

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from Montana's Conservation Districts

June 15, 2016

Volume 9 Issue 12

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SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
of MONTANA



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This newsletter is made possible
by a 223 grant from DNRC

River Rendezvous showcases Missouri River projects

When willing landowners combine forces with available funding programs, amazing things can happen for the vegetation and wildlife along the Missouri River. This was the theme of the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council's annual River Rendezvous hosted by the Chouteau County Conservation District on June 9.

Nearly 50 people were treated to a 15 mile boat ride downriver to view first-hand several riparian restoration efforts. The Bailey Ranch was the first stop, where Rob Hazlewood described the partnerships that led to a fenced riparian corridor and water gap funded by Northwestern Energy.

Next, Rachel Frost showcased the Ranching for Rivers program (MRCDC & SWCDM partnership) that provides cost-share to landowners for installing fencing and off-site water developments to protect and enhance riparian zones. The importance of managed grazing in the riparian areas rather than complete exclusion of livestock was stressed throughout the tour.

Additional stops provided Joe Offer, Stewardship Director with the Friends of the Missouri Monument and Sean Reynolds with the BLM an opportunity to describe several successful cottonwood plantings conducted by the group and supported through Montana Conservation Corp volunteer teams. Anna Nason with the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab spoke of the songbird monitoring they are conducting in partnership with Northwestern Energy along the Missouri River and the importance of riparian restoration to the populations of these birds.

The boat tour wrapped up with a savory lunch at Woods Bottom with FWP employees providing a close-up look at some fish in the Missouri River. An hors d' oeuvres social sponsored by the Montana Land Reliance provided the perfect ending as folks gathered on the patio of the Grand Union hotel to wrap up the day.

EAB confirmed in Nebraska

June 8: The Nebraska Department of Agriculture announced today that the emerald ash borer (EAB) was found earlier this week in southeast Omaha. This is the first confirmation of the insect in Nebraska. EAB has killed hundreds of millions of ash trees in 26 states. It is projected that Nebraska's taxpayers and homeowners will spend over \$961 million on ash tree removal, disposal and replacement.

"Now is a good time for residents in and around Omaha—and municipalities throughout the state—to take proactive steps to deal with EAB," said Deputy

State Forester John Erixson. "Once EAB is found in an area, most ash trees are killed within 10-15 years."

Residents with ash trees in the Omaha area may want to begin treatments.

"The best candidates for treatments are healthy, high-value trees that are in a good location," said Mark Harrell, Forest Health Program Leader with the Nebraska Forest Service. "Trees in poor condition or located under wires or too close to sidewalks or buildings generally should be removed rather than treated."

Professionally applied trunk injections are the most effective

treatments, especially for large trees. Their main drawback is the damage they cause to the tree and therefore are best applied by certified arborists well-trained in the procedure. The most common products available to the homeowner are soil applications, but they are somewhat less effective than injections and have a greater chance of harming beneficial insects, such as bees.

"Treatments need to be applied every one to two years and must be done for the remaining life of the tree," said Harrell. "For this reason, many trees will not be worth saving."

Solar power solves ranchers' dilemmas

From the Prairie Star: Mark Fix has 200 to 250 head of cattle 20 miles southwest of Miles City to water in the blistering heat of summer. The trouble used to be that the hotter it was, the thirstier they were, and the less likely it was the wind would blow. If the wind didn't blow, the windmill attached to the stock tank pump didn't turn, and the cows were plumb out of luck.

But Fix figured out a work-around: a solar powered well. The 100-foot deep well, "works fantastic, putting out the water when it's hot, when you have lots of sun," Fix said.

Fix, like ranchers, farmers and rural people across the nation, are turning to renewable energy technologies, solar in particular, as less expensive, more reliable

and greener ways to provide power as the oil, natural gas and coal industries have waned and electricity prices have spiked.

"Solar energy has come down in price over the last five or six years by 50 percent," said Ben Reed, owner of Winpower West in Billings, who serves on Gov. Bullock's Energy and Utilities committee of Main Street Montana project. "Even in Montana and Wyoming where shipping costs higher, we're still seeing a 50 percent drop in the price of systems. Those systems just get better and better and better and now we have a price point that makes them lucrative for people to invest in them."



Reed and Fix spoke at a June 6 seminar in Miles City about solar energy and agriculture put on by the Northern Plains Resource Council in partnership with Custer County Extension. The seminar addressed issues of cost and payback time, site selection, sizing the system, installation, warranties and incentives, grid-tied and off-grid options and pivot and pump systems.

[READ MORE](#)

NACD Partners with Scotts-Miracle Gro to promote water conservation

From NACD: The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, one of the country's leading lawn and garden care companies, announced today it will be working with NACD to educate U.S. homeowners on the importance of employing water conservation strategies and reducing nutrient runoff and leaching.

Through Scotts' Water Positive Landscapes Initiative, NACD and a dozen other leading conservation organizations will work together to deliver conservation solutions within critical U.S. waterbodies, like the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay. The groups will also help determine the direction of the Initiative and provide ongoing feedback to Scotts on consumer outreach.

For more information about Water Positive Landscapes, click here: <http://www.z2systems.com/nps//servlet/DisplayLink?orgId=nacdnet&emailId=9474e43856ace7ff0c869fbf355ff53a9m924891947&linkId=2340&&targetUrl=http://scottsmiraclegro.com/waterpositive/through-t-leadership/> to be redirected to Scotts' designated website. You can also follow the hashtag #WaterPositive on Facebook and Twitter and check here for NACD updates on the partnership.

Majority of snowmelt has occurred, ahead of schedule

From Montana NRCS: Water users across the state of Montana have seen streams swell with snowmelt over the last month, and a substantial portion of this year's snowpack has melted as of June 1, according to data from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Snowpack in the state peaked in early April in most locations and has experienced substantial melt over the last two months. May weather patterns were more favorable with regards to slowing snow melt rates and prolonging the snow water further into the summer, but earlier than average melt has resulted in below normal snowpack levels for June 1.

According to NRCS, at this time of year 25 to 50 percent of the annual snowpack typically remains to enter the river systems, but this year only 10 to 40 percent of the annual snowpack peak remains on June 1. The early melt has resulted in reservoir storage across the state that is near or above average in all basins, as reservoir managers have been able to capture the snow water runoff in reservoirs. "For irrigators and water users that rely on river systems with reservoir storage this is good news, said Lucas Zukiewicz, NRCS water supply specialist.

"However, for water users that rely on naturally flowing streams the early melt has left less water available as we enter summer and stream flows could decline earlier than average due to the lack of available snow water in

the 'mountain reservoir.' On these streams summer precipitation will play a critical role in streamflows later this summer."

May brought abundant precipitation to the northern river basins and plains in eastern Montana, while southern basins received slightly below to below average precipitation during the month of May.

Defying El Nino expectations, precipitation this water year (beginning October 1) is still near average in all basins, with the exception being the Sun-Teton-Marias basin where water year precipitation remains below average after a relatively wet May. June is typically one of the last "wet" months before the typical summer weather patterns begin.

Summer precipitation is generally less widespread than winter and spring storms and more convective in nature, isolated thunderstorms rather than large storm fronts. "Long term climate forecasts indicate a possible La Nina on the horizon for next year, so there may be a chance we can continue this trend and end up with some always welcome summer moisture," said Zukiewicz.

So far this spring streamflows have been above average but began to fall below average levels at the end of May in most basins. As the remaining snowpack melts in the coming month, streams will run out of snow water and begin their decline into summer.

Supplementing horse diets with homegrown barley fodder *by Ashley Riviero, Lewis & Clark CD BSWC member*

The discovery for us here at the Conservation District was during a stream permitting assessment on the Rocking Z Guest Ranch. They offered to show us some of the environmentally friendly methods they have integrated into their daily operations and one that stuck out the most offers a potential solution to overgrazing problems.

The owners, Patty and Zack inherited this ranch from Zack's grandfather in 1951, originally homesteaded in 1863. To prosper from their surroundings they found themselves at a Dude Ranch Association convention in San Diego where a speaker was discussing the high cost of hay and the continuing threat of drought. He demonstrated a cheaper and more environmental alternative to feed livestock through the use of hydroponic fodder/barley production.

It was a captivating idea for both Patty and Zack, so they began researching how this system could work for them. Is it safe? What are the nutritional and cost benefits? Is this feasible? What do we really need to make this work? Zack, who had made his living as a contractor, said "there's a learning curve but the benefits are endless," and both Patty and Zack feel this could be an excellent approach for landowners large and small.

They began this learning experience by raising 20 trays and adding light to their root cellar mainly to provide feed to some of their older horses who

had high medical bills. After a short time they noticed healthier horses, and glares of interest from the other horses, so they decided to do more. Those old horses are still thriving and their medical bills have decreased drastically.

The use of fodder is nothing new; in fact it dates back to the 1600's. However, due to technology and engineering it is becoming economically more competitive for feeding options. Barley seed (not barley feed) in particular is chosen over other grains due to its high germination rate.

Barley fodder is also the most nutritious of small grains, it is high in protein, energy, and it is rich in enzymes that improve digestion while also allowing a decreased use of expensive grain.

Patty and Zack give each horse two trays a day which comes out to about 3-5% of the horse's body weight accompanied by some hay. The standard rule of thumb is one pound of barley seed to produce seven - twelve pounds of sprouted fodder. Hay is still part of the livestock diet due to higher calcium and other nutritional components. Fodder is just a supplemental alternative to decrease overall hay costs and reduce over grazing.

The use of barley helps to offset the cost of hay while being able to produce fresh live green, high protein barley, which is rich in enzymes and nutrients year round. Barley also creates energy and vitality, helps stimulate immune response, reduces anti-nutritional factors, and has antioxidant properties. [READ MORE](#)

USDA, Partners invest \$11 million in Conservation Service

June 7, 2016—As National Get Outdoors Month begins, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the U.S. Forest Service and partners have invested over \$11 million to support work and training opportunities for more than 1,500 youth and veterans on national forests and grasslands in fiscal year 2016. The funds support the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC), a public-private initiative to connect America's youth and veterans with job opportunities that conserve and sustain our natural and cultural resources.

"The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps experience transforms the lives of our veterans and youth, allowing them to connect to the great outdoors and become part of the next generation of natural and cultural resource conservationists," said Vilsack.

Over the last two years, the Forest Service has engaged 20,000 youth and veterans through partnerships with 21CSC member organizations and other institutions. This year participants will focus on more than 120 priority projects across the country working on a range of issues from restoration, hazardous fuels management and watershed protection to trails and facilities maintenance while helping to develop the next generation of conservation stewards and the agency's workforce. [READ MORE](#)

2017 RRGL & RDGP Applications

DNRC received the following applications for RRGL and RDGP funding for consideration in the 2017 legislative session. 8 RDGP Conservation District applications were received and 11 RRGL applications from Conservation Districts.

#	Applicant	Project Name	Request
1	Butte-Silver Bow Plan Dep.	Butte-Silver Bow Erosion Control and Vegetation Enhancement	\$439,850
2	CSKT	Revais Creek Mine Tailings Reclamation	\$302,074
3	Deer Lodge Valley CD	Oregon Creek Placer Mine Reclamation	\$450,000
4	Deer Lodge Valley CD	Mt. Haggin Uplands Sediment Mitigation and Habitat Restoration	\$299,796
5	Deer Lodge Valley CD	French Creek Placer Mine Restoration	\$300,000
6	Deer Lodge, City of	Milwaukee Roundhouse	\$294,250
7	East Helena Public Schools	Dartman Field Reclamation Project	\$500,000
8	Fort Belknap Indian Community	Landusky Pit & Swift Gulch Capture Wells to Reduce AMD to State Waters and Ft. Belknap Indian Reservation	\$489,966
9	Granite CD	Flint Creek Watershed Metals Reclamation--Fred Burr Creek Rumsey Mill Tailings	\$500,000
10	Harlowton, City of	Harlowton Removal of Contaminated Soils and Free Product	\$300,000
11	Lewistown, City of	Cleanup of the Central Post and Treating Company	\$475,000
12	Lincoln CD	Tobacco River Restoration Project	\$395,136
13	Richland County CD	Mitigating the impacts to the Fox Hills/Hell Creek Aquifer	\$499,469
14	Meagher County	Meagher County Road Dept. Equipment Maintenance Yard	\$175,000
15	MDEQ	Basin Creek Mine--Phase 2 Stability Project	\$500,000
16	MDEQ	Tramway Creek Mine Reclamation	\$432,500
17	MDEQ	Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex--Wetland Connection	\$300,000
18	Mile High CD	Conifer Encroachment Reduction Project	\$195,744
19	Missoula County	Ninemile Creek Housem Placer Mine Reclamation	\$420,000
20	Roosevelt County	Kenco Refinery Cleanup	\$487,469
21	Ruby Valley CD	California Creek Mining Reclamation	\$62,625
22	Sweet Grass County CD	Yellowstone River Channel Stabilization & Surface Water Protection	\$457,562

Grants

319 Nonpoint Source Projects

DEQ has funding available for nonpoint source water pollution reduction projects. An estimated \$900,000 of funding will be available to Montana in 2017 under Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. The funds support projects to reduce nonpoint source pollution caused by agricultural and forestry activities, urban and suburban development, and runoff from abandoned mine sites. Interested parties should attend a webinar on June 22 for more info. The webinar will start at 9:00 AM in Room 111 of the DEQ Metcalf Building at 1520 E 6th Ave. in Helena. Remote access is available and details are available from Katie Steele at [\(406\) 444-0549](tel:4064440549) or ksteele2@mt.gov.

Project sponsors must submit a preliminary proposal by July 25, 2016. Final applications are due on September 26, 2016. Funding for projects will be announced after the 319 Agency Review Panel meets on October 20, 2016.

FY 2017 Grant Deadlines

Deadlines for 223, mini-education, and district development grants from DNRC for FY 2017 are as follows: **July 29**, 2016; **October 14**, 2016; **January 14**, 2017; and **April 26**, 2017. [Grant Info](#)

The Montana Conservationist strives to present news & information relevant to Montana's Conservation Districts and greater conservation community. The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent those of MACD or its affiliates.

Workshops/Meetings /Trainings/Events

Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology Camp

Ecology Project International is accepting Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming high school students to participate in our summer Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology Program. This summer's courses will take place July 13-17, July 22-26, July 25-29, and August 3-7. Activities include collecting data for a Yellowstone bison study, observing wolves with a biologist in the Lamar Valley, completing a conservation service project, and exploration of a Yellowstone geothermal basin. [More Info](#)

Jobs

Seasonal Field Botanist

The MT Natural History Program is looking for a qualified Botanist who wants to build leadership skills and work in a diversity of floristic areas of Montana. Contact Jen Chutz 406-444-3500 for more info.

Environmental Science Specialist – DNRC Sage Grouse

The Sage Grouse Program Specialist organizes and implements Montana's Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy and the Habitat Stewardship Conservation Program under direction of the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Manager. Specifically, the program specialist will work with state and federal agencies, and administrative entities like the Montana Board of Oil & Gas in matters related to Montana's

Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy and the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Stewardship Program. The program specialist will be a program contact for private landowners and project proponents who submit plans for proposed activities occurring in Sage Grouse habitat to the program for consultation. [More](#)

RFQ Issues for Strategic Framework

Missoula County, in association with the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council, is issuing a Request for Qualification ("RFQ") to select a natural resource consultant to aid in the development of the Montana All-Taxa Invasive Species Strategic Framework. The purpose of this plan is to provide a roadmap and timeline with prioritized short-term and long-term actions aimed to improve coordination, increase capacity, and decrease duplication of efforts for invasive species programs across Montana. Due June 24. [More Info](#)

Funding Available for Assistance with QuickBooks

Are you a new administrator, having troubles with the conversion to the BARS or with Quickbooks?

Funding has been secured to continue the outreach and on the job training program with new administrators, or those that just need a little help with QuickBooks and or the conversion into BARS. If you are in need of assistance please contact Carie Hess at petroleumcd@midrivers.com or [406-429-6646 ext. 104](tel:4064296646).

Coming Up:

June

20-22 Montana Range Days,
Harlowton

23 CMR Working Group
Meeting, Circle

27 MACD Executive
Committee Conference
Call

July

11 MACD Board Conference
Call

Have an event to share?
Visit macdnet.org/calendar
to add your event to our list!

BSWC 2017 Host Site Applications Available

If your organization has conservation projects and goals that you have not been able to check off your to-do list, consider hosting a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member.

This program places a recent college graduate in a conservation district or watershed group for 11.5 months to put new projects or programs on the ground.

Feel free to contact Jessica Makus with any questions regarding BSWC at jessica@macdnet.org.

Supervisor / Admin of the Year Nominations

Nomination forms are now available for 2016 Supervisor & Administrator/Employee of the year.

This is a great chance to recognize someone from the Conservation District world who has gone above and beyond in execution of their duties, whether by assisting others or by generally producing excellent and innovative projects.

Winners will be recognized at the Banquet at the State Convention, November 15-17 in Sidney.

Forms can be downloaded from the MACDEO website at employees.macdnet.org/supervisor-admin-of-the-year-nomination/. Please mail forms by August 15, 2016 to:

Department of Natural Resources
ATTN: Laurie Zeller
1625 Eleventh Avenue, PO Box 201601
Helena MT 59620-1601

Call for Boot Camp participants

NRCS recently opened up an agency-led, three-week-long, conservation program training opportunity to conservation districts employees that apply through NACD. NACD is currently looking for district employees interested in attending future training sessions held in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Boot Camp participants will learn how to work through a comprehensive conservation planning process and how to partner with NRCS field employees.

For more information about this opportunity, contact your NACD Region Representative or Rich Duesterhaus at rich-duesterhaus@nacdnet.org.