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El Paso County Conservation District

Quarterly Newsletter

October, November, December 2020

Check out our website at WWW.EPCCD.org Like

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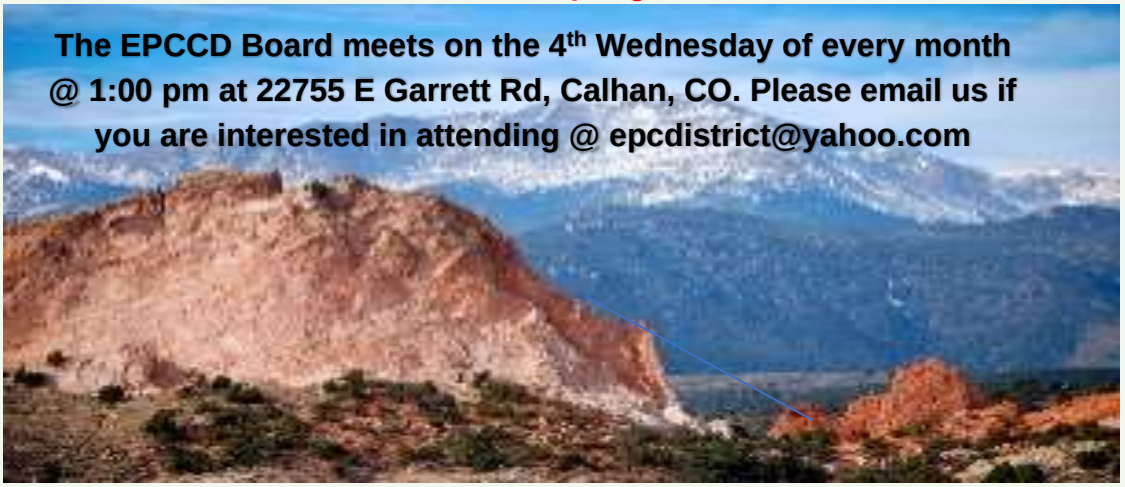

WELCOME TO 5610 INDUSTRIAL PLACE!!!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our Cultural Resource Specialist Michael Troyer and Software Distribution Manager Tamira Sallee. Also a big welcome aboard to our new Soil Conservationist Scott Nichols and Soil ConTechnician Hailey O'Neil.

Welcome to Industrial Place!

As we say farewell to 2020, we hope we can all reflect on the accomplishments as well as the challenges, the lessons learned and the perspective gained.

El Paso County Conservation District Board and Staff wish you all a very happy, safe, healthy New Year, and more than ever, we thank you for supporting your local Conservation District!

Bio on Soil Conservationist Scott Nicholson:

Scott Nicholson is the NRCS Soil Conservationist for our area. He earned a bachelor's degree in Geography and Environmental Studies, with a Geology minor, completing comprehensive coursework in geographic information systems (GIS), hydrology, water resources, soils, geology, environmental studies, and sustainability. He is a military Veteran with interdisciplinary experience in Civil Engineering, Water and Fuel Systems Maintenance. He is a recipient of multiple awards for outstanding performance and professionalism including a Humanitarian Service Medal, two USAF Commendation Medals, a USAF Meritorious Service Medal and the Bronze Star Medal. Scott has lived in Colorado Springs for 10 years with his wife and 2 children. He is also a graduate student at Colorado State University (CSU) working toward a Masters of Natural Resources Stewardship (M.N.R.S.), Rangeland Ecology and Management Specialization."

Hailey O'Neil, Soil Conservation Technician Bio:

My name is Hailey O'Neill. I'm 24 and grew up the small town of Evanston Wyoming. I graduated from the University of Wyoming in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in geology and geophysics. During my time at the University of Wyoming, I assisted with several research projects involving stream beds and sediment flux. My husband and I moved to Colorado right after we both graduated. I wanted to work for NRCS because I truly believe in conservation and sustainability. Being able to implement conservation practices in a helpful and impactful way has always been a dream of mine. NRCS provides me with the ability to make a meaningful impact on the Earth on all that inhibit it. When I'm not working, I love spending time outside with my dog and my husband. I'm usually hiking, camping, or rock climbing in the summer months and in the winter months I enjoy skiing and reading. I'm lucky to live in beautiful Colorado where all my hobbies are easily accessible.

Below please read a soil health article written by Scott Nicholson, Soil Conservationist. Enjoy!

Soil Health at a Glance

By: Scott Nicholson

Healthy soil is the foundation for sustainable land use and is the #1 asset for farmers and ranchers. Improving soil health plays a vital role in long-term sustainable agricultural production and landowners and operators can use a variety of practices to keep their soils healthy. Managing soil health through proper land management strategies is one of the most effective ways to increase productivity and profitability. Good management can improve agricultural soils just as bad management can destroy them.

Healthy soils consist of organic matter, a variety of minerals such as sand, silt and clay, and a good supply of air and water that fill the spaces in between. Healthy soils should have a good mixture of aggregates that crumbles easily, have deep roots, earthworms and a good earthy smell. Soil organic matter is present in the top 10 cm of the soil and controls more than 90% of the soil function. The organic matter consists of plant residue and animal tissues at various stages of decomposition and include; fungi, bacteria, and inputs from wildlife and/or livestock.

As soil organic matter increases, the water holding capacity of the soil also increases, enhancing the soils ability to absorb and retain water. Each 1% increase in soil organic matter can help the soil hold 20,000 gallons more water per acre (USDA-NRCS, 2018). Plant roots not only provide organic matter but also creates a suitable habitat for which soil microorganisms can thrive. These organisms add to the volume of soil organic matter and aid in nutrient availability to support plant growth. Living soil connects what is above ground and what is below ground, but without the influence of plants, soils lose stability and erode.

The interaction between soil and plants stabilize the soil and creates a more resilient ecosystem. The resilience of an ecosystem is its capacity to regain its structure and function following a disturbance, such as drought, overgrazing, or soil erosion. Utilizing the living roots of plants is one of the most important tools to protect the soil surface from erosion, to improve water quality and quantity, and to improve forage for livestock and wildlife.

Additionally, maximizing vegetation cover will also reduce the risk of erosion, will help intercept more rainfall that can infiltrate into the ground, will help control soil temperature, and will reduce evaporation. Increasing infiltration will save water and can increase vegetation drought tolerance. As plants and soils interact, soils become more fertile, but without fertile soils, plants can die. Plant species adapt to outcompete other plant species on soils with particular properties. Therefore, healthy soils should remain undisturbed and consist of a desirable plant composition that is free of noxious weeds. Healthy soils provide healthy rangelands which in turn are more productive.

Soil is an intergenerational resource and we must take action to ensure soil erosion does not outpace soil formation. Improving soil heath is not difficult but it can be a lengthy process that is dependent on topography, soil type, climate, vegetation and land use. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that it takes approximately five hundred years to produce an inch of topsoil, therefore conserving and improving topsoil is the utmost importance for long-term sustainable land use for us and our children's children.

According to the NRCS Principles for High Functioning Soils (2018), landowners and operators can protect and improve soils by: 1 - maximizing continuous living roots, 2 – minimizing soil disturbance, 3 – maximizing soil cover, 4 – maximizing biodiversity, and 5 – integrating prescribed grazing. Some of the recommended conservation practices include: Conservation Crop Rotation, Cover Crops, No Till, Mulching, Nutrient Management, Planned Grazing and Pest Management. Remember, if you are trying to make your soil healthier, you should not see it very often.

If you have questions, comments or ideas for future articles, please email scott.nicholson@usda.gov.

Did you know? The earliest known semi-agricultural people lived on the slopes of the Zagros Mountains between Iraq and Iran about 11,000 to 9,000 BC (or thirteen thousand to eleven thousand years ago). (Montgomery, 2012, p. 31)

Sources:

Montgomery, D. R. (2012). *Dirt, The Erosion of Civilizations.* University of California Press.

USDA-NRCS (2018), Principles for High Functioning Soils. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/soils/health/?cid=stelprdb1049236

Remember… EPCCD sells native wildflower mix, our own custom El Paso County Conservation District "Native Shotgun grass seed mix", Our "Cool Season Sod Forming" grass seed mix, and other custom mixes. Call 719-686-4510 or email us at epcdistrict@yahoo.com if you would like to purchase our native custom mix or special request grass seed mix for a quote.

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SHOTGUN MIX

Common Name	Recommended Cultivar	% of seed mix	Non Irrigated PLS Rate per acre Drill	Broadcast
Bluestem, Big Native	Kaw, Bison, Champ	20.0 %	5.0	11.
Grama, Blue Native	Lovington, Hachita, Alma	10.0%	1.0	3
Green Needlegrass Native	Lodorm	10.0%	5.0	10
Wheatgrass, Western Native	Arriba, Barton	20.0%	8	18
Grama, Sideoats Native	Vaughn, Butte, El Reno, Haxar	10.0%	4.5	9
Switchgrass Native	Blackwell, Greenville	10%	2	4
Prairie Sandreed Native	Goshen, Pronghorn	10.0%	3.5	7.0
Yellow Indiangrass Native	Cheyenne, Holt, Llano	10.0%	6.0	13

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For more information please call the office @ 719-686-4510.
You can also check out our Website @http://www.epccd.org.

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Harding Nursery locally grown trees and shrubs

ORNAMENTAL SHUBS	#1'S	#5'S
Chokeberry, Brilliant Red		
Chokeberry, Black		
Coralberry, Hancock		
Coralberry, Indian Currant		
Cotonester, Peking		
Current, Alpine		
Current, Yellow Flowering		
Elder, Golden		
Forsythia		
Honeysuckle, Arnold's Red		
Lilac, Chinese		
Lilac, Common Purple		
Lilac, Common White		
Lilac, Dwarf Korean		
Lilac, Miss Kim		
Ninebark, Dwarf		
Gambel		
Plume, Apache ****		
Potentilla, (Most Varieties)		
Privet, Cheyenne		
Prunus, Rose Tree		
Rabbit Brush		
Rocky Mountain Scopulorum		
Rose, Rugosa		
Rose, Woods		
Sage, Tall Western		
Saltbrush		
Serviceberry		
Siberian Peashrub		
Silverberry		
Snowberry, White		
Spirea, Blue Mist		
Spirea, Froebel		
Spirea, Snowmound		
Spirea, Vanhoutte		
Sumac, Three Leaf		
Western Sandcherry		
Willow, Blue Artic		
Willow, Coyotte		
Willow, Pussy		
Yucca, Soapweed		
Russian Sage		

Deciduous trees	#1'S	#5'S
SHADE AND ORNAMENTAL TREES		
Aspen, Quaking ****		
Birch, Rocky Mtn ****		
Canada Red Cherry ****		
Cottonless Cottonwood ****		
Cottonwood, Lanceleaf ****		
Cottonwood, Narrowleaf ****		
	#1'S	#5'S
FRUIT & BERRY BUSHES		
Chokecherry, Green		
Gooseberry, Pixwell		
Plum, American		
	#1'S	#5'S
FIR-PINE-SPRUCE		
Austrian Pine		
Ponderosa Pine		
Spruce, Colo. Blue		
SUBSTITUTION ALLOWED?	YES	NO
ORDER TOTALS	#1'S	#5'S
Price Each	$12.00	$29.00
****		$38.00
X # of Units		
TOTAL PRICE		
Sales Tax 8.25%		
TOTAL PAYMENT		
Make check payable to:		
El Paso County Soil Conservation District		
NO WARRANTY		

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NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

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CACD Colorado Association of Conservation Districts

FSA FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Thank you to our sponsors and Partners! We appreciate you.

PAST & UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Ongoing custom mix grass seed, tree sales and Rain barrel events
- Virtual Annual Meeting December 9, 2020
- March/April/May 2021 Rain Barrel Events
- Local Work Group Workshop Spring 2021
- Forestry Workshop Fall 2021
- **AGRICULTURAL EXPOSITION** ON **Oct 9, 2021** at the El Paso County Fairgrounds.
- Check out our website http://www.epccd.org & sign up for our newsletter to receive news about upcoming events, workshops and projects. We share our mission & have links available for our partnering agencies and their programs to help landowners and small acreage owners with conservation practices.

El Paso County Conservation District
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