

Williston Basin RC&D



North Dakota

Featured Project

Customer: General Public

Location: McKenzie County

Project Value: \$9,196.00

Partners: McKenzie County Commission and other partners

Date: December 2010

CARTWRIGHT TRAIN TUNNEL C.A.T. PROJECT

In January 2010, the McKenzie County Soil Conservation District submitted an application requesting technical assistance from the Council to pursue a C.A.T. (Critical Area Treatment) project at the historic Cartwright train tunnel. The Cartwright Tunnel and Fairview Bridge that crosses the Yellowstone River were constructed in 1913 and 1914, respectively, by the Great Northern Railroad. The tunnel's dimensions are 22 feet wide by 24 feet in height, lined with creosote treated timbers, and are 1,456 feet long and built through an 80 foot hill. The bridge and tunnel were used only by trains until 1926 when Highway 23 was built to the bridge. It was then planked for motor vehicle use as well and became a toll bridge operated by the railroad. In 2002, both the tunnel and bridge were turned over to the Fairview Chamber of Commerce by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to maintain as a historic site.

Over the years, areas of erosion developed on the top and adjacent to the tunnel due to both natural and human related causes. A plan was developed with input from representatives of the McKenzie County Soil Conservation District, McKenzie County Commission, McKenzie County Roads Department, Eastern Plains RC&D Council (Sidney, MT), and Williston Basin RC&D Council; and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service employees from the Watford City Field Office, Eastern Plains RC&D Office, and Williston Basin RC&D Office.

The project plan included the following: 1) chemical spraying the weeds above the tunnel, 2) necessary earthwork needed to fill in gully erosion areas with rock and fill and create a water runoff diversion to an adjacent woody draw, 3) install a protective corridor barrier with existing materials on either side of the railroad track bed from the bridge to the tunnel to reduce off road vehicle traffic, 4) plant both native and introduced grass seed (separately) on the sprayed area above the tunnel and runoff diversion area, respectively, and 5) remove the pioneer coal mine near the bridge as an attractive nuisance. Project work was done in phases beginning in June with the chemical spraying and completed with the grass seeding and removal of the pioneer coal mine in early November. Many partners helped to make this project a success.

Total estimated value of this project was \$9,196. The McKenzie County Commission provided the cost of installing the protective corridor barrier, earthwork and rock material, and chemical spraying through the McKenzie County Weed Board. The North Dakota Public Service Commission provided the labor and equipment to remove the pioneer coal mine. The USDA Plant Material Center donated the grass seed for this project and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provided in-kind assistance with this project.



Pioneer Coal Mine after reclamation work by the ND Public Service Commission.



Water diversion earthwork completed by the McKenzie County Roads Department adjacent to the Cartwright Train Tunnel.