

County receives grant for Invasives Project

Written by Darci Tomky

Phillips County Weed District and Soil Conservation District recently received the High Plains Invasive Project Matching Grant, reported Phillips County Commissioners at their March 31 meeting.

Phillips County will be partnering with Sedgwick County in the Northeast Colorado Invasives Project. A \$3,000 grant plus matching funds of \$750 in cash and \$2,250 in in-kind donations will fund the \$6,000 project.

At the beginning of 2009, Phillips County applied for a \$20,000 grant but ended up not getting the request because of a lack of funds in the state. After reapplying this year and receiving the grant, the amount of grant money was much less, and the emphasis of the project had to be changed accordingly.

Denise Swanson, district manager for the Haxtun Conservation District, said the focus this time is to educate landowners about invasive weeds before they get out of control in Phillips and Sedgwick counties.

“We want to stop it before it starts,” she said.

Other counties in the area have encountered issues with these weeds, so Phillips County has the potential for the same problems, said Swanson.

The grant money is designated for the control of specific weeds. Out of the seven weeds targeted in this area of Colorado, Swanson said the four they will be focusing on are dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed and leafy spurge.

Educational resources funded by the project will include “Weed of the Week” notices in the three newspapers in Phillips and Sedgwick counties as well as informational books available to landowners.

The grant will also provide two new sprayers—one ATV sprayer and one backpack sprayer for Phillips County. Wilbur Strickert of the Phillips County Weed District said they will help out a lot,

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especially because individuals can now borrow the ATV sprayer to spray their own land when time restraints limit the district from getting everywhere.

Other necessities for the project include a GPS unit. The counties are required to map their findings and send the results in to the state.

Swanson said it will be great if they don't find any of the targeted weeds in the county. So even though the project might not have big implications right now, she thinks the educational resources will have a big impact on the future of weeds in Phillips County because landowners will now know what to look for and what to do about it.

Event Center driveways moving forward

Commissioners opened the bids to complete the sidewalks and driveways at the new Phillips County Event Center. This portion of the project is being done under an Enhancement Grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation and was required to be bid separately.

Three bids were received on the enhancement project. They were McAtee Construction of Sterling, \$178,611; Mike Smith Construction of Holyoke, \$182,760; and Noraa Concrete Construction of Keenesburg, \$249,305.

McAtee Construction is the apparent low bidder. The commissioners finalized their decision at their April 7 regular meeting which will be reported in an upcoming Enterprise.

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Other business

In other business in the month of March, commissioners:

—offered support for the recycling project in which three bins will be purchased for Holyoke and Haxtun to collect recyclables in conjunction with U.S. Recycling located in Ogallala, Neb.

—noted Haxtun got a new ambulance, and the old one will need to be sold or disposed.

—purchased a Caterpillar D6 bulldozer for \$75,000 from Tri-County Equipment for the road and bridge and landfill crews.

—selected a consultant firm for the Housing Assessment Grant for Phillips and Sedgwick counties, but noted the grant money has been temporarily put on hold.

—approved the ambulance service license for Holyoke. The Haxtun agreement will be approved after they list new equipment.

—purchased a 2010 Ford Expedition for the new sheriff's vehicle. Net cost was \$22,140 after trading in the 2004 Dodge Durango for \$5,000.

—noted Tanya Lemley, a new caseworker/supervisor, was set to begin work Tuesday, April 6.

—wrote a letter of support for a stimulus grant to be used by PC Telcom to bring higher speed broadband to rural areas outside of Holyoke.

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—noted the landfill free days for Holyoke are set for May 12-13. Phillips County's will be June 5-6, and Haxtun will choose two days.