

## Elk Creek Conservation District (No. 14)

History from 1969 publication:

The Elk Creek Conservation District covers all of Meade County except a portion in the northeast corner which is included in the Tri-County Conservation District. It is largely a ranching area with some farming scattered over the entire county. A part of the Elk Creek valley is irrigated through a system established in the early days and is still in operation.

The western part of the county was settled about the time Fort Meade was established in 1865 and the remainder in the early 1890's. It is primarily a beef and sheep producing area with some dairying along the West side. Some wheat is grown over the entire county, especially the northeast and west parts.

The topography of the area is from undulating to steep with some fairly level land along the Belle Fourche River and Elk Creek, Pleasant, Whitewood and Alkali Creek valleys. Parts of the valleys along Elk Creek, Bear Butte Creek, Pleasant Creek are, or have been in the past, irrigated through small systems established in the early days. Some portions of the area adjacent to the northeast corner of Lawrence County, are within the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project presently being irrigated. This irrigation was primarily for alfalfa and grass production.

These four streams form the chief drainage ways of the west, while in the east drainage is into the Cheyenne River. These streams and some springs were the main sources of water in the early days. Soon, the settlers built stock water dams.

The soils over most of the area are Pierre clay, which is usually called gumbo. The river and creek bottoms are mostly a silty or silty clay soil, with some areas of somewhat sandy soil. And then just at the edge of the foot hills are some stony and gravelly areas.

The bottom land soils are usually used for the production of alfalfa hay. Originally all of the area was covered with a good growth of native range grasses and produced abundant forage.

As the area was settled, most of the people were from farming area in the bordering states on the east and south. It was only natural for them to want to plow out the sod and start raising grain crops, chiefly wheat. This continued for many years and when the dry years of the 30's came along, wind erosion became a serious problem; and when a hard rain came, the fields washed and started gullies. Stock water also became short. The small dams would not hold enough water. A lot of cattle were shipped out because of lack of water, as well as feed. Many of the people moved out of the county.

Those people who stayed realized they had to do something. They studied their problems and sought relief. A C.C.C. Camp was established at Fort Meade in 1937, and some man power and equipment was available from the camp. The State Conservation District Law had been passed, and other people were taking advantage of the opportunity to organize conservation districts. And so a group of people decided that would be a good way to get the assistance they needed.

This group of men got behind the movement. Ernest Ham, Piedmont; Harvey Ganz, Piedmont; Ernest Kammerer, Rapid City; Cole Burton, Rapid City; Robert Roth, Box Elder; George Roth, Box Elder; George Meyers, Box elder; John Nachtigal; Harold Gossard; Tom McNenny; Harry Snook; Eugene Harrington, Piedmont; Olaf Peterson, Box Elder; Guy Buel, Box Elder; Charley Wilson, Elm Springs; Cy Johnson, Sturgis; Kenneth Johnson, Vale; LeRoy Thompson, Sturgis; and Gaylor Cudmore, Viewfield.

These people spread the good word and circulated petitions for a hearing and referendum, which was held on December 12, 1940, and carried five to one. The Conservation District was organized February 20, 1941.

In 1944, the first addition was made. In 1951, another addition was made. In 1959, that portion of the Elk Creek Conservation District lying in Butte County was transferred to Butte Conservation District, and the parts of Meade County included in the Butte Conservation District were transferred to the Elk Creek Conservation District.

The first supervisors of the Conservation District were: Robert Roth, Box Elder; Ernest Ham, Piedmont; Harvey Ganz, Piedmont; Ernest Kammerer, Rapid City; and Olaf Peterson, Box Elder.

The problems confronting the Conservation District, as named by the supervisors, are: loss of soil and water through erosion, both wind and water; irrigation not working properly; insufficient water for livestock; too intensive use of grasslands; cropland needs to be improved.

They propose to solve those problems by:

- Using stubble mulch farming;
- Strip cropping;
- Contour strip cropping;
- Terraces on cropland;
- Proper distribution of grazing, supplying more watering places;
- Develop water spreading systems;
- Plant adapted grasses and legumes;
- Build water spreading dams;
- Plant trees for shelter and windbreaks;
- Reorganize irrigation systems.

Others who have served as supervisors, in addition to the men named previously are: Marvin Kammerer, Rapid City; Clarence Glover, Sturgis; and Leo Grubl, Hereford.

The 1969 supervisors were: Marvin Kammerer, Rapid City, Chairman; Clarence Glover, Sturgis, Vice-Chairman; Harry Snook, New Underwood, Treasurer; Leo Grubl, Hereford, Secretary; Kenneth Johnson, Vale; and LeRoy Thompson, Hereford, Assistant Supervisor.

Updated information provided in 2012:

#### **Original Board Members**

Robert Roth, Ernest Ham, Harvey Ganz, Ernest Kammerer, Olaf Peterson

#### **Former Board Members**

Art Shaffer, Edgar Barber, Harry Snook, Charles Wilson, Harold Gossard, Eugene Harrington, Cyrus Johnson, Thomas McNenny, Leroy Thompson, Gaylord Cudmore, Kenneth Johnson, Marvin Kammerer, Leo Grubl, Clarence Glover, Albert Keffeler, Kenneth McKenny, Morris Hallock, Mark Keffeler, Irwin Richardson, Scott Phillips, Dale Johnson, Rich Blair, Ed Dodson, Ronny MacKaben, Kip Matkins

#### **Current Board Members**

Dale Lundgren, Connie McPherson, Philip Wilson, Eddie Grubl, Jim Schroeder