



Tongue River Watershed Annual Newsletter

Tongue River Watershed Group
Sheridan County Conservation District
January 2017

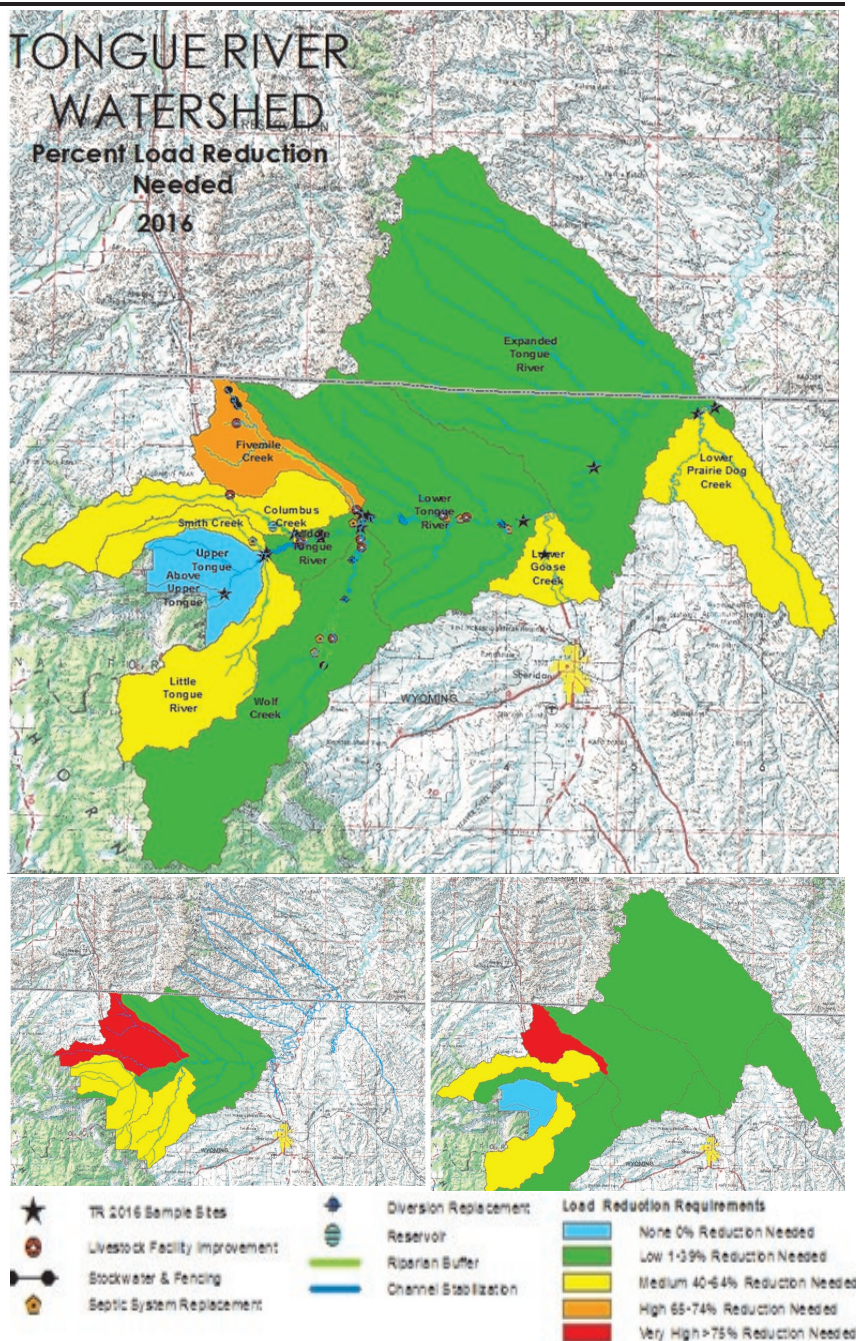
SCCD, in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, initiated a water quality monitoring and improvement effort in the Tongue River Watershed. The original boundary included the area upstream of the Town of Ranchester. The project boundary has been expanded twice. The first expansion, in 2006, included the area between Ranchester and Acme. In 2013, the remaining lower portion to the Montana state line was added. Multiple years of monitoring identified levels of bacteria that exceeded Wyoming water quality standards for recreational uses. The first watershed plan was developed in 2000, with subsequent revisions in 2007 and 2012. All of these plans recommended continued monitoring, information and education activities, and continued administration of cost-share programs for projects. The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) initiated the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in 2014. A TMDL indicates the amount of a given pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards.

Planning efforts used water quality monitoring information to determine the percent reductions needed for bacteria levels to meet water quality standards. Using a similar process, SCCD incorporated collected data to document reduction requirements in relation to installed improvement projects (See Maps). These figures are based on the average of data collected within the monitoring season. There are 5 reduction categories, including:

- No reduction needed (meets standards)
- Low (up to 39% reduction needed)
- Medium (40-64% reduction needed)
- High (65-74% reduction needed)
- Very High (greater than 75% reduction needed).

SCCD uses the information from multiple years

to help prioritize project requests. Typically, tributary watersheds and lower subwatersheds require higher bacteria reductions than other parts of the watershed. In most cases, reduction requirements have decreased since 2010, with the majority of subwatersheds in the Low or Medium reduction categories. Continued implementation of improvement projects is necessary to support further bacteria reductions.



New to the Area: Be Aware of Invasive Grasses

Medusahead and ventenata (North African wiregrass) are invasive annual grasses with extremely aggressive characteristics. They have recently been identified in Sheridan and Campbell counties. The University of Wyoming Extension developed a flyer to provide more information and photos of the grasses. The flyer can be found on the SCCD website at www.sccdwy.org. If found, please report these grasses to Sheridan County Weed and Pest (752-7930) or UW Sheridan Research and Extension Center (673-2647).



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Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee Meeting

The annual Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 2nd, at 6:00 p.m.** at the **Ranchester Town Hall** (next to the Tongue River Branch Library). The Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee, which is comprised of landowners and interested parties, provides input and recommendations to the SCCD for implementing resource programs within the Tongue River Watershed. The meeting is open to anyone living in or interested in the Tongue River Watershed. Stay tuned to the District website (www.sccdwy.org) and Facebook page for an upcoming agenda. Please come join us on March 2nd; your input is always welcome!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD PROJECTS!

Through federal and state grants, the SCCD offers financial assistance for projects that benefit water quality in impaired watersheds. Typical projects include installing fencing or stockwater systems to minimize livestock access to waterbodies, relocating corrals or animal feeding areas away from waterbodies, and replacing eligible septic systems to eliminate sewage discharges. Descriptions of select projects are available on SCCD's website (www.sccdwy.org).

If you would like to apply for cost-share funds through one of SCCD's many water quality improvement programs, we encourage you to contact SCCD to determine if the project is eligible and to learn more about the application process. Batching deadlines for project applications are March 1st and July 1st.

Tongue River Watershed Clean-up Project

As part of the Tongue River Initiative, the Sheridan County Conservation District and Sheridan Community Land Trust, with other partners, are pursuing options to acquire the property that includes the former Acme Power Plant. The purpose of this acquisition is to perform environmental assessment and environmental reclamation using federal and state programs. The partners have initiated a process to convey ownership of the property to the Sheridan County Conservation District, a legal entity eligible to participate in clean-up programs.

The timeline for clean-up is largely dependent upon the duration of environmental assessments and the availability of state and federal clean-up funding. Initial environmental assessments are currently underway. For more information, please contact the Sheridan County Conservation District or the Sheridan Community Land Trust.



Please consider making a donation to the SCCD to support our efforts on this important project!

~ The Tongue River Initiative is a partnership among the Sheridan Community Land Trust, the Sheridan County Conservation District, and the Nature Conservancy of NE Wyoming. The mission is to maintain and enhance the current agriculture character, wildlife habitat and natural resources, and the natural aesthetic values of the Tongue River Valley. ~