INTERESTED IN COAL SEAM FIRE SUPPRESSION? CONTACT THE ROSEBUD CONSERVATION DISTRICT NOW!

South East Montana Coal Seam Fire Suppression Planning Grant Phase 1 & Phase 2

The Rosebud Conservation District has been awarded a DNRC Conservation Reclamation & Development Planning Grant to address coal seam fires in five southeastern Montana counties. The project counties are Rosebud, Treasure, Custer, Powder River and Big Horn counties, including the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and the Crow Reservation.

* The fire season of 2012 saw nearly 600,000 acres or nearly 1,000 square miles burned in southeastern Montana with the vast majority of those acres in very coal rich areas. As a result of the vast area burned, an extremely high number of exposed coal seams were ignited and have become a significant “new” source of wildland fire ignition and expense ever since. Within the Miles City Dispatch Center zone during the 2015 fire season, a total of 38,943 acres burned and of those total acres, 40% or 15,143 acres were caused by coal seams. The State of Montana along with the Bureau of Land Management expended nearly $380,000 to suppress these fires and that does not include the time and money expended by the private landowners and the county government fire suppression organizations responsible for initial attack on these incidents. It also does not include the indirect cost of the state and federal fire suppression agencies to have additional resources available throughout the summer in part to deal specifically with the increased frequency of these coal seam ignited wildland fires. Wild land fires ignited by actively burning coal seams have also become a tremendous burden on already stretched thin volunteer fire organizations in that because they are always burning they can ignite into a wildland fire at any time of year given the right conditions, and this was evident with significant fire activity that started in March of 2015 with all of the spring fires being coal seam related. When the “normal” fire season that was July-September now can essentially be twelve months out of the year, it has a tremendous impact for responders to respond.

Phase one of the project plan includes developing a working committee comprised of local, state and federal partners and landowners who have an interest in suppressing coal seam fires in SE Montana to direct phase 2 & 3. This is the initiation of phase one outreach. Due to the current situation with Covid-19 in Montana, public meetings will be postponed until mid-fall in each of the participating counties and reservations. If you have an interest in participating in this project and/or participating in the working committee, please contact Bobbi Vannattan at the Rosebud Conservation District in Forsyth Montana. You can email: bobbi.vannattan@mt.usda., rosebudcd29@gmail.com, or phone 406.351.8012.

Send your name, address, email and phone number to be added to the contact list and notification list of meetings and progress on this grant project.

FOR MORE INFORAMTION ON THE ROSEBUD CONSERVATOIN DISTRICT AND UPDATES ON PROGRAMS GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.ROSEBUDCD.COM](http://WWW.ROSEBUDCD.COM)