

Newsletter

Fall 2023



From the District Coordinator

As the termination dust begins to accumulate, the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD) wraps up their busy field season. It sure seems like summer zipped by faster than ever beginning with our May tree sale where over 5,000 trees and shrubs were sold and planted in interior communities. As one of over 3,000 non-regulatory Soil and Water Conservation Districts nationwide, FSWCD staff worked at achieving the volunteer board members' goals of developing locally driven solutions for natural resource concerns. Their priority goals to assist private landowners include promoting local agriculture and natural resource education, sustainable land development, eradicating invasive species, forest management, and soil and water conservation. Applying these to our local district which encompasses over 20 million acres including portions of the Tanana, Nenana, and Yukon River Watersheds was the objective of staff this busy summer.



This newsletter will feature many of the projects that FSWCD worked on during the 2023 field season. But here are some important highlights:

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From the District Coordinator

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SALMON! – The low numbers of returning salmon have subsistence and recreational fisherman alike very worried. Every riparian restoration, fish passage, and aquatic invasive action that FSWCD took this summer related to improving salmon habitat.

Nenana Totchaket Agricultural Project – FSWCD reviewed 24 farm conservation plans for the new farmers who purchased state land from the agricultural land sale in Nenana. Please contact us for any technical assistance with developing your farm conservation plan.



Photo Above: Low cost hydroponic tower building workshop at Fairbanks Community Food Bank.

Soil Soil Soil – Hugh Hammond Bennet, known as the father of soil conservation, stated, “out of the long list of nature’s gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.” FSWCD sent out over 150 soil samples to be tested and then gave recommendations for soil amendments this season. If you can still dig your soil, bring in a garden or farm soil sample now to be prepared for next spring. Read about our new compost program in this issue.

Partners – FSWCD acts as a liaison between many government agencies and private land users. Without our partners, the natural resource educational and technical assistance could not get accomplished. Thanks to all our local, state, federal and private partners. And thanks to you, our cooperators and private landowners who express your needs and utilize our services. Please let us know your natural resource concerns and consider becoming a FSWCD board member! Nominations are due near the end of November.

Thank you for reading! *Joni*



Photo Above: A 2023 FSWCD Beginner Youth for Habitat student prepares to identify and measure a recently trapped fish from Cripple Creek south of Fairbanks. The program works with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game to monitor fish occupancy in the vital waterway.

Food Security – This seems to be an important Alaskan buzz word and concern of the last few years. Every project that FSWCD accomplishes, relates back to food security in some way. Specifically, staff has started and promoted community gardens, hosts the Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum, has offered a farmer training program, and developed affordable and easy to build hydroponics systems and distributed them throughout communities.



Photo Above: Scott Faulkner shares about the FSWCD's Youth for Habitat Program's efforts in restoring and monitoring Cripple Creek with USFWS director Martha Williams. USFWS Biologists Mitch Osborne and Amy Tippetery join in the special visit from the national director.

Education and Outreach Program

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Education and Outreach Department Update

FSWCD's Education had a productive spring. We welcomed new staff member Emily Cheney in Mid-April, and she has been a fantastic addition to our team. Emily has been helping Mel Sikes with our USDA Community Foods Project AFFECT (Alternative Fairbanks Farm Education and Cooperative Training). We held many community classes during the spring and summer including a second summer of the farmer training classes with visits to local farms and farmers. Scott Faulkner has been working with Effie Kokrine School this fall in continuing work with their students on a large hydroponic system.

Upcoming Events

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Oct 5.</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Garden Fresh Food Preparation Workshop</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Nov. 9</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Natural Dyeing and Paint Workshop</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Oct. 12</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Hydroponics Workshop</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Dec. 7</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Fermented Hot Sauce Workshop</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Oct. 19</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Pickles and Sauerkraut Workshop</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Dec. 14</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Butter and Cheese Workshop</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Oct. 19</p> <p>AFFECT's Free Freezer Jam Workshop</p> </div> </div>	<div style="background-color: #2e5496; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Interested?</p> </div> <p>Visit affectfarm.com to learn more about the free workshops we offer, the community tower builds, and how to apply for the Farmer Training Program. Visit our website: fairbankssoilwater.org to apply for the Youth for Habitat Program.</p>

In August we had a visit from the Undersecretary of the USDA grant program, Chavonda Jacobs-Young and received much praise on how the project is progressing and what we have accomplished so far. As a result of all our efforts, we have been getting many calls about assisting communities with hydroponic projects and are happy to share what we have been working on. The AFFECT project has received a no cost extension to its original 3-year timeframe. As of September 1, we are starting our 4th year of the project and plan to work in partnership with UAF which include plans to expand the farmer training next summer. We will continue to provide community classes through the winter and spring. Watch for notice about our updated Farmer Training program for next summer in our spring newsletter.

In May, we completed a grant from the Alaska Mental Health Trust to support the AFFECT project. As part of their generous funding, we worked with many community members and groups including Rotary Club and the Boys and Girls Club to build 100 hydroponic grow towers to give to Trust beneficiaries. Towers were distributed with the help of many local agencies including NAMI, NA, FNSBSD's Center Program, Alaska Behavioral Health, and many others.



A hydroponic tower donated to NAMI through the AFFECT grant.

This summer we completed our Alaska Division of Agriculture microgrant

awarded in 2021 with the expansion of the community garden at Corinthian Baptist Church with the help of our two summer Americorps VISTAS Brendan and Rex. The VISTAS assisted with many projects in the community including new garden beds at



FSWCD employees Mel Sikes and Scott Faulkner and some FFA students pose with USDA Undersecretary Chavonda Jacobs-Young during her visit to Fairbanks.

the UAF Georgeson Botanical Garden's community garden plot. We have started doing Afterschool programs in the local FNSB schools including Ann Wien, Hunter, Denali and Tic Brown. Emily Cheney, Amelia Sikes, Liz Kempton and Laura Weingartner are our staff for ASP this year.



Photo Left: Summer Americorps VISTAs Rex and Brendan constructing new garden beds with local volunteer Steve Neumuth.

Photo Right: Pepper plants growing in one of the raised beds at the Lloyd Jones Memorial Garden at Corinthian Baptist Church. The resulting peppers were donated to the Fairbanks Community Food Bank.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR OUR INTERIOR ALASKA COMMUNITY GARDEN GUIDE - COMING SOON!

Education and Outreach Program

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Composting in Fairbanks

Compost FBX is a USDA grant-funded food waste prevention and diversion initiative operated by the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District. The goal of this project is to investigate the best way to reduce and divert food waste on a large scale given the unique resources and specific climate in Fairbanks. In addition to a feasibility study, Compost FBX has a large focus on community engagement, education, and outreach. The two-year grant cycle began this April and kicked off a busy summer for the team.

The summer began with a backyard composting program. Interested community members signed up to attend a two-hour composting workshop in Ester in exchange for a backyard composting unit of their choice, free of charge. Over 50 people attended the three workshop sessions and began diverting their own food waste at home. We will start the backyard composting program again next May for anyone else hoping to make their own compost next summer.



Steve Neumuth leading a Backyard Composting Program workshop to Fairbanks residents.

Compost FBX hosted other free workshops throughout the summer focusing on alternative forms of composting such as pet waste composting and an anerobic fermentation process known as bokashi. We also implemented some pilot organic waste drop-locations as part of our community compost initiative. We built and currently maintain three locations, two open to the public and one private, for organic waste drop-off where the waste is turned into a locally produced soil amendment for local community gardens. This process will shut down as the snow continues to fall but will begin again early next summer.



Compost piles made from organic waste collected in the community.

The cold temperatures won't keep us from working in the community. Check the FSWCD website and the Compost FBX website for more free workshops and events this winter. There will be a "Vermicomposting" workshop, a "Natural Dyeing with Food Waste" workshop, and more. Contact Liz (liz.fswcd@gmail.com) or compostfbx@gmail.com with any questions.



Fairbanks Community Waste Audit

According to the EPA, the average American produces almost five pounds of waste every day. Fairbanks residents were producing even more last year at an average of 6.02 pounds per day. However, a lot of that waste that ended up in the landfill could have been diverted to a more sustainable waste stream. How much do you think you know about landfill alternatives in



your community? Compost FBX created an interactive "Waste Audit" for you to find out. The next time you're headed to the transfer site, take a moment to visit compostfbx.com or scan this QR code to see how much of your waste you can divert.

In order to perform the waste audit, you'll sort one load of your household waste into categories. The categories are reuse, donate, recycle, compost, and landfill. This exercise is great for the whole family and can show you how much waste your household can personally keep out of the landfill. The waste audit sheet includes information on where to take the non-landfill items so you can keep diverting waste from the landfill in the future.

For every waste audit completed and submitted in person to the FSWCD office (590 University Ave. Suite 2 in Fairbanks) or via email to compostfbx@gmail.com, we will donate one food item to the Fairbanks Community Food Bank. Happy sorting!



Scan the QR code to see the entire waste audit.

GO TO COMPOSTFBX.COM TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR INITIATIVE!

Education and Outreach Program

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Area Students Encouraged to Design a Farm

Do you have a unique agricultural idea for the interior of Alaska? This is your opportunity to share it with others. Learn about all the factors potentially facing your 100-acre farm in the Nenana-Tochaket Agricultural Project near Nenana. Design your farm, write about it, draw pictures, and share it! You can even earn cash or win prizes for your creativity.

All Alaskan (public, private school, and homeschooled) students can be part of this first-time program. 7th to 12th-grade students residing in the North Star Borough and Nenana regions are encouraged to participate in the Design a Farm competition organized by the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District in collaboration with the Alaska Division of Agriculture. The competition is set to run from October 2023 to April 2024. Participants can craft their concepts of a sub-arctic farm from any location, as all necessary materials will be accessible electronically. Winners will be selected by Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District board members and staff.



A sample farm plan to serve as a template for students. Students will create an oral presentation, written plan, and poster of their unique 100-acre farm design. Students are encouraged to feature specialty crops and conservation-minded methods.

A series of classes will become available that will feature lessons about climate, soils, crops, animals, and much more from the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District's website, www.fairbankssoilwater.org. Under the Education tab, students will access the lessons and materials. The tab will allow access to applications, templates, project ideas, supplemental information, and FSWCD-produced podcasts and YouTube links. The website tab will be available starting December 1, 2023.



The first 30 students to complete and submit the project will be eligible for a modest cash payment and the chance to display and present their farm idea at the 2024 State Farm Bureau Conference in Anchorage. Project submissions include an oral presentation, written plan, drawings, and a 3' x 4' project poster. FSWCD will provide templates, suggestions, and examples to assist students and educators. Scott Faulkner, program manager, said, "This is a great project for individuals or small teams of up to four. It can be completed by homeschoolers or as a classroom project. We encourage educators to implement this program as it meets many educational standards and brings awareness to local needs." Contact Scott Faulkner, FSWCD Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator, at scott.fswcd@gmail.com for more information.

Photo Left: A sample of a page in the written farm plan.

New Hire in the Education and Outreach Department

Emily Cheney joined the FSWCD team in mid-April, 2023 as an Education and Outreach Assistant. She brings 8 years of natural resources and education experience. She will be working on several new and current district projects.

Emily was raised in northern New York. She was inspired to pursue a position in natural resource conservation from her love of the environment and sharing her knowledge with others. She attended SUNY Morrisville for an associate in Natural Resources Conservation and a bachelor's in Environmental and Natural Resource Management.



Emily posing in her afterschool classroom.

She came to Alaska in September 2021 to enhance her knowledge in dog mushing. After a year and a half experiencing dog mushing in Willow, AK, Emily decided to continue her passion for natural resources and education work. In addition to working for FSWCD, she has her own kennel and sprint race team in Fairbanks.

Emily's current responsibilities include after school coordinator, AFFECT Workshop coordinator, and attending education and outreach events in and around Fairbanks. She also helps fellow staff members with their projects.



Emily teaching canoeing at the Salcha Science Camp.

CHECK OUT THE EDUCATION TAB ON OUR WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STUDENT FARM PLANS!

Soils and Agriculture Program

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Request for Information from High Tunnel Users

"Do you grow in a high tunnel? If so, we would like to talk with you!"



Do you grow in a high tunnel? If so, we would like to talk with you! We will be conducting interviews with high tunnel users next spring 2024 and we would love to hear from you! The goal of this project is to develop a guide for best management practices for new high tunnel growers, to highlight the diversity of high tunnel growing approaches in interior Alaska, and to increase the efficiency and longevity of high tunnels for seasoned growers.

Please contact us at aleya.fswcd@gmail.com (907-479-1213 x 7) if you would like to participate in this study or have relevant ideas to share.

What do you wish you had known when you started growing in your high tunnel?

How did you design your layout?

Do you irrigate?

How old is your high tunnel?

What do you plant?

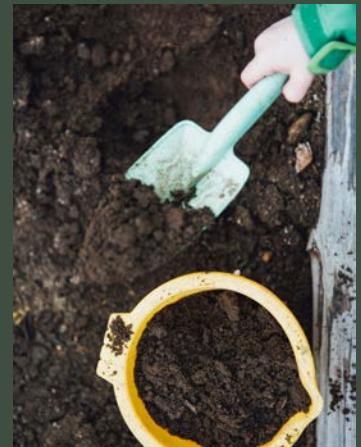
How do you manage weeds?

What do you do to keep it in tip-top shape?

Share and Learn!

Please contact us at aleya.fswcd@gmail.com (907-479-1213 x 7) if you would like to participate in this study or have relevant ideas to share.

Soil Sampling Program



Are you ready for your best gardening year yet? It starts with knowing the nutrient levels in your soil!

We can help you with this. You can get your garden or farm soil tested with FSWCD. We will send out your sample to an agricultural lab for a full nutrient analysis.

You will receive macro and micronutrient levels, pH, cation exchange capacity, and organic matter percentage. We will take this information and develop a fertilizer recommendation unique to your garden.

The cost is \$40.00 per sample and it takes around 6 weeks in the fall to receive the results and report.

Soils and Agriculture Program

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Cover Crop Varieties for Fairbanks

We just completed the final report on our cover crop variety trial at the UAF Fairbanks Experiment Farm. During summers 2021-2022, 23 varieties of cover crops were tested for emergence, canopy cover, bloom status, and above ground biomass. These included buckwheat, field peas, barley, sunflower, oats, clover, and radishes among others. You can view the final report by visiting the agriculture section on our webpage or requesting a copy from soils.fswcd@gmail.com. Let us know if you have any questions about using cover crops in Fairbanks or would like to share what has been working for you! Here are some highlights from the report.



Buckwheat (Mancan): Biomass, Pollinators



Barley (Sunshine): Emergence, cover, seed



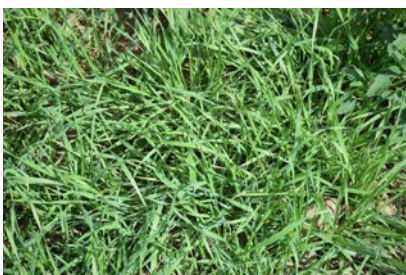
Red Clover: Nitrogen fixing, native pollinators, slow emergence, canopy cover.



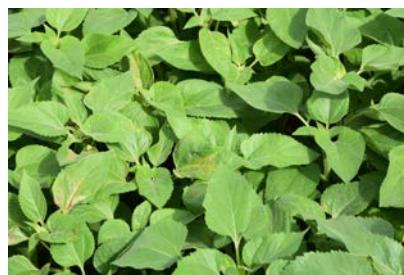
Radish: Weed suppression, pollinators, biomass



Mustard (White Gold): Pollinators, Emergence, Weed Suppression



Cereal Rye (Berberal): Emergence, Canopy Cover



Sunflower (Black Oil): Biomass, good canopy at maturity, slow to flower



Oats (Toral): Produce seeds for consumption, good soil cover to prevent erosion, quick emergence



Field Peas (Austrian Winter): Nitrogen fixing, lots of biomass

Interested in Trying Cover Crops?



Here Are Some Places to Get Seed

Alaska Feed Company
(Fairbanks)
<https://alaskafeed.com/>

Alaska Farmer's Coop (Delta Junction) Grain Elevator
907-895-4645

Alaska Mill and Feed
(Anchorage)
<https://alaskamillandfeed.com/>

Johnny's and Territorial
<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/>
<https://territoralseed.com/>

Green Cover
<https://greencover.com/>

EMAIL US AT SOILS.FSWCD@GMAIL.COM FOR A COPY OF OUR COVER CROP VARIETY TRIAL REPORT.

Habitat Restoration and Conservation Program

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Habitat Program Field Season Updates

The Habitat and Invasive Species crew has had a busy summer conducting surveys for terrestrial and aquatic invasive plants, eradicating invasive plant infestations, and working with partners to form the Interior Alaska Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. Check out our new website at [fswcd-weeds.squarespace.com!](https://fswcd-weeds.squarespace.com/)

Aquatic Invasives

The FSWCD invasives crew continued their efforts to control and prevent the spread of the invasive aquatic plant elodea in Interior Alaska. Herbicide treatments to eliminate elodea were conducted in Chena Slough, Piledriver Slough, Harding Lake, Chisolm Lake, as well as 9 lakes located on Eielson Airforce Base, and in Chena Cove on Fort Wainwright. Post-treatment monitoring conducted in Birch Lake, Chena Lake, Bathing Beauty Pond, and Totchaket Slough revealed that herbicide treatments in these water bodies had successfully controlled the elodea infestations.

Early detection surveys for elodea were conducted in 30 lakes in interior Alaska. These included 5 float ponds (Fairbanks International Airport, Metrofield, Chena Marina, Nenana, and Bettles), several stocked lakes, and other popular recreational sites. Surveys for elodea were also conducted in sloughs and side channels along the Yukon River in the vicinity of the communities of Galena, Koyukuk, and Nulato. No new elodea infestations were found during any of the early detection surveys.

There are active elodea infestations at the following locations: Harding lake, Chena Slough, Piledriver Slough, Chena Cove, as well as 5 lakes on the highway near Eielson Airforce Base (28 mile pit, Grayling Lake, Scout Lake, Pike Lake, and Hidden Lake), and 4 lakes on Eielson Airforce Base (Mullins pit, Moose Lake, Polaris Lake, and Lady of the Lake Pond).

Please remember to clean, drain, and dry all recreational equipment before leaving and entering a waterbody. Elodea can spread by hitching a ride on boats and trailers. Ice fishing can also be a potential vector for spreading it since elodea does not die back in the winter and can survive freezing. Please remember to check all ice fishing equipment for plant fragments. If a suspicious plant is spotted either in the water or on equipment, please take a clear picture of the plant and report it to 1-877-INVASIV (1-877-468-2748, or to FSWCD's Habitat and Invasive Plant Program Coordinator at (907)-479-1213 Ext. 4 or aditi.shenoy@gmail.com. For more information about elodea visit fswcd-weeds.squarespace.com/elodea.



Photo Right: FSWCD field technicians learning how to measure stream discharge rates at Piledriver Slough near North Pole.

Photo Left: FSWCD field technicians looking for elodea in Yarger Lake near Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ELODEA

Habitat Restoration and Conservation Program

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Terrestrial Invasives

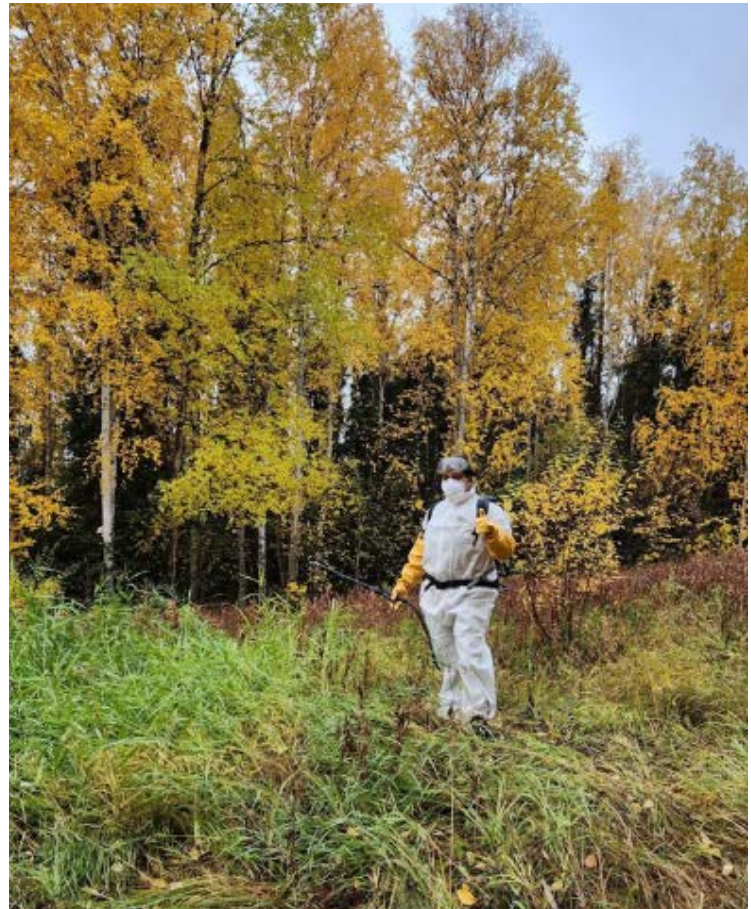
This year's efforts to combat terrestrial invasive species included early detection surveys, outreach, and manual or herbicide treatments. The targeted invasive plants included European Bird Cherry, Chokecherry, Bird Vetch, White Sweet Clover, Reed Canary Grass, and Canada Thistle. Surveys for these high priority invasive plants were carried out by ATV and on foot along Standard Creek and Cache Creek forestry roads. Standard Creek Rd was found to have extensive infestations of White Sweet Clover and Bird Vetch that were too extensive for manual removal. Cache Creek Road had smaller patches of Bird Vetch that were manually removed. A single infestation of European Bird Cherry was detected and will be treated next year. Surveys were also conducted on popular hiking trails along Chena Hot Springs Road, and along waterways in the Fairbanks area. An infestation of Reed Canary Grass that was detected along the TAPS pipeline access trail near Wickersham Dome was treated with herbicide in order to prevent its spread into surrounding wilderness areas.

Our surveys have shown extensive spread of Chokecherry and European Bird Cherry from urban plantings in Fairbanks to the understories of neighboring intact forests, as well as along waterways such as the Chena River. Both of these species are highly invasive, and can have detrimental impacts on native ecosystems. As we continue to document the spread of these two invasive tree species, and work towards their targeted removal in order to prevent them from further spreading, please consider planting alternative tree species in your backyards. For more information please contact Hazel Berrios at hkberrios@gmail.com.

The Interior Alaska Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, a collaborative effort by FSWCD, UAF Cooperative Extension Services, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, hosted an Invasive Plant ID Workshop in June 2023. Attendees from various agencies and private organizations had a fun afternoon learning about invasive plants in our area, and learning how to identify them during a field visit to Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. For more information or to get involved with this group please contact aditi.shenoy@gmail.com

FSWCD now provides weed free inspection and certification services for gravel pit operators and contractors. This season, 6 gravel pits in Fairbanks, and three gravel pits in Nenana were certified under the Alaska Weed Free Gravel Program. For more information please contact aditi.shenoy@gmail.com

Photo Right: FSWCD staff conducting herbicide treatment to control a Reed Canary Grass infestation along the pipeline access trail near Wickersham Dome.



MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON FOR THE INTERIOR ALASKA COOPERATIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AREA (CISMA).

From Our Partners

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Save the Date: Partners and producers invited to NRCS Alaska State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting November 21

Next STAC Meeting: Nov. 21 from 1 - 5 p.m.

In-person at the NRCS State Office Conference Room
800 E Palmer Wasilla Hwy, Palmer, AK 99645
Virtual Option also available on Microsoft Teams.

A Tribal Conservation District (TCD) sub-committee meeting will be held from 9 - 11:30 a.m. in the same location that morning, all TCD representatives are welcome to join.

Look for a calendar invitation in your inbox! Agenda coming soon.

If you would like to become a member of the Alaska State Technical Committee, contact Tracy Robillard (907) 761-7749 or tracy.robillard@usda.gov.



NRCS accepting proposals for Conservation Innovation Grants national funding competition - Apply by October 30, 2023

USDA is making \$65 million available through two funding opportunities for new tools, approaches, practices and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands through the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program.

Of this funding, \$25 million will be delivered through President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, the largest clean energy and climate investment in history, which directed USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to prioritize CIG On-Farm Trials projects that use diet and feed management to reduce enteric methane emissions from ruminants, as well as other projects that have climate mitigation benefits.

Two separate CIG funding opportunities are now available on grants.gov: \$50 million through CIG On-Farm Trials and \$15 million is available through CIG Classic.

For CIG On-Farm Trials, this year's funding priorities are:

- Irrigation water management technologies
- Nutrient management
- Feeding management and enteric methane reduction
- Grazing lands
- Soil health demonstration trials

For CIG Classic, this year's funding priorities are:

- Forestry
- Habitat conservation and restoration for wildlife and invertebrates



- Managing agricultural lands to improve local water quality
 - Energy conservation
 - Economics
 - Strengthening conservation through indigenous knowledge
- Strong consideration will be given to proposals that include Historically Underserved entities and individuals. This opportunity is open to all domestic non-federal entities and individuals based in the United States for projects carried out in the U.S. Applications are being accepted now through October 30, 2023.

Contact your local NRCS office for more information and to begin the application process.

Fairbanks: (907) 479-3159

From Our Partners

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New NRCS Staff at the Fairbanks Field Office!

Steven is originally from a small central Utah town where he started with agriculture moving irrigation pipeline, fixing fence, and helping with his family small herd of yearling cows and horses. He received a M.S. and B.S. at Utah State University in Plant Science (agronomy) and Rangeland Resources respectively. He has worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a Rangeland Management Specialist for 9 years in Utah and eastern Idaho. He and his family moved to Alaska last January and have been enjoying the Fairbanks area ever since. He enjoys hiking with his family and reading.

Steven looks forward to working with partners and producers in the Alaska North Team Area.

For Inquiries about NRCS programs please email or call:

Steven.cox2@usda.gov 907-479-2657 ext. 114



Steven Cox
Soil Conservationist
Fairbanks Field Office - NRCS



Ben Beebe
Natural Resource Specialist
Fairbanks Field Office – NRCS

Ben is originally from New York, where he left at 18 to have a career in the Army. Ben went to college at Kansas State University for Wildlife Biology. Ben has just started his career with the NRCS, but previously worked for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks as a Conservation Technician.

USDA Farm Lending Discrimination Financial Assistance Program – Deadline extended to January 13, 2024

On July 7, USDA and its partner vendors announced the opening of the application period for Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which directs USDA to provide financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021.

The opening of the application process is an important step in delivering on USDA's commitment of providing financial assistance to those who have faced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs. The application process is open now and the deadline has been extended to January 13, 2024. Borrowers will have the option to apply for assistance online via [22007apply.gov](https://www.22007apply.gov) or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at [22007apply.gov](https://www.22007apply.gov). The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970, or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available.

It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021, and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.



Contact your local NRCS office for more information and to begin the application process.
Fairbanks: (907) 479-3159

District News

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Call For Board Member Nominations and Notice of Elections

Are you passionate about promoting sustainable resource development and the wise use of natural resources? Please consider serving on our board of supervisors!

Read this board of supervisors description to learn more.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICIALS JOB DESCRIPTION DESCRIPTION

Conservation District officials serve on a multi-member board that establishes and implements programs to conserve soil, water, prime and unique farmland, rangeland, woodland, wildlife, energy and other resources on privately owned and leased land in The Fairbanks Conservation District area.

DUTIES

- Identify local conservation needs and develop, implement, and evaluate programs to address them.
- Educate and inform landowners and operators, general public, and local, state, and federal legislators on conservation issues and programs.
- Supervise district volunteers and paid staff; coordinate with cooperating agency personnel.
- Budget district funds and report on activities to the public.
- Direct the conservation district's operations
- Coordinate assistance and funding from district associations, private groups, federal, state, and local government.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Interest and background in developing natural resources responsibly
- Communication Skills

RELATIONSHIPS

- Other district officials
- State conservation agency
- Conservation organizations and agencies
- Other partners

BENEFITS

- Satisfaction in seeing conservation practices applied
- Interaction with others interested in natural resources
- Input into local, state, and federal conservation programs
- Training through the state conservation agency

TIME REQUIRED

- Serve a two to three-year term beginning January 2024.
- Attend up to 10 regularly scheduled board meetings per year, occasional special committee meetings, and events as needed.

If this sounds like a position you are interested in, please fill out the following nomination form and submit to Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District. Contact us if you have any questions!

We're Hiring!

FSWCD is seeking an administrative/project/financial assistant. The assistant will execute general administrative duties that support FSWCD natural resource priorities and mission to offer technical and educational assistance to private land users.

Duties:

- Provide administrative support to ensure efficient operation of the office
- Grant management
- Assist in event planning and coordination
- Bookkeeping
- Attend and take minutes at monthly board meetings
- Maintain website and social media outlets
- and more...

We are seeking someone proficient in Microsoft Office, Quickbooks, website management, and basic social media platforms with bookkeeping experience. Grant management experience and a natural resources background are preferred but not required.

- 30-40 hours/week
- \$20-25/hour
- Paid Time Off
- Health and Technical Stipends
- Paid Holidays

Submit cover letter, resume, and at least two references via email to fairbanksswcd@gmail.com or in person to 590 University Ave. Suite 2 in Fairbanks.

CHECK OUT THE NOMINATION FORM ON THE NEXT PAGE!

Call for Nominations and Notice of Election Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District

FAIRBANKSSWCD@GMAIL.COM | WWW.FAIRBANKSSOILWATER.ORG | 907-479-1213

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to cooperators that nominations by petition will be accepted to fill one eligible seat on the above named Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seat E (Vacant) has a three-year term that expires on December 31, 2026.

Candidates wishing to fill any board seat must be a cooperator of the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District. The nomination period runs until 4:00 p.m., Friday, December 8, 2023. **Petitions for nomination must be:**

- Signed by the nominee certifying the nominee’s willingness to serve, if elected.
- Signed by at least three (3) cooperators in the district who appear on the certified cooperators list.
- Received by the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District no later than 4:00 p.m., Friday, December 8, 2023.
- Nominations may be emailed to asst.fswcd@gmail.com, or dropped off at 590 University Ave. Suite 2, Fairbanks AK 99709.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that an election to fill the vacant seats will be held in December 2023 unless nominations for one candidate are submitted. In the event this occurs, nominee(s) will be appointed to fill the seat(s) instead of conducting an election.

For more information, contact Joni Scharfenberg, District Manager, at jonisc@gmail.com or (907) 978-1727.

NOMINATION FORM

We, the undersigned cooperators of the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, hereby nominate _____ as a candidate for Supervisor in the December 2023 election. (Must have at least three (3) signatures other than the nominee.)

PRINTED NAME SIGNATURE

1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

CERTIFICATE OF NOMINEE

I hereby certify that I am a Cooperator as defined in AS 41.10, and that if elected, I will serve as Supervisor on the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

Signature of Nominee.

Mail, E-mail or Deliver Nomination Form(s) to:

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District
Attn: Joni Scharfenberg
590 University Ave. Suite 2
Fairbanks AK 99709
E-Mail: jonisc@gmail.com

Our Staff

FAIRBANKSSWCD@GMAIL.COM | WWW.FAIRBANKSSOILWATER.ORG | 907-479-1213



Joni Scharfenberg - District Coordinator

jonisc@gmail.com

Joni was born in Fairbanks, owns an 80 acre farm in Two Rivers, and sold vegetables at the Tanana Valley Farmers Market for over 25 years. She has worked for the FSWCD for 23 years and has been the District's coordinator for over 15 years.



Melissa Sikes - Natural Resource Education and Outreach

mel.fswcd@gmail.com

Mel Sikes is the Natural Resource Education Specialist. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from Unity College which she received in 1990. Her duties at FSWCD include being Project Director for the AFFECT USDA grant, state program leader for the Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom program, managing the afterschool natural resource education program, instructing educator workshops, managing grants, outreach community events, and sitting on the Alaska Food Policy Council governing board. She and her husband Derek have 3 grown daughters who live in Fairbanks. She quilts, sings, and enjoys walks with her dog Zoe in her free time.



Aditi Shenoy - Habitat Restoration and Conservation

aditi.shenoy@gmail.com

Aditi runs our Habitat Restoration and Conservation Program. She leads the Interior Alaska Elodea Taskforce, and has been working on eradicating the invasive aquatic plant elodea from interior Alaska. She also manages terrestrial invasive plant survey and control projects in Fairbanks, and surrounding communities in interior Alaska.



Colin McKenzie - Habitat Restoration and Conservation

wcmckenzie907@gmail.com

Colin has been working on our habitat crew since 2019 and has settled into the role of coordinating and leading our surveys, herbicide applications, and invasive species related outreach. You'll most likely spot him on some sort of watercraft investigating the local aquatic vegetation.



Teri Benson - Financial Manager

asst.fswcd@gmail.com

Teri is in charge of accounting and grant reporting. She loves helping her fellow co-workers get new grants and complete their grant projects.



Aleya Brinkman - Soils and Agriculture

aleya.fswcd@gmail.com

Aleya runs our soil sampling program and will tell you what you need to add to your garden or farm soil to grow great plants. She also leads our cover crop variety trial research project and can answer questions on incorporating cover crops into your rotation for soil health. Aleya has been in Fairbanks for 16 years and is a huge supporter and consumer of locally grown food.



Hazel Berrios - Habitat Restoration and Conservation

hazel.fswcd@gmail.com

Hazel leads the terrestrial invasive species surveys and manages various GIS mapping projects and data analysis.



Liz Kempton - Development Coordinator

liz.fswcd@gmail.com

Liz is the Project Manager of a Composting and Food Waste Reduction USDA grant. She coordinates the backyard composting program, community compost bins, and local compost sales at the annual FSWCD tree sale.



Scott Faulkner - Natural Resource Education and Outreach

scott.fswcd@gmail.com

Scott works with the Education and Outreach department specializing in natural resource and agricultural education.



Emily Cheney - Natural Resource Education and Outreach

emily.fswcd@gmail.com

Emily works with the Education and Outreach department specializing in natural resource and agricultural education. She leads the afterschool program, coordinates AFFECT workshops, and works on various other projects. In her free time, she enjoys mushing with her many dogs.