

Local Area Conservationists Recognized

Dave Fraley, Lake DeSmet Conservation District Supervisor and Nikki Lohse, Lake DeSmet Conservation District Manager were recently recognized at the Wyoming Association of Conservation District State Convention held in Lander. Dave Fraley was recognized as the Outstanding District Supervisor of the Year for Wyoming, while Nikki Lohse was recognized as the Outstanding District Employee of the Year for Wyoming.

Dave owns and operates Fraley Land & Livestock located southeast of Buffalo. Dave was born and raised in Johnson County and has been involved in the agricultural industry all his life. He attended Sheridan College where he received a degree in Agriculture. He is married to Robbin and they have four children. He is an active member of the Guardians of the Range and active in his Church. Dave has served on many boards throughout his years. He served on the Johnson County School Board and was a member of the Johnson County Weed & Pest District Board for 16 years.

Dave has been a Supervisor for the Lake DeSmet Conservation District for the past eight (8) years, and was recently re-elected for another 4-year term as the "At-Large" member. Dave has served as Chairman of the District for the past four (4) years. He also serves on the WACD Board of Directors. He is the Area I Representative and has served in this capacity for the last 6 years. Dave was instrumental in bringing together the Guardians of the Range to support action against Wyoming Watersheds on the Big Horn Mountain Litigation efforts. Dave enjoys the camaraderie of his fellow conservation supervisors and stays actively involved on all the issues currently affecting the conservation districts at the legislative level.

Dave never fails to offer his time to stay abreast of local issues. He sits on the steering committee for the Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plan. Dave represents the District on the Forest Service Steering Committee for the Big Horn National Forest Revision Plan. He sits on the Energy Minerals County Coalition Joint Powers Board, as the District representative, and was a participant in DEQ's watershed based permitting process to address CBM development issues. He is actively involved with the District by participating in Local Work Group meetings that bring conservation decision making to a local level. He has served as co-chair of the LWG for the last eight (8) years. He is a strong supporter of setting county priorities that will improve and maintain our natural resource. He has participated in several educational tours that the conservation district has sponsored, as well as area and state meetings.

Dave's involvement with the Weed & Pest Board, helped facilitate and move forward the Double Crossing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project. This project secured funding for landowners within the Double Crossing area to implement IPM plans to address noxious weeds, primarily leafy spurge, within the watershed.

Dave is very dedicated to his agricultural way of life and strives to maintain agriculture viability for the future generations. Dave is extremely conservation minded and has implemented several conservation practices on his ranching unit. He has installed stock water pipelines, solar wells and additional fencing that assist in his grazing management plan that was designed specific for sage grouse. He installed

escape ramps in all watering tanks to facilitate wildlife safety. Rangeland and wildlife inventories were conducted on his ranch unit to develop a conservation plan that would assist in enhancing sage grouse and sagebrush obligate habitat. A pasture aerator was utilized on approximately 400 acres to enhance wildlife habitat by inter-seeding sage grouse forbs in overflow sites adjacent to sage grouse leks. He has implemented a monitoring plan that assists him in the movement of his livestock to help in maintaining critical nesting and brood rearing wildlife habitat, while sustaining his agricultural operation.

The District feels very fortunate to have Dave as a Supervisor. They value his input and commitment to the constituents of Johnson County for the years that he has served on the Board. He is committed, dedicated and always goes the extra mile. Dave is very deserving of this award, and sets a wonderful example for the new members of our conservation district family.

Nikki Lohse has been employed by the Lake DeSmet Conservation District since 1991. Nikki and her husband Tom ranch southeast of Buffalo. They have one daughter, Catie.

The projects and programs that Nikki has been instrumental in are too numerous to mention however a few examples include:

- Emergency Wildlife Restoration Buffalo Core Sage Grouse Habitat Project. This project re-established sage brush habitat on 270 acres that was destroyed in a wildfire.*
- The Clear Creek City Greenbelt Management Project. This project focused on partnerships to reduce wildland fire risk, enhancement of natural vegetation and expansion of recreational and educational opportunities within the City of Buffalo's Green Belt Area. This project was recently highlighted in the Wyoming Natural Resource Foundation Urban & Community Forestry Report.*
- Continued coordination with the Sheridan County Conservation District and the Wyoming Water Development Commission to complete the Clear Creek Level I Study and continuation of the Level II Water Storage Study.*
- Administration of the Community-Based Approach to Applying Innovative Technologies for Monitoring and Restoring Sagebrush Habitats in Wyoming Project. This project focused on enhancement of sage grouse habitat. It involved 24 landowners encompassing approximately 340,000 acres. This was a partnership effort to restore native vegetation using a pasture aerator to interseed sage grouse and sage brush obligate forbs. A combined contribution by partners totaled \$3.2 million.*
- Monitoring of 29 sites for the Use Attainability Project coordinated through WACD and DEQ*
- Coordination of a brochure, "Reclamation Tools for Restoring Healthy Sagebrush Ecosystems: with BLM, NRCS, several local CD's, Weed and Pest, Game & Fish, State Engineers Office, Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and Powder River Energy Corp. Its purpose is to provide Northeast Wyoming landowners with voluntary opportunities for restoration of important wildlife habitats on decommissioned coal-bed natural gas fields and sage grouse.*

Nikki's personality, knowledge and professionalism are the corner stone of the District. She is committed to representing the District and always ensures that the District's needs and issues are represented.

Nikki is a genuine grassroots representative of the landowners and general public in the District and has,

for years, provided leadership and direction to bring volunteer cooperation in natural resource conservation programs. After 20 years of dedication and service to the District, Nikki continues to show enthusiasm in her work. She continues to learn the newest state of the art technologies to do the best possible job she can for the Board and the citizens of the District.

In addition to working for the District and the family ranching operation, Nikki is very involved in community activities. She was one of the founders of the Powder River Family Resources organization. This organization produced the Battle on the Blacktop 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament held every year in Buffalo. It offers scholarships to kids that can't afford to attend camps, and provides clothing to athletes in need. She and her husband host a Bobby Harris Roping Clinic for the youth each year. Nikki is also a strong supporter of Johnson County 4-H serving as the Junior Leader Advisor for many years and supporting the Junior Livestock Sale.

Johnson County is very fortunate to have these two committed people working towards conservation of our natural resources.