

# Mini-Cassia Conservation Update

East Cassia, West Cassia, & Minidoka  
Soil and Water Conservation Districts

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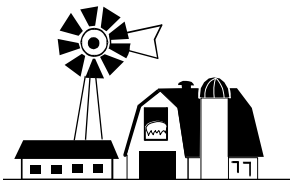
*The "Conservation Update" is published quarterly by the East Cassia, West Cassia, & Minidoka Soil and Water Conservation Districts and mailed to approximately 1,100 landowners. The distribution mailing list is maintained by the Information & Education Specialist in Burley, Idaho. Names may be added to or removed from the mailing list for the next publication by calling 878-5556.*

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## COVER CROP TOUR

Landowners from the Mini-Cassia area attended a Cover Crop Tour on November 3, 2016 hosted by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Cassia and Minidoka Counties. The group toured fields where cover crops had been planted.

The 2016 Cover Crop Tour spotlighted fields in both Minidoka and Cassia Counties where cover crops of 3 or more varieties of seed had been planted. While riding the tour bus, landowners shared details of their cover crop projects, including varieties of cover crops planted, Continued on page 5.



### Soil Health Workshop

The Soil Districts are sponsoring A **Soil Health Workshop** on February 15, 2017, which will include soil health training and provide **Pesticide Credits**. The workshop is part of the educational goals of the Continued on page 7.

### Tree Sale

The Annual Seedling Tree Sale will begin February 1st, 2017. Seedlings are an excellent way to get started on a windbreak or shelterbelt project. Seedlings are inex- Continued on page 4.

# District Board of Supervisors

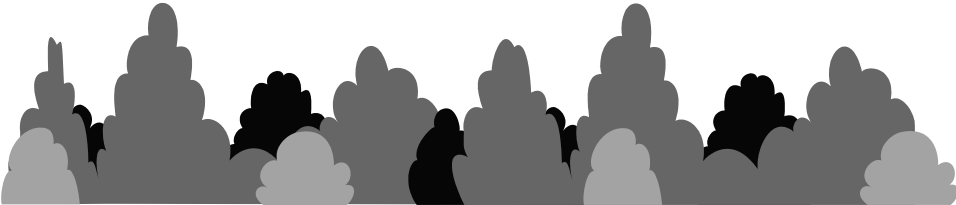
	<u>East Cassia SWCD</u>	<u>West Cassia SWCD</u>	<u>Minidoka SWCD</u>
Chairman.....	Mark Streeter.....	Richard Kunau.....	John Firth
Vice-Chair.....	Mark Webb.....	K. Wells.....	Brian Kossman
Sec/Treasurer.....	Ken Woodworth.....	Kathy Poulton.....	Russ Suchan
Member.....	Steve Ward.....	Brent Stoker.....	Dusty Wilkins
Member.....	Brook Holtman.....	Ken Black.....	Justin Hunter
Associate Member.....			Aaron Firth
Associate Member.....			Tyler Hanssen

### District Employees

Megan Heward.....Cassia Administrative Assistant  
 Madi Patterson.....Cassia Office Assistant  
 Sharon Hardy-Mills.....Minidoka Administrative Assistant  
 Doreen McMurray.....Cassia Information & Education Specialist

### Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Personnel

David Mabey.....District Conservationist  
 Carolyn Firth.....ISWCC Ag Program Specialist  
 Dinah Reaney.....Soil Conservationist  
 Connor White.....Range & Wildlife Conservationist  
 Haydn Carson.....Soil Technician



## NEWSLETTERS

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## SUPERVISOR BOARD MEETINGS

Supervisors for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are landowners in Cassia and Minidoka Counties. They are interested in farming issues and want to make a positive difference.

Serving as a Supervisor is a great opportunity to learn how to improve your own operation as well as helping to make a difference within our community.

If you are interested in serving on the Soil & Water Conservation District in your area, contact a current board member or call one of the NRCS offices for information.

Monthly Board Meetings: (Public Welcome)  
**East Cassia SWCD** - 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of ea month  
**West Cassia SWCD** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of ea month  
**Minidoka SWCD** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month

Burley Office — 678-1225 ext 100  
 Rupert Office — 436-4202

## - WINDBREAKS -

### THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Number of **rows**, **Distance** between rows,  
 Number & **variety** of seedlings needed,  
**Irrigation**, and **Protection**  
 from weeds and animals.

Look us up on **FACEBOOK** @  
**East & West Cassia Soil and Water  
 Conservation Districts**  
 or on the **Web** at  
[minicassiaswcd.com](http://minicassiaswcd.com)  
 Information also available by email @  
[ewcswcd@pmt.org](mailto:ewcswcd@pmt.org) or [mwswcd@pmt.org](mailto:mwswcd@pmt.org)



## DIRECT SEED DRILLS

Minidoka and Cassia Soil & Water Conservation Districts continue working together to help educate farmers on soil health issues and the benefits of planting cover crops. Supervisors from all 3 local Soil Districts donate their time to serve on the **Direct Seed/Cover Crop Project** Committee to run and supervise the project which provides education to landowners, seed reimbursements, and access for rental use of direct seed drills for cover crop plantings.

Seed recommendations are available by contacting the NRCS offices in Burley or

Rupert. **Financial reimbursement for partial cost of cover crop seed is available to those landowners renting soil district drills and applying for the seed rebates.**

These drills can be used for any planting but are excellent for **Direct Seeding** into stubble from previous harvest. Contact either the Burley (678-1225 x100) or Rupert (436-4202) office for details.

Direct Seed Drill Information & contracts can be picked up in either the Rupert or Burley USDA offices, or can be found online at [www.minicassiaswcd.com](http://www.minicassiaswcd.com).

### THE PURPOSE of the Mini-Cassia Direct Seed/Cover Crop Project

To increase education in:

- ◆ The use of **direct seed farming**,
- ◆ The use of **cover crops**,
- ◆ How to **improve Soil Health**,
- ◆ To provide access to **equipment, seed information**, and **seed rebates** toward implementing these practices.

## Cover Crops Diversity Brings Benefits and Spreads Out The Risk

Cover Crops allow crops to be grown with:

- **less soil disturbance**,
- Increased **water holding capacity** in soil,
- Increased **organic matter** in the soil,
- **Decreased wind erosion**,
- **Decreased water erosion**,
- More **soil stability**,
- Natural **Weed control**, and
- **Increased nutrients in the soil** provided by certain cover crop varieties chosen ie: legumes for nitrogen or plants with long tap root systems which pull mobile nutrients and moisture back up to the surface from lower layers of the soil and provide moisture pathways.

Visit our webpage at [www.minicassiaswcd.com](http://www.minicassiaswcd.com)

## STUDENTS “SPEAK OUT”

High school students in Minidoka & Cassia Counties participated in a Speech Contest with the theme “We All Need Trees”. Winners from all 3 Conservation Districts include:



(pictured LtoR)

Blake Redhead  
Tate Burton  
Khali Wells  
West Cassia  
Supervisor K.  
Wells.



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## Natural Resource Conservation Service Conservation Stewardship Program deadline February 3, 2017

The Natural Resource Conservation Service is offering the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for 2017. Applications can be accepted throughout the year but the first evaluation cutoff date for the coming year is **February 3, 2017**.

CSP is now the nation's largest conservation program offered by NRCS. As part of this program, agriculture producers can get funding for conservation efforts they are already implementing on their land. Producers then choose additional enhancements to improve their operations. Funding is available for several kinds of enhancements to help participants:

\* Improve soil quality through use of cover crops, reduced tillage, conservation crop rotations, and other activities that increase soil productivity.

\* Use water wisely and improve water quality through enhancements such as more efficient nutrient management, and improvements on irrigation systems including weather monitoring.

- ◆ Restore habitat for wildlife and pollinators such as the greater sage-grouse and native bees by providing habitat corridors on cropland, improving grazing systems, and improved plant management.
- ◆ A producer is eligible for CSP funding on all cropland, pasture, and rangeland they have control of for at least five years. CSP is available to all producers regardless of operation size or crop produced. NRCS has recently made several updates to the program this year to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations. To see if this program is a fit for you, contact your local NRCS office located in Rupert (208) 436-4777 ext. 3 and Burley (208) 678-1225 ext. 3.

## **TREE SALE** continued from page 1.

pensive and hardy. Seedlings we carry are selected for their high rate of survival in our climate.

Start planning your project now. Select the desired location where you need protection from the wind such as around a feedlot, on a property line, down a roadway or lane, surrounding your yard or livestock pens, or along a field for either wind protection or wildlife habitat shelterbelt.

The seedlings selected are primarily for windbreaks but can also be used for beautification projects on your property or in your community.



1. *Seedling trees are very small – just “babies”, but their cost is minimal and their survival rate is excellent. Nearly all windbreaks are started with seedling-size plants to keep the costs down.*
2. *Do some careful planning before you begin. You can find many excellent sites on the internet that will give you guidance and direction to help with your plans. Consider proper location. Careful planning of the distance between the windbreak and the area you want to be protected is important.*
3. *Ground preparation,*
4. *Irrigation,*
5. *How many rows of trees and/or shrubs to plant, and the varieties that would be best.*

Here's a few things to remember before ordering your seedlings:

Also take into consideration the protection for the seedlings from livestock and animals during the first few years. With good conditions, your seedlings should produce noticeable protection within 4-5 years. (7-12 years on dry-land).

## COVER CROP TOUR From page 1.



their purpose for planting cover crops, their goals and the outcome so far. Some of the main benefits so far have been improved soil health and increased water holding capacity in the soil.



The tour spotlighted Mark Webb and Nate Garner from Heglar Creek Farms, Seth Woodland of Paul, Cody Plocher from Timm & Luke Adams' Farms of Rupert, and Jeff Johnson of Rupert/Paul.



The tour was held to encourage and to educate landowners on the benefits of using cover crops to improve soil health and increase harvest yields. The Cover Crop Tour is part of the Direct Seed & Cover Crop Project sponsored by the Minidoka, West Cassia, and East Cassia Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The Project includes rental of 2 Direct Seed Drills landowners may use to try out the cover crop procedure. A Dutch Oven lunch was provided following the bus tour.



## **SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP**

continued from page 1.



Direct Seed & Cover Crop Project that Minidoka, West Cassia, and East Cassia Soil & Water Conservation Districts are implementing.

The Soil Health Workshop will spotlight Regional Agronomist Marlon Winger. Marlon is a regional soil health specialist educator and presents a very engaging and passionate approach to soil health and soil education.

Also included in the workshop will be NRCS programs highlights, using cover crops to integrate pest management program, and discussions with landowners currently implementing cover crops.

**Pesticide Credits** will be available to those attending the workshop. The workshop includes lunch. **Both the workshop and the luncheon are free of charge but you must RSVP** as space is limited. RSVP to [dmcurray6@gmail.com](mailto:dmcurray6@gmail.com) or 678-1225 x100 to secure your spot.

### **What are the Benefits of Healthy Soil?**

1. Healthy soil holds more water (by binding it to organic matter), and loses less water to runoff and evaporation.
2. Organic matter builds as tillage declines and plants and residue cover the soil. Organic matter holds 18-20 times its weight in water and recycles nutrients for plants to use.
3. One percent of organic matter in the top six inches of soil would hold approximately 27,000 gallons of water per acre!
4. Most farmers can increase their soil organic matter in three to 10 years if they are motivated about adopting conservation practices to achieve this goal.

### **Begin Your Path to Healthy Soils:**

1. Keep it covered.
2. Do not disturb.
3. Use cover crops and rotation to feed your soil.
4. Develop a soil health management plan with the help of NRCS.

### **Follow 4 Basic Soil Health Principles to Improve Soil Health & Sustainability:**

1. Use plant diversity to increase diversity in the soil.
2. Manage soils more by disturbing them less.
3. Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.
4. Keep the soil covered as much as possible.



Information & picture from [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)