the Sage Grouse Initiative and similar wildlife protection plans that benefit Crook County
- Partner with wildlife agencies to secure grant funding for wildlife improvement projects
- Stay abreast of local and regional wildlife populations
- Request cooperating agency status when applicable for threatened or endangered species that may be impacted within Crook County

Legislation

Long-Range Plan: *To inform Crook County residents of current legislative activity and issues at the national, state, and local levels and provide action when necessary.*

Objectives:

- Encourage legislative actions that are in line with Crook County's resource management goals and objectives
- Provide the County with information regarding natural resource management and resource development issues that could negatively impact Crook County
- Provide oral or written comments on legislation, permitting, and other decision-making that would impact Crook County
- Remain informed on legislative actions and offer Crook County leaders and residents insight as to the implications of the proposed or enacted legislation on the County
- Meet annually with locally elected officials and legislators to provide feedback regarding legislation that may impact Crook County stakeholders and landowners
- Work closely with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts and local legislators to develop or review environmental and natural resources legislation and make changes on the State level as needed

CCNRD's Financial Long-Range Goal

The Crook County Natural Resource District will continue to pursue grant funds to provide natural resource conservation programs. However, grant funding is restricted money and can only be used specifically in the way in which it was awarded. The CCNRD has previously attempted to receive a mill levy by listing the request on a ballot. However, due to the lack of recognition, awareness, and understanding in the community of who the CCNRD is and how we are funded, the mill levy was not supported. The CCNRD has contributed to landowner improvement projects in the past several years by cost-sharing on conservation improvement projects and Best Management Practices (BMPs). In the fiscal year 2019, the CCNRD assisted landowners by cost-sharing on rangeland and water quality improvement projects in the amount of \$276,074.00. The CCNRD also spent an additional \$200,998.00 in forestry management projects on private lands in the County from July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020.

The CCNRD exists to help landowners improve their land and protect the natural resources for future generations. The CCNRD has the people and the land in their best interest.

The CCNRD is seeking avenues to generate income through wildlife-escape ramp sales and possible fundraising events. The CCNRD primarily operates through grant funding, base appropriations from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, and the generous support from the Crook County Commissioners. However, none of this funding, especially grant funding, is secure. Therefore, it is imperative that the CCNRD find a more secure avenue of funding.

Public Notice

**CROOK COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT (CCNRD)
LONG-RANGE PLAN 2020-2025
RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Crook County Natural Resource District (CCNRD) will accept written comments on the draft CCNRD Long-Range Plan 2020-2025 beginning Friday October 16, 2020 and will continue through Monday November 30th, 2020. Copies of the document are available at the CCNRD office located in the USDA building (117 S. 21st St. in Sundance) and by email request to crookcountynrd@gmail.com. The finalized plan, including all public comments, will be reviewed at the CCNRD Board of Supervisors' meeting on December 1st, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. at the USDA building. For more information, contact the CCNRD at (307) 283-2870 x4.

Facebook Post— Board Meeting November 3rd at 12:00 PM.
Please stop by to provide the CCNRD with input on the CCNRD's Long Range Plan which will outline goals for the next 5 years.

Board of Supervisors Approval

Whereas, the Crook County Natural Resource District is empowered by Wyoming State Statutes to adopt and implement water and soil conservation management policies;

Whereas, the Crook County Natural Resource District has sought out and received public involvement and input regarding the role of the Crook County Natural Resource District in the conservation and management of the CCNRD's natural resources and that the plans and programs are carried out utilizing an open and collaborative planning process;

Therefore, be it hereby resolved by the Board of Supervisors of the Crook County Natural Resource District, this 1st day of December 2020 that the Board of Supervisors adopts the Crook County Natural Resource District's Long-Range Plan for 2020-2025.


Chairman, Wayne Garman

12/1/2020
Date

Vice Chairman, Vacant

Date


Treasurer, Wanda Burget

12/7/2020
Date


Secretary, Kim Fundaun

12/15/2020
Date


Member, Lily Altaffer

12-1-2020
Date

