



SEPTIC SYSTEM COMPLETED WITH GRANT MONEY: One of 45 septic system clean-up projects completed by Washakie County Conservation District was at the Gene Schreibeis home south of Worland. Above, the new septic tank is lowered into the ground; below, the leachfield is installed for the new tank.



WCCD has money for septic system clean-up

WORLAND — In these tight economic times it's unusual for anyone to be looking to give away money, but that's just what Washakie County Conservation District is looking to do.

The district has grant money to improve failing septic systems just waiting for an applicant, says WCCD Director Tori Dietz.

The grant will pay 50 percent of the cost of a new septic system up to \$8500.00, unless special approval is granted from DEQ for higher costs. This can be a big chunk of change since new below-ground systems have been costing homeowners approximately \$9,000 and above ground systems approximately \$15,000.

Dietz explains that the district received 319 DEQ grant funds in 2005. The money was used to fund water monitoring on impaired streams — monitoring that was completed in 2008 — and to implement “best management practices” to improve water quality through moving feedlots and renovating old septic systems.

“The grant was supposed to expire on Dec. 31, 2008, but because one of our feedlot projects wasn't completed, the grant was extended,” Dietz says.

The district still has \$123,000 left — enough to fund about 15 more septic projects.

“I'm really excited we get another chance to use this money,” Dietz says. “If people know they have a septic problem, now is the time to fix it.”

To qualify for the money, Dietz says the septic system:

- must be in Washakie County
- must have been installed before 1973
- must have failed or be a straight-pipe system into a stream
- must have septic effluent within 500 feet of a stream or a ditch going into a stream.

Each application must be evaluated and then ranked by the Washakie Watersheds Steering Committee before approval is obtained.

“I know there are projects out there needing to be completed,” Dietz said. In order to qualify for the money, Dietz said landowners must complete the project by May 31 and, with a limited number of contractors able to complete projects in the area, time is of the essence.

She adds that doing the work pro-actively is important.

“If someone files a complaint about your septic and you're issued a citation by DEQ, you are no longer eligible for these funds. I don't like to hold that over people's heads, but it's something they should know.

“And you know, we all just need to be responsible about our water; you wouldn't want your kids, grandkids, or neighbor's kids to get sick because you didn't fix a problem with your septic.”

Dietz said the district has used the 319 grant money to fund 45 septic projects and 4 feeding operation relocations since 2005. They have also used a portion of the funds to hire a consultant to sort through the data they collected in four years of monitoring the water on the six impaired waterways in the county: the Big Horn River, Fifteen Mile Creek, No Water Creek, Slick Creek, Sage Creek and the Nowood. The first five streams exceeded set E. coli standards each time they were monitored, the Nowood River only

exceeded the standards during spring run-off in May and June, but is still considered impaired according to DEQ.

Dietz said anyone interested in applying for the septic clean-up money can contact her at 347-2456, ext 191, or by e-mail at wccd@rtconnect.net.