

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from Montana's Conservation Districts

May 24, 2017

Volume 10 Issue 11

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Big Sky Watershed Corps
Host Site Applications now
open for 2018



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This newsletter is made possible
by a 223 grant from DNRC

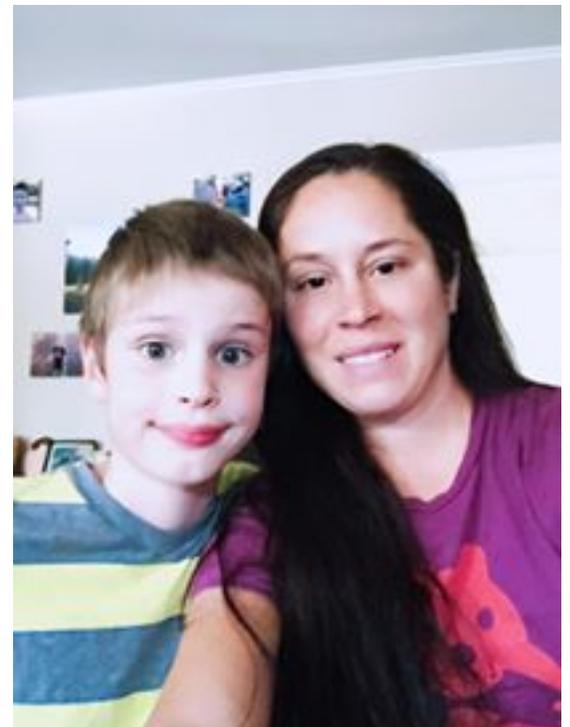
Meet Melissa Downing, new MACD & SWCDM Operations Manager

SWCDM and MACD are excited to introduce you to Melissa Downing, our new Operations Manager. Melissa will be taking on the tasks of our former administrative assistant (thanks April!), while also focusing more on the financial management parts of our organization.

Melissa holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Humboldt State University, with an emphasis in hazardous waste management. She spent several years working as a paralegal at a large law firm in West Virginia, before taking time off to raise her two sons. As the Operations Manager for SWCDM and MACD she assists the organizations in financial record keeping, office management, and works to improve office systems and policies to ensure the missions of SWCDM and MACD are fulfilled. Melissa has lived in Montana for 7 years, and enjoys spending time with her family in the outdoors hiking, camping, and rafting.

Melissa's hours at the office will be 8:30-12:30, Monday through Friday. She can be reached at Melissa@macdnet.org.

At right, Melissa with her oldest son, Ronin.



Craft malt opens in Butte, marking a Montana brewing first

From Missoula Current: Montana Craft Malt opened its new 10,000-ton malting facility in Butte on Thursday, capping a milestone in the \$15 million project.

The facility will cater to Montana's craft brew industry and serve as the state's only malting product made exclusively from Montana-grown barley, according to the state.

"Montana Craft Malt will make it easier for Big Sky brewers to access Montana-grown barley, and market their craft brews as truly Made in Montana," said Commerce Director Pam Haxby-Cote.

Haxby-Cote said Montana's craft beer industry is quickly growing and becoming known around the world as a destination for beer enthusiasts. It's also growing as employer, with 700 people now working for the state's 71 breweries.

According to the Montana Brewers Association, the state's craft beer industry has an economic impact of more than \$100 million each year. Brewers also use 7 million pounds of malted grain each year, half of which is grown in Montana.

"Not only is this a good thing for our brewing industry, but for the farmers and ranchers who fuel it." [READ MORE](#)



Bison Range to remain with US Fish & Wildlife

ABC Fox Montana: The Department of the Interior has reviewed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal for management of the National Bison Range and determined it will continue under Service ownership.

"I took a hard look at the current proposal suggesting a new direction for the National Bison Range and assessed what this would mean for Montana and the nation," said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. "As Secretary, my job is to look 100 years forward at all of Interior's resources. I recognize the Bison Range is a critical part of our past, present and future, which is why I have changed course."

The Service will resume its review of future management actions at the range by publishing a revised notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and accompanying environmental impact statement (EIS). The draft CCP/EIS will include detailed information about the planning process and will outline a range of management

alternatives based on public input received over the years. Once finalized, the CCP will determine the resource management goals and visitor recreational activities for the National Bison Range over the next 15 years.

By law, the Service is required to develop a CCP for each refuge it manages, outlining specific resource management goals to meet the purpose of that refuge and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System as a whole. The CCP process is a collaborative process and includes partners and the public in its development.

The National Bison Range lies entirely within the boundary of the Flathead Indian Reservation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). As part of the planning process, the Department of the Interior is committed to evaluating a range of options that include opportunities for the CSKT to participate in the future management of the Range. [READ MORE](#)



Flushing the Beaverhead: Beaverhead Watershed Committee & partners work together to solve sediment issues

Report by Matt Jaeger, MT FWP:

In a successful effort to reduce fine sediment in the Beaverhead River, earlier this month the Beaverhead Watershed Committee, FWP, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the East Bench Unit Joint Board worked together to coordinate a flushing flow from Clark Canyon Reservoir.

The effort was coordinated after a sediment event from Clark Canyon Creek loaded fine sediment into the river, causing potential harm to a valuable fishery.

Clark Canyon Creek is the first major tributary to the Beaverhead River downstream of Clark Canyon Reservoir. The creek enters a very robust tailwater fishery; the Beaverhead River typically supports 2,000 to 3,000 trout per mile in this reach and provides one of Montana's premier trophy fisheries. Up to 48,000 days and \$21 million

dollars are spent by anglers on the Beaverhead River each year, making the viability of this fishery of high importance locally and statewide.

Periodic sediment loading from Clark Canyon Creek has had a severe negative affect on this fishery. The problem has been most pronounced when accelerated sediment delivery from Clark Canyon Creek coincides with low flow releases from Clark Canyon Reservoir and sediment loads delivered by the creek exceed transport capacities in the Beaverhead River.

These sediment events can result in extensive deposition of fine sediment over several miles of the Beaverhead River and cause a severe decline in the fish population; trout abundances are typically reduced by greater than 50% following large sediment events.

The large reductions in trout abundances and reoccurring nature of these sediment events resulted in numerous concerned citizens, angling groups, and outfitters approaching Beaverhead Watershed Committee (BWC) to help find a solution to this problem. The BWC coordinated several studies to determine the cause of sediment events and the type of flushing flow that would mobilize deposited sediment.

Mass failures of the naturally highly erosive volcanic ash geology in the North Fork of Clark Canyon Creek are the primary sediment source. Sediment events are stochastic in nature and are typically associated with rain on snow events or localized thunderstorms; average conditions do not produce harmful sediment loading. When the fine-grained volcanic rocks in this sub-basin become saturated by storm events their inherent instability and steep hill slopes result in massive production of sediment that is rapidly transported to the Beaverhead River.

Reclamation completed a sediment flushing flow model and report in 2012 that predicted flows of 600 cfs were needed to mobilize sediment; however, this report did not provide a duration or plan for implementing flushing flows.

Beginning in the winter of 2013-2014 the East Bench Unit Joint Board, Reclamation, and FWP agreed to annually store 2100 acre-feet of water in Clark Canyon Reservoir to provide a flushing flow if a Clark Canyon Creek sediment event occurred.

[READ MORE](#)

The story of sagebrush, an icon of the West

From the audio podcast Field Notes by MTPR: Break off a sprig of big sagebrush and inhale its aroma: the fragrance is clean, sharp and as cool as the smell of winter. Call it camphor blended with a touch of Christmas. Crush a few leaves between your fingertips and the scent is suddenly somewhat bitter and more pungent. Let the sprig dry for a few hours and you'll find that the fragrance gradually loses its bite, softening to crisp evergreen with a hint of juicy berry.

Big sagebrush flourishes throughout North America's Great Basin and sagebrush steppe. One of more than a dozen species of *Artemisia*, big, or tall, sagebrush is the most common, ranging from as far south as New Mexico all the way up into the Dakotas, Montana, and British Columbia. This woody-stemmed evergreen shrub is able to thrive in such widely diverse environments because it has double systems of roots, branches, and leaves.

Now let's examine the branches. Big sagebrush produces both vegetative and reproductive branches. Vegetative branches are leafy. Small yellow flowers blossom on reproductive branches in late summer and early fall. After the seeds ripen, reproductive branches die off, but may remain on the shrub for another year.

Now for the leaves. The first type — non-lobed ephemerals — sprout in early spring and die off

as the soil dries up in summer. Shorter leaves pop up in late spring and carry on photosynthesis throughout the winter. It's from these shorter leaves, graced with three lobes at the tip, that big sagebrush derives its official name: *Artemisia tridentata*. Both the ephemeral and the lobed leaves are tiny, usually from one-quarter of an inch to one inch long. A coating of fine gray hairs covers each leaf, imparting a frostiness that gives big sagebrush its characteristic silvery green color. Run your hands along a branch of big sagebrush and you'll find its leaves feel as soft and smooth as fine suede.

First, let's talk about the roots. One network of small roots laces out beneath shallow layers of soil, enabling the plant to soak up

sudden rainfall or meltwater before evaporation occurs. Meanwhile tresses of longer, tougher roots plumb deeper into the earth, searching out underground water reserves.

Big sagebrush is a survivor. A healthy shrub may live up to 100 years. It competes with native and non-native grasses, and tends to grow abundantly in areas damaged by overgrazing. The size of the shrub depends upon the moisture content of the soil. The average shrub stands from two to four feet tall; however, in dry areas big sagebrush may be as small as 6 inches, and in wetter climates the plant has been known to grow as high as 15 feet.

[READ MORE](#), or [listen to the audio version](#)



HHS repeats as state Envirothon champs

For the second year in a row, Helena High School's Envirothon team took the Montana state Envirothon championship.

HHS also took first place in the Envirothon aquatics competition.

In early May, they were out at Wood Barrel & Farms on Sierra Road helping the owners, Dave and Angie Wood, to dig weeds and plant cauliflower, onions and leeks.

"It's pretty cool when you give a bunch of kids shovels, said their coach, science teacher Claire Pichette, as the kids dug up grass clumps with gusto.

The outing was a "thank you" to the farm owners for giving the

team real life experiences they used in the natural resource conservation competition in late April at Lewistown.

The competition is sponsored by Montana's Conservation Districts and is a competitive, problem-solving natural resource event for high school students that's now in its 22nd year.

On a previous farm visit, "Dave and Angie gave us a little crash course about what they do to conserve soil and water at their farm," said Pichette, who co-coaches the team with Tyler Hollow. "And the kids actually used some of the ideas in their presentation." [READ MORE](#)

Making a Plan: Missoula Conservation District actively seeking input from community on natural resource concerns

From the Missoula Current: The Missoula Conservation District has unveiled a new online survey ahead of a series of listening sessions planned this month to gauge the needs and concerns of county residents regarding a range of conservation issues.

Monica Perez-Watkins, the conservation and communications coordinator for the [Missoula district](#), said the information gathered over the next few weeks will help inform the district's long-range plan covering the next five years. "We work throughout Missoula County, and we want to hear back from county residents on their natural resource priorities and concerns,

and use that information to inform our long-range plan," she said. "We want to see how we can be most helpful."

[The survey](#) includes 14 questions regarding a range of issues related to conservation, resource use and the environment. [READ MORE](#)

Editor's Note: This could be a great way to create buy-in and district awareness in other districts across the state. We look forward to hearing from Missoula CD about how the process worked and the feedback they received, and will report back when the process is finished so that other interested districts might follow Missoula's example.

President's budget released, cuts to conservation possible

This week the president delivered his budget plan to Congress, and naturally there are a lot of opinions swirling around. Of course, this is only a proposal and will inevitably be changed by Congress, but we felt that it was important to share with you. Here are links to a couple of our trusted news sources:

NACD: *Leadership urges congress to reject budget proposal.* "We are very concerned that the president's budget calls for privatizing conservation planning," NACD President Brent Van Dyke said. [READ MORE](#)

Successful Farming: *USDA'S Budget Plan to Cut 5,263 jobs.* Hours after the White House proposed a 36% cut in crop insurance and downsizing of conservation programs. [READ MORE](#)

Northern Ag: *Trump Proposes Major Farm Cuts OMAHA (DTN)* -- The Trump administration is proposing dramatic cuts to the farm safety net in the president's first budget plan being delivered to Capitol Hill on Tuesday. [READ MORE](#)

NPR: *This land is...cut under Trump's budget* Rural communities dependent on U.S. public lands for everything from outdoor recreation to hunting to livestock grazing could be hit hard under the Trump administration's latest budget. [READ MORE](#)

Jobs

Watershed Coordinator, Yellowstone & Shields Valley

Park CD is seeking applications for the position of watershed coordinator for the Upper Yellowstone Watershed Basin/Shields Valley Watershed Group. Part time. Email jessica.anderson@mt.nacdnet.net

Executive Director, Montana Audubon

The Director will be provided the opportunity to substantially shape the long-term future of a statewide conservation organization with a trusted reputation, dedicated staff, engaged Board of Directors and substantial financial resources. Closes July 1. [More Info](#)

Assistant Coordinator, Beaverhead CD & Watershed Committee

The watershed assistant coordinator will be responsible for working on programs and grants with the Beaverhead Watershed Committee and Beaverhead Conservation District in an effort to improve water quality in the region. Part Time. Contact beaverheadcd@gmail.com for more info.

Grants

223, etc. 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](#)

Watershed Management Grant

A new application cycle for DNRC's Watershed Management Grant Program is now open. Closes June 30. [More Info](#)

Aquatic Invasive Species Grants

The Montana DNRC offers state-funded grants for the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The goal of the grants is to protect the natural resources of Montana from severe and unacceptable damage from aquatic invasive species. Closing June 1. [More Info](#)

Irrigation Development Grants

DNRC is offering grants of up to \$20,000 per project to support ongoing and new efforts to enhance the value of irrigated cropland. Deadline: June 15. [More Info](#)

RFP: Sagebrush Landscapes project

NFWF is pleased to announced its new Sagebrush Landscapes Program. Pre-proposals are due June 15th, we're hoping to solicit ideas far and wide to show demand and build funding for the program. Although we have limiting funding (\$450,000) for this go-round we hope only to grow the pool of funds in subsequent years. [More Info](#)

RFP: Forest Legacy Program

This is a call for **Forest Legacy Program** forest conservation proposals for the federal 2019 funding cycle. The U.S. Forest Service will be calling for projects by early fall. Therefore FWP, as

the state coordinating agency, is requesting project proposals, to be received by close of business July 7, 2017. Contact Rick Northrup, rnorthrup@mt.gov

Events

MACD & SWCDM Spring Board Meeting

The annual spring board meeting for MACD & SWCDM will be held in Helena, June 12-14. The EO will hold their spring meeting June 15 & 16. [More Info](#)

River Rendezvous

The Milk River Watershed Alliance(MRWA) along with the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC) would like to invite you to join us on a tour of the St. Mary's irrigation diversion system on June 27th, 2017. [More Info](#)

Montana Ag Summit

The summit, co-sponsored by Daines, will take place in Great Falls on May 31 and June 1, 2017. The Montana Ag Summit will bring the nation's agricultural leaders to Montana's Golden Triangle. [More Info](#)

Montana Range Days

Carbon County CD is hosting the 2017 Montana Range Days in Red Lodge, June 19-21. Registration is available online at www.montanarangedays.org.

Have something you'd like to see in TMC? Submissions are due every other Friday at 5:00 (visit our website for a calendar), and should be sent to tmc@macdnet.org.

Coming Up:

May

25

Judith Basin County
Range School, Utica

31-1

Montana Ag Summit

June

12-14

MACD/SWCDCM Spring
Board Meeting, Helena

14

Bridger Plant Materials
Center Field Day

7th Annual Matador
Ranch Science & Land
Management Symposium

15-16

MACDEO Spring Training,
Helena

19-21

Montana Range Days,
Red Lodge

21

6th Annual Ladies Day on
the Range, Jordan

22

Open the Gate
Workshop, Wibaux

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



Applications now open for 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps host sites

Applications close July 28, 2017. Visit www.swcdm.org/programs/big-sky-watershed-corps for more information, or contact Jessica Makus, (406)443-5711, jessica@macdnet.org.