

LA PLATA COUNTY

FOOD PLAN

WATER, LAND & SOIL STEWARDSHIP

Natural resources such as land, soil, and water are crucial elements of the environment. Stewarding, protecting, and preserving natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. Resource conservation and stewardship practices can occur on any scale, from individual households to regional watersheds, as well as national and global programming. Combining effective methods for stewardship, conservation, and protection can help secure land, water, and soil are still able to be productive and are available for future generations.



BENEFITS

- Promote biodiversity by protecting various species and their habitats
- Ensure survival of diverse ecosystems
- Preserve essential areas for animals to thrive and reproduce
- Protect the environment and maintain soil and water quality
- Prevent pollution, ensuring cleaner air, water, and soil for future generations
- Foster economic benefits by attracting tourism and enhancing property values
- Improve climate resilience

CHALLENGES

- Limiting resources and funding allocations for practices
- Creating tension between different stakeholders related to land and water use
- Lacking public awareness and support
- Requiring significant outreach to educate communities
- Adopting new technologies and upgrading of infrastructure
- Changing established habits by individuals, organizations, and communities
- Coordinating multiple parties for collective action
- Adapting new and varying climate and resource changes

Understanding place-based knowledge of local traditions, including natural resource use, can encourage communities to learn more about conservation practices and strategies (Uspayanti et al., 2021). When local knowledge is passed down through generations, it encapsulates an intimate understanding of the land and water's nuances, seasonal patterns, and ecological intricacies.

Producers are key stakeholders in conservation efforts, and their values of stewardship can be seen through practices such as integrating easements, reduced/no tillage and cover crops (Paolisso, 2013). By grounding conservation efforts in the traditions, values, and knowledge systems of local farmers, a holistic approach can be formed that not only safeguards the environment but also nurtures the well-being of those who steward the land.

Recognizing the importance of private land in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health also connects to personal responsibility. Within focus groups, an individual shared, "we struggle with what we want to do right now, and what we envision for the future. We need to shift how we're living today to support the environment we want for the future."

The policy and practice of conservation are connected to struggles for 'power over nature.' Sound practices and policies are critical components in addressing resource scarcity, especially in regions where climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. Effective conservation policies rely not only on government action but also on collective efficacy of communities, where people believe in their shared ability to achieve water conservation goals.



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