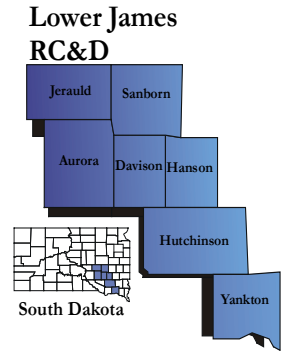


## ***Lower James RC&D, Inc.*** ***South Dakota***



During 2009, the Lower James RC&D Council provided technical and financial assistance to 40 projects in their seven county area for planning, funding, and implementation. Just over \$2.4 million in grants was secured for project implementation by public and private organizations assisted (Annual Report posted at: <http://www.sdrcd.org> under Lower James/Projects). Linda Assmus, Council President, attributes the RC&D's positive impact in the region to the Council's commitment to helping build the capacity of area organizations by assisting them plan, fund, and provide the leadership for project implementation. Successful local efforts supported by the Lower James RC&D during 2009 included:

### **Farm Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development**

During the past three years, the Lower James RC&D Council has provided project leadership to implement the goals of the South Dakota Agricultural Energy Committee established by the South Dakota Association of RC&D's. Activities during 2009 included:

- Twelve workshops held in rural communities on energy efficiency and renewable energy, attended by 600 landowners.
- Partnering with East River Electric and South Dakota State University (SDSU) to secure \$100,000 for assistance by East River Electric Cooperative to rural residents for farm energy audits that support the Rural Energy Assistance Program.
- Participation and technical support to the SD 25x'25 Energy Alliance to develop a strategic plan to achieve 25% renewable energy from agricultural and forestry by 2025. The Alliance also secured \$4,000 to support an Alliance web site, printing of information material, and Ag Energy Workshops.
- Partnering with SDSU, the SD Wind Energy Association, and Randall RC&D to secure funds from the North Central Risk Management Education Center to provide landowners information on wind energy development through workshops, a web site ([www.sdagenergy.org](http://www.sdagenergy.org)), and risk management tools.
- Technical assistance to farmers and rural businesses to determine the feasibility of renewable and/or energy efficiency projects, and support to develop their grant proposals.



### **Grassland Critical To Water Quality**



Four southeast South Dakota lake projects are partnering with the Lower James RC&D Council, USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), SD Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and their local partners such as the City of Mitchell and the James River Water Development District, to improve stream side (riparian) pastures within five miles of priority lakes. Approximately 700 acres of riparian pastures associated with Swan Lake, Lake Mitchell, Lake Hanson, and/or Marindahl Lake are being leased for 2 to 15 years, to improve riparian vegetation as a tool to filter pollutants out before

entering these lakes. Riparian Area Management Programs are becoming a part of all Clean Water Projects in southeastern South Dakota.

## **Support Provided to Plan and Secure Funding For Water Quality Projects**

Area organizations continue to utilize the Lower James RC&D for assistance in maintaining or improving water quality in area lakes and rivers. During 2009, assistance was provided to plan and submit funding requests for projects associated with the Lower Big Sioux Watershed (\$325,000), and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition (\$310,000). Projects assisted in 2008 and funded in 2009 were the Lower James River Watershed (\$400,000), and the Lewis and Clark Lake Watershed (\$625,000). The Lower James RC&D Council also partnered with the SD Agricultural Nutrient Management Team the past year to provide \$4000 of assistance to 39 livestock producers, to sample manure and soils when developing nutrient management plans for economic and environmental application of manure on 3400 acres of land.

## **Southeast Enterprise Facilitation Project**



The Southeast Enterprise Facilitation Project (SEFP) provides free, one-on-one, confidential, business assistance to entrepreneurs in Turner, McCook, and Hutchinson Counties (since 1997) to create, retain, or expand an average of 15 businesses and 30 jobs per year (see <http://www.sefp.com>). The average cost is \$2000 per job created or retained, with 78% of businesses assisted still in business. The project has been primarily supported by investments from communities, counties, utilities, private businesses and organizations. Support from the USDA Rural Development (RD) (\$22,000) is being provided to the project during 2009 and 2010.

Photo above: Curt Lukes, Parker Ford, SEFP President; John McDonald, Southeastern Electric CFO and SEFP Treasurer; Elsie Meeks, South Dakota, RD State Director; Trace Davids, SD RD; Nancy Larsen, SEFP Facilitator, and Sherri Lewis, South Dakota RD.

## **Women In Blue Jeans 2009/2010 Conferences**

The seventh annual Women In Blue Jeans (WIBJ) Conference was attended by over 190 women, January 15-17, 2009, at the Dakota Wesleyan University Facilities in Mitchell, SD. The WIBJ conference steering committee utilizes the Lower James RC&D resources to assist plan and fund the conferences. Grants secured to support \$15,000 in local cash donations and \$30,000 of local in-kind are from the USDA Risk Management Agency and the North Central Risk Management Education Center (\$24,000 total). (See <http://www.womeninbluejeans.org>.)

## **Grassland Management and Planning Project**

The SD Grassland Coalition requested assistance from the Lower James RC&D for project planning and project proposal development for their technical assistance and information and education efforts in South Dakota. A Clean Water Act grant application for \$310,000 was approved by the SD Nonpoint Source Task Force in December of 2009. This project would fund their work through 2012, and continue their project initiated in 2000 and funded by over \$1.2 million in grants.

(See: <http://sdconservation.org/grassland/> or <http://www.sdgrass.org/>.)



## **Lower James RC&D Council Fund Established To Support Local Community Projects**

Since 1992, the Lower James RC&D Council has provided \$29,400 through over 30 mini-grants to local projects. The Lower James RC&D Council Endowment Fund was established as part of the SD Community Foundation, in November of 2006, to continue these mini-grants through interest earned.