

Budget Message FY July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021

Pursuant to Wyoming State Statutes Title 11 Chapter 16, the Uinta County Conservation District is charged with the protection and preservation of the natural resources in Uinta County. In order to provide administrative costs and fund and implement conservation projects, the Board of Supervisors is requesting \$150,000.00 in mill levy funding for fiscal year July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021. Every year the UCCD Board of Supervisors carefully reviews the budget and tries to cut costs in as many areas as possible in order to protect the tax base and save Uinta County citizens from unnecessary increases in property taxes.

In past years, UCCD has invested extra funds in a savings and investment account as well as in CD's with the Wyoming Government Investment Fund and 1st Bank in order to have funds available for unforeseen expenses that result from natural disasters such as flooding and drought, as well as other expenses related to district operations. The amount of funds available in the savings and investment account is \$129,843 an increase from last year due to UCCD cashing out the CD from 1st Bank and putting it into the savings and investment account with Uinta Bank. The amount invested in WGIF CDs is \$333,373. UCCD will continue to use funds from the savings and investment account to supplement the budget and will again ask for a much reduced amount in mill levy funds. Participation in the districts cost share programs is voluntary and the size and cost of projects varies greatly, therefore it is difficult to determine the number and cost of projects to budget for. Rather than ask for additional funding, UCCD will use funds in the savings and investment account to supplement these programs and projects as applications are received and approved.

UCCD continues to seek and receiving funding through state and federal agencies for several projects. These projects include stream restoration, small water development, habitat improvement as well as other conservation related projects. Funds are secured through the Wyoming Water Development Commission, WDEQ 319 grants, Wyoming Game and Fish, Trout Unlimited, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust as well as other private funding partners. A majority of these projects also require landowners to pay a percentage of the cost which is reflected in the Miscellaneous Revenue section. Although small, also included in this section is revenue that UCCD earns through grant administration. An additional \$20,000 for project engineering has also been added to the budget to cover the cost of projects that are engineered through UCCD cost share programs.

For the Conservation District to be successful in implementing projects and programs, a great deal of time, effort and money must be spent on an education and public outreach program. This program will include costs associated with advertising, mailings, information booths, reports, newsletters and educational workshops. All of these things are necessary to let the public know what the conservation district is doing and how they can benefit from district programs. Public participation in district programs and activities continues to increase, resulting in an increase in staff time, wages and benefits such as health insurance and retirement. UCCD plans to improve on existing programs such as Adopt A Rancher, classroom activities and lessons, outdoor field trips and implement new programs that will give students a better understanding and appreciation for agriculture and natural resources. UCCD will hold a Well Water Testing Day offering financial assistance for well water tests as this benefits many residents of the county. The district will continue to provide natural resource and agriculture related education in Uinta County schools. The district will also continue to offer adult education including classes and workshops where continuing education credits can be earned. Another Uinta County Soil Health Day is planned for September 9th with a field day September 10th in Lonetree with the hopes of at least 100 participants.

Rangeland monitoring is becoming increasingly important and the District will continue to provide the personnel, equipment and expertise to work with permittees and other agencies to collect credible rangeland data. The District plans to implement new monitoring strategies and studies that will aid in this effort.

Water quality monitoring will continue on the Bear River to gather baseline data as well as data downstream of the stream restoration projects being done to show results of implementation.

Monitoring on the Blacks Fork and Smiths Fork Rivers will be scaled down and occur just 3 times per recreation season (May-September). However, three additional sites have been identified to collect data that will fill in data gaps from previous monitoring. Funds will be used to repair and replace equipment to make sure the data collected is credible. UCCD receives just under \$4,000 from the State every 2 years to help with the cost of water monitoring. Due to budget cuts at the state level this year, UCCD will need to budget for lab expenses which have been paid in the past by the Wyoming Department of Ag. UCCD will continue to offer cost share programs to help homeowners and landowners implement projects that will improve water quality. UCCD will also offer funds to assist with other natural resource emergencies such as drought, flooding, etc. Funding for these programs will come from the districts savings and investment account as needed.

Additional cost share programs available through the district include a windbreak program, water development program, weed management, and irrigation water management as well as a Natural Resource Project program that includes other projects as approved by the board. Funds for these programs will come from the savings and investment account as projects are approved.

UCCD provides a Community Enhancement Grant program that will allow applications to be submitted for any amount up to \$5,000 for projects that benefit the community and natural resources. UCCD will also offer three, \$1,000 Outdoor Education Grants to help educators with the cost of providing outdoor, hands-on education about agriculture and our natural resources.

Other important program areas include Land Use Planning and continuing to represent local interests through participation as a cooperating agency in Federal Land Planning processes, providing equipment and personnel to work with producers to improve pastureland, rangeland and wildlife habitat, and continuing the seedling tree program to establish conservation plantings throughout Uinta County. The district continues to expand and improve the range program to assist producers and small acreage landowners with range monitoring and conservation planning.

UCCD is in need of new computers for office staff as well as a new server and related equipment. This will be a significant cost this year but will benefit the district for several years. The Uinta County Conservation District Board of Supervisors realize their duties as elected officials and have been diligent in their duties to protect the tax base in Uinta County. The board feels that by asking for a reduced amount in mill levy funding and using savings and investment funds to supplement the budget again this year, they are fulfilling their responsibilities as elected officials and protecting the tax base and citizens of Uinta County, while still performing at the highest level possible to meet the needs of the Conservation Districts constituents.